

Valparaiso University

ValpoScholar

---

The Cresset (archived issues)

---

3-1991

## The Cresset (Vol. LIV, No. 5)

Valparaiso University

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholar.valpo.edu/cresset\\_archive](https://scholar.valpo.edu/cresset_archive)

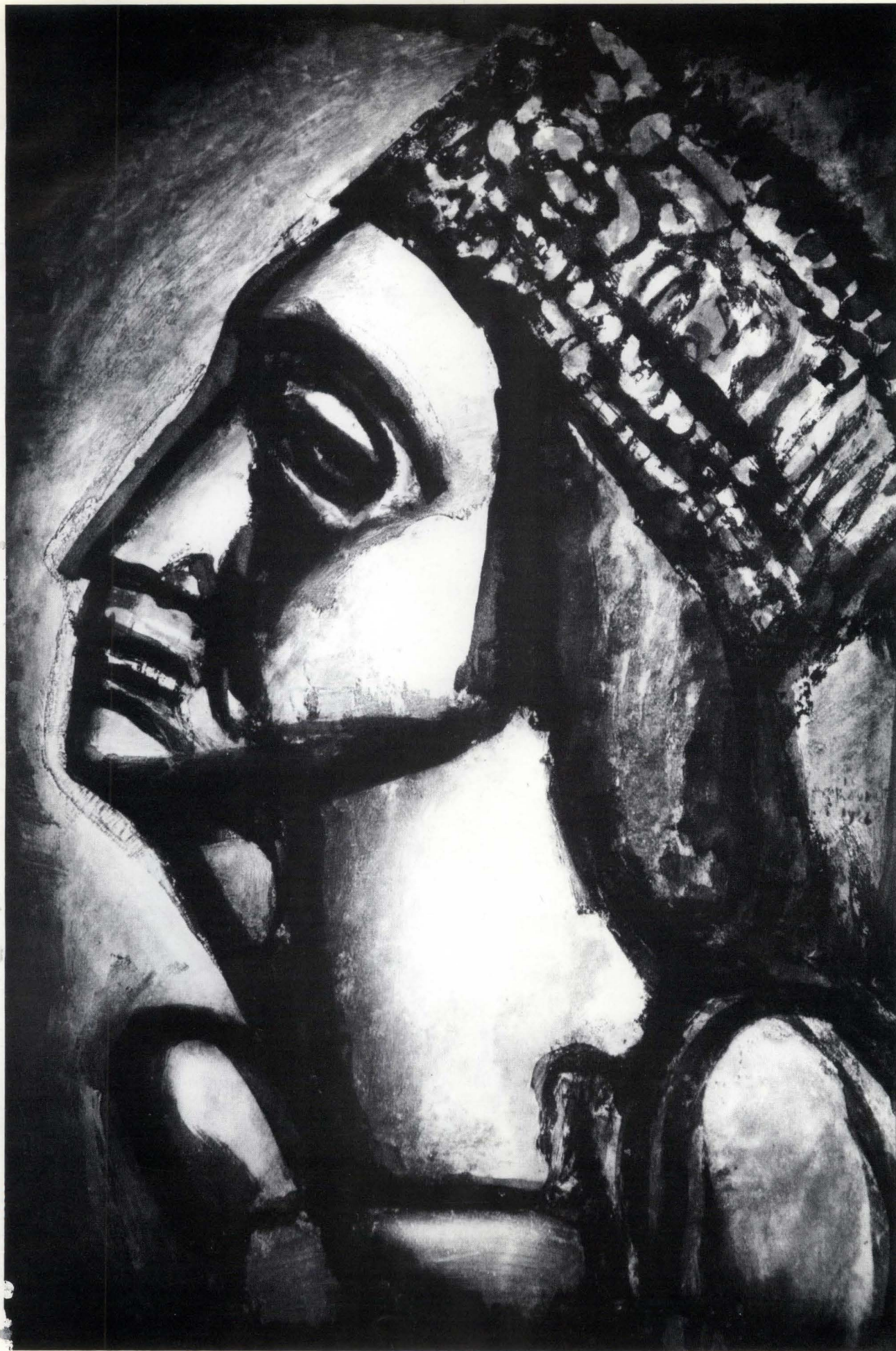


Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

---

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Cresset (archived issues) by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at [scholar@valpo.edu](mailto:scholar@valpo.edu).

5/5



A Review of Literature, Arts, and Public Affairs

March, 1991

# the Cresset



# C<sup>the</sup>resset

Valparaiso University  
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

ALAN F. HARRE, *Publisher*  
GAIL MCGREW EIFRIG, *Editor*

March, 1991 Vol. LIV, No.5  
ISSN 0011-1198

## Contributors

- 3 The Editor / IN LUCE TUA: A WAR FOR LENT
- 4 Kathleen Mullen/ EDGING TOWARD PEACE, 3, 4 (*Verse*)
- 5 William F. May/ THE HONOR CODE
- 9 Dan Kaderli / A RUNNER'S DENIAL (*Verse*)
- 10 Mollie Sandock / MOTHERS OF THE NOVEL: REDISCOVERING EARLY WOMEN WRITERS
- 15 Edgar Senne / LETTER FROM TANZANIA
- 19 Clyburn Duder / THE GOLDEN BOW (*Verse*)
- 20 Charles Vandersee / LETTER FROM DOGWOOD: INTERESTING CLASSICS
- 23 Renu Juneja / THE NATION: TIMES TO TRY THE SOUL
- 28 Edward Byrne / FILM: AMERICAN DREAMS
- 32 REVIEWS: Dale Lasky on Trutz Rentdorff's *Ethics*; John Wolf on M. L. King and James Cone

### Departmental Editors

Eric Wignall, *Assistant Managing Editor*  
 Richard H. W. Brauer, *Art Editor*  
 Kathleen Mullen, *Poetry Editor*  
 Thomas D. Kennedy, *Book Review Editor*  
 Jane Layman, *Copy*  
 Therese C. Nelson, *Student Aide*

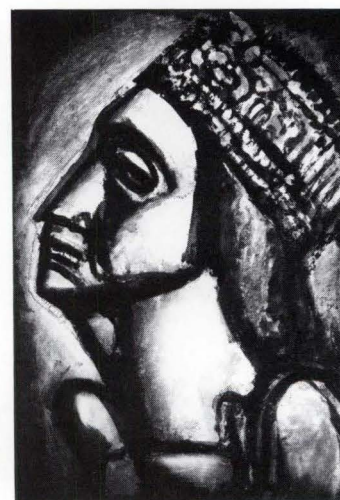
### Advisory Board

James Albers	Arlin G. Meyer
Richard Baeppler	Frederick A. Niedner, Jr.
James Caristi	Mel Piehl
Christine H. Lehmann	Mark Schwehn
Alfred Meyer	

### Business Manager

Wilbur H. Hutchins

THE CRESSET is published monthly during the academic year, September through May, by the Valparaiso University Press as a forum for ideas and informed opinion. The views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the preponderance of opinion at Valparaiso University. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor and accompanied by return postage. Letters to the Editor for publication are subject to editing for brevity. *The Book Review Index* and the *American Humanities Index* list Cresset reviews. Second class postage is paid at Valparaiso, Indiana. Regular Subscription rates: one year - \$8.50; two years - \$14.75; Student subscription rates: one year - \$4; single copy - \$.75. Entire contents copyrighted 1991 by the Valparaiso University Press, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383, without whose written permission reproduction in whole or in part for any purpose whatsoever is expressly forbidden.



**Cover:** Georges Rouault, French, 1871-1958, *Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows (Virgin of the Seven Swords)*, plate #53 of the 58 plate series: *Miserere et Guerre (Suffering and War)* published 1948, intaglio/etching and aquatint, edition not indicated, 22 3/4 x 16 1/16 inches. Valparaiso University Museum of Art, Gift of Leonard Scheller 79.5.

French expressionist Georges Rouault, in this series, intertwines human sufferings with the sufferings of Christ.

**Back cover:** Hubert Distler, German, b. 1919, *Karfreitag (Good Friday)*, 1962, relief/woodblock, 18/50 signed and dated lower right, 25 1/8 x 17 1/4 inches. Valparaiso University Museum of Art, University Fund purchase 75.14.

German expressionist Hubert Distler here presents, in even the blackest moments, glimmering Christian hope.



### A War for Lent

Perhaps it is the experience—all too common in these winter weeks—of four days in bed with *la grippe* that has made metaphors of disorder and disease take such strong hold in our mind. The war, pervasive and omnipresent, seems like an abscessed tooth. The whole of the body aches and sickens, poisoned by the small but insistent core of rottenness. There is nothing to do about the condition; the continual dripping of infected cells into the blood stream goes on with an ineluctable, if silent, certainty. You can call it anything you want, and you can ignore its meaning, and you can call the symptoms signs of something else, but the abscess will move steadily through its course, self-destructively collapsing its own site as it goes.

Just how immoral we have been in our pursuit of this war seems unclear to most citizens at this moment, but our blindness cannot last forever. At some point the language of “softening up his defensive positions” and “kicking his butt” and “stopping the course of unacceptable aggression” will have to give way to an acknowledgement that our desire to humiliate yet another dark, foreign nation may be for the sake of our own self-esteem. We will have to ask ourselves the meaning of the cheery tokens of patriotism and togetherness that have emerged as we all get together to kill other people because we can do it. At some point we will have to call ourselves to account for our destruction of other people's lives and fortunes. As the tanks line up at the border, and on this sunny winter afternoon we wait for the news that someone has given the signal for a ground war to begin, and we contemplate the contempt with which our president has treated the possibility of peace talks, how can one not weep for the idea of an America we thought we were, or might have been? There is talk about God blessing America; it may be more to the point, if we are going to invoke God at all, to consider that pity is the best we might expect. It is part of the mystery of Lent that mercy is what we might encounter.

□

The Christian intellectual tradition has consistently attempted to ease or perhaps at least moderate the despair one feels in contemplating the folly and futility of the human condition as it manifests itself in political orders. Lutherans have often felt that the two kingdoms doctrine, for example, provides a comfortable mental construction for accommodating an acknowl-

edgement both of the world's wickedness and the certain goodness and powerful justice of God over against that world. In his book, *The Political Meaning of Christianity*, Glenn Tinder joins that Christian intellectual tradition, and in doing so provides a provocative contribution to the work of those thinkers who have attempted to explore how we can be good Christians and act well in the political sphere. This spring, the *Cresset* Colloquium is meeting for five sessions to consider this book, and next fall, we will publish the results of these conversations as a series of articles. This year's Colloquium members are Richard Balkema, Dorothy Bass, Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Thomas D. Kennedy and Mel Piehl. Two lively sessions thus far prompt us to encourage readers of the *Cresset* to get hold of the book, and prepare to enjoy the fruits of study with us beginning in September.

□

And, while we are on the subject of good books, a loud hurrah! for A. S. Byatt's *Possession*, which is every bit as good as all the reviews said. Rather like a *Name of the Rose* for nineteenth century English literary history, it is engaging, literate, humane, witty, accomplished, entertaining, and even wise. Though it is about writing and scholarship and sex, it is comic enough to risk recommending to certain grown children, and clean enough for your mother. It has won all sorts of prizes, and if we had one to give, I'd cheerfully award it on the spot. Also recommended, for getting through the last of a particularly hard winter, Jay Parini's *The Last Station*, a novel about Tolstoi's last months, Nadine Gordimer's *The Son's Story*, Clyde Edgerton's *Raney* and *The Floatplane Notebooks*, Michael Malone's *Handling Sin*, Ulysses S. Grant's *Memoirs*, Edna Hong's *Turn Over Any Stone*, and of course, anything by P. G. Wodehouse. I'd also encourage you to write to VU's Book Center for *Amen! Till Tomorrow*, a collection of radio talks broadcast on shipboard in the Pacific theater by our neighbor and sometime-reviewer, retired Methodist minister John Wolf—when he was a 23-year-old chaplain. All these, different as they are, offer a sense of heart and hope, if only in the writers' integrity and goodness, reflecting in manifold ways the only Goodness we are likely to know.

GME

## Edging Toward Peace

### III.

Days of rain and, after, days of rain  
again. Morning's a luminous mist, noon  
a grey drizzle sliding toward night, and soon  
comes night in a dark downpour. I tell the chain  
of winter days like well-worn beads, a spell  
against the dissolution of the day:  
Keep watch; recite to the hour its proper grey;  
wait; be awake. The vigilance is all.  
What spell against the dissolution of  
my life? The same? The vigilance is all?  
How will you answer my passionate call,  
"What would you have me do, Lord? How must I love?"  
"Wait; be awake. My love will flow through you,  
natural as rainfall, faithful as dew."

### IV.

A week of mild weather has turned my head.  
Here in the deep of winter, what clear blue  
above, what blandishments of cloud! I've shed  
my layers of jackets, gone exploring through  
the neighbor's woods, expecting daffodils  
and iris at the river's edge. One squirrel  
drops by; a sparrow, bright and steady, spills  
the beans about a new exuberant world.  
Mother, my Gardener, like your small fern  
I've been curled tight against the heel of cold,  
clutching to heart the only green I know.  
Now your soft touch undoes me, and I turn,  
feeling my stingy winter heart unfold,  
breathing your new air, emerald and slow.

**Kathleen Mullen**



## THE HONOR CODE

William F. May

Valparaiso University's honor system, adopted by the faculty in 1944 at the initiative of the student body, requires that students sign at the close of unproctored examinations the following statement: "I have neither given or received assistance, nor have I tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid."

Behind this statement lies the moral tradition of honor codes, which perhaps my own university's code more boldly exposes. Princeton University—an all male institution at the time I was a student there in the 1940s—required us to sign at the close of every exam—all of them unproctored—a statement which read as follows: "I pledge my honor as a gentleman that during this examination, I have neither given nor received assistance."

Princeton's statement had its roots in an earlier era—male chauvinist, to be sure. It suggests that men peculiarly have a sense of honor or, at least, special duties to uphold their honor. The word "gentlemen" further suggests and reflects a distinction not just between men and women but between two types of men—gentlemen and those others who hustle and work for a living and who, under the strain of scrambling in the marketplace might be somewhat more tempted to behave in ways unbecoming to a gentleman. Thus the term "honor" harkens back to an aristocratic culture preceding modern, middle class, meritocratic culture. Gentlemen usually received an inheritance: they didn't have to make it in the marketplace. The honor pledge associated the pledger with a sense of class identity and with behavior befitting that class.

The pledge presupposes that at least two types of behavior ill befit the class: first, cheating, breaking the rules of the game; and, second, lying about cheating. A gentleman does not cheat and he tells the truth. So

much so, that when either misbehavior exceptionally occurs, gentlemen can devise their own internal mechanisms for enforcement. Hence exams need not be proctored by aliens—the faculty. It befits gentlemen to discipline their own. But more of this later.

The code turns on another key phrase. "I pledge my honor." The term pledge suggests that one puts at risk something of value that one would not want to lose by the proscribed behavior. That valuable something is one's honor. The code does not say, "I protest my innocence," but "I pledge my honor."



What is at issue in a culture that appeals to the notion of honor and its correlative "shame"? Anthropologists have distinguished between two types of cultures. The first type of culture relies upon the primary moral categories of honor and shame and the second type, upon the moral notions of guilt and innocence. While these two ways of understanding human behavior can operate, as well, in one and the same culture, each accents a different aspect of the moral life.

We can conveniently illustrate the moral differences between guilt and shame by examining the extended, twelve step pledge of alcoholics as they attempt to reconstruct their lives in the setting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Clearly, the alcoholic experiences the dead weight of both guilt and shame; recovery must deal with both. The fault-line between guilt and shame, according to Ernest Kurtz, shows up in two kinds of self-reproaches. Guilt accuses, "How could I have done *that!*"; shame reproaches, "How could *I* have done *that!*" (Kurtz 19)

Guilt springs from discrete, specific acts of commission and omission whereby the alcoholic has harmed others. Thus, Step Four of the famous Twelve Steps requires alcoholics to make a "searching and fearless moral inventory" of themselves, in which they identify the discrete deeds and specific harms which they have imposed on others. Otherwise, the injuries and wrongs they have committed and the duties they

---

William May is the Cary M. Maguire Professor of Ethics at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. *The Cresset* is proud to publish this lecture, originally delivered to the VU faculty at the Opening Workshop for the Academic Year 1990-91.

March, 1991

have dodged will spook and haunt them. Specific acts of reparation then help alcoholics move through the doorway into the future which moral inventories and contrition have for the first time opened.

The alcoholic's problem however goes deeper than guilt- it also sinks into shame. In Kurtz's typology, guilt springs from doing wrong, but shame from being flawed; guilt from a sense of wickedness, shame from a sense of worthlessness; guilt from causing pain, shame from feeling pain; guilt from the wrong exercise of power and control, but shame from the lack of power and control; guilt from the not-good, shame from the no-good; guilt from injuring others, and shame from demeaning the self. Guilt is objective; shame is subjective.

Shame is profoundly self-referential, so much so that whereas we speak of the opposite of guilt as guiltless; we do not call the opposite of shame shameless. Whereas the ashamed perceives his self as worthless, the shameless has lost a sense of worth (and of self) and therefore of the worth or worthlessness of the self (Kurtz 69). Shame afflicts and therefore ultimately posits a core identity. Shame does not spring simply from the deeds of an agent, but rather from those deeds as they reflect backward into one's core being or lack thereof. Hollow men cannot feel shame.

In a culture of guilt, one condemns lies because they wrong and harm others. In a culture of shame, one condemns lies because they diminish the liar. But shame does not spring exclusively from self-condemnation. Certainly, our shabby treatment of others can provoke our own sense of self-diminution. But this feeling strengthens yet further when others learn what we have done, or, more precisely, as we learn that they know. Our shabby deeds suddenly expose us to view; others see what we have done and reprove us. Thus, our shameful sense that we do not enjoy or deserve the esteem of others further lowers our self-esteem.

People in a shame-sensitive culture prize the opposite of shame—honor; they value the approval of others. They seek to prove their mettle and worth. A challenge, a test, proves one true or false, worthy or spurious. During such "moments of truth," a person shows his stuff, displays his or her qualities. Such moments reveal not abstract truth, but the truth the early Greeks called *Aliethiea*, stepping forth into the open, out of hiding. (In the Homeric epic, *Aliethiea* required two participants—the warrior to perform the deed and the poet to celebrate it. The two let a hero step forth and show his qualities.) Correspondingly, an honorable person acts openly and straightforwardly, shows openly what, in fact, deserves approbation. Oppositely, the person who feels shame must hide the dreadful exposed lack he has shown, his failure as a

man. He knows that he has fallen short and that the community finds him wanting. It esteems him not and he loses self-esteem.

Guilt springs from deeds, but shame from the deeper issue of identity. Thus Steps Six and Seven of the Twelve Steps abandon the language of discrete acts of reparation and suggest the language of reconnected or "born again" identity—"Ready to have God remove all these defects of character" and "humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." This reconnecting treats God as Polestar; hence, Step Eleven seeks "through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God."

This reconnecting also points the initiate to the inner community of Alcoholics Anonymous, that is, to other, similar, flawed, desperate, powerless, human individuals who have joined together in this latent church of the afflicted. Guilt sends the alcoholic out into the original communities from which he fled, whose members he has aggrieved, offended, and injured, to repair wrongs. Shame forces him to join the altogether new community of similarly afflicted. There he needs to repair his own soul in a community which never excludes the self for reasons of its own shortfall. In the AA, everyone has fallen short, has found himself lacking, has known despair and powerlessness, has seen the disapproving look in his child's eye and the even harsher disapproval in the eye of his own soul.



In the foregoing set of distinctions between guilt and shame, I have identified ancient Greece with cultures that orient primarily to the categories of honor and shame. It is tempting to associate biblical religion with cultures that rely exclusively on the distinction between guilt and innocence. The Bible, for example, identifies and prohibits specific actions that harm and injure others—adultery, killing, stealing, lying, and coveting. However, we should not press this contrast too far. The Bible is not insensitive to shame. It acknowledges not simply the injury of others but also self-injury. The prophet Jeremiah likens Israel's shameless behavior to the wild ass on a high hill who in her season "snuffeth up the wind in her desire." Israel's sins harm others but also plunge Israel into self-degradation. Or again, the New Testament warns against self-degradation. "What does it profit the self if it gains the world but forfeits its own self?"

In later Western history, shame and guilt link with two differing types of societies, aristocratic and middle class/meritocratic. The philosopher Montesquieu noted that in an aristocratic society honor defines, not so much a particular virtue, but a noble-

ness of scale in all one's virtues. In aristocracies "the actions of men are judged, not as virtuous, but as shining; not as just, but as great; not as reasonable, but as extraordinary." (Montesquieu 29) Honor defines the motives of a culture oriented more to the chivalric, the knightly, the heroic, the extraordinary. A society driven by honor is thirsty for glory.

An ethics of honor also encourages "a certain frankness and open carriage." Montesquieu associates the virtue of honesty or veracity with "an air of boldness and freedom." In effect, Montesquieu notes that truthfulness characterizes the person of honor not for the sake of the hearer of his words but as a reflection of that freedom and boldness which the honorable person should evince. This freedom of bearing, Montesquieu believed, distinguishes behavior in an aristocratic society from the calculating servility of subordinates in a despotic society. The tyrant wants his subjects servile. They must trim and shave their words and watch their step. The man of honor in such an environment must be ready to die. A certain contempt for his own life makes possible his courage. "...We are permitted to set a value upon our future, but are absolutely forbidden to set any upon our lives." The despot cannot tolerate such a display of honor. Thus the aristocrat glories in the contempt of life which undercuts the despot's power "founded on the power of taking it away." (Montesquieu 26-32)

A modern, middle class, careerist culture hardly resembles in most particulars a despotic society, but fear and anxiety figure large in both. The anxious modern careerist finds it difficult to act with that self-confidence and boldness that ideally marked the person of honor. Servility tends to mark the competitors in a meritocratic educational system. Students engage in a lifelong scramble for grades in order to get into the top professional schools that will put them in the best jobs, that will buy them the best homes, that will eventually turn the keys into the best cemeteries. The subjective correlate of a despotic society—fear—besets a despotic society and a highly competitive, meritocratic society alike. In a despotic society fear is personal; in a meritocratic society, it often takes a somewhat more impersonal form. "Pressure" is our word for that diffuse fear that constricts movement, crimps action, and stutters speech.



The modern justifications for an academic honor code largely fit the sensibilities of a society oriented to the problem of guilt. To violate the honor code perpetrates an act of injustice upon others. A meritocratic society presupposes morally a level playing field. Every-

one must play by the rules of the game in testing out performance. When I cheat, I refuse to play on a level field, and I hide my true performance by using crib notes, eyeballing the work of my neighbor, stealing advance information about an exam, or passing off the writing of others as my own. Thereby, I injure both students who make the poorer grade, which my own ignorance deserved, and students who make the better grade which my cheating misleadingly secures for me.

What begins in college often continues afterward. Insider trading inverts cheating on an exam. In insider trading, I exploit hidden knowledge to steal money from others. In cheating on an exam, I hide my ignorance to steal a grade from others by diluting and distorting the meaning of their grade. In both cases, I perpetrate an injustice. Insider traders go to jail. Exam cheaters, if caught, get an F—perhaps a warning shot across the bow to remind all competitors in a meritocratic society that they should be playing according to the same rules in the same game.

Further, indirectly and cumulatively, my action contributes to the erosion and corruption of an institution upon whose good health and integrity the society at large depends. First and most immediately, the academic institution, and, second and more broadly, those powerful institutions in the outside world. The classroom cheater makes an easy transition to becoming the inside trader, the S & L wheeler-dealer, the wartime profits exploiter, the secret industrial polluter—all those who abuse the power which an academic degree helps place within their reach.

Violating the honor code, however, not only injures and wrongs others (and other institutions), it also injures and wrongs one's self. It entails that moral loss and forfeit which traditional cultures of shame sensed so keenly. Self-injury and self-degradation occur at several levels. First, the cheater cheats himself out of an education. He substitutes ingenuity for knowledge, cleverness for wisdom. His manipulation of the system eventually arouses and reinforces cynicism; and cynicism, when fixed in him, makes him uneducable. (Not merely uneducated, but uneducable. The uneducated person has merely failed to study, the cynic has rejected the very possibility of being educated, that is, of being enlarged, drawn out, and changed by knowledge. For the cynic automatically trashes everything—the noble as well as the trivial. He reduces both alike to rubble.) Second, the cheat places himself under psychological strain—the strain of those who fear being found out, of being exposed for the fraud that they are. He carries the heavy burden of Dante's hypocrite who wears a coat of lead painted gold.

But cultures of shame warn us of a deeper self-injury than educational deprivation and psychological



strain. The cheat ultimately diminishes himself. He loses the straightforward bearing, the boldness, of the free person. "What shall it profit a person to gain the whole world but to lose his own soul." One ruptures one's integrity, one's identity. One alters one's inward being; one is no longer a person who can come to terms with himself, and remain himself in the midst of strain and temptation.



Honor systems face vexing issues of enforcement in our time. A meritocratic society generally depends upon the external enforcement of standards. Football players have to cope with referees; baseball players with umpires; tennis players with line judges; business people with the courts; and students with proctors.

A highly legalistic society such as ours—we have more lawyers per acre in the United States than any other society on the face of the earth—produces a kind of anti-nomianism of the law. That is, the law does not point beyond itself to a higher righteousness, an absolute ideal, but it marks with phosphorous paint minimal standards. It lets people know maximally what they can get away with; and, thus, absent the referee, the umpire, the linesman, the proctor, the policeman and the judge, it encourages the ambitious, the lazy, and the desperate to think that they can flout the rules as freely as they like to their own advantage.

An honor code depends largely upon the internal enforcement of standards. First, the individual student by and large internally accepts the code and abides by it without the necessity of policing; and, second, students themselves will largely see to its enforcement upon the few of their members who violate the standards.

The internal enforcement of standards cannot occur, however, unless members of a group identify inwardly with those standards. Thus how does one form and maintain the identity of students with the intrinsic good of education and not simply the extrinsic goods of grades? Since students do not come to a university with their identity fully formed and in place, how does one develop their identity with an education in the midst of a society which massively disdains its honored ideals? Our society rarely sends its students to college for an education, but for grades and a degree, jobs, and promotions. We go for glitz rather than goods, for the glow of style rather than the rewards of substance.

The problem of self-regulation is culture wide. The feeble effort of students to be self-policing and self-disciplined only anticipates the later, feeble efforts of the professions to be self-policing. A former presi-

dent of the AMA once conceded that 5% of doctors are unethical or incompetent, but in the same year only 75 (out of 20,000 unethical/incompetent doctors) had their licenses removed. Churches rarely defrock their morally inadequate religious leaders; academics rarely return a negative tenure judgment based on incompetence against colleagues. (Since academics do not perform much better in self-regulation than their fellow professionals, perhaps the deepest question universities must face is the question of their own institutional identity.) In any event, the moral problem students must address in supporting an honor code anticipates the problem burgeoning later in the culture at large. Society creates through education a ruling class and yet does blessed little to instruct that ruling class in the rigors of self-discipline apart from which its power surely corrupts.

Am I my colleague's keeper? The brief answer is, yes. It is not good enough for a doctor to practice well while winking at his malpracticing colleagues, for an academic to teach well but to pass on to tenure the teacher who will bore and discourage students for generations to come, or for the student himself not to cheat, but by silence and inaction to turn test results into candy grades.

Thus I read with some gratification the straightforward statement by a senior student at Valparaiso University, Noelle Haughty, who wrote that "Not only is the student responsible for personal honor but for the honor of other students as well." That's a very important moral move on the part of students at a university with some awareness that by bestowing knowledge, grades, and degrees, it bestows an enormous power upon those who will wield power for 40-50 years. And if students acquire that power shabbily, they will not be inclined to use it nobly, justly, compassionately, or responsibly.

Still, how does one establish and sustain such an institutional identity in a society which so massively has ignored, repressed, mocked, or disdained that identity and then expect young people to assume that identity upon admission to a university? Very frankly, I don't have something new to propose beyond the steps which Valparaiso University has already taken in response to the earlier work of Professor Reidel, Kenneth Klein, and other members of the Committee on Academic Integrity and the subsequent actions taken by President Harre after faculty and student discussion of that report.

Strategies for disciplining and enhancing the moral life of a community inevitably (and at their best) include both a negative and a positive aspect. The more censorial negative requires as its complement the educational positive. Your decisions reflect both.

First, several proposals in the report orient negatively. How does one discourage behavior that, at its best, depends upon self-regulation and yet depends upon regulators who are not fully convinced of the moral grounds for that regulation and have not fully identified themselves with it or who fear that if they blow the whistle they will forfeit their place among colleagues and friends?

Valparaiso has answered that question by providing, as a last resort, for external regulation (that is, the faculty proctoring of exams), but also, by insisting that students must initiate the request for that proctoring in a particular course. The university has also provided for the full protection of the identity of that whistle blower. These provisions seem to me a fair compromise and accommodation to a society where the desired ethos has not fully taken hold and students themselves are extremely vulnerable to ostracism and rejection if they make a move to support an ethos not yet fully established.

Further, Valparaiso has also provided for greater faculty participation (but not majority participation) in court proceedings—perhaps to give students a little more confidence in returning negative judgments where such judgments are deserved.

But, second, Valparaiso's report recognizes that education is the necessary positive to the negative of disciplinary activity. Negative regulation at best enforces minimal rules. The positive of education ought to help internalize maximal ideals that energize the aspiration to excellence, and that begin to create

bolder, more self-confident, more courageous students. Valparaiso's decisions rightly recognize that a strong educational effort alone will strengthen the honor system. Clearly, that effort will not materialize if faculty members merely hand out *pro forma* the regulations on the honor code or punt the problem to the central administration. Education requires clarifying for and with students the broader links between the rules of the game in college with the kind of ruling class we will create and suffer together. It poses for students, early in their lives as citizens, the moral and political question as to whether their society will mix shamelessness with power or whether it will turn out leaders with some sense of honor and decency both in dealing with others and in coming to terms with themselves.

Education of this moral magnitude requires more than the hurried acquisition of information about the rules of the game. It may require something resembling those powerful rites by which traditional societies inducted their young into the sacred. Such moral education invites and requires nothing less than an alteration in human identity.□

#### Works Cited

Kurtz, Ernest. *Shame and Guilt: Characteristics of the Dependency Cycle*. Vol. 7. Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1981.

Baron de Montesquieu. *The Spirit of Two Laws*. New York: Halner, MacMillan, 1949.

### A Runner's Denial

The road before me stretches, cold and grey  
Into the jagged hills where sinking sun  
Hurls fading color at the dying day;  
On asphalt hours by hours by hours I run.  
I pass the field once ripe with green and gold;  
I stride beside the stripped and barren rows;  
The reaper's hook has struck the razor cold;  
Husks drift in autumn winds assuring snows.  
Dark comes. The churchyard glows in ghostly light  
From the harvest moon which grins above the field;  
Once-vigorous day has curled up into night;  
I see the granite markers of the yield.  
I shiver, spit, and turn the other way,  
Toward where the eastern hills gave birth to day.

Dan Kaderli



## MOTHERS OF THE NOVEL: REDISCOVERING EARLY WOMEN WRITERS

Mollie Sandock

In *Northanger Abbey*, completed in 1803, Jane Austen playfully but vigorously defends the novel, the eighteenth-century female-centered novel chiefly written and read by women, as a literary form worth reading. She boldly admits that her heroine reads novels:

. . . Yes, novels; — for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances, to the number of which they are themselves adding—joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? (57-58)

Austen shows how the female novelist is traduced by the male reviewer, and valued below the “man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the Spectator and a chapter from Sterne” or “the nine-hundredth abridger of the history of England.” The productions of such men are granted high status as literature, but

. . . there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have *only* genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. ‘I am no novel reader—I seldom look into novels—Do not imagine that I often read novels—It is really very well for a novel’—Such is the common cant.—‘And what are you reading, Miss—?’ ‘Oh! it is only a novel!’ replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame.—‘It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;’ or, in short, *only* some work

---

Mollie Sandock, a member of the Department of English at VU, has written on nineteenth century literature, is studying the economic and social dimensions of eighteenth century fiction, and also teaches contemporary literature. She is active in campus discussions of gender and curriculum.

in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the reader in the best chosen language. (58; my italics)

Austen knew that every contemporary reader would instantly recognize the novels she cites. Now, however, editors feel obliged to give footnotes explaining to the general reader who Frances Burney (*Cecilia* and *Camilla*) and Maria Edgeworth (*Belinda*) were.

Austen’s other novels and her letters are full of allusions to the works of the writers from whom she learned her craft, many of whom are buried even more deeply in oblivion than Burney and Edgeworth: Charlotte Lennox, Frances Sheridan, Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe, Sarah Harriet Burney, Regina Maria Roche, Mary Brunton, Elizabeth Hamilton, Lady Morgan, Hannah More, Jane West. Recent scholars who have tried to relate Austen to the feminist and progressive movements of her day have made a good case that she must also have known the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Opie, and Mary Hays. Recent students of the novel would add the names of Aphra Behn, Delariviere Manley, Eliza Haywood, Mary Davys, Jane Barker, Sarah Fielding, and Clara Reeve, among others, to the list of those whose art culminated in the art of “Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda,” and of Austen herself.

A generation ago, when I was in college, none of the works on Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* honor role was in print, nor were the works of most of the writers mentioned above. Because these novels were not in print in a form which could be purchased, they could not be taught in English courses which employed inexpensive paperbacks, and they were not even owned in hardback by most college libraries. These novels lived in scattered collections in rare-book departments of large research libraries and were the province of specialists who considered themselves historians more than literary critics.

Because most early novels by women were out of print and thus could not be taught, people who went to college when I did had a partial and skewed view of the development of the English novel. The title of a recent book which introduced a new paperback series of once-forgotten novels is Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel: One Hundred Good Women Novelists Before Jane Austen*. (Spender's is not really an academic book but a frenetic 357-page fan letter; a much better overview of the early women novelists is given by Jane Spencer in *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*.) The first reaction of most people educated as English majors is amusement and disbelief: there can't possibly be one hundred women novelists, much less good novelists, before Jane Austen. The eighteenth-century novel, we were taught, consists of Richardson and Fielding (perhaps with Defoe as an almost worthy predecessor), Smollett if you like that sort of thing, Mackenzie for those interested in the byways of sentimentalism, and the startlingly prescient Sterne. Later in the century, there was a blank, filled in part by "minor" writers like Burney and Edgeworth, forerunners and heralds of Jane Austen, who began to invent the nineteenth-century novel after first making fun of the lady novelists of the day. We might hear the names of such selected lady novelists as Radcliffe and Inchbald, but we would not be expected to make the sacrifice of actually reading them. The names of the others listed above we would not hear at all. The "real" English novel, the novel of the Victorians, lay ahead, beyond the deserts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and independent of them.

□

Recently, however, the once-forgotten "mothers" of the novel have begun to return to print, and the landscape of the seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century novel is beginning to look quite different. In the 1970s, many long-forgotten early novels by both women and men began to escape from closely-guarded rare book rooms when they began to appear in microform and hardback reprint editions. These editions were too expensive for undergraduate classroom use and graduate student budgets, but at least they could be checked out of the library and read freely. Facsimile editions made the novels accessible at least to those who were prepared to deal with the eighteenth-century long "s" (which looks like "f") and could decipher passages like "the blufh of pleafure, with which Camilla heard the firft fentence of this fpeech, became a tingle of fhame at the fecond, and whitened into furprife and forrow at the laft."

The next step in the resurfacing of early novels by women came when two special-purpose paperback series began making the novels available at affordable prices.

In recent years, the pointedly-named Virago and Pandora presses have begun to bring Jane Austen's teachers to light. Virago, which in the late 1970's had begun publishing its "Modern Classics," has recently begun to edge backwards into the eighteenth century with works like Sarah Scott's 1762 *Millennium Hall*, a Utopian vision of a group of women who have successfully escaped from the marriage market and its alternatives of dependence or poverty and have established a peaceful independent female society devoted to study, philanthropy, and the arts. The Pandora Press "Mothers of the Novel" Series, begun in the late '80s, was specifically devoted to publishing the works of the alleged "One Hundred Good Women Novelists Before Jane Austen"; this series made it possible for me to understand at long last Austen's jokes about Mary Brunton's *Self-Control* and to adorn my shelves with titles like Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village*, prompting my friends to make bad jokes about old TV series.

Pandora Press is no longer publishing, and its "Mothers of the Novel" series (now handled by Unwin) has not completed its ambitious plans to publish one hundred novels. Many of its '80s titles are now out of print, but it enabled many people and many academic and public libraries to acquire the works of Austen's teachers, and it enabled college courses taught in the late '80's to teach them. Virago, however, remains in excellent health; its handsome and inexpensive paperbacks continue to extend the range of what can be taught. And as Pandora and Virago have brought out these works, excellent standard paperback publishers like Oxford University Press have begun to bring out better editions of many of the same titles.

I have just received a catalogue from Oxford University Press in which I am urged to buy Burney's *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, as well as two more of her novels. I am also offered Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (in her day, Sarah Fielding was as famous as her brother Henry; Dr. Johnson preferred her works to his). Oxford urges me to consider Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, as well as Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*, the story of a young girl beguiled by the myths of female power she finds in her reading of French romances; Austen found that Lennox's novel held up well to a second reading. The catalogue further offers three of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic thrillers (the very "horrid" novels which enthrall the young heroine of *Northanger Abbey*) and Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (Smith is the writer whom the heroine

of Austen's early "Catherine, or The Bower" is eager to discuss with her friend). Most gratifyingly, Oxford offers me all of these long-ignored texts under the rubric of "The World's Classics"! All of these novels can now be studied by any interested scholar and taught in college courses—this is what shapes generations of students' idea of the literary "canon"—and they are also available to the exploration of all of those readers who wish that Austen or the Brontes had written just one more.

□

What did these newly restored "foremothers" write? I am struck both by the exuberant variety of what they wrote and by the overt concern so many of them have with questions about Woman's proper role, rights, duties, and nature. Among other things, they wrote illustrations of the evils of slavery and celebrations of the single life. They wrote softcore pornography, sometimes starring thinly-veiled portraits of contemporary public figures. They wrote pious tracts and subtly revolutionary Utopian visions. They wrote love stories, some of which vary sharply from what the reader of canonical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works might expect. They wrote works exploring power relations within the family. They wrote political tracts about the Wrongs of Woman and the futility of present social arrangements. They wrote political parables in support of and in opposition to the principles of the French Revolution. They wrote didactic works recommending retirement, submission, and silence to young women, in narrative voices of ironically great authority and power.

It is remarkable that so many of these women, from the most radical to the most apparently conservative, give voice to complaints about the social, physical, and mental constraints placed upon Englishwomen in the eighteenth century. One pervasive theme has to do with women's access to education (it is not surprising that women who themselves wrote books, even books advocating female piety and submission, found themselves uneasily confronting cultural taboos against studious women). In the eighteenth century, the "conduct literature," books of instruction and advice for young ladies, makes it very clear that serious study is "unfeminine" and makes women repellent to men: it will hurt them on the marriage market, and it will make them seem not only unfeminine but unchaste. Works like James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1776) and Dr. Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774) were reprinted many times and widely read throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

centuries. Fordyce warns young ladies to avoid such "masculine" pursuits. Dr. Gregory instructs his daughters to hide their good sense, and especially to hide their learning from men: "keep it a profound secret." Lady Mary Wortley Montagu gives the same advice: women must hide their learning as they would hide crookedness or lameness!

Studies thought particularly dangerous for young women include "masculine" subjects like Latin and Greek, which were the preserve of upper-class and monied males. Latin is the mark of a "gentleman," a term which includes both gender and class: both "gentle" as opposed to "simple" and "man" as opposed to "woman." Mathematics and, later, the sciences also fell into this forbidden "unfeminine" zone, and thorough professional skill at any branch of knowledge is likewise suspect. "Learned ladies," anomalous scholarly women, are targets of vituperation in the pages of novelists like Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett.

Eighteenth-century women novelists illustrate the harm done by such constraints upon women's minds. Sarah Fielding, in *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), gives us the history of Cynthia, whose frustration must have been shared by many:

I cannot say, I ever had any Happiness in my Life; for while I was young, I was bred up with my Father and Mother, who, without designing me any harm, were continually teasing me. I loved Reading, and had a great Desire of attaining Knowledge; but whenever I asked Questions of any kind whatsoever, I was always told, such Things are not proper for Girls of my Age to know: If I was pleased with any Book above the most silly Story or Romance, it was taken from me, for Miss must not enquire too far into things, it would turn her Brain; she had better mind her Needle-work, and such Things as were useful for Women; reading and poring on Books, would never get me a Husband. (311)

Some early women writers shared in part this disapproval of "learned ladies" and found ways to avoid considering themselves members of that category, while others clearly rejected the prohibition against intellectual work for women, and in their novels used various strategies for defending women's right to learn things. Some writers invented extreme "learned lady" characters, made it clear that these characters were disapproved, and then used such characters as a "cover" so that the heroines could engage in modest intellectual activity without anyone noticing. Others more forthrightly made their heroines "learned ladies" themselves, apologizing for this with various degrees of defensiveness.

Frances Burney's first novel was the anonymously published *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778). The title character is a sharp observer of contemporary social and sexual politics, and of course the author, a young woman in her twenties, is by her act of publication setting herself up as a keen student of the social arrangements of her day. She protected herself through anonymity and repeated protestations of feminine horror at pushing herself forward as an author, and she also invented a character, Mrs. Selwyn, a learned lady, who acted as shield for her heroine and herself. *Evelina*, writing to a friend, describes Mrs. Selwyn, an older woman who is accompanying her on a trip:

Mrs. Selwyn is very kind and attentive to me. She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*, but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own. In regard to myself, however, as I have neither courage nor inclination to argue with her, I have never been personally hurt at her want of gentleness; a virtue which, nevertheless, seems so essential a part of the female character, that I find myself more awkward, and less at ease, with a woman who wants it, than I do with a man. She is not a favourite with Mr. Villars [her saintly guardian, an elderly clergyman] who has often been disgusted at her unmerciful propensity to satire. (268-269; Burney's italics)

Here *Evelina* and her author free themselves by "correctly" criticizing Mrs. Selwyn, whose masculine mind and masculine studies ruin her feminine gentleness; with criticism deflected onto Mrs. Selwyn, the author herself can be quietly knowledgeable and she and the heroine can be quite "unmercifully satirical" without attracting undue criticism. Furthermore, Mrs. Selwyn's masculine studies also prove useful to Burney in another way. Mrs. Selwyn knows the classics well, as aristocratic young men ought to but often do not; she exposes the ignorance of the languid and vicious aristocrats into whose company *Evelina* falls. They snub *Evelina*, and Mrs. Selwyn thoroughly retaliates by shaming them; the heroine can thus maintain the approved stance of injured innocence, and the officially disapproved Mrs. Selwyn can do her work, and Burney's work, for her.

It is interesting to note that while Burney has *Evelina* deplore Mrs. Selwyn's masculine studies, she also puts the novel's longest statement of the standard antifeminist line into the mouths of characters even more officially disapproved, these ridiculous, parasitical young men. The cowardly fop, Mr. Lovel, begins, in an attempt to fend off Mrs. Selwyn's satire:

"I have an insuperable aversion to strength, either of body or mind, in a female."

"Faith, and so have I," said Mr. Coverly; "for egad I'd as soon see a woman chop wood, as hear her chop logic."

"So would every man in his senses," said Lord Merton; "for a woman wants nothing to recommend her but beauty and good-nature; in every thing else she is either impertinent or unnatural. For my part, deuce take me if ever I wish to hear a word of sense from a woman, as long as I live!" (361)

Jane Austen adopts a similar method of "covering for" a heroine with what contemporaries would call a masculine mind in *Pride and Prejudice*. She gives her heroine Elizabeth Bennet a sister, Mary, who is a cartoonish figure of a female pedant; Mary deflects the criticism from Elizabeth as Mrs. Selwyn does from *Evelina*. Characters unfriendly to Elizabeth, like Miss Bingley, who is trying to marry Mr. Darcy herself, accuse her of bookishness, and Elizabeth and Austen must repeatedly mount a defense against this damning suggestion. In this scene, Elizabeth is reading a book while others play cards:

Mr. Hurst looked at her with astonishment.

"Do you prefer reading to cards?" said he; "that is rather singular."

"Miss Eliza Bennet," said Miss Bingley, "despises cards. She is a great reader and has no pleasure in anything else."

"I deserve neither such praise nor such censure," cried Elizabeth; "I am *not* a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things." (83; Austen's italics)

With Mary as a stalking-horse or scapegoat like Mrs. Selwyn, and with disclaimers of this kind, Elizabeth can read, look forward with great pleasure to Mr. Darcy's library at Pemberley, and even use the language of formal logical debate with her sister Jane and still retain contemporary readers' sympathy. Austen also confronts the question of women's education a little more directly through acid humor directed at the idea that women ought not to know anything. These are bitter jokes, but they can still be passed off as *merely* jokes. In *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator remarks,

Where people wish to attach, they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can.

The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have been already set forth by the capital pen of a sister author, [Burney, in *Camilla*]—and to her treatment of the subject I will only add in justice to men, that though to the larger and more trifling part of the sex, imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms, there is a portion of

them too reasonable and too well informed themselves to desire anything more in a woman than ignorance. (125)

I was recently surprised to learn that two of Austen's rediscovered predecessors, Mary Brunton and Frances Sheridan, treat the question "learned ladies" in a much more forthright way. In her novel *Self-Control* (1810), Brunton avoids the strategy of inventing an "officially disapproved" figure like Mrs. Selwyn or Mary Bennet; she comes right out and makes her heroine herself a learned lady.

Laura Montreville, our heroine, studies mathematics with the man she will eventually marry; they also read Tacitus in the original. Laura and her wicked aunt, Lady Pelham, both begin to study math, but her aunt gives up at the first difficulty, and Brunton brilliantly puts the usual anti-feminist lines about learned ladies into the silly aunt's mouth; she then repeatedly and defensively assures us that math has not ruined Laura's charm. Laura enters into her studies

... with a pleasure that surprised herself, and she persevered in it with an industry that astonished her teacher. Lady Pelham was, for a little while, the companion of her labours; but, at the first difficulty, she took offence at the unaccommodating thing, which shewed no more indulgence to female than to royal indolence. — Forthwith she was fired with a strong aversion to philosophers in bibs, and a horror at shepedants, a term of reproach which a dexterous side-glance could appropriate to her niece, though the author of these memoirs challenges any mortal to say that ever Laura Montreville was heard to mention ellipse or parabola, or to insinuate her acquaintance with the properties of circle or polygon. (255)

Brunton then repeatedly reassures us that Laura not only refrains from mentioning parabolas in public, but also does not alienate the man who is the companion of her studies; he does not love or admire Laura any less because of her strange habit.

In *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), Frances Sheridan (whose father disapproved of her learning to read and write) not only gives us a scholarly heroine, but she makes disapproval of that scholarship a foreshadowing of villainy in the heroine's suitor. Sidney writes to her friend about the conversation preceding the suitor's proposal:

I was sitting in the little drawing-room, reading, when he came in. . . . The book happened to be Horace; upon his entering the room, I laid it by; he asked me politely enough, what were my studies. When I named the author, he took the book up, and opening the leaves, started, and looked me full in the face; I coloured. My charming Miss Bidulph, said he, do you prefer this to the agreeable entertainment of

finishing this beautiful rose here, that seems to blush at your neglect of it? He spoke this, pointing to a little piece of embroidery that lay in a frame before me. I was nettled at the question, it was too assuming. Sir, I hope I was as innocently, and as usefully employed; and I assure you I give a greater portion of my time to my needle, than to my book.

You are so lovely, madam, that nothing you can do needs an apology. An apology, I'll assure you! Did not this look, my dear, as if the man thought I ought to beg his pardon for understanding Latin? (73)

Sheridan is certain that no apology is required; like so many women who wrote in the eighteenth century, she does not find intellectual activity intrinsically "unfeminine."

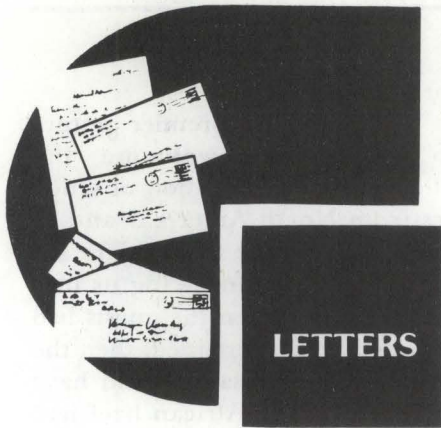
In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf wrote about "the extreme activity of mind which showed itself in the later eighteenth century among women." She claimed enormous importance for the historical moment in which ordinary women (as opposed to aristocrats) began to claim the beginnings of a public voice:

... towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or Wars of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write. (68)

Today we can witness another momentous change: we are beginning to read what she wrote. □

#### Works Cited

- Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. London: Penguin, 1988.  
———. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Penguin, 1986.  
Brunton, Mary. *Self-Control*. London: Mothers of the Novel Pandora, 1986.  
Burney, Frances. *Evelina*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982.  
Fielding, Sarah. *The Adventures of David Simple*. Cited in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Athens: Ohio Univeristy Press, 1986.  
Sheridan, Frances. *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*. London: Mothers of the Novel-Pandora, 1987.  
Spencer, Jane. *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.  
Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Harvest/HBJ-Harcourt, 1957.



## Letter from Tanzania

Edgar Senne

It was something I had only tried to imagine; it was called the "third world," its nations identified as "developing." Suddenly, I was flying through the night somewhere between Frankfurt and Nairobi, somewhere between these first and third worlds. I was about to have my own direct experience of life in that world. In a way it was like a dream about to come true, for I had longed for this kind of opportunity ever since the mid-sixties, when I was researching the life of one of Kenya's most powerful ethnic groups (we used to call them "tribes"), the Gikuyu. This was the group from which came Jomo Kenyatta, first president of the new independent nation of Kenya. As I studied the traditional religious and cultural life of the Gikuyu and other African ethnic groups, I could only hope that the day would come when I would get a closer look.

The plane landed in Nairobi at 10:20 P.M. local time. As we left the plane and entered the walkway to the airport terminal building, I did

---

*Edgar Senne has taught in the VU Department of Theology since 1962. His courses on world religions, and on the religions of Native America, routinely have waiting lists. This letter will be followed by another, from Nigeria.*

a double take when I saw the soldiers lined up, three on each side of that walkway, in full forest camouflage attire, holding their submachine guns in combat-ready position and watching every step I took. My mind started spinning. What is this all about? Has something awful happened here in Nairobi, something that we have not heard about? Are they expecting a major invasion from some dangerous foreign power? Surely, they are not deploying their armies to defend against twenty-one college professors from the United States and Canada, most of whom were too advanced in years to make good soldiers! This conspicuous military presence continued throughout the terminal and was a bit unsettling. One of our group finally dared to ask a soldier, "Why are you here with your guns all ready for action?" The answer seemed so simple, "To make it safe for the planes to come and go and for people like you to travel where you want to travel." I wondered, "Is such conspicuous security a standard part of life in the new African nations?"

Immigration and Customs went more smoothly than I had thought it might, and soon we were speeding down the wrong side of the road toward our first lodging place in Africa, the guest house of the Church Province of Kenya (CPK), an accommodation operated for travelers by the Anglican Mission. As our bus sped down that road in the dark of night, the lighted signs and billboards along the road were familiar at about a fifty percent rate. I recall CalTex Petrol, Firestone, GM, Sanyo, Sony, Toyota and other familiars. This is the city of Nairobi; wonder what it's like thirty miles out in any direction?

It's a pretty remarkable thing how I happened to be in on this adventure. There's an organization headquartered in Washington, DC, that goes by the acronym LECNA—Lutheran Educational Conference

of North America. The forty-three Lutheran colleges and universities, under the leadership of the executive offices, made a successful grant application to the United States Department of Education for a Fulbright-Hays Travel Abroad award. Applicants were invited from member schools, and twenty-one of us were selected to participate in this six-week travel seminar.

All this was designed to help us globalize—this seems to be the buzzword these days, and I even had to teach the word to the spell checker on my word processor. Globalize the minds of our students, globalize the courses we teach and globalize the whole curriculum as much as possible. This high purpose is born out of the well-documented fact that Americans lack knowledge and understanding of non-western cultures. Our travel seminar to Africa is one of the many attempts being made to try to make a difference in this matter. So, there are some strings attached; it's not the usual safari.

As I write to you, we are nearing the end of our time in Tanzania. We have been here for three weeks, here on the Indian Ocean side of Africa. Soon we will be flying to Nigeria in West Africa, on the Atlantic Ocean side of Africa. Looking back on all that has been packed into these last three weeks, it is hard to decide what I most want to share with you. But, of course, some things do stand out.

I will never forget where I spent Friday, the sixth day of July. We drove a couple hours on the dreadful back roads outside of our headquarters in Arusha, on our way to visit Munjere, a traditional Maasai village just a few hundred yards from the Great Rift. We stopped at a small town called Mtowa Mbu (river of mosquitoes), where a German missionary briefed us on the Maasai village we were about to visit and how it was that the Lutheran church was invited to



come to that village in the first place. As we continued our drive to the *engan'g* (a Maasai settlement) called Munjere, our four Land Rovers kept a quarter mile distance between them to avoid the worst of the dense clouds of red dust which rose up from what didn't even look like a road.

As we approached our destination, we could see in the foreground a simple round building with a corrugated tin roof and a cross on top. A few hundred yards behind it was that geological spectacle called the Great Rift escarpment. The church was built, like everything else, of wooden poles and mud, plastered over with a one or two inch layer of cow dung. As we climbed out of our Land Rovers, about thirty women of all ages were forming a semi-circle in front of that church, singing and swaying to welcome us. The men kept their distance for a while, coming closer only after their curiosity would no longer suffer the distance. We had all assumed that this would be a no-picture day, since the Maasai were so well known for their resentment of such impositions of western culture. But it turned out otherwise. To our great surprise and delight, the people of Munjere gave us complete freedom to use tape recorders and photography. They did so because our host in this Arusha region of Tanzania was Bishop Thomas Laiser, himself a Maasai, and he accompanied us on this visit. It was upon his recommendation that they indulged our modern ways—besides, it gave them great delight to see themselves on instant replay in the view finder of the hand-held camcorder.

The Maasai are an ethnic group spread out over much of the northern part of Tanzania and the southern part of Kenya. They have held out more firmly than any other group in East Africa against assimilation by the forces of modernization. Their herds of cattle are the focus

and central symbol of this pastoralist culture. Mixed into the herds of cattle and serving somewhat more practical purposes are large numbers of goats and a few donkeys. The Maasai cling tightly to their pastoralist ways and refuse (except for a few groups living near Arusha) to take up the practice of agriculture, notwithstanding the gradual limiting of grazing lands and the hardship imposed by the unceasing encroachment of modern society. They are confident that Ngai (Creator God) has given to them all the cattle in the world, and so they have traditionally justified their cattle raids on other ethnic groups. Ngai gave their first ancestor a cattle stick, while he gave to the brother of that ancestor a digging stick and taught him to be a farmer.

The Maasai continue the traditional initiatory rites. They live in polygamous families and hold rituals of reverence for their ancestors. The young boys are sent out to care for the family herd, and when I saw them on those vast plains, I could not help but think of little Joseph, far from home, tending the flocks of his father, Jacob. Even the part about the lions killing him didn't seem at all far-fetched out here in the Serengeti. So, the many other pastoral images from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures took on a whole new meaning for me.

We stood at a respectful distance and gave our attention to the women's songs. After thirty minutes or more of this, four men came up from the cluster of huts about fifty yards away bearing some mysterious cargo and taking it inside the church. Whatever that cargo, we could see that it was covered with large green leaves and through that covering escaped a faint trail of steam. We were asked to follow them inside for the unveiling of the cargo. Missionary Hitzler announced that Bishop Laiser had donated a steer from his own herd

for this occasion.

This was the premier gesture to honor and welcome the "distinguished delegation of scholars from North America" and to thank the people of Munjere for their hospitality in taking us into their village. When the guests had been fed and entertained, then the people of the village would have their feast. The African beef had been cooked since early morning, in the traditional Maasai manner, and would now be served according to custom. The host himself would cut the first pieces from the steaming chunk of meat; first he took one for himself, as though to test its quality, and then he shared with the leader of the guest delegation. Then, we all ate freely with our fingers. When this sharing of the beef was well along, other traditional dishes were brought in, which we received as best we could.

After all were well fed and the calabash of curdled milk had been passed like a common cup, we were invited down to the *engan'g* itself. There, surrounded by a half dozen or so traditional huts, we witnessed a Maasai ritual, the jumping dance of the *morans*, or warriors. The boys, ages fourteen to eighteen, stood in a semi-circle, and opposite them stood the young girls ages nine to eleven. Dressed in the traditional red wrap-around clothing, with long hair hanging in multiple braids and spears in hand, the boys began their chant. It was a unison buzzing sound with a strong pulsating feel. The girls stood facing them and sang their own songs. One by one the warriors stepped out into the center and performed a triple vertical jump. Three times, in the rhythm of the pulsation of their warrior chant, they would leap high into the air, hair braids flying high over their heads, the third time coming down with a great stomp. The young prepubescent girls are supposed to be much impressed

and, who knows, they just might marry one of these warriors in a year or so.

While we witnessed this traditional ritual, Missionary Hitzler was telling me about the traditional sexual behavior of these groups and the enormous threat which is posed by the high incidence of venereal diseases. The problem, according to him, has been considerably worsened by the recent and fast moving AIDS epidemic. He clearly implied that the whole Maasai society could soon be wiped out by this new worldwide plague.

We left the village at the Great Rift escarpment and returned to the Missionary Hitzler residence. We gathered in the lovely garden behind their home, drank *chai* (the Swahili word for tea) and enjoyed the best fresh fruit we'd had since we left home. There, accompanied by the most beautiful wild bird songs I'd ever heard, Bishop Laiser presented us with a lecture, "How the Church Respects Maasai Culture." He offered a refreshingly non-romantic view of the topic. Yes, the church must respect the culture; that is, it must not condemn it, destroy it or manipulate its people. But, neither should the church be *a priori* committed to the value of every aspect of Maasai culture, or any other culture for that matter. The church must try to discern when and how to support and preserve traditional cultural practices and when to take a more prophetic stance, issuing the call for change.

After we had returned to our guest rooms in Arusha and had taken an hour for supper at the Safari Grill, we gathered for two more lectures on Maasai culture. One was delivered by Mary Laiser, the Director of the Women's Division of the Lutheran Church of Tanzania, wife of the Bishop and a rare Maasai woman who had managed to receive the benefits of

higher education. Western educated and fluent in English, she spoke with a passion about the difficult plight of women in Maasai culture. She told how she had to be hidden by teachers and friends already in secondary school to prevent her father from forcibly taking her back to the family *engan'g*. She told of the harsh conditions of childbearing and health care, of the ever present shortage of water and of carrying it for miles and miles.

Just two days later, after attending a Lutheran worship service in Arusha, we piled into our Land Rovers for a three day adventure that provided almost more thrills than a senior academic should pack into that short a time. We drove west from Arusha on the rough roads, leaving behind us billowing clouds of thick red dust. Finally, nostrils smarting from the hot dry dust, we arrived at our destination, the Ngorongoro Crater Lodge. There it was, perched at an altitude of eight thousand feet on the edge of this extinct volcano. From this beautiful vantage point on the crater's rim, we saw the near full moon reflecting mirror-like from the several large lakes three thousand feet below.

On that floor of the crater was every form of East African wildlife, just as we had so often seen it on the PBS specials. The crater has, in recent decades, become a famous wildlife reserve, a playground for photographic safaris for visitors from all over the world, visitors like us. We'd be visiting down there in a couple of days. We watched our breath make little clouds and we shivered just a bit as the high altitude cold seeped through our summer jackets. We hoped out loud that our cottages were equipped with heaters and heavy blankets to keep us snug and warm through the night; and indeed, it was so.

Living was "high" in this modern lodge — in more ways than

one. It was not only five thousand feet above the floor of the crater, but even higher in its catering to western predispositions for luxury. The food and spirits were first class; the crackling fireplace added a warm glow to the whole scene, and smiling black faces served with obvious attempt to please the tourist "master's" every whim. I cannot say I didn't enjoy it, but I was ambivalent about being a tourist on this journey, and I couldn't push away the thought that this was a lifestyle invention of a few wealthy colonial masters. Rare, indeed, is the African who has access to such luxurious indulgence.

Early morning saw us on the red bumpy road to our first destination. It was a place I had read about with fascination for many years, the place where Mary and Louis Leakey had found so many of the evidences of the early hominids. We were headed for Olduvai Gorge, quite commonly regarded in our time as the birthplace of the human race. We visited the little museum, and then drove down the winding road into that geological wonder, created by those same earth forces that created the whole Great Rift fault. There, we stood for a moment before the marker which reads, "The Skull of Australopithecus Bosei (Zinjanthropus) was found here by M. D. Leakey, July 17, 1959." I stood there in silence, and my imagination ran wild, like it always does at places like this. I felt so connected with my human ancestors of all time; I could hear their crying and their laughing; I could see their babies being born and their dead being mourned. I felt a wave of sympathy for their hardships and gratitude for all their cultural accomplishments. I suppose that's an excessively romantic way to respond to such experiences, but, for me, it is a reminder that most all of what we are and have God has given us through those who have

come before us. It has some things in common with our prayers of gratitude for the saints, only it reaches back a little further in time and includes the whole world in its scope.

After a lunch that was elegantly spread out on the hoods of the Land Rovers by the driver/guides, we headed off over the Ngorongoro highlands to find a village called Olbalbal, the home of the "Man of the Serengeti," Tepilit ole Saitoti. In 1972 the National Geographic Society made a television film about this man, a Maasai who managed his way into secondary school in Tanzania and eventually to higher education in the United States. For fifteen years he lived in the US, and then he heard the call of the Ngorongoro highlands and the voices of his people calling him back to be who he really was, a Maasai man. Some years later, the National Geographic Society made another film about Saitoti, this one about his return to Serengeti. That was in the early eighties; and now, in the summer of 1990, we drive across the the Serengeti plains, hoping that the Bishop's connections will pay off again.

We followed a trail, rarely recognizable as an automobile track; we followed it as best we could in roughly (the pun is intended) the right direction. Every thirty minutes or so, we'd spot a young Maasai boy, out on those dry and dusty plains watching over his family's herd. Thanks to our driver, who knew enough of the Maasai language to communicate for necessities, we were able to keep the train of Land Rovers moving in the right direction. Finally, we arrived at Olbalbal, the *engan'g* of Tepilit ole Saitoti.

Wearing a traditional garment and carrying his cattle stick, he came out to receive us. Almost immediately, I noticed his shoes; they were not the traditional sandals, but the black dress shoes of

his days in another culture — albeit covered with dust and cow dung and worn without socks. He led us up to the top of a hill a quarter mile or so from the village. "You see these hills," he said, "the most beautiful hill country in all the world. And here the beef is — ah, delicious; not sweet and soft like in Iowa, but a little bit stronger and much better."

What stands out especially about this encounter with Saitoti was the wrenching dilemma of his life. He said, with more than a touch of pathos in his voice, "I am a western person, like you. I lived in the West for fifteen years and earned a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree. I know how to go out to fancy nightclubs, and I know how to take hot showers and sleep between linen sheets. I know all that — but here I am, wearing these poor old rags and trying sleep on animal skins." On it went, his talk about his personal dilemma and that of his people, as modern and national developments encroach upon and multiply their hardships. Where are these changes leading?

We sat on the ground at the top of that hill, under a giant baobab tree, carefully positioned between cow pies, hanging on every word that came out of the mouth of this sage from two cultures. The pain of the Maasai just wouldn't go away after that; it became paradigmatic of the more general dilemma of African peoples as they have moved from their ethnic past into a future way of life they can still scarcely imagine. He walked us through his *engan'g* to see the huts of his first and second wives and all the other people of his extended family. Then he took us to his father's *engan'g* a hundred yards away. It may look romantic in the big coffee table picture book (*Maasai*, photographs by Carol Beckwith, text by Tepilit ole Saitoti, Harry Abrams Publishers, New York, 1980), but somehow it wasn't

romantic that day. I saw children with faces and bodies covered with a solid layer of flies, eyes swollen and sore, crying in their mothers' arms. I saw people holding out their hands for money, because even the Maasai can no longer live apart from the money economy of the nation. Some of the women called after us as we walked back to our Land Rovers, and Saitoti explained, "They want to know if anyone can give them some aspirin. The little girl has terrible headaches, and we have no medicine." My fascination for Maasai culture is all the greater, but, somehow, it lost its romantic edge that day.

The next day we did the regular tourist thing, taking a half-day trip down into the Ngorongoro Crater. As a photographic safari, it was a total success. We saw them all — lions, elephants, giraffes, wildebeasts and zebras by the thousands and all the rest as well. But, that you can always see on public television specials.

Before returning to our base at the guest house of the Arusha Diocese, we visited the village of Bashay. Here was a village model of *ujamaa*, the special brand of socialism which was the hallmark of the leadership of Julius Nyerere since the time of independence. It meant that people would band together in somewhat compact villages to maximize cooperation and efficiency in production, and the government would bring such social services as schools and medical clinics to the people. We talked with an African Christian pastor, a political leader and the doctors who ran a Lutheran health center. Had the ideal of *ujamaa* worked in this village? Yes, it had helped to improve the availability of social services for the people; but no, it had not fulfilled its promise of economic improvement.

In our brief time at Bashay, as on so many other occasions in these several weeks, I found myself

pleased with the social consciousness of the church. It seems that church-operated health clinics and hospitals are able to do a much better job than the ones run by the government. It is not that the government clinics are not there; it is just that most of them are seriously lacking in personnel and have little or no medication to dispense. What little technology they have is likely to be in the back room and out of operation for lack of spare parts. It's the foreign connection, the worldwide link of the church, that makes the difference for the churches' hospitals and clinics. It

was the same way with refugee services and projects for bringing safe water to communities. The Lutheran Church of Tanzania seemed to have both the will and the know-how to do the job well.

Our visit to Bashay ended with the church people serving us a midday meal, one they had been planning for three months. It was a spread that would probably have very few precedents in that village; for after all, the distinguished scholars from North America had come all this way to learn about their village. When we thought we had eaten well from the pots of rice and

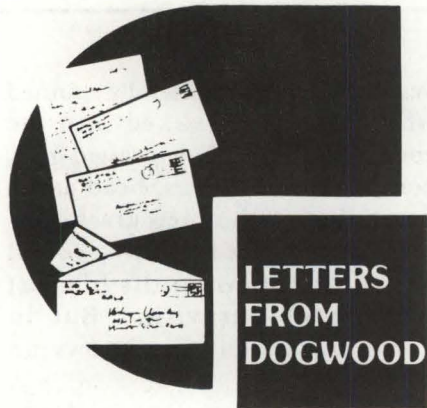
vegetables, we were literally stunned when four men walked into the room carrying a whole roasted goat, complete with hooves, head and a handful of fresh green grass in its mouth. This is now the second animal that gave up its life just because of our visit. But in Tanzania, hospitality knows no bounds.

Tomorrow we'll board our chartered bus and motor straight north to Nairobi. The next day we're supposed to fly across the continent to Lagos, where a whole adventure awaits us. □

## The Golden Bow

I sit at McDonald's and write sermons  
Sipping on hot, weak coffee at a table greasy  
And covered with residue from car and truck exhaust.  
Plastic stir sticks help me swirl my artificial  
Sweetener and non-dairy cream to a pleasing color—  
Brownish—in a white M-bossed styrofoam cup.  
Cement-embedded chairs and tables show the wear  
Of a billion Macs sold. Is it because of hunger  
That people come to acquire blood-coagulating  
Nourishment? The minimum wage smile proclaiming  
Come unto me all you who are, and I will give you rest.  
Even the crows, a glossy black-blue, believe the  
Rhetoric of the literate, and fly away to Popeye's  
"Consummatum est."

Clyburn Duder



## Interesting Classics

Charles Vandersee

Dear Editor:

Finally someone has actually said it.

Every time I see the "literary canon" attacked or defended, or the "great books" or the "classics of Western civilization," I look for the central issue in the argument, from either side.

It's never there; instead, a surfeit of pieties and grievances: We need a canon because we have to teach and transmit "the best that has been known and said in the world," and the canon tells what that is. Or, we gotta get rid of the canon, because voices "marginalized" or victims of "erasure" have as much right to be heard as the "hegemonic" ones.

The piety/grievance battlefield has called forth artillery from Roger Kimball, Peter Shaw, ProfScam Sykes, and others, volumes fierce and metallic, attacking colleges and universities for subverting the Western heritage and succumbing to "relativism." Standing for the

---

Charles Vandersee, at the University of Virginia, has on his reading list this spring Anne Dudley Bradstreet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Ezra Loomis Pound.

other side might be Barbara Herrnstein Smith, whose book *Contingencies of Value* asks whether people really know what they're talking about when they crave "intrinsic" and "objective" merit in certain "classic" texts. Add Houston Baker and Stanley Fish.

Can any of us bear much more of this? Let me just stop here, and congratulate Marjorie Perloff. This Stanford literary scholar has actually, in print, specified the central issue. She has actually used the word "interesting," in a recent journal article, in her emphatic final sentence. The texts we read and therefore keep alive, and therefore canonize, are those we find interesting!

Perloff was discussing two stories, one by Ernest Hemingway, "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" (1924), and one by Gertrude Stein, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (1922). Her point, in *American Literature* (December 1990), is that each story is told with different ends in mind. Stein, in her unheard-of ratchety way, keeps repeating certain words and phrases, until you're hypnotized, off-guard, mind sort of scraped clean. Hemingway, by contrast, wants to produce a further specimen of the "well-made" tale, doing nothing eccentric with language, mainly wanting the story just to hold together beautifully.

Avoiding scholarly equivoca-

tion, eschewing deconstructive indeterminacy, Perloff sides with Stein. Holding it together, she concludes, "is finally much less interesting than telling it again and again." Hemingway's "classic Modernist ideals" of unity and coherence are not Art's final or most interesting modes of operation.

Well, of course, this is problematic. Perloff knows this; everybody does. No one way of telling a story is automatically more "interesting" than another. But a long-abandoned criterion has actually been resurrected: Let's evaluate by asking whether this story, and its method, actually interests us! In doing this, admit that once every journeyman writer knows how to tell a "well-made" story, that standard achievement may well "interest" us less.

I'll confess that what's interesting has been my own chief criterion for years, deciding what to teach, in a department mercifully large, expectant, willing to entertain interesting literary strangers. And doesn't my personal prejudice happen to coincide with what we're always talking about when we talk about keeping a work in a "canon," or expelling it, or replacing it? Whether it's the Ancrene Riwe or the latest enigmatic Language Poetry spread over the pages of *Sulfur*, *Temblor*, or *Paper Air*. Won't it survive only if enough intelligent people get interested in it?

What might I mean by this word interesting? The temptation is to go on at *Gravity's Rainbow* length, but let's hear John Updike. Recently reviewing a biography of Theodore Dreiser, he found himself admiring this synactically uncouth philanderer, constructor of "novels that in their crude honesty kept offending those to whom the social contract and its repressions were sacred." (*The New Yorker*, Jan. 14)

What interests Updike, and Dreiser's other readers then and now, is Dreiser's acute avoidance of posturing. Sister Carrie, who runs off with a married man and ruins his life, rises in the world and becomes a New York stage celebrity. Vice is rewarded, not uncommon in life. Most intelligent readers find this crude honesty immensely interesting. Other readers find interesting only the boldness of writers who idealize—who lift up our street-prone minds into rooms with Bibles and with citizens fully-clad, pure in heart.

I therefore attempt no rules or doctrines about what's "interesting," except to assert one thing: even Shakespeare has no hope of permanence if people, inside classrooms and out, do not find him interesting. A moving passage in Eugene O'Neill's deservedly much-revived *Long Day's Journey Into Night* addresses the Shakespeare question. Old James Tyrone in that play is based on James O'Neill, once the greatest American actor of his day. Tyrone, starved immigrant son, machinist, never schooled, late in life tells his spoiled son:

I studied Shakespeare as you'd study the Bible. I educated myself. I got rid of an Irish brogue you could cut with a knife. I loved Shakespeare. I would have acted in any of his plays for nothing, for the joy of being alive in his great poetry.

Because other people feel that way, Shakespeare and Shakespeare festivals will survive. However, Tyrone's son Edmund is interested in Nietzsche, Ibsen, Marx, and Shaw—and genuinely so, it seems. Not an affectation. A cold moment on the prairie occurs in Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* as the rich but unschooled rancher, Alexandra, thinks with admiration of her younger brother. He has gone to the university, while her stodgy older brothers had not. "All his interests they treated as affectations." There is no explaining the genuine interests people have, and no accounting for the fervor of their pursuit.

It's at a university that people sometimes acquire these interests, and indeed some texts survive only in the oxygen tent of academia. That kind of life support is essential in the face of the difficulty and recalcitrance of certain texts. My sister, not the literary one in the family, read *Crime and Punishment* before I did, when we were both in college, and let on that it was pretty good. Older than she, I took the book away from her and actually still have it, the old Bantam paperback, Constance Garnett's translation, fourth printing. I agreed with her; it was terrific. It will survive outside of academia. Some of Faulkner will too, but will much of Proust and Melville? Thomas Pynchon yes, in the realm of behemoth novels, but William Gaddis? *Paradise Lost*? *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

So of course it matters what teachers choose to teach. They simply have to assign and discuss some things that students will not delve into on their own. And civilization will not collapse if you pretty much trust English professors to teach what interests them. Most of us are actually human, not given to affectations. Like other intelligent

people (even some students), we are unable, on literary grounds, to "do" much with trivia, narrow piety, screamie politics, unrelieved scum, fatuous journalese, formula writing, tales told by flat-earth promoters, verses launched by the likes of Adam Smith or Betty Crocker.

If English professors on occasion insert into the reading list a Stephen King or Dashiell Hammett, you can generally assume they want to do some serious pedagogy: Why isn't this book a "classic"? What do we think we're talking about when we say something is or isn't "worth" serious attention?

Even so, isn't there the danger that students of the present generation will be deprived of Hemingway, because teachers, tired of beautiful form and style, are now shoving the ample Miss Stein down unready throats? Seekers of the perverse will flock to this force-feeding scenario, but the truth about what's "interesting" is that Hemingway has a little too much going for him to sacrifice. His totality of merits constitutes an irresistible power. For Perloff's nonce purpose he seems stuffy, beautiful form and style as a sort of affectation, but I don't read her as disputing his place in literary history and the curriculum.

The seekers of the perverse remain on the prowl, however, gnashing over who is being asked to devour what. Because they have lately been so fierce, in books and magazine pieces, newspaper columns and even TV, perhaps a brief caveat is called for. Why might you not want to believe quite everything you hear, from the surly Right?

Chiefly because such gadflies and their godfather Allan Bloom have adopted a clever tactic: charging academia with their own mischief, which is to say "politiciz-

ing" the university. The surly Right has brought into and against the university the power ploys of fear, stasis, and arrogance.

Fear is now being demanded of any of us who establish courses and reading lists. We're sternly told to be afraid of ourselves. It seems we're no longer capable of making just and honorable decisions about what's interesting. Have we overdone it—too much reading and study in our lives, resulting in brain rot? Give in to that fear—incipient in anyone honest—that you're losing your modest talent for reading and teaching.

Stasis means wait for "posterity" to render its "verdict," as if writers are by definition an indicted species. No one "today" knows what works of "permanent value" will have survived Time's winnowing. Let's pretend that nothing interesting is being produced today—that novelists and poets and playwrights should wait for "classroom adoption" until they're senior citizens.

Also, while keeping the reading list as it was in the days of Our Miss Brooks, let's have no digging up of "forgotten" makers of things to read. Especially female, vanquished, or hued. By perverse and contradictory logic, if they were buried in their own time, there's no reason for us, their posterity, to give them a fresh look. And be sure to require no readings that might be "controversial," since it's either too late or too early, these years of 18 to 22, for American college students to form judgments of their own.

Arrogance among the surly Right means that one of those occasional imperial moments is upon us,

when a few individuals angry and culturally resentful confuse their sweat of anxiety with the oil of kingly anointment. They and only they—pontificating columnists, religious lobbyists, federal panders—know what texts are culturally meritorious, thank you. They've found that the louder and more often they whine, the more the media think something new and terrible is happening.

The arrogators exploit the natural and inevitable (even comic) dissonance between media and academia. The premise of academia is that it takes time and calm paragraphs to think, while the premise of the popular media is that instant comment, with exclamation points, represents reality. So when gadflies claim—by scurrilous anecdote and hyperbole—to discover the academy festering, those flies get lots of column inches but insufficient critique.

Of these three political strategies, the strategy of fear embraces all. Be afraid of your own expertise, teachers are advised. Learn fear of posterity, of controversy, of the media. Get afraid that the public is mobilizing to smash anyone appearing indictable or even accessorial. Just capitulate.

I speak not having an ox being gored but as an observer of this aggressive politicizing. Politics can be an entertainment, but teachers and scholars determined, as they should be, to take works interesting—in the largest and most significant senses—and bring them before students, are justified in finding politics of the surly Right more and more of an invasion.

You might want to follow up, and a summary and critique, in an obscure magazine, helpfully amplifies. I haven't drawn on him here, but Donald Lazere, in *Profession 89*, a publication of the Modern Language Association, does something as fresh and startlingly sensible as Marjorie Perloff does. Finding writers like Jonathan Yardley (*Washington Post*), David Brooks (*Wall Street Journal*), and James Atlas (*New York Times Magazine*) tarring or indicting certain universities and teachers of literature, Lazere actually investigated. On what grounds, this bashing?

He pursued by letter and phone the sources cited by these flies, and got after the flies themselves, inquiring, closing in. The result is his indictment of the indicters, for "lurid accusations calculated to maximize publicity; evaluating expressions of the opposing side with malice aforethought, deliberately putting the worst light on every statement and refusing to acknowledge any valid points; . . . uncritically accepting secondhand accounts from sources biased toward one's own side," and so on.

What he found sure sounds like politics, a little deeper in the gutter than usual, perhaps almost interesting enough to draw into the curriculum itself, on the reasonable ground that Shakespeare, Faulkner, and Stein are writing in and of a real world and not beyond it.

From Dogwood, faithfully yours,  
C.V.



THE  
NATION

## Times to Try the Soul

Renu Juneja

In the Indian epic *The Mahabharatha*, not merely a literary work of art but preeminently a source of religious precepts and moral values, the forces of good are about to undertake a war with the evil empire. And yet even here good and evil, right and wrong, are not so easily demarcated. Prince Arjuna, the supreme warrior without whom the army of good would be crippled, is reluctant to take up arms even though as a member of the warrior class to fight for good is his *dharma*, his moral and religious obligation. The enemy are his brothers (He is indeed fighting his uncle and cousins). To what end is this war being fought? Is it worth it? He is persuaded to join the battle by Lord Krishna, god incarnate. Detach yourself from emotion, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, and follow the path of virtue disinterestedly. Difficult choices cannot be escaped, nor can one allow oneself to be paralyzed into inaction, into an abdication of duty, when confronted by competing goods.

---

Renu Juneja is a regular contributor to *The Nation* column. A member of the VU Department of English since 1978, her professional interests in English Renaissance theatre have shifted to greater concern with colonial literatures, particularly in the Caribbean.

America today is the reluctant warrior, but we have no god right here amidst us, no set of clearly established and universally held beliefs, to help resolve our ethical dilemma. President Bush, in his address to the nation on the night of the opening of hostilities, quoted Thomas Paine: "These are the times that try men's souls." They are indeed, but perhaps not quite in the way, or only in the way, President Bush used the words. He was referring to the pain and suffering associated with the blood and carnage of war, the loss of lives of not only our own sons and daughters but also of ordinary Iraqis whom we have no reason to wish ill. But the nation's soul is also being tried because we are uncertain about the good of this war. Most Americans have, for the moment, endorsed the war, but there has been enough questioning and protest to suggest that Americans have swallowed hard and made a decision not willingly but almost as if trapped by uncontrollable events, not choosing the greater good but resigning themselves to the lesser evil in a slate of bad choices.

Is it because Americans have become squeamish about war in general, no longer possessing, as Saddam Hussein implies, the nerve to go to war? Or is our squeamishness, shaped by memories of Vietnam, reserved for a particular kind of war? As a recent immigrant, I have no direct memories of the agony of Vietnam, a condition I

share with my students. With them I have begun to explore our responses to war, this war, all wars. As it happens, in my various classes I am teaching *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, and Thomas More's *Utopia* and these works have provided a context for our self-probings. Few of us, I find, are genuine pacifists believing that the use of force in any situation would be immoral. Yet, very few of us are willing to subscribe fully to any Hobbesian conception of human nature as inherently aggressive or to its Freudian versions of the dark, irrational psyche never fully contained by the forces of civilization. Freud had suggested in a 1932 letter to Einstein prompted by the League of Nations International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation that personal aggression and war as a social manifestation were outcomes of the same drives. (Freud did concede that cultural development could bring us to the point where war is eradicated.) Hobbes' state of nature postulates an inherent competitiveness in humans which would keep them in perpetual conflict but for the coercive force of the laws of a civil state. While humans have moved out of this "natural" state of warfare, we could perceive the nation states themselves as existing in a Hobbesian state of nature in relationship to each other. Both views would suggest that we resign ourselves (in lieu of a superpower to police the world) to war as a permanent and



frequently recurring feature of human existence. In which case one deals with war as it erupts rather than agonizing about its rightness and wrongness.

As we try to come to terms with this war, as we ponder over the religious, economic, cultural causes for violent conflicts, we begin to see that for us such conflicts, particularly those between sovereign states, are not fuelled, for the most part, by instincts or psychological drives. There may or may not be a "natural" inclination to rely on force in order to secure what we desire, but at least in the case of war we do not succumb to this "natural" instinct to use force without careful pondering about the consequences. For that matter, we see peaceful cooperation as also a natural form of behavior. This is not to deny that war can become a psychological necessity for a nation. To some measure, this war had become a psychological necessity not only for a president who is trying to live down his wimpish image or live up to the machismo of his football and navy career but also for many American people who see themselves taunted by a bully, chickening out in a game of chicken, and losing their pride in standing tall. Certainly, war must have become a psychological necessity for Saddam Hussein whatever else its "objective" reasons. The rhetoric of the Great Satan indicates that for Saddam Hussein and for many other Arabs (even those like the Palestinians for whom we feel such sympathy) America has become a scapegoat to cover, perhaps deny, internal frustrations and national and ethnic histories in which they have been agents as well as victims.

Nevertheless, my students and I ask ourselves, specially as we read *Beowulf*, is not war, the kind of war we are fighting, as much a learned behavior as an instinctive one? So much of our heritage that I teach and my students learn valorizes war

or rather valorizes the virtues that are honed in war. It is easy to condemn popular fare on TV, from *He Man* cartoons to he-man detective shows, for fueling our inclinations for violence, but so many of the classics of the Western tradition I teach in my courses depict war as the appropriate arena for testing courage, manhood, human skill and intellect, and even our very humanity. If the humanity of the heroes and heroines of my texts were tested by the ethics of *ahimsa* (non-violence) would we conceive of courage and manhood and humanity differently? So much of human behavior is learned rather than instinctive; that is one of the ways we differ from animals with whom so much behavior is instinctive. Why should we assume that the animal part of us overrides the human part or that the aggressiveness of chimpanzee is the behavioral model within which we remain trapped?

In his essay, "The Role of Expectancy," Gordon Allport writes "While some serious and basic conflicts of interest may be unavoidable, warlike solutions spring always from warlike expectancies and preparations" (187). Have we been thrust into this war by a President trapped by his rhetoric of war, a rhetoric, for instance which personalizes the war and the enemy so that it is difficult for the President to step back? Had we not so rapidly landed our army into the Middle Eastern desert, could peaceful solutions have stood a better chance? If we threaten war then we had better fight the war, and if we have to fight let us fight on our own terms. These two months are the best suited for this desert war, so if the hostilities have to begin let them begin now. Were the sanctions indeed not working? And even if they were not working would more time have permitted the development of other than warlike solutions? I have wondered now as before if the pres-

ence of armies in nations, even when only maintained for self-defense, does not eventuate the likelihood of warlike solutions to conflicts.

After the success of the nonviolent struggle to achieve independence we might have assumed that India had internalized the value of *ahimsa* as a tested alternative to violence. Yet, since independence India has been involved in four wars. The one with the Chinese could be termed a genuine self-defense but still one fought over a barren and inaccessible piece of land. Two with Pakistan over Kashmir and the new eruption of violence in Kashmir suggests that wars have not provided and will not provide a resolution. The last war was undertaken to liberate a neighbor where India had actually fuelled the insurgency because the regime being thrown off was India's favorite enemy. The doctrine of non-violence is apparently no curb on a nation with an army.

Gandhi had no nation and no national army at his disposal. He did indeed shape an army out of his nonviolent fighters whose success demanded training and self-discipline comparable to that of the soldier using the weapons of violence. But does nonviolent struggle provide a viable alternative only when the powers in conflict, as with Gandhi and with Dr. King, are people within a state in conflict with the ruling power and not as with us today two sovereign states in conflict? Civil disobedience will work only when a state has been conquered; it will not prevent conquest. Once Iraq had occupied Kuwait, the people of Kuwait, instead of looking for military help, could have practiced civil disobedience. What would be the likelihood of success of such a venture? Do the tactics of going slow and paralyzing the work of governing not demand a fairly large state where the rulers

are indeed dependent on the labor and goodwill of the ruled? What if, as with Kuwait, the workers could be supplanted by vast numbers of Iraqis who have flooded the state?

But, of course, even the most shrewd and pragmatic practitioners of non-violence like Gandhi and King have argued for this alternative to war on moral not utilitarian grounds. Nonviolent struggles are based on the assumption that the good will overcome the evil, where the value system of the oppressor will be transformed by the force of the good. Such a faith assumes that all humans, even those engaged in cruel oppression, have within them this spark of human decency which can ultimately be ignited. Would not such assumptions have been utterly misplaced with the Nazis or with Stalin as they evidently were not with the British and Americans? Are there not some situations where the costs of non-violence are unacceptably high?

The vocabulary of costs takes us away from the realm of arguments made in absolute terms where war is morally abhorrent no matter what the good or goods that were to be obtained by war. I think most Americans think in terms of costs when assessing the worth of war. That is why rallies opposing this war have carried placards like the following: "Is Saddam worth it?" "No blood for oil." In general, Americans accept the paradox that wars can be fought to achieve justice. What they have sought to be persuaded about is whether this war is necessary and whether the war is just.

By what criteria are we persuaded that this is indeed a just war? First we have to be persuaded that it is our war. Why should we have to fight for Kuwait and even Saudi Arabia? Certainly not for the price of oil or perhaps even for the flow of oil. No one really believes that the price or flow of oil would be

radically affected if Saddam Hussein was controlling Kuwaiti oil. We might, however, fear that he could use his control of oil as a tool for blackmail to establish his hegemony over the Arab world. If this were our only fear would we be right in committing ourselves to the evil of war for the fear of a future evil which has not yet taken place?

I think a little more than our so called "vital" interests should be involved if we are to undertake the evil of war. Wars in the past have, of course, been fought and defended as morally justified when undertaken to secure material advantages and needs. In class, when I raised questions about the moral justifiability of such wars during our discussions of More's *Utopia*, my students were perplexed to find that even the Utopians endorsed wars for such reasons. The Utopians "absolutely loathe war"; they see it as "subhuman"; they are "practically the only people on earth who fail to see anything glorious in it" (109). But they will go to war for several reasons: In self-defense; "to repel invaders from friendly territory, or to liberate the victims of dictatorship—which they do in a spirit of humanity, just because they feel sorry for them. However, they give military support to 'friendly powers', not only in defensive wars, but also in attempts to make reprisals for acts of aggression. . . . Their idea of an adequate *causus belli* includes more than robbery by force of arms. They even take stronger action to protect the right of traders who are subjected to legal injustice in foreign countries" (109).

Indeed, the dirty tricks of the CIA which have often embarrassed the more "upright" citizens of this country are quite acceptable to the Utopians as a means of fighting a just war. Utopian secret agents will bribe to kill key individuals, and offer generous take-over bids to overthrow the enemy. They have

calculated costs and have decided that it is unquestionably humane to avoid killing large numbers by using any form of chicanery that will work. If today we are less sanguine about undertaking such wars it is perhaps due less to any deep disapproval of the moral logic followed by Utopians and more due to our awareness that we lack the moral certainty of the Utopians. The rights and wrongs of our world are so much more complicated. Thus, while it is easy enough to condemn the barbarity and cruelty of Saddam Hussein, we are forced to remember that we cheerfully supported this same man in the recent past. In such situations, it is impossible to claim righteous moral indignation. When we hear of protests in favor of Iraq in the Muslim world, we are also forced to acknowledge our ignorance, forced to sift through distortions in perspective, through hostile conceptions and group stereotypes.

Perhaps in a war such as this one there is no clear and just course to take, no way of responding that is entirely right or entirely free of the responsibility of evil. Like the Utopians, we feel compelled to go to the aid of our allies, which is why we rushed to defend Saudi Arabia. Our friends asked for this help, and this obligates us morally. Our response was of course politically pragmatic as well allowing the President to show his mettle and allowing us to establish that we stand by our commitments. But, of course, it is one thing to send troops to defend Saudi Arabia against possible and even likely aggression, quite another to set out to liberate Kuwait by force. We believe that in taking up arms against an aggressor like Saddam Hussein we have moral principle on our side. But the question remains—how far does our moral obligation to intervene extend? Should we be rushing into Lithuania? Do we see ourselves as a

police force patrolling the world? No, not after Vietnam.

But just as there is something morally, and politically, questionable about rushing around imposing our ideals, or interfering in the conduct of sovereign states, there is also something questionable in which we essentially turn our back to the world and say that we don't want to be involved because this does not affect us directly. If my family, my nation were attacked, I would go and fight, but not for those strangers across the world. By this logic, if the Nazis had not moved beyond the borders of the Third Reich, they could have continued to murder the Jews. If Saddam Hussein had marched into Kuwait and intended to occupy it to exploit it, but we could be sure that he would do so without continual violence, terrorism, and enslavement, perhaps then we could say that the Kuwaitis have a right to resist but it would not be wrong for us to help in appeasing Iraq. But to turn away as things stand may well be a failure to resist evil.

One of the strongest arguments I have heard in favor of this war comes from those who argue that nothing will stop Hussein, so that if we don't fight him now we will have to fight him later at far greater costs. And these costs would include not just human life but also environmental damage should Hussein secure capacity for nuclear arms. There would be costs as well in terms of the tenuous geo-political order because if Hussein, seeing himself as a liberator of the Arab world, had attacked Israel without our presence in the the region to contain Israel and to keep the present alliances intact, the dangers of escalating warfare would also be far greater. Hence it is that some experts use the notions of preemptive and surgical strikes. As the Utopians well understood, cost remains an important factor in such

moral decisions. We are always faced with issues of proportionality when weighing justice, at least in the gray, complicated moral realm of ordinary human beings if not in the morally clearer world of saints. When someone says that the results of war will always be worse than refusal to go to war, that is still the language of costs and not of idealism.

Of course, how we weigh consequences is also not entirely clear. It is seldom a matter of simply measuring the cost in terms of human lives and human suffering. Greater numbers of lives were perhaps lost in the second World War than if the Third Reich had been allowed to go its own way. One of the necessary conditions of initiating a just war according to the just war theorists is proportionality: that the war itself not produce more evil than the good it achieves. It is also a condition for waging war— that is, we do not engage in a conflict, even one not initiated by us, if the expected results will outweigh the good, however important this particular good. The problem today is that modern technology of war has made such calculations difficult if not impossible. When the Utopians went to war they too would have had to consider the possible harm to non-combatants. And they could, perhaps, have satisfied themselves with the so-called notion of double effect which postulates that the death of innocents is excusable if this is not the direct and intended effect of the war. It is merely an unfortunate side effect. But with the current technology for nuclear warfare and our capacity to produce total holocaust, the notion of double effect becomes a somewhat academic and moot question. Indeed, theorists like Michael Walzer have argued that with the possibility of war escalating to include nuclear annihilation we are faced with a "monstrous immorality

. . . an immorality we can never hope to square with our understanding of justice in a war" (282). In the case of the present war, even if we can be certain that we will avoid such an escalation we are still left with a great uncertainty about the consequences so that some may legitimately argue that the only just action would be to avoid war.

I know that many Americans have supported this war in the faith, or at least the hope, that this will be a quick war and that if the war were to drag itself out, the conflict escalating with time rather than diminishing like Vietnam, our opinion polls would begin to reflect unease with and disapproval of the war. Merleau-Ponty argues in *Humanism and Terror*, that when we engage in actions which involve doing something wrong or evil in order to do good, our guilt often depends on the success or failure of the action. We have to begin with (as in the case of this war) such a high degree of uncertainty about results of our actions; in such cases we can live with the wrong done without guilt if the outcome is good. To the pacifist convinced about the wrongness of all war, this is faulty thinking. But for the majority of the American people, success or failure will determine what they feel about the war. For all their moral rhetoric, Americans on the whole remain pragmatists at heart. They would be quite willing to accept Hamlet's paradoxical formulation to his mother when he lashes out at her for marrying Claudius: I am being cruel to be kind. (Walzer cites this familiar defense in his chapter on "Dirty Hands," 72.)

Nevertheless, we Americans must consider the possibility that even if we win this war, and quickly, so that the criterion of proportionality is satisfied, we might still not be able to account our winning a success. When using *Utopia* to initiate a discussion of our war, I had

asked my students if they believed that wiping out Saddam Hussein would be an entirely successful resolution to the Middle East conflict. The immediate context for this question was our discussion of More's critique of capital punishment for the crime of thieving. Thomas More mounts both a moral and a pragmatic argument against the use of capital punishment: killing is immoral and it is an ineffective deterrent against this crime. More's analysis of why capital punishment is an ineffective deterrent has him exploring the social and political causes of thieving. Crime is not caused by the sinful and evil nature of humans but by specific social causes which the solution does not address. My students were quick to apply the analogy to the present war. To single out Saddam Hussein as the great evil, to root the problem entirely in his character, is to fail to undertake a systemic analysis of the situation. For Saddam Hussein the raising of the Palestinian question may merely have been a ploy, but the Palestinian question remains, as do other causes of present Arab dissatisfaction.

Given Saddam Hussein's act of aggression, initiation of war may still have been a necessary action. To be entirely convinced of the necessity of the war we must, however, be entirely sure that war was indeed the last resort. Some of us are worried that we have allowed ourselves to be

cornered into a war by allowing ourselves to be trapped by a sequence of threats and counterthreats, by not allowing ourselves to fully explore diplomatic initiatives and peaceful solutions. Yes, there was a scurrying of diplomats to and fro but always within too tense and vitiated an atmosphere to promise success. In a very western way, we seemed to feel that time was escaping us, that we had to set quick deadlines to achieve our goals—as if we must settle for a quick war if we could not achieve a quick peace. But if history teaches us anything, it is that what looms as an urgent and gargantuan threat today may well appear as unimportant from the longitudinal perspective.

But if we were and are entirely convinced that this menace had to be halted quickly before it spread, if the medicinal metaphors of surgical strikes are indeed appropriate, then, I think, for all our horror of war, we should get on with the business, much like St. Augustine's soldier who understood both that his war was just and that killing even in a just war is a terrible thing to do. Just because moral discriminations are difficult we should not abandon the act of moral discrimination. Just because choice seems so difficult in this immensely complicated modern world, we should not abandon choice. Let us, Hamlet-like, admit our guilt in being cruel and live with it. But let us not, like Hamlet, worry

so endlessly about whether to act or not to act that we cause as much if not more carnage by our inability to act. Let me end by quoting Michael Walzer once again: "In our myths and vision, the end of war is also the end of secular society. Those of us trapped within that history, who see no end to it, have no choice but to fight on, defending the values to which we are committed, unless or until some alternative means of defense can be found" (329). Could nonviolent resistance have been that alternative means in this instance? I don't think so. Could there have been less warlike solutions? Perhaps. There seems to be no easy, certain choice here for many of us. Since the nation has made a choice, let us pray for a successful resolution. □

#### Works Cited

- Merleau-Ponty. *Humanism and Terror*. Trans. John O'Neill. Boston, 1971.
- Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," *War and Moral Responsibility*. Eds. Marshall Cohen, Thomas Nagel, and Thomas Scanlon. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974.



## American Dreams

Edward Byrne

*Almost all serious stories in the world are stories of a failure with a death in it. But there is more lost paradise in them than defeat. To me that's the central theme in Western culture, the lost paradise.*

—Orson Welles

*Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?  
Our nation turns its lonely eyes to you.*

—from "Mrs. Robinson"

—Simon and Garfunkel

As the first few months of 1991 begin to unfold and the disheartening events of the new year start to accumulate like so many shadowy clouds across a threatening sky, one searches for safe haven, wherever it may be found, in an attempt to provide a barrier against the anxiety of the moment. Some newspaper columnists have noted the greater attendance recorded at churches

---

Edward Byrne, who teaches in the Department of English at VU, writes regularly for *The Cresset* on film. He regularly publishes poetry in a variety of journals.

and synagogues across the country as evidence of Americans' increased interest in religion. Other social commentators have remarked upon the newly found closeness displayed by members of many communities whose ties to one another have been symbolized by the yellow ribbons encircling a large number of the nation's trees, especially in those towns or cities where military bases are located and the families of service personnel assigned overseas duties still live. In addition, various film critics have published articles crediting the troubling times for the surprising success of "escapist films" such as *Pretty Woman*, *Ghost*, or *Home Alone*. However, one might discover some sense of security in another sort of diversion.

Annually, as Hollywood begins its countdown of days to the Academy Awards ceremonies, film enthusiasts avert their attention from the troubling concerns of the moment to take a nostalgic look at movies and artists of the past that have earned the respect of Oscar, or to reconsider films and filmmakers that have been spurned by Oscar. This year, just such a backward glance seems more appropriate than ever, as the film industry will mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of *Citizen Kane*, directed by Orson Welles.

No film in cinema history has received as much praise and adulation as *Citizen Kane*. Throughout the decades since its opening in July of 1941, *Citizen Kane* has been revered by critics, scholars, and film buffs as the best film ever made. More has been written about this movie—its script, its cast, its production problems, its historical significance, its social commentary, its critical reception, and, of course, its director—than about any other work since the invention of celluloid film. *Citizen Kane* is the dominant example used to illustrate filmmaking at its finest in courses of film appreciation, film criticism, or film

production. Even literature anthologies published for use in college English courses, such as Oxford University Press's *Elements of Literature*, include *Citizen Kane* alongside the other works of great literature that have helped define our culture. An international poll of more than 120 film critics conducted every decade by Sight & Sound, the official film journal of the British Film Institute, continually ranks *Citizen Kane* as the greatest film ever made. In fact, the survey for the 1980s indicated *Citizen Kane's* lead position was stronger than ever and the status of Orson Welles more solid, as he received more votes than any other as the greatest director in cinema history.

Nevertheless, as the 1991 Academy Awards draw near, one is reminded of the controversial treatment *Citizen Kane* and its director received at the Oscar ceremonies honoring the films of 1941. *Citizen Kane* had been universally praised by critics like John O'Hara, Gilbert Seldes, and Archer Winsten, as a truly great landmark film—in the words of *Time* magazine, "the most sensational product of the U.S. movie industry." Only those newspapers and magazines owned by William Randolph Hearst, on whom Kane's character is transparently based, declined to join the parade offering acclaim. Earlier, Hearst had attempted to buy the negatives of the film's master copy, offering to meet any price, in order to destroy the picture. In addition, the premiere of *Citizen Kane*, originally scheduled for Valentine's Day of 1941, had to be cancelled because Hearst had threatened the film distributors and theatres with retribution. Only after a lawsuit brought by Hearst against RKO failed did the studio release the film for public showings—although the studio did limit the film's screenings.

*Citizen Kane* received nine Academy Awards nominations (Best Picture, Director, Actor, Screenwriter,

Editor, Cinematographer, Decorator, Score, Sound), but was honored only for its screenplay. As many publications have demonstrated throughout the last five decades, most prominently *The Citizen Kane Book* by Pauline Kael, *Oscar Dearest* by Peter H. Brown and Jim Pinkston, and *Marion Davies* by Laurence Guiles, Orson Welles and his film were victimized by the social politics of the time. As Brown and Pinkston point out in their book, "Welles's Oscar K.O. was a political defeat, not an artistic one, and that knock-out was sealed the minute Hollywood realized that the doomed, alcoholic mistress in *Citizen Kane* was meant to be Marion Davies," Hearst's mistress and a mainstay of the Hollywood social scene. The film community, in denying Welles the recognition he deserved, succumbed to pressures to hold to a politically expedient line rather than to honor the film on the basis of its artistic merit. As columnist Hedda Hopper declared at the time, the Academy was willing to honor "almost any other film except *Citizen Kane*."

The atmosphere at the Academy Awards was so filled with rancor that each time a nomination for *Citizen Kane* was announced, boos and hisses could be heard throughout the auditorium. Even the awarding of an Oscar for the screenplay, which Welles was forced to share with co-writer Herman J. Mankiewicz, was a slap in the face for Orson Welles, since many in the community considered Welles's credit for the scriptwriting as undeserved and saw this as an opportunity to display support for Mankiewicz over Welles.

At the time of the Academy Awards, Welles already was preparing two new films for RKO, *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *It's All True*. However, the studio, caving in to the political pressures brought about by the Hollywood community,

withdrew its support of Welles's artistic freedom. While Welles was out of the country, RKO cut forty minutes from *The Magnificent Ambersons* and attached an inferior ending to the film previous to its release. Welles would later declare: "They let the studio janitor cut *The Magnificent Ambersons* in my absence." (Nevertheless, many critics still believe *The Magnificent Ambersons*, even with the poor editing by the studio, to be as accomplished as *Citizen Kane*.) Furious at the studio's interference, Welles turned his back on Hollywood rather than compromise his artistic vision. As an indication of his disdain for the studio system and the members of the film community, Welles remarked: "Hollywood is a golden suburb, perfect for golfers, gardeners, mediocre men, and complacent starlets." The second film, *It's All True*, rumored to be a remarkable film as well, was never released by RKO. Stored in the studio vaults for years, the only print of the film was eventually destroyed.

When Welles exiled himself from Hollywood to Europe in order to preserve his artistic integrity, he lost the financial backing needed to create films. Unlike other artists who simply need a paint brush, or a pen, or a pair of ballet slippers, or a musical instrument, a filmmaker cannot produce without substantial funding, which—in today's world—is measured in millions of dollars. Ironically, Welles's life imitated his art so closely that many fans of film began to confuse Welles with Kane, somehow blending the fates of these two tragic heroes. Like Kane, Welles represented the man who had spent his early years achieving the success that exemplifies the American Dream, a contemporary version of paradise, only to spend his later life confronting his loss of paradise and its accompanying pain.

In the same year that *Citizen Kane* was released, two other events,

one in the summer and the other in the winter, occurred which, oddly enough, might be connected with the reminiscence of Welles's triumph and fall. In the summer of 1941, the New York Yankees' Joe DiMaggio strung together his record streak of batting safely in 56 consecutive games. Recently, *New York Times* sports columnist Dave Anderson declared that DiMaggio's feat represented "baseball's most majestic record" and that it was "held by its most majestic personality." In the same manner that Anderson identifies DiMaggio with 1941 in the world of sports, film critics identify Welles and *Citizen Kane* with 1941 in the world of cinema. However, the baseball community will celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Yankee Clipper's accomplishments over and over this summer with a sense of pride and honor, since Joe DiMaggio has remained a cherished figure throughout the decades, embraced by the sport to which he contributed so much. At the same time, one wonders what amount of guilt and sadness instead will be felt by those members of the film community, particularly the older figures of the Hollywood establishment, who belatedly will celebrate *Citizen Kane* and Orson Welles this year.

Perhaps, some might argue, a better baseball comparison to Welles would be Pete Rose, who holds the National League record for batting safely in consecutive games and who has just been banned from consideration for Cooperstown's Hall of Fame. Like Welles, Rose had attained the American Dream and then lost it, finally exiled by the ruling establishments of his profession; however, Rose's exile has occurred after the achievements of a full and enriching career. Film critics will always wonder what great works Welles might have produced had the politics of Hollywood not turned against him in mid-career.

To extend the baseball metaphor one step further, Welles, therefore, could be compared to Shoeless Joe Jackson of the 1919 Chicago White Sox, the young phenom among the players banned from baseball for gambling on the World Series, ironically immortalized in filmgoers' minds by a recent movie, *Field of Dreams*.

The other event that also characterizes 1941 is the December 7th Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which brought the United States into a war its people had tried throughout the year to ignore—perhaps praying it would just go away. Many historians have written of the oppressive presence of the news from the European warfront on the daily lives of Americans in 1941. Most citizens were fearful of their nation's imminent entry into the conflict, but all were hoping there would be some way to avoid joining the battle. In the summer of 1941, Joe DiMaggio's extended batting streak offered Americans something to follow from day to day in their newspapers other than the battle victories or losses in Europe and the spreading threat of Hitler's forces. In contrast, *Citizen Kane* reminded Americans of the dangers represented by power and greed. DiMaggio extended more than just his batting streak each sunny summer afternoon that he collected a base hit. Each day his streak dominated the idle conversations of Americans, Joltin' Joe also extended the nation's sense of innocence and trust in the security offered by the American Dream, distracting its citizens from the storm approaching from overseas. On the other hand, *Citizen Kane*

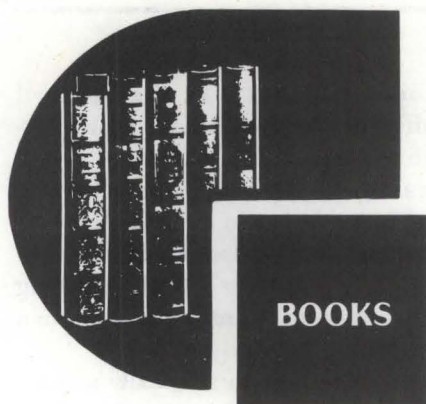
depicted the end of innocence and the corruption of the American Dream. A pair of early working titles originally considered for the film were *American* and *John Citizen, U.S.A.* Clearly, Welles wanted the film to be seen as a metaphor for the dark direction toward which America was moving.

On that "Day of Infamy" in December of 1941, Americans were forced to face the dangerous elements lurking beyond their borders and an age of innocence came to a close. In the decades ahead the distance from that innocent era grew larger, replaced by a time filled with terrible experiences: the atomic bomb, the McCarthy years, the violent civil rights struggle, the assassinations of the sixties, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the drug epidemic, AIDS, materialism, corrupt evangelists, insider trading on Wall Street, the savings and loans scandal, etc. Today, Joe DiMaggio stands almost as a solitary symbol of the American Dream in the manner it existed just before everything began to unravel. At the age of 76, DiMaggio's confident, self-assured dignity appears at old-timer games like a beacon shining brightly amidst turbulent waters. In contrast, Charles Foster Kane foreshadowed the many public figures, politicians and personalities, who would be undone by their corruption of the American Dream in the latter half of the twentieth century, and Orson Welles became one of the first victims of the new age.

In a scene from *Citizen Kane*, a magnificently evocative moment occurs when Kane's assistant, Bernstein, played by Everett Sloane, recalls: "One day, back in 1896, I was

crossing over to Jersey, and as we pulled out, there was another ferry pulling in, and on it was a girl waiting to get off. A white dress she had on. She was carrying a white parasol. I only saw her for one second. She didn't see me at all, but I'll bet a month hasn't gone by since, that I haven't thought of that girl." Metaphorically, the girl in the white dress, like Joe DiMaggio, might represent an unattainable innocence remembered regularly only in daydreams, an emblem of the simpler, romantic past, the lost paradise which can never be recaptured.

Today, a half century later, as the country finds itself at war again, one hopes that the symmetry, symmetry suggested by the nation's unified response to the war, will signal a conclusion to an era of torment and turmoil. Perhaps it may be only wishful thinking, an attempt to regain the lost paradise, but one can hope that as the earlier war initiated an era which in its darkest moments during the sixties and seventies eventually tore the nation apart to a degree only surpassed by the Civil War era, this war will begin to move the nation in a different direction. As community members pull closer to one another, as larger congregations pray together with a greater voice, as flags and ribbons symbolize a sense of solidarity among the citizenry, it would be pleasant to think this unity might continue into a new age—a period in which, once again, characters like Charles Foster Kane are the exception and role models like Joe DiMaggio are the rule.



Trutz Rendtorff. *Ethics*. Vol. I. *Basic Elements and Methodology in an Ethical Theology*. Fortress Press, 1986. 193 pages. \$19.95. Vol. II. *Applications of an Ethical Theology*. Fortress Press, 1989. 223 pages. \$24.95.

What Trutz Rendtorff has achieved in these two short volumes can be measured by the fact that they originally appeared in an eighteen volume series designed to introduce aspiring pastors and teachers of religion to the study of theology. That they are now offered to the general English speaking audience testifies that the author has written not merely a textbook, but a work which sets out to recast the image of the theological study of ethics. The original purpose of these volumes, however, should forewarn the prospective reader against selecting them for an evening of leisurely reading.

Rendtorff marks his break with a traditional way of doing theological ethics by subtitling both volumes

---

□ Dale Lasky is a member of the VU Department of Theology, where his special interests are in contemporary ethics, and the intersection of religion and technology.

□ John D. Wolf, a retired minister of the United Methodist Church, lives in Valparaiso, Indiana, and writes frequently on peace and justice issues.

as a work in "ethical theology." Ethics is not to be derived from dogmatics or incorporated into a systematic theology, but can stand by itself as a way of doing theology. Rendtorff's thesis is that ethics itself is an intensified form of theology because vital ethical questions compel us to confront the question of the basis and goal of human life most directly. Ethics itself requires theology, and thus *ethics* and *theology* can be employed as synonymous terms as far as their subject matter is concerned. The American reader will recognize how closely Rendtorff's approach resembles that of James Gustafson in his two volume work on theocentric ethics. In the preface to the American edition, Rendtorff notes that his work and that of Gustafson were originally published at almost the same time. Whereas Gustafson's work was "a Reformed theology, of sorts," Rendtorff characterizes his as "a Lutheran theology, of sorts."

As might be anticipated, doing ethical theology requires an engagement with the human sciences. Rendtorff's continuing dialogue with these sources draws him beyond German scholarship into a continuing interchange with American, British and Scandinavian authors. The academic grapevine attributes to Rendtorff the comment that no German student should be allowed to complete graduate studies in theological ethics without spending at least one year studying in the United States. Unfortunately the copiously cited references for engaging in this dialogue are almost exclusively in German.

Rendtorff acknowledges that doing ethical theology in contemporary western society can begin

neither by an analysis of the life world or by directly addressing contemporary moral issues. The primary moral question is no longer how the individual relates to the world in which we live, for the very foundations of that world have become the overriding issue. In politics, discussing issues moves quickly to considering the very relevance of politics itself. Ecological decisions lead directly to probing the question of the relationship of human beings to nature. And the same holds true with questions about human sexuality and marriage. The first task of ethics is the formation of an ethical consciousness capable of coping with moral questions.

In his brief consideration of ethics in the New Testament, Rendtorff concludes that early Christianity placed the entire conduct of life under a comprehensive, unified principle, that of Christian freedom. This included the fundamental insight that the indicative is the basis and presupposition of imperatives as well as coming to fulfillment through the imperative. Rendtorff interprets freedom in its essence as protection from immediacy, from being delivered up defenseless to the world of activities and affairs. Ethics endeavors to create an ethos which can give a practical and relevant shape to the indicative of freedom in face of the pressure of obligations in situations which require immediate action. Ethics can claim relevance and practicality only by providing the ability to move beyond the alternatives which ossify debates under the pressures of immediate circumstances. Ethics must take a stand, but it must do this in such a way that genuinely ethical questions remain possible



and meaningful.

In executing his ethical theology, Rendtorff first analyzes the three basic elements of the ethical reality of life. His schema closely resembles the dialectical relation between the individual and culture formulated by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann: A person is born into a culture, the person internalizes that culture, and the person contributes to the renewal and reform of that culture. The three elements, which provide the framework for the whole of Rendtorff's work, are the givenness of life, the giving of life, and reflection on life. The givenness of life comprehends both the fact that life is a gift and that it is a specific life which can be lived only by the person to whom it is given, which provides the context for discussing the freedom of the Christian person. The giving of life implies that doing good is essentially a matter of being useful to others which illuminates how love provides the gestalt for freedom. And the very fullness of life, which provides more possibilities than can be realized and extends beyond the life of the individual, leads to reflection on life.

Rendtorff provides no rationale for his selection of the three basic elements. Presumably he assumes that the reader will be convinced of their fundamental and comprehensive character as they are elaborated in the text. The theologically alert reader might discern trinitarian overtones in the selection. If this is the case, it would not conflict with Rendtorff's basic intention. For the doctrine of the Trinity is not a dogmatic construct derived by systematically relating biblical texts, but the result of an intense effort to understand how the confession of Jesus as Lord informs living in a historical and material world.

Next, Rendtorff takes up the question of ethical methodology,

which he focuses on the simple question, "What should we do?" Instead of treating the question of how to make moral decisions, Rendtorff elaborates the method by which we come to consciousness of our place in reality and our active participation in it. This means first coming to terms with what has been given to us, which is the literal meaning of tradition. The givenness of life defines duties or obligations, and the methodology plots the movement from dependence to freedom and from a recognition of the givenness of life to an affirmation of reality. Second, the giving of life requires clarifying what it means to assume responsibility for one's own life. The responsible life depends upon nurturing the personal virtues which embody the moral principles learned through decision-making. In this context, Rendtorff offers a threefold answer to the question of the specifically Christian features of the ethical life. It is a historically distinct way of life derived from a specific historical starting point. It is a life of radical freedom based on an intensive closeness in relation to God made possible through Jesus Christ rather than living in terms of a defined moral code. And it is universal in the sense that a Christian life is possible everywhere and at every time.

In part three of the methodology, Rendtorff argues that reflection on life undertakes the justification for ethics, which requires defining the highest good. On the way to formulating his answer, he engages in an interchange with the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse, the Anglo-Saxon tradition of analytical ethics, the communicative theory of Juergen Habermas and Karl Otto Apel, and the functional sociology of Niklas Luhmann. In a brief treatment which begs for elaboration, Rendtorff argues that the Christian theme of the Kingdom of God,

while it cannot take the place of ethics or be ethics, makes ethics possible and demands that it be practiced, "by confining it within the boundaries of an independent human task and freeing it from the burden of wanting to be something other than the study of how human life should be lived."

While the theologically uninitiated reader of Rendtorff's first volume may have the feeling of wading in murky theological waters, the second volume should prove more inviting. Here the author provides a broad treatment of contemporary moral issues, including topics such as educational reform, family planning, social welfare, participatory management, the relations of men and women, ecology, abortion, the conflict of the rich and poor nations, the ethics of pastoral counselling, liturgical practices, economic growth and quality of life, and care for the aged. In every instance, the treatment is concise, deliberate and cogent. The uniqueness, however, lies in Rendtorff's procedure in treating these topics. Instead of dealing with questions topically, he examines them in terms of his basic threefold schema.

The English sub-title "Applications" may prove misleading. The term implies that something is being applied, which commonly refers to the application of principles to moral topics. This may be what people expect of ethicists, whether the topic is medical ethics, business ethics or family life. But this is precisely not what Rendtorff sets out to do. Literally, the German term translated "*applications*" would be rendered "*concretizations*" or "*rendering concrete*." The entire volume embodies the author's conviction that for ethical theology constructive work takes priority over criticism, or put simply, "the Yes is more important than the No." An ethical theology seeks first to dis-

cern how moral issues arise out of different spheres of life, then examines how people assume responsibility when the moral dimension is taken seriously, and finally reflect on points of conflict which emerge.

Rendtorff proposes to examine five spheres of life as examples to illuminate his ethical theology: marriage, politics, economics, culture and religion. But in accord with his purpose, instead of examining the areas serially, he runs them through his grid. Each sphere of life is analyzed in terms of the three basic elements of ethical reality, and each of these in terms of the three methodological aspects of the ethical question. Hence, the reader interested in what Rendtorff has to say on a topic such as marriage or economics will have to examine the nine separate sections in which each is treated. This ethics is clearly not intended to serve as a reference book to see what the author has to say about an issue, but as method by which to introduce readers to ethical reflection.

That Rendtorff's procedure proves productive can be illustrated by a cursory examination of his treatment of culture. Beginning with the basic element of the givenness of life leads to the recognition that in all experience of reality we encounter the activity of human consciousness. Individuals adopt a personal stance in the context of the cultural definition of life, not out of some human nature outside and prior to culture. The task of education is not mere socialization, but enabling an individual to adopt a stance. Instead of assuming an individual is autonomous, education enables a person to become self-determining in relation to culture. In our scientific and technological culture, the function of ethics is not to define limits from the outside but in terms of the concrete responsibility of science and technology

themselves.

When culture is examined in terms of the basic element of giving life, it becomes clear that the school contributes to the formation of culture by enabling the individual not simply to find herself but to relate the self to the culture and contribute to its development. A person serves culture by acquiring the etiquette and manners which enable people to move freely anywhere, to respect differences and to relate to strangers. To maintain the worth and credibility of tradition depends upon a continuing critique provided particularly by the arts, which stimulate critical reflection through the impact of aesthetic experience when freed of immediate moral or political intentions.

Finally, the basic element of reflection serves the affirmation of life in the midst of conflict. The controversy which has resulted from the unintended consequences of technology requires acting in such a way that we can correct ourselves by consequences of our action. In the discussion of health care, it needs to be remembered that health is the strength to live with disorders, not the absence of disorders. Otherwise we would always have a reason for feeling sick, because sickness is a situation where help is needed. Patients surrender their independence in consulting a physician and the limit and extent of the physician's involvement should be defined by the independence which the patient seeks to regain. With respect to the elderly, the task is to find the ways to support their independence and dignity. This requires overcoming the one-sided view that strength is indispensable to human dignity. And a crucial test of a culture will be its ability to care for the dying.

Because he is true to the method he espouses, Rendtorff has formulated his ethical theology apropos contemporary German

culture. Because of the substantive similarities between German culture and American culture, however, the American reader will discover this work consistently pertinent and illuminating. Rendtorff's ability to make clear that when theology is taken seriously it must be what has become known as "public theology" is of singular significance. And this task begins by trying to discern the moral dimension in life rather than endeavoring to impose so-called Christian principles and rules on society. And Lutheran readers will profit from pondering how Rendtorff unpacks the ethical significance of the doctrine of justification and finds a way through the impasse of debates on law and gospel and the doctrine of the two kingdoms.

On the whole, the translator has done a creditable job of rendering Rendtorff's German into readable English. There are instances, too frequent to enumerate, however, where the translation is not only infelicitous but mistaken. This is particularly troublesome in a work so condensed and succinct that each sentence bears great freight. Fortunately, in most cases the context will carry the reader through. But when puzzled, the English reader will have to give Rendtorff the benefit of the doubt until he can consult the original text.

Dale Lasky

Martin Luther King, Jr. *The Trumpet of Conscience*. With forward by Coretta Scott King, Harper & Row, 1968, 1987.

It is fitting that these collected final statements of Dr. King should be juxtaposed in revival with Dr. James Cone's 20th Anniversary edition of *Black Theology and Black Power*. It is also fitting to publish this

book at a time when the media carries stories of the plagiarism revelations surrounding Dr. King's doctoral dissertation at Boston University. As a King admirer, my admiration was not based on his scholarship but on his courage of leadership that moved America to re-think its racial attitudes, change its laws and refocus its fundamental dream. This little book of 78 pages contains the Massey Lectures delivered over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1967. It deepens my admiration.

In beautiful style Dr. King takes the opportunity to stir the conscience of his listeners on the subjects uppermost on his mind, namely, nonviolent protest and civil disobedience, resistance to the Vietnam war, the role of youth, black and white, in shaping a new world, urban decay and unemployment, and finally, his Christmas Eve sermon at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Always the advocate of non-violent resistance to oppression (in this he contrasts with James Cone's justification of violence), Dr. King places the blame on the "cause of darkness" that brought on the riots in the cities. The cause lies on the doorstep of white society. His alternative to civil riots is mass civil disobedience. As expected, King gives us the larger picture "The Negro (interesting he does not use the term "black" as Dr. Cone does) revolt calls into challenge the system that has created the miracles of production and technology." And "the American Negro is in the vanguard in a prolonged struggle that may change the shape of the world."

King judges the Vietnam war as "being on the wrong side of a world revolution" which we helped begin with our own revolution. Our "arrogance" prevents us from seeing that

we have become the "arch-antirevolutionaries." In this reviewer's mind, Dr. King would have been one of the first to oppose American lives being sacrificed in the Persian Gulf conflict. He believed non-violence was not only right but practical. Like Jesus and Ghandi before him, he was willing to lay down his own life for the cause of justice and truth.

Understandably, his Christmas sermon turns to the subject of peace. He affirms that war has become obsolete in a nuclear age and the necessity of interrelatedness and dignity of human life. What do we believe when our dreams turn into nightmares?—obvious to persons of faith—Keep the Dream.

**John D. Wolf**

James H. Cone. *Black Theology and Black Power*. New York, Harper & Row, 1989 (20th Anniversary Edition).

It has been twenty years since James Cone sounded the clarion attack upon white racism, white theology, and white churches with the words, "The Black Revolution is the work of Christ." The analysis of how we got to where we are is devastating to the prevailing mentality tired of hearing words like "freedom" and "equality" after the civil rights movement. The fact is, Dr. Cone will not let us "be at ease in Zion." He predicts doom upon the white church and forecasts the rise of Black Power as the salvation of Christianity. "The message of Black Power is the message of Christ." (37) "Christianity is not alien to Black Power; it is Black Power." (38) "Christ is black, baby." (68) To say Dr. Cone's view is "hard-hitting theology" is to put the case mildly. He makes no apologies as he

kicks theology off its academic pedestal and abstract rhetoric as he directs our attention to the continuing goal of black liberation. He diagnoses the "sickness of the American Church" as intimately involved with the bankruptcy of American theology.

Dr. Cone believes "whites are enslaved by their own racism." Just as God made the Hebrew people His special people while they suffered under oppression, chose His own Son to suffer under the oppression of the religious establishment, so today's Black Church is the instrument of God's salvation. Born in slavery, the Black Church became the platform for announcing freedom and equality. Tracing its history before and after the Civil War, he points to the Richard Allen break that formed the separate African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787 as the new beginning of purification against the "evils of white power." Ironically the black man saw the white master's religion as the best way to freedom. That insight required separate churches and a Black Theology.

Dr. Cone answers the stereotype that black theology was required to emphasize an eschatology that was other-worldly. Just as the Christian faith is anchored in history, so black theology is "earthly," meaning, it brought confrontation with the system that would deny human dignity and freedom. Just as white society wants to assume that everything is basically all right, the black power emphasis will not allow its revolution to be lost. Dr. Cone pays special tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. as a 20th century return to the pre-Civil War preachers who set "black people's hearts on fire with the gospel of freedom in Christ."

**John D. Wolf**

## Support *The Cresset*

You may receive *The Cresset* because of your position at a university or college. You may be reading it without a subscription, but perhaps you know someone else who would like to be part of the conversation carried on in these pages.

Why not consider giving a gift subscription to a friend, colleague, or graduate? At only \$8.50 for nine issues *The Cresset* is—dare we say it—a good deal.

-----  
I would like to send *The Cresset*

to:

Name:.....

From:

Address:.....

City/State/Zip:.....

1 year, \$8.50

2 years, \$14.75

(Five or more gift subscriptions from a single donor, \$5 per year per subscription.)

Yes  No With a card announcing the gift

Yes  No Please send renewal notices to me.

# C<sup>the</sup>resset

