STUDENT PUBLICATION OF
BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE
VOLUME FIVE DECEMBER 1964

AGORA

AGORA

Agora
essentially
plenary assembly
re
he laoi gathered,
he citizens
ie town,
he warriors
ie camp,
iort
whole mass
iose who had
lace
ie Council.'
Clotz
Greek City

These words coming from a young man, even though he was President of the United States, were tremendously impressive; they confirmed a truth which has come to many of us after twenty years of study.

The Negro must have legislation "every step of the way" because he is born not only into a desperate economic and social complex, but he must struggle against a psychological complex which demeans every American, white and Negro. We cannot help recognize the black man, and there are many whose recognition triggers terror, or contempt, or condescension, or paternalism, or fear. This is a conditioned psychological response that only reason dissipates, but there are many who are unreasoning. And do not let anyone tell you that law can not do the job.

There are Negroes working today in the carding rooms of the textile plants of my state, for the first time in history. This did not come about because the white mill workers were suddenly possessed of an overpowering love. It has come about because of Mr. Kennedy's Equal Employment Directive. If you discriminate in employment you lose your government contract.

And behind all of this are a few simple facts which in themselves are amazing in that they have so rarely been explored and yet they involve not only human dignity but human life itself. Because behind all of this law and sociology is the simple fact that in 1960, four Negro women died in childbirth for each white woman who died in childbirth; that Negro infant mortality was five times greater than white infant mortality; that tuberculosis which is twelfth as the cause of death among whites is second as the cause of death among Negroes, and these simple facts tell us the story of the locked-in Negro community within a civilization which is the most opulent on earth and which also considers itself the most Christian of all countries on earth.

I referred to Race *and* Immigration, but their relationship is close and we may reasonably consider both problems as central to the perpetuation of the American Dream.

The McCarran-Walter Immigration Act, still on the books, admits 154,647 immigrants a year, under quotas based on the 1920 ratio of foreign-born in the nation's population. President Truman declared it discriminatory and inadequate for national needs, saying some deportation provisions were so vague as to allow "thought control."

When President Eisenhower urged revision of the restrictive measures of the Act, the late Congressman Walter successfully guarded provisions allowing almost free access to the United States of immigrants from the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries and restricting the number from the Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Balkan, eastern European, and Asian countries.

Thus the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act permits those to come who are likely not to want to, and restricts those who *do* want to.

The restrictive features of the McCarran-Walter Act strike me as paradoxical in a civilization professing Christianity. While we have no State Church, one can say nevertheless, Christianity is an important factor in the life of most Americans.

Certainly what helped make Christianity a universal religion was that the early Church recognized the value of the foreigner.

Pope Hildebrand believed the Gospel would be spread most effectively by missionaries *as dissimilar to the people to whom they preach as possible.* It was this Pope's deep understanding of the foreigner's vitality which led to establishing celibacy among the clergy around 1070. The clergy were thus made "strangers" in

eir surroundings and in its way the prohibition against marriage helped the urch seal its tremendous political success.

ore to the point is that we can relate the success of Christianity as a universal igion to the success of the United States as leader of the free world.

ristianity came at a time when travelers could go from Babylon to York without assport. Think how this helped to spread an idea.

the second and third centuries, the highways of Europe and Britain were filled th monks in black robes bearing crosses. By the time of St. Augustine, there s a McCarran-Walter Act all over Europe, but the missionary work had been ficiently accomplished and Augustine was able to consolidate the great victory "marrying" Christianity to the arts. Had there been no free movement, how-r, we have the right to conjecture that the people of the Northern forests of rope might have held on much longer to Wotan, the Anglo-Saxons might have en Mithra to their hearts, the god they had borrowed for a time from the nan legionnaries, and other peoples might have held on much longer to their ls who lived on mountain tops, in the trees, and in the oceans, rivers, and ams.

ristianity was quick to grasp the significance of the classical stranger in world ory. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a little town the great Greeks and the ally great Romans had never even heard of. And a mere handful of "strangers," s from Judea (St. Paul among them) were able to "conquer" the great Roman pire with all its vast works and all its far-reaching institutions. They did it an idea, but they also did it because they were "strangers."

he United States as late as 1900, fewer than one-third of our people could e their ancestry further than a native-born grandfather. Essentially we were oreigners. Indeed, based on European standards, all Americans even today, 964, are foreigners, except the American Indian. What the freedom of move-t in the first two centures did for Christianity, the free access to the United es from its earliest beginnings to 1920 did for America—it made us.

n the Congress passed the first of its anti-immigration bills, one of the argu-ts to which it hearkened was that the Italians came to America and worked for ten or fiteen years, saved every nickel, and departed then for home. gressmen even gave President Woodrow Wilson a carefully documented ey of how many millions of dollars this cost America, money which left here entered Italy. President Wilson read this document, then vetoed the bill, g, "Yes, but they left us the subways they built, didn't they?"

immigrants, particularly the immigrants after the Civil War, gave America lf stream of vitality.

should this be? Is the "foreigner" better than the native? Of course not. In he foreigner or the stranger does not think himself as good as the native and his sense of inferiority, this hope to be *like* the native, that has given him this y through all history.

s the three great monastic orders in France were founded by a German, a arian, and an Englishman, and Christianity was established in the Anglo-world by Italians and Spaniards, so were the great industrial, intellectual, cientific institutions in America founded by foreigners from Scandinavia, any, Ireland, Britain, Italy, Poland, Russia, Hungary, Romania, Austria, and other lands in the world, forty three million immigrants in a hundred years seventy different countries.

It is a vitality we may have lost since the first law restricting immigration passed over the veto of President Wilson in 1920. When we become comfortable in our environment and there are few challenges, we lose some of our drive.

Another fifty years of "racial" and "ethnic" restrictions and we will all look like Davy Crockett. Not that Davy Crockett was bad looking, but he didn't look like the Swedish farmer in the Midwest or the Irish laborer laying the railroad ties or the Jewish medical student or the Polish iron worker or the Chinese merchant in San Francisco or the Italian restaurateur in Connecticut or for that matter, the Mohawk Indian who works in high steel.

Realistically, the "open door" policy is out of the question. But there are reasonable and providential revisions possible. And they are American. I refer to the proposals made by Senator Philip A. Hart of Michigan. He asks for the total number of admissable immigrants to be one-seventh of one per cent of the total population instead of one-sixth of one per cent of the white population according to the 1920 census. He would revise the "national origins" quota system by a formula based on the relative population of the countries of the world.

The section of our country which is only now entering the industrial age is the old Confederate South; significantly, this is the one section that had no immigrants, no foreigners, no strangers. There was great comfort in the homogeneous society, yet today when the physicist and scientist appear before the Senate committee to discuss the matters which concern the welfare, security, and survival of the United States, some of them talk with a heavy accent. One or two even need an interpreter.

Lysander, Sparta's great man, was not a Spartan at all, nor was William who started Britain on her road to glory a Briton, nor was Disraeli who made Victoria Empress of India an Englishman. A man is no prophet in his own country. Every land in this world sends its preachers to its neighbor, and receives preachers in return. The millions of immigrants who came to America were "preachers" with a gospel, seeking what the Greeks called "the good life."

It is the immigrant, who, finding freedom and opportunity in America, tells us what it is.

Once we had a peace corps that cost us nothing. It was composed of foreigners who wrote "home" about America and linked us to every country, city, town, hamlet, and farmhouse in the world. Who else better extolled the American way of life, who praised liberty and proved the pursuit of happiness better than the "foreigner" who described to the folks behind, his new job in Detroit or his butcher shop in Milwaukee?

The McCarran-Walter Act robbed us of this. But God is good to us. America's new vitality will now come from the Negro, who, striving to be like others, will make others define what it is they are, what it is they ought to be. This is America's good fortune, to have always the marginal man struggling to get "in," struggling to prove himself, struggling to enter the open society and "become" like everyone else—as quickly as possible. By his use of Christianity as a weapon in his struggle for civil rights, the American Negro may have saved Christianity, or at least redeemed it for those religious fellowships, particularly in the South, who backed away from a moral issue. But the contribution of the American Negro will be equally great in providing the American civilization with the vitality which the classical "stranger" has always provided in his struggle to become part of the corporate whole.

Make someone happy,
Make just one someone happy . . .
a song by one some-
one they know not of

OPUS NO. I

Wheat.
The great golden wheat
of Kansas summers and Russian Peasants.
Of suns, in waves
reeling and racking the wheat
back and forth
fooling the eye, dizzy, swirling
hypnotizing the eye
into lazy undulating wheatful summers.

From high on yon these fields
look warm with child,
—would seem
to dance the graceful dance of memory.
. . . of limpid hanging breasts,
the press on slumbering backs
in wide dark wombs of beds.
. . . all curl'd.
The kick and woo of child's with them.

"How is this?" cry I.
Look close. YES, look close.
Accursed sweating wombs.
Feeders of the poor.
Breadbaskets of the world.
(Three blind mice, three blind mice,
See how they run, see how they run,)
All is quiet high on yon
and suns move on.
Peace is his, high on yon.
As wide as the mind can be,
as wide as the fields in which they stand,
are these from each just where they stand.

Oh cursed lot of skinny wheat,
stand tall, straight, erect.
Let each stalk know across the row
that THIS is that field where poppies grow.
Requiescant in pace.

Epilogue

Oh cursed lot of skinny wheat,
stand tall, straight, erect.
Let spring summer, then twilight come.
Then truly will I love thee.

—DON NEULAND

FREEDOM OF SPEECH WITHIN THE CHURCH

BY

GERARD SHERRY

Since the days of Pope Pius XII and especially since the glowing example of the ample exercise of the "holy liberty" granted and assured to the Fathers of the Council by Pope John XXIII and the re-emphasis on this long-sought understanding by Pope Paul VI, none can seriously object to a discussion of freedom of speech within the Church. Yet we must admit that some in authority still persist in the viewpoint that the only freedom to exist is that which guarantees stability to them, sometimes at the expenses of subordinates.

We hear a lot these days about freedom of speech and freedom of information. They are pertinent issues. All the more so, since we have witnessed several examples of the denial of academic freedom. There was the controversy over four liberal lecturers banned from the Catholic University of America campus; there was the disgraceful panic banning of speakers at San Diego in 1961 when right wing political extremists threatened a diocese with violent rioting if another point of view was expressed; the "difficulties" experienced by Father Hans Kueng on his western trip to the United States when permission to speak publicly was denied him on alleged administrative grounds. There have been many more examples in recent years of an over-protection of Catholic thinking, the formula going something like this: "A little knowledge is dangerous, a lot of knowledge is disastrous."

There are some within the Church who still think they are dealing with 19th century adolescence instead of 20th century maturity. The morbid self-hypnosis of the last century still provides many of their judgments. Yet we know that they are wrong.

Two world wars, a major depression, the world divided into two hostile camps, the horrors of Hiroshima, have led men to suspect science. The degeneration and complete corruption of democracy into the so-called People's Republics behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains have led men to a more sober estimation of liberty, have let them see more clearly the distinction between liberty and license. The modern world is not so hypnotized by man. It has almost rediscovered the sense of Original Sin and is willing to look to God—if God can be made visible, if God's children can speak its language. What about the Church? Do we still find lethargy, cowardice, ennui, respectability? There are still indications that some of these vices are present. There are still men within the Church who are fascinated by the past because they are scared to death of the present and don't dare think of the future. There are men whose faith is not up to the hazards of going out to people.

There are men who must cower, locked in an imaginary cloister, muttering and repeating the fetish-like slogans and symbols of the past, endlessly building "straw men" which are easily destroyed.

There are men who look out at the advances made by unruly human reason and refuse to recognize that new questions have been asked. They answer the old questions with the old answers, instead of accepting the new questions, incorporating them, as St. Thomas did into the *Summa*, and bringing new things out of the old. The spirit of lethargy, of ennui and concentration on the past, I think, is best illustrated in one of the greatest weaknesses—our almost complete lack of fruitful communication with our separated brethren.

Our neighbors are confused by a contradiction. We boast of the name Catholic, yet we are amazingly parochial. We claim universality, and yet in day-to-day concerns we are quite exclusive. Our works of mercy are valued by the community at large, yet we are often blind to the needs of the community. With the possible exceptions of Communism and smut, many of us seem little interested in those problems which beset our city and our world.

Let the whole community act on a problem like police-community relations, and only one Catholic organization shows up. If the community is discussing the problems of the Welfare Department, our sodalities are absorbed in the minutiae of their own organizations. If the city is puzzling over tax sources, our societies are busy with bingo or baseball or football nights. Our indignation rises and is vocal at any sign of birth control, but we are smugly uninterested when others, motivated by moral concern, seek to ban discrimination in public places.

At a time when the sap is dying in the roots of our democracy, how many Catholic groups would even think of working for voter registration? Is the sole purpose of our alumni associations to serve as springboards for aspiring alumni?

Even our self-interest is pitiable. A glaring case at point is urban renewal. This multi-million dollar project for rebuilding the city affects a majority of parishes within the limits of most big cities. How many are even aware of it?

All of this narrow-minded lack of concern for anyone but ourselves strikes our neighbors as scandalous. Those who don't know us at all are untouched. "After all, what else can you expect from Catholics," seems to sum up their attitudes. But those who know something of the social doctrine of the Church, who know something of Catholic activities in other countries, who have worked with the few cooperative Catholics, are hurt and puzzled. "This is what you preach, but look at what you are," seems to be their remark. Where is the aggiornamento of John XXIII, so ably continued by Pope Paul?

Aggiornamento is foreign to some of the American traditionalists within the Church. They become almost hysterical at the discovery of "emerging laymen and emerging laywomen" within their midst. The critical comments of the laity are branded insubordination, disloyalty and excessive liberalism. It is tragic that in the Church in America there are still some who consider all criticism within the Church as coming from compromising theologians and ambitious laymen.

Controversy in the Church is obviously a healthy thing as long as there is an objective and constructive airing of the issues. Alas, there are too many people who abuse the virtue of prudence and use it as an excuse to preserve the status quo—sometimes at the expense of justice. "Don't rock the boat" seems to be their philosophy. "Don't rock the boat" is but another way of expressing the socio-psychological law that people who are externally successful and entrenched find it especially hard to distinguish the accidentals from the essentials of what they are trying to preserve. Invariably they decide to try and preserve everything, and so lose even the vital essentials they have and should have preserved and handed down to their posterity. This type of un-Catholic timidity has no place in an age of explosive change.

However, there are many points about this topic which must be prayed over, thought about and debated in a brotherly manner. I should like to bring up one point, and that is the manner in which one is to exercise this freedom within the Church. This will entail certain obligations on the speaker, and certain obligations on the listener, if the freedom is to be really "within" the Church.

It must be assumed that only those who love the Church will even bother, in this day of conformism, to speak up. Where this love is lacking, inertia, tedium and indifference will bar a man from raising questions, rocking boats or stirring himself from his torpor. But when there is a real concern for God's people, when the tension between the Spotless Spouse and Her all too soiled realization is tight, when the demands of the Gospel are going begging, there is a real need to speak out. No man should elect himself to this office, but no man can refuse to be an instrument of the Spirit. To remain silent out of an undue love of peace, or out of a concern to protect one's own position, or to pander to the "Powers That Be," is a betrayal of a sacred trust. No wonder Augustine could compliment Cyprian because he was not silent about what he felt.

Agreeing that one must speak, the manner in which one does speak is of the utmost importance. Here again, love for the Church will be normative; but the Church can be an abstraction, truth can be isolate, and love must be directed towards persons; therefore, a real conscious love of the brothers who are involved in the dialogue must be our criterion. One of my friends put this in capsule form for me, when in a letter on the delicate problem of race relations in the South he said, "If I love you enough I will write so that you can read, and if you love me enough you will be able to read what I write with understanding."

When we sense a malaise in the Church, when we discover a need or a lack, when we discover a solution of a vexing problem, we are personally and emotionally involved. Normally, we have come to this discovery after a period of time. We have been occupied with the problem, and thus we are familiar with many ramifications which cannot be marshalled for any brief presentation. When we burst in on another Christian, be he a peer or a superior, he has not shared our journey. His concerns have been in other fields; his investigations have been in other areas. His emotions are directed elsewhere. If we are to speak to him in such a way that he can hear us, we must first acquaint him with the back-

ground of our perceptions. Above all, we must try to recreate for him an experience of the problem. Let me illustrate: a hospital administrator who has never met a Negro, except as an employee, who has never become a friend with a man who happens to be of African descent, has not the faintest idea of what we are talking about when we try to communicate some of the sense of the absurdity, the personal affront, that is involved in Catholic failings in racial justice. The problems of the administrator of a hospital are experiences he has had, but he has not held in his arms a weeping Negro mother whose daughter was forced to be subjected to sterilization propaganda in the state hospital because there was no room for her in the Catholic Inn. If I love him enough, if I love that Negro mother enough, if I love the Church enough, I will by prayer and penance find a way to translate her problem into his experiential area, so that he can sense at least the dimensions of the problem.

Having investigated how one speaks in exercising the freedom of discussion in the Church, we must now turn our attention to the equally important role of listening. For, if I indulge in a monologue, and simultaneously you indulge in a monologue, we are not in conversation: we are not speaking with each other; we are merely talking *at* each other.

If a love of the Church demands that we speak up about what we see in a given situation, how much more must our love of the Church, and above all our love of our brother, make us listen. This love will drive us first of all to be silent and pay attention to our brother when he speaks, precisely because he is our brother, and because his love of the Church is the same as our love of the Church. To listen, to attend, to be open to what is being said; this is the elemental service of love that we owe as a duty, which should become a joy, as our love grows.

But there is a third love which impels us to listen, and that is the love of the truth. Reverence for truth, the truth that sets us free, should be a great motive for our listening. Who would dare to say that he has an absolute grasp of the reality in any sphere of the Church's life? Who would be so bold as to assert that he has nothing more to learn about this marvelous family into which Christ has called us? Who would have the arrogance to silence the voice of the Spirit, or to command the Spirit in His choice of instruments?

I would like to suggest a principle, which you can discuss at your leisure, and that is that the wider the gap between the speaker and the listener, the greater the responsibility of the listener to pay careful attention, especially when it is a case of a superior listening to a subordinate. Where there is an equality of position one naturally recognizes the right and the propriety of the speaker to express his thoughts; but where positions are widely separated, where one carries authority which exceeds that of the speaker, only a supernatural charity will lead a superior to show this reverence to one who is only accidentally a subordinate, but who is at the same time essentially a brother. Was it not at the Last Supper, after washing the feet of His Apostles, that Jesus said, "The Son of Man has come, not to be waited upon, but to serve."

The only source of freedom of discussion within the Church is a love of the Church; a love which will embolden a faithful son to speak his mind in charity and in the bond of unity; a love which will enable another faithful son to listen in charity and in the bond of peace. Let us all work to hasten the day when such a charity is rampant within the Church and the glorious freedom of the sons of God will become manifest to our separated brothers, and they will thus be urged to seek a greater unity with us.

Pope John XXIII, in the celebrated encyclical, "Pacem in Terris," said, "Every human being has the right to objective information," and this is closely bound up with the freedom of speech and freedom of action in the Church. As Pope Paul said on April 17 of this year: "Since this is a question of a right founded in the very nature of man, it evidently does not suffice to proclaim it in theory; one must also recognize it in practice, defend it, serve it, and so direct its exercise that it remains faithful to its natural purpose. It is a right at once active and passive; the seeking of information and the possibility for all of obtaining it.

"The importance of the function of him who gives information is fully illustrated here: he enables each one, by the information he furnishes him, to understand situations better, and, with fuller knowledge of the case, to make his decisions as a man responsible—as part of the whole—to the human group he belongs to."

Yet it often seems the fashion in these parts to look with suspicion on anyone who "rocks the boat" or who asks questions, and the cry is often that of "Catholic liberal," as if this were sinful.

The unhappy faculty to see both sides of real tension puts the Catholic liberal at odds with his friends on both sides. Because he recognizes a real role and value for authority, obedience, and society, he is suspect to the secular liberal. Because he has a real, sincere love for God's great gift to man, his freedom, and because he realizes that there are limits to the teachings of the Church, and that the application of these teachings depends upon day by day prudential decisions by this particular Catholic, he is suspect to his fellow Catholics who sport the Conservative tie.

Yet, it is this regard for man's freedom which keeps the Catholic liberal in his liberalism, as difficult and embarrassing as this may be. His commitment to his Catholic heritage and his American heritage lead him to this conclusion. A deep knowledge of the history of the Church, of her insistence on the dignity which flows from the fact of man's freedom, and her unceasing efforts to raise him to the point where he can live the freedom of the sons of God, inspire him to avoid the temptation to quit before the forces that would immerse man in any determinism.

In the light of this urgency he reads the condemnations by the 19th Century Church of the 19th Century abuses and errors, and accepts them. But he does not find in them what was not there in the first place—a condemnation of freedom itself.

His love of his American heritage leads him to the same position. A real admiration of the works of our Founding Fathers lets him see the genius behind their work, and leads him to desire to see the work progress apace. Freedom must expand, or it will atrophy. But the threats to freedom increase with the expansion of the country and the world.

He neither denies nor decries the expansions that have occurred or will occur, but he does search them carefully for any threat they hold. He protects the things he loves against this threat, without denying the good that is available in the expansions.

Despite the many pressures from those who view aggiornamento as unworkable, we know that the reform and renewal of our Church and our society can be accomplished, but only when we become real, genuine witnesses—as the whole Mystical Body is called to be witness—to what He is, to His will as He has revealed it.

SING A SONG OF STATUS

Five-ten the clock hands pointing, spinning
Out familiar seconds over muted scenes,
All same, routine, had no beginning,
No end, familiar blacks and browns and whites and greens.
This and what else?
Give me a paper clip and I am an executive;
One chance to sharpen my pencil and try and receipt the world
What world?
One chance . . . The secretaries wink (at times); they know.
I hold the marble, practicality,
In my fist, the marble that the others don't show,
That beats them, wins this game for me.
I ignore its identification
With lie and jungle law and machination.
I carry men's respect (or is it fear? with some I know it's hate)
And forget the times I almost failed, times I wanted to hesitate.
It would have been a check, at any rate,
To have scruples; for in this world they have no place
When you have something to do, have some task to face,
Something important, to rise above self and
Others and . . .
You have to overcome the drag, sentimentality,
Even be willing to dim a part of your mentality.
The climb was not far;
But the obstacles I met made it quite trying,
And those found lying
In my way—they had to be
Gone round or removed, and discreetly.
So I picked my path to the country club.
"Sure it's expensive (that's just it); besides, golf keeps you
healthy-hardy."
So I picked my path to a cocktail party.
Regret?—I wanted, sometimes wished, to hesitate,
Times when it was already too late,
Sometimes when I thought of words and acts bestowing
Servile deference, of lowering
Myself despicably and doing things I hated.
And yet this was part of what I wanted, the desire to be so sated:
Was it lowering oneself to be raised or remain abased?:
But it was not that and values couldn't be simply traced;
It meant, it was success to have it all.
Five-eighteen the clock hands'
Closing angle, second hand
Dizzy as from drink . . .
A life of work, a drink
On the way home, of a train that rumbles
And whistles, and a wife who grumbles
And doesn't care now if her husband is a wheel,
When she knows him less and less and sees he can no longer feel.
I get on my train and leave, I'm going home to my third meal:
Turning wheels, speeding and loud, can't be stopped.
Can't be stopped.

—DAVID VAN ZILE

BECKET

BY FOUR PLAYWRIGHTS

TENNYSON

ELIOT

ANOUILH

FRY

BY

MARGARET BRYAN

Nearly 800 years ago a man defied a king and was murdered. His story, reality and myth, has been told through the centuries, each version modified by the conventions of the storyteller, yet unchangeable in its basic appeal. In 1964 convention presents the story in Technicolor on a wide screen (in the film version of Jean Anouilh's *Becket*), but the trappings do not obscure the drama.

The four treatments of Thomas Becket's story considered here vary widely in approach and effect. Tennyson, the "essential Victorian poet," who said he began writing plays to treat national ideas Shakespeare left untouched, presents a curious mixture of chronicle and sermon, sentiment and spectacle, a Shakespeare play manqué, which was a success when produced in London in 1893.

T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is written in the manner of a Greek tragedy in which only one character is named—Archbishop Thomas Becket. The other characters are stylized into abstractions—a Chorus of Women, Three Priests, Four Tempters, Four Knights. Events taken from the last days of Becket's life are presented as effects on the minds of the participants. The loss in dramatic action is compensated for by Eliot's achievement in universalizing both the crime and and guilt.

Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, unanimously praised by critics during its 1960 performance in New York, is a compelling play, the only one I read which traces the development of Becket's character from King Henry's worldly friend to saintly martyr. Less conscientious than Tennyson in trying to cover every historical detail of the complicated political situation, M. Anouilh simplifies the plot in order to isolate and clarify the central issues. His Henry and his Becket both emerge as men.

Christopher Fry's *Curtmantle*, produced in 1961 in Holland, is a play about King Henry II, who "laid the foundations of the English Common Law." Becket appears here as the King's one-time friend, now antagonist; his death occurs off-stage, and the King is shown in his penance. Although Becket is a strong figure in Mr. Fry's play, he is treated only as part of Henry's story—a worthy opponent to a formidable King.

Jean Anouilh's play is most readily comparable to Tennyson's in form, characters, and approach; therefore, only these two *Beckets* will be discussed in detail.

There is a fascination in checking the plays against each other and with the history of the period. Incidents occur and recur, onstage before one's eyes or offstage and later described, all modified by differences in point of view and context. Events are transposed, years telescoped; one gets a dizzy impression of history as patchwork.

In form Tennyson's play follows the formula so successfully used by Shakespeare—five acts (plus a Prologue in this case), a "turning-point" at the end of Act III, blank verse alternating with prose, and a cast of 24 plus "Knights, Monks, Beggars, etc." Tennyson, one feels, is hampered by the rigidity of the Victorian proscenium stage; curtains rise and fall on a confusing number of scenes; the play is chopped up into blocks of space and time. Incredibly one counts ten (or possibly eleven) separate stage sets; the Victorian audience saw a rich spectacle indeed.

M. Anouilh's play, written for the fluid stage of the modern electric-powered theatre, actually seems closer in spirit to the Elizabethan stage of Shakespeare. As Shakespeare used the eleven areas of the Globe Theatre, supplemented by the audience's imagination, to give a swift pace and unity to his succeeding scenes, so can Anouilh open his drama on "an indeterminate set, with pillars" to represent the interior of a cathedral and move immediately to the King's chamber, a forest (trees float electrically down from above), or a peasant's hut—all without closing a curtain.

M. Anouilh's play is presented in retrospect, opening with Henry's penance before Becket's tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, with the past revealed when Henry begins to muse about early "happy times." The first scene of the past is Henry's making Becket Chancellor; thus M. Anouilh develops Becket's character from an earlier period in his life than does Tennyson.

Tennyson's play, which moves in a straight progression from the Prologue, begins with Becket as Chancellor and Henry's decision to make him Archbishop. The first scene shows Becket and Henry at a chess game, and Tennyson charges the dialogue with double meanings and foreshadowings. Becket defeats Henry at the game, and the King becomes so angry (historically Henry II had a terrible temper) he kicks over the table and board, saying, "Down go bishop and king together." Throughout the Tennyson play Becket is a stern, moral, humorless man, noble always, though at times not quite human. Although Henry speaks of Becket as "A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts, /A sauce deviser for thy days of fish,/ A dish-designer, and most amorous/ Of good old red sound liberal Gascon wine" (Prologue); and Becket says, "I have been a lover of wines and delicate meats/ And secular splendours" (I, i), one is hardly convinced. It is as though Joan of Arc had said she worked in a tavern at night. Since Becket's sensuous life is only talked of, his sudden conversion from a worldly dilettante to an ascetic archbishop lacks drama and conviction. Tennyson always seems to be dealing with a figure-head; Becket is not a man so much as an exemplar, and as such he dominates the play.

We are told that Tennyson did careful research for his drama, and every historical aspect of the time is catalogued: the rudimentary English courts; the Queen's relationship with her divorced husband, Louis of France; the French-English situation; the Clarendon Constitutions; crowning the young boy Henry III. But with the piling up of historical detail, characters are almost submerged in events. The only attempt made to characterize Henry II is to show several instances of his losing his temper.

In the Introduction to his play M. Anouilh tells of reading the life of Becket: "I was dazzled. I had expected to find a saint—I am always a trifle distrustful of saints, as I am of great theatre stars—and I found a man" (p. 5). A man—men—human beings—are what the reader finds in M. Anouilh's play. We are shown Becket's relationship with Henry before Becket is made Chancellor, and the traits of both men are clearly delineated. Henry is crude, quick-tempered, impulsive, unintellectual but shrewd, genuinely fond of Becket, in whose abilities he finds childish pleasure. Becket is a role-player, intelligent enough to recognize what he is, a true friend of the King before their relationship changes, yet reserved enough to make the later change in his life credible. M. Anouilh makes us realize that Becket's love of luxury and pomp as Chancellor and his almost ostentatious austerity as Archbishop are two sides of the same coin.

Parallel passages from the two plays give insight into the different conceptions of the playwrights.

When Becket is told the King demands an accounting and rendering of money he owed the Treasury as Chancellor, Tennyson's Becket says pompously:

> What! forty thousands marks!
> Why thou, the King, the Pope, the Saints, the world,
> Know that when made Archbishop I was freed,
> Before the Prince and chief Justiciary,
> From every bond and debt and obligation
> Incurr'd as Chancellor.

Hear me, son. As gold
Outvalues dross, light darkness, Abel Cain,
The soul the body, and the Church the Throne,
I charge thee, upon pain of mine anathema,
That thou obey, not me, but God in me;
Rather than Henry. (I, iii)

In M. Anouilh's play:

BECKET. (Smiling) I don't believe there was ever as much money in all the coffers of England in all the time I was Chancellor. But a clever clerk can soon change that . . . The King has closed his fist and I am like a fly inside it.

He smiles and looks at him.

I have the impression, gentlemen, that you must be feeling something very akin to relief. (III)

When the Barons planned to arrest Becket after he refused to put his seal on the Constitutions of Clarendon, he protected himself by carrying a silver cross. In Tennyson's play, when Henry hears of Becket's strategy, he says, "His cross! It is the traitor that imputes trachery to his King! It is not safe for me to look upon him. Away—with me!" (I, iii)

In M. Anouilh's play:

KING. (Unable to hide his delight) Well played, Thomas! One point to you.

He checks himself, embarrassed, and then says:

And what about my Barons?

PAGE. Their hands flew to their swords with cries of "Traitor! Perjurer! Arrest him! Miserable wretch! Hear your sentence!" But not one of them dared move, or touch the sacred ornaments.

KING. (With a roar) The fools! I am surrounded by fools and the only intelligent man in my Kingdom is against me! (III)

The "beggars' banquet" is handled by Tennyson as resulting from the invited aristocracy's refusing to dine with the Archbishop after Becket has incurred Henry's anger:

BECKET. . . . was not my lord of Leicester bidden to our supper?

ATTENDANT. Ay, my lord, and divers other earls and barons. But the hour is past, and our brother, Master Cook, he makes moan that all be a-getting cold.

BECKET. And I make my moan along with him. Cold after warm, Winter after Summer, and the golden leaves, these earls and barons, that clung to me, frosted off me by the first cold frown of the King. Cold, but look how the table steams like a heathen altar; nay like the altar at Jerusalem. Shall God's gifts be wasted? None of them here! Call in the poor from the streets, and let them feast. (I, iv)

M. Anouilh's treatment of the same incident makes it part of Becket's renunciation of his luxury-filled existence. The servants are clearing Becket's bedroom of his clothes and fur coverlets:

BECKET. Has the steward been told about tonight's meal? Supper for forty in the great hall.

FIRST SERVANT. He says he won't have enough gold plate, my Lord. Are we to mix it with silver dishes?

BECKET. Tell him to lay the table with the wooden platters and earthenware bowls from the kitchens. The plate has been sold. The Jew will send over for it late this afternoon.

FIRST SERVANT (Dazed) . . . Yes, my Lord. And the steward says could he have your list of invitations fairly soon, my Lord? . . .

BECKET. There are no invitations. The great doors will be thrown open and you

will go out into the street and tell the poor they are dining with me tonight. . . . I want the service to be impeccable. The dishes presented to each guest first, with full ceremony, just as for princes. Go now. (II)

Later in the same scene in M. Anouilh's play, Becket, alone and looking over the clothing packed away ready to sell, says:

I must say, it was all very pretty stuff.

He drops the lid and bursts out laughing.

A prick of vanity! The mark of an upstart. A truly saintly man would never have done the whole thing in one day. Nobody will ever believe it's genuine . . .

It's like leaving for a holiday. Forgive me, Lord, but I never enjoyed myself so much in my whole life . . .

Lord, are You sure You are not tempting me? It all seems far too easy. (II)

Tennyson's Becket, reflecting on the same subject, says grandly:

> I served King Henry well as Chancellor;
> I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.
> This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
> And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,
> Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,
> And all the puissance of the warrior,
> And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,
> And all the heap'd experiences of life,
> I cast upon the side of Canterbury. (I, i)

Tennyson treats the death scene at the close of the play with historical exactitude in most details. Becket's throwing one of the Barons to the floor is in the records, as are Becket's supposed last words commending his soul to God, which Tennyson uses. The murderers leave the cathedral in a thunderstorm which is said to have broken over the city at that very moment.

In M. Anouilh's play Becket does not struggle with his attackers, and his last words are "Poor Henry." The death scene blacks out, and we are shown immediately once more the opening scene of the play, Henry's kneeling at Becket's tomb. Becket is established as a saint, and Henry II is using the magic of the saint's name to win the people to the King's side during Prince Henry's attempt to seize power.

The chief weakness in Tennyson's play stems from the large role he gives to Rosamund de Clifford, the King's mistress. Hints of a liaison between Rosamund and Becket; the mechanics necessary to keep Rosamund hidden from the Queen (she lives in a secret "bower" in England); the existence of Geoffrey, illegitimate son of Rosamund and Henry; Queen Eleanor's suspicions of and actions toward Rosamund—all these seem artificial devices which only muddy the real story and cause it to degenerate at times into melodrama. Tennyson does not bother to separate legend from fact in his treatment of this most famous of Henry II's mistresses and even embellishes the legend to suit his dramatic purposes.

According to Amy Kelly, in *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, Geoffrey was old enough to have been Rosamund's grown brother. Miss Kelly also assigns to legend the story that the queen offered Rosamund her choice between the dagger and the poison bowl as an escape from the royal fury. Tennyson re-works part of this story into Act IV of his play, when the Queen of England, who has tracked Rosamund to her bower, attacks her with a dagger: "This in thy bosom, fool, And after in thy bastard's!" (IV, ii). Her hand is stayed by Becket, who appears in the nick of time (mystifying the audience; the last time we saw him was in France) to save Rosamund's life and make the Queen angry. In this way

Tennyson motivates Eleanor to urge the knights to kill Becket after the king impulsively expresses a wish to be rid of him.

Rosamund escapes her enemies by disguising herself as a monk (another mystifying bit), and in that guise she kneels beside Becket's dead body when the final curtain closes. Although Tennyson seemed to do such careful research for his historical details, he said only that "Bishop Lightfoot found out about Rosamund for me." Tennyson was criticized by contemporary critics for giving so much weight to facts of doubtful authenticity. Miss Kelly gives no evidence of any relationship between Becket and Rosamund, other than the fact that Rosamund's affair with Henry ran concurrently with Becket's primacy and somewhat beyond his martyrdom (1166-1177).

The part of Rosamund was played by Ellen Terry when Henry Irving produced Tennyson's play and acted the role of Becket. One is forced to conclude that the fame of the actress who was to play Rosamund had some influence on Tennyson's shaping of the role. Irving, an old friend of Tennyson, had produced and acted in several of the poet laureate's plays, encouraged him to write *Becket*, and praised it highly. The play was produced posthumously in 1893, "and because of the splendour of the pageantry and the very powerful acting of Irving, it was one of the successes of the season, running one hundred and twelve times."

M. Anouilh's play is subtitled *The Honor of God*, and Becket's quest for honor (his own, which turns out to be God's) provides a unifying theme. This theme, though consistent and prevailing, is both relieved and underscored by the humor of witty dialogue and Becket's gentle irony resulting from his knowledge of human nature—his own and that of others. The ironic tone of much of the play makes the story seem modern in 1964 to audiences schooled in the existentialist "absurd" tradition. When Becket's protogé speaks of Norman tyranny, Becket asks:

Are you so very set on killing one?

MONK. One for one. After that, I don't much care if I *am* just a little grain of sand in the machine. Because I know that by putting more and more grains of sand in the machine, one day it will come grinding to a stop.

BECKET. (Gently) And on that day, what then?

MONK. We'll set a fine, new, well-oiled machine in the place of the old one and this time we'll put the Normans into it instead.

He asks, quite without irony:

That's what justice means, isn't it?

Becket smiles and does not answer him.

If theatre audiences in 1964 expect irony, even in a play about a man who dies for a cause, Victorian audiences evidently expected the sentimental moralizing Tennyson gave them. A contemporary criticism, written for the *Theatrical World* of 1894, by Archer, and quoted by Montrose J. Moses, listed the shortcomings of the play before adding: "... it is what most of all it oughtn't to be—a success. It delighted the audience. . . . There was a genuine warmth in their applause which did my heart good, for it entirely expressed my own sentiments . . . the nobility and pathos of Mr. Irving's Becket are as irresistible as ever. This is . . . an entirely beautiful and memorable creation . . . I much prefer Mr. Tennyson's 'undramatic' verse to the self-consciously and spasmodically dramatic iambics of some other poets."

M. Anouilh's reviews in 1960, quoted on the jacket of the published play, were all good, too. The story of Becket, it would seem, can't miss. This may be the answer to the television producers' question: After Westerns, whodunits, medicine and psychiatry—what next?

COMES ON A MAN

Comes on a man (and he knows it)
the time for counting what has been for him
  something of what he could be.
Age is a counting house and did he
want to be a trader
      or a father
      or a god and did he
want land and honey and traveling miles,
to be a bridegroom to his Ada
or did he want to be more than free?

And did he fulfill the farm and the cry
of his reckless children,
did he age with time or with anxiety
or perhaps because of dread
or because he missed the truth
of what he was or how he was
or did he know that he was vain
because he could not renew the dust?

Now he is old and nomadic
about the past and he thinks
that all of us are too young
and that age is rite of prophecy.

He has a right, let us say,
to call his life an encounter
with all that was planned for him
by the digging of his father;
let us say that his age is his truth,
his wisdom his joy, and let us heed
when, like him, we have lived too long
and breathed into eternity.

—ROBERT EARLY

oh yes
and you are here my Mim
I say yea to you and my heart
says that beating midnight bong-bong-bong
of ThaMes the
o(x)ny x
love of mine
the many nights we have sat
and dr e amed the rug
and soft, oft fired floor of you and
the snow, oh, the snow
the low whispered love of you
that look of e. e. c.
(the shadows smile on your softest breasts)
that whisper on the
gloomy, doomy quiet din
of fla k
ing snow upon the windowed glass of
you and
  I

—DON NEULAND

Oh great orchid of my mind,
please burst and bloom for me.
Let me see the flower of my soul
for but an hour, for then you're mine.
Let me see the color of my life
and death,
the why's and who's of any(one's) mind
. . . of children's sillys . . . . .
(we Christmas tots, and not
its yammer men and clink-in-pots.)

—DON NEULAND

ON HEARING
A SYMPHONY OF SIBELIUS
with reluctant apologies
to Edna St. Vincent Millay

Pitiful sounds, oh, tortured music, cease!
Enter not this helpless hall again.
Bewitched by tedious, arid tones,
With aching seats and nodding heads
The captive people deeply snore.

This moment is the best the night can give;
The banal piece comes slowly to its end.

Let's hear some Beethoven.

—FRANK BERNAT

I have spent all
my life thus far
building a shell
to crack and eat
the n-u-t
of
    rot
        ten
            ness

—DON NEULAND

□

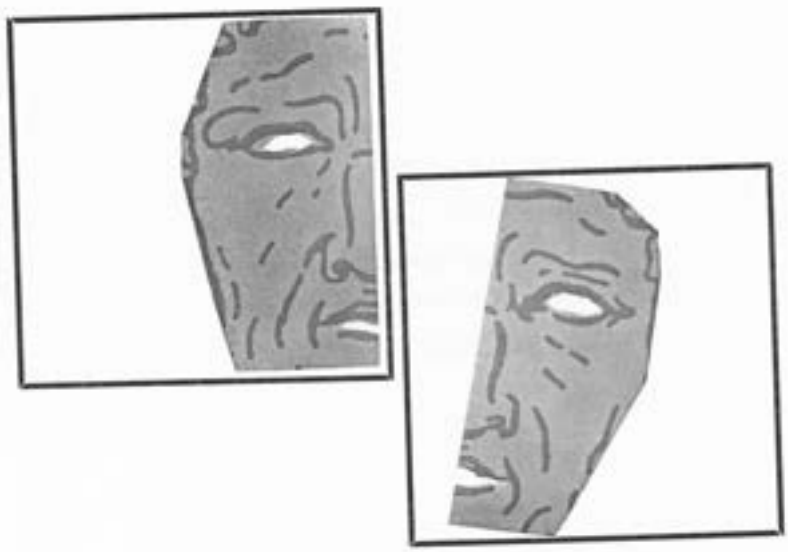
□

□

SOMETHING OF CHANCE

BY

ROBERT EARLY



Some say that April is a cruel month, that she is both birth and death, she holds at once the curative warmth of summer heat and the degenerating cold of winter winds.

Winds do blow in April, but new things begin to grow then, and all life shouts out with its own living, proposing a mystery to the human heart and its consuming curiosity. If April were to fail, the world would end. That is April's mystery; that is her cruelty.

April was a beginning place for him. He found in her arrival each year a satisfaction that lengthened his ambitions, proffered a new concept of life for him, and gave him some intangible but nevertheless real evidence of his own good destiny.

But in the years of her pleasant and varied comings and goings, the holy month helped his mind shift itself into another world outside all of earth's reality. And as in that world of pleasant mental creations she represented rebirth, so he found her coming producing a progressively more gleeful expectation in all his actions.

And after she had hastened through the fibers of his soulful contemplation, he perpetuated her in a thousand ways. The walls of his room were cluttered with trappings from April excursions up Hoanoke Mountain; he painted pictures and bought prints of brightened woods where the sugarberry vine, sign of summer and of April, was sending stubble shoots up the edge of some huge oak tree.

In the glistening nooks of those afternoon forests caught like a single word by the eye of the 5 and dime photographer there was the peace of freedom, the rite of true existence set above what men must be.

In his collection there was a view of Hoanoke Mountain herself, a huge battlement of diorite, like a medieval castle at the side of a meandering river. She was gray and the sun on the lower edges of her stones cast a spy-glass glow onto the side of her underlying fan. She was guardian of hills and valleys that lay beyond, 700 feet below her topmost climb. He had gathered much from her, the power of standing on Cove Rock, her natural balcony, and the moist comfort of her hospitality from summer heat at sea level. Her mineral wealth gave him a variety of items for collection, and from her gray-lined surface he gathered some of the best specimens, now shelved there beside her picture. She was like so many satisfactions, at once light and shade, warmth and coolness, sympathy and strength. He had known of her from his earliest years when his grandfather carted his sister and him up her rolling lower slope piggy-back and said, "watch out for the yellow rag weed; if it touches you you'll sneeze and won't be able to stop." There in the picture was the yellow, and he thought how delightful it would be to sneeze once again under the spell of ragweed.

April's warm return on Hoanoke had always brought the colors his mind feasted on. There were patches of red bells here and there, and the spring green buds and leaves of the spruce not yet fully grown were searching out to the touch of the sun. One whole side of the highest slope was covered with hemlock, he recalled, the fullest green; and at their top on the same incline a clump of pines stretched themselves into what he imagined was the form of a camel. These unmoving pines never lost their color, seeing to it that the camel remained where it was throughout the year; it had always been there on that slope, and it never reached the top of the mountain. In mid-April the maples had begun to bud around the camel and it was no longer the mountain's only soul. In his early days he watched for the beginning of this growth, and on the first Saturday after he had seen it come each year, he climbed Hoanoke and stood on Cove Rock, possessed the power of his mountains and proclaimed to his soul the advent of his own rebirth. Now would begin another year: May and June to follow, months of lasting spring, honeysuckle, the new garden in the back yard, bee hives, and the buzzing swarm of free flight.

The picture also brought to his thoughts the sound of the bob-white and her unstopping summer call, the late afternoon song she had to sing in his grandmother's back yard. Down across the slope that bordered the garden of purple and yellow irises she joyously called to be answered; she sought to be answered, and he sought to answer her. In those days he had mentally changed places with her many times, and he tasted her life and pleasure in walks along the gullies and grass of her habitat. He went often to lie under the pasture oak and there wait for the sound "bob-white, bob-white." From time to time it seemed that the call would be saddened, and he wished that the animal could speak to him and understand that he could feel her pain too. And while there under the tree time passed and he lay still in the pursuit of dreams and glories, his own portion of beatitude and fulfillment, Hoanoke called out from beyond, stalking his grandmother's house above and shadowing her front yard evergreens, calling them alone, like a mother, quietly passing over them as the sun passed her last rise and night counted him in its hand. And each year these things had come and gone.

He had established an empathy (in his thoughts at least) with Winslow Homer, some of whose landscapes hung above his settee. The placid scenes of Homer's bright and open imagination called on his desire to hold something beautiful on

a canvas of his own. His empowered experience in all the calls of natural scent and sight told him that someday he would paint such a scene. But he could not believe that it would be soon. He still grasped too much the outer truth of things: the inner search was not complete, his studies were as yet too sombre, too impoverished; but this life, this training, this world of his, he felt sure would one day bud out like the plants of April and no longer would he speak only to himself of his truths, but to all of life; to every man he would say, "behold this soul which has seen all of reality."

The few people with whom he had enough contact to allow a view of his gallery were surprised at what they felt was a lack of taste in his collections. A college man, he had been told, should find soul expression a little more esoteric than these simple emotional Victorian travesties. At first he was unhappy over such remarks, especially from the students of his own art classes who, it seemed to him, lacked even basic communication with the inner meaning of things. But he had known this difficulty before, and it was too hard a task, he felt, to begin a friendship with any of them. His recent transfer and the newness of the school, the oblivion and fright which held the past six months of his life—these things guided him into quiet and happy longing for summer and home. Homer's pictures satisfied that desire as long hours passed with his recollections. It was as if each leaf in all the prints on his wall could contain an unending reality, that he could see beyond any green or red color there the substrate of reality itself, and by that vision he could fill all the pages of a thousand books with the truth of their perfection and the horror of his own limitations. Any act he could recall from his childhood, any good deed of his past life, was an unmeasurable atom of the reality that April growth represented. He wanted freedom from the forces that compelled him to be himself; he wanted oblivion out of knowledge; he wanted to measure himself against the world and its human contradictions. And in that way he found himself hating, withdrawn, destructive of verbal and physical incongruities. Where was there hope if men could not know their own hearts; if in truth, they could not each day walk a new way and follow a single rightness to selfhood? His thoughts gave him selfhood that the world refused to grant, and he easily lived in them. If he could have a thought of something purposeful, a memory of reasoned action from any past deed, the analysis of that thought could reduce his curse of self and humanity for a time. New pictures brought new thoughts, and from time to time he paced the floor in the ecstasy of mental peace, dwelling on the reconstruction of a satisfied moment from the past.

There was not really much wall space in his room, for in his studies he had needed the usual large window for natural light. And when the rooms were rented he had not thought much about the lack of any unbroken wall surface. Three doors broke into the area of one side of the small parlor: to the bath, to the kitchen, and to the back porch. That left only one wall on which to hang his collection of thought and inspiration. He had silently contracted the flat as soon as he had been able to arrive at the University.

He had come on a very normal but rainy day, and much of his consciousness was with what he had left behind him. He made the rain furnish him a peace-gathering lament; he sat in the middle of the bare room with his belongings, and put his head in his hands. The coldness of the flat pushed him into a strained gathering of his hammer and nails, and like a circus jog-poler he raised a lavish and sympathetic background about his personal show (only a center ring, however) and released himself to the joy of beholding familiar sights once again hanging around him.

The landlady, a small sprite with unbalanced eyesockets and one small wisp of hair coloring her otherwise dim and petty face, found the fact that he was immediately disfiguring her walls with the prints a near reason for eviction. When she had seen the wall weighted down with what she termed fancy junk, she had told him to take it down or move out. He had spoken few words to her even in the transaction for renting the room, but then he defended himself with promises to repaint the flat before he moved. After she had left that time and he sat once again to recount his feelings and plan for the first day of class, he began to organize the battle which he eventually built against her. With this initial contention she was to him the exemplar of all evil, and as he saw her more and more she became uglier. It was easy for him to make her the subject of many hatreds: she was humanity and his world was her feebled loss. In time he disdained even her presence. She found it necessary to check up on him, an act which he eventually proposed to himself to be nothing but the envious world sending a protagonist against what threatened its own destruction. He believed that on any day she might begin an all-out war with his soul, step through his door (to which it seemed she viciously guarded a key), and with a hoard of ugly sprites of her own kind battle him into loss of sense and truth. He presumed immediately that she hated him also; he waited in fear for her to come, though he knew as time passed that she entered his room frequently while he was at class, and when he heard her knock he sat stiffly; sometimes he would stand and stare at her, thinking that would make her visit shorter, but always she did the same things; she walked past his desk into the kitchen, looked into the oven of the stove, turned on the small light over the sink, adjusted the knobs on the window and then turned to him and spoke. He dreaded her words and her cold stare, for both were like something black and void. She would push the single wisp of hair that fell on her forehead back into place under the plaits at the side of her head and then extend her hand. "I have come for the rent money," she would say in impersonal tones.

He wished each time that she would vary that phrase, say it in a different way or at least change the expression on her face. She did not. And he never knew what to say to her except "yes," or "very well," or on occasion, "I will get it." He then would turn to his desk and put twelve dollars into an envelope. She had told him that it was a special rate to students of the University and that it was a blessing. She always grunted an inarticulate remark or two under her breath as she left the room and turned her head in the direction of the wall that held his paintings.

Her posture was grudging and unstable. He perused his imagination for a prototype of her manner and recalled his childhood fear for Hattie Black, the lean woman who sat on the front porch of her Tettgar Street house for most of each day and fanned herself with a Harris Funeral Home fan. She put her moccasined right foot on the porch banister and sat with an unsmiling face; and he remembered that once she had thrown a brick at him from the porch and had called him a damned mean puke. That minute he had stepped bold-footed into her pansy bed with disposed anger. Hattie had disliked him more than any of the neigborhood children though she verbally took the life of each of them at one time or the other. But he knew she pondered more on her distaste for him because she had a base hatred for his parents. The house his family owned had first belonged to Hattie and her husband. His father had bought it on the rebound, for sale because of debts. Washington Black had been a drunk and a losing gambler, and the house which he had built for his 1927 bride had gone to the highest bidder while he sat coddling a bottle of gin in the front yard. After the auction Hattie

had managed to buy the present Tettgar Street house a block away, and he knew that her daily front porch pose was a vigil to see that nothing ever happened to harm what she still felt rightly belonged to her. She watched his father's house with fixed eyes and considered all who lived there intruders.

He had certainly never understood Hattie and he never felt sorry for her in the least. Since those days of petty warfare with her, she had represented something of the cruelty that he found everywhere in the world, and in his mind he had helped to make her a pariah: gattoothed, lecherous; she was sombreness like a trip home from a bright day on Hoanoke; she was fruitlessness like the cry of one of his grandfather's sick hens; she was despair, like the frenzy of his father's rabid Irish setter. And passing time allowed her to become eternally part of his mind's outlook, an impulse, a dread, a torment. She had a way of protracting her eyes into little goblin beads and curling her hair in small ringlets that made her face haughty. He had reveled many times under her facial expressions and dreamed once or twice over the years of her gaudy and purposeless smile. She had appeared in his dreams as a faraway figure in a white robe remarkably beautiful as he looked at her from the back. In each of the dreams he had remembered stretching out a hand to the figure and following nearer to it as he passed by. And then quickly the figure had turned to him and had displayed Hattie's face and her sporish smile. She called him closer; he fought not to go, but his loosened nerves could not act and he followed his crawling arm to touch her. She did not hurt him; there was no pain to his touch, only the disgust of looking at her smile. So many times he had remembered being taunted and laughed at, and Hattie was that feeling in person.

Now the landlady seemed to possess that cruelty, a ready battle for his soul. She was ugly and small; she was uncompromising and unlettered, and though she depended on him for part of her income, she disliked him for being in her way. He thought of the hours he had spent as a child waiting for Hattie's back to turn so that he might avenge his overturned feelings in scattering red dirt on her front porch, or clipping the buds on her peonie bushes, or stealing the first bloom of the back yard peach tree, or calling her secret names, or breaking the glass of her pantry window. Then he wanted to do those things to the landlady.

He waited and April had come again; class had been no burden for the past month, but he gained no reward, doing his work indifferently. He had painted and spent time in his room, fearful of the loss but anxious for some first sign of spring. He had let his mind soar into prolonged ecstacies, developing a moodiness that shook his own heart when he thought about it. But he contentedly sought some new expression either on his canvasses or with attempts at verse. He was no poet, he knew, yet much of what he thought seemed easily written down. Over the months too, the distrust of the landlady had not ended; his mind never completely eased itself under her gaze nor did he find the courage to speak to her about it. He had, however, not been surprised to see her suspicions and his acquiescence to them becoming routine. Her visits to his room had still followed the usual pattern, at least when he had been there, and when he had settled his mind to her inquiries, the need to avenge himself crept into his mind less frequently.

Still, he had lamented her distrust, recalling more completely the image of Hattie Black. Several times he had run from her presence under the shame of his imaginings about her, but thoughts of other things and the quietness of being once again settled and at work had generally sublimated all but a few encounters. In duller hours he had done several studies of both Hattie and the landlady. He

had been pleased with the preliminaries on the landlady and had placed them locked in his desk for later inspection and redraft. He had felt perhaps her sketch would be a good subject for memory technique class because of the accuracy with which he imagined her face. His studies on Hattie lacked something, however; he saw her face well enough in his mind and recounted enough of her personality to have a good mental image of her. He stroked perfect lines and formed an outline that presented her in all detail. Yet when it came to sketching the outline on canvas his hands could not follow his mind and he consigned the study sheets to the trash pile.

Beneath his conscious thought he had gathered an aversion to seeing her again, and he had thought that the canvas representation might all too well bring her into his life as more than a subject for his work. He had felt the need of presenting some technique for showing that aversion though, for that indeed was a good expression of his art. If he could let the emotion with which he had received her manner flow into some constructed image then he would have succeeded in setting down much of what life meant to him.

His short peace was not to last, for the portrait soon became something he *had* to do. It was not merely a means of displaying human depravity which sickened him, not even a way to release his personal misgivings for the world's incongruities, but it had begun to call on his soul as the first stroke of his masterpiece, a first show of what he had to say to the world.

He had not understood why he so despoiled his thought with Hattie Black; he had assumed that the suffering he underwent must have something to do with his abilities, that he, like all people who see the inner meaning of things, should through hurts become speaker for other men who had not been likewise gifted. He should have to hate for awhile only.

He had not minded hating.

□

The light of day pressed unmarked and uncluttered against his sun window and centered itself around his stool. He sat in his studio smelling the afternoon shade, restless but happy over April. He guided his thoughts over the world of his imagination and briefly looked over the rejected canvasses that lined the baseboards of the walls. With each of them he recalled the moment at which inspiration had said "paint" and his thought over the forces that had formed the idea he wanted to show. Dim and stinted, the attempts of the winter months seemed so uncolored and unplanned. They had a spontaneous sadness about them which gathered into a forboding tremor and sounded through the room. They called his last gaze always toward the studies in his desk drawer, the portraits of Hattie Black, unfinished and waiting for his brush. Their blackened backgrounds, which he without their presence easily imagined, were heavy with erasures and dabbings of turpentine thinner, and only a faint trace of flesh appeared on the faces he had tried to show. Two such drafts had come almost to completion just short of being Hattie's perfect likeness, yet some stroke on each had ruined the end and had left them smeared with palette scrapings. The finished canvas of the landlady was underneath Hattie's, and he had not removed from it the chalked-in grade of "B" which it had received from the technique class instructor.

That canvas, he thought, had been painted almost perfectly, the dull shades about her eyes and the tiny wisp of hair hanging at the edge of her face, so much a part of her character, making her almost alive. The color scheme, purple,

umber, and red, together with the flesh of her face, however, made her completely lifeless and rudely grotesque. She was on the canvas as she was in reality to him, deathly and volatile, and the leery image which he had made of her wandered through his mind when he could not be thinking of other things.

Before him also were studies of more pleasant things. When he had first come to the University he had wandered the spacious campus for a place to be alone with his thoughts during class breaks. He had wanted a hidden corner with trees and a few hedges or shrubs that he could use for outdoor sketching. The campus, old and ill-planned, had not offered much. It rambled, with many hills, each covered and defaced by a dormitory, and if not that, a Victorian gazebo or a set of concrete benches and no shrubbery. The land seemed so barren to be so expansive, and he found the attempts to cover the lack of green things there with rock paths, gateway grills, and chalk benches, a complete effrontery. Some of the paths wound in circles and were awkwardly narrow and full of cigarette butts. One area bounded by a few large and shadowy pines had in its midst a sort of makeshift baseball diamond. He had seen its green at a distance and had been elated with it. He ran to it in smiling satisfaction, and when he had discovered that its inner courts were bare and muddy from ball games, his happy disposition sank into curse. The circular walkways were disappointing, for the end of each was completely apparent; there was no adventure in them, and their unending windings were an annoyance.

In the late afternoon of that first day he had followed the circling paths and unconsciously led himself toward the end of the campus and down an incline onto a heavily planted ridge at the edge of an old cemetery. There lay a grand forest aligned on two sides by a backwash stream apparently flowing out of the city sewage system. Trees and shrubs and scores of winter berry bushes grew from its blackened earth, and though the stench of the river raked his nostrils he threw up his hands and sat down at the roots of the first barren black oak. He leaned against the strong base of the tree, and from within the wood he saw a bright, strong beam break the darkness before him. The light of a fading sun filtered through the barren limbs of the great trees above him and like a diamond displayed on black velvet, seemed all the more dazzling because of the void from which it came. He had found another more pleasant world, and in the brief dusk that drew out its own inner plan before him, he sought the security of home, and at the other end of the forest hidden in darkness he imagined that he saw Hoanoke moving slowly toward him to enfold his world there within herself and in her warmth nurse him again into ecstasy.

The next day he had returned to the place. As time passed he had begun to spend most of his afternoons sitting quietly at the foot of one of its oaks and painting a new view of some part of what was before him. The canvasses at his baseboard were those collected efforts. Some five or six of them displayed the backwash stream itself in some way or other. Quite surprisingly, when the smell of the sewage was removed from his mind, he saw the stream as something singularly quaint and alluring. It fell from a huge bank at an unexplored end of the clearing in which he usually sat, meandered loosely around the back of a clump of oaks in front of him, and then returned to the other side of the forest. When he looked at the stream and listened to the wind swishing the tortured branches of the trees above him, he thought that he was on an island in the sea and that the blessed things above and around him were a protection from something slowly gliding in from the world beyond, something he could not know or understand and some-

thing which because of his fortress there he need not really fear. In this he was at peace, and that quiet seemed to show in his paintings. They spoke to him lucidly and he breathed deeply into their memories: the thought of their simple images gave him a singularity, a soul, a sort of lonely leadership that moved only him. Perhaps the people beyond him spoke of him in less praising terms; his name was unknown, his heart unexpressed; no one had bought any print of his, no careful study had placed his name in a list of up-and-coming artists. He longed for that—for a recognition from one person, now. He did not know what any one professor thought of his work. He had little to do with them and never went for criticism outside class. They enjoyed his work as a curiosity, perhaps, as the flayed workings of someone who is caught with his own importance, the desire of a young man with a drastic ambition. But how could they know one way or the other? These questions hurt him. He confided only to the walls of his room and to the images of his soul put out before him in the dabs of paint he carefully pressed against the canvas. The professors had spoken of him as odd; several comments proffered some excitement into his desires when one of his small trappings of the bedecked backwash stream received an "*extraordinary, how did you conclude this?*" He never answered, presuming that art teachers allow for the frustration of recognition and particularly for the apparent embarrassment of someone like himself. His grades had been good though only occasionally exceptional, and he had returned often to the backwash stream for inspiration and moments to be alone. There, it seemed, he could think of himself in a true light and separate fancies and glories from absolute facts. He really wanted to know his place with people around him, but when encounters with the other students were embarrassing, he could not remain with them. He felt as if they always wanted to pity him. It seemed that they were forced to be polite, that they had to hunt words for him, that they wanted to know him but not his world. That was a depraved curiosity, he thought, for in the school from which he had transferred, the students had at least been spontaneous with him. He had never needed to manufacture a conversation with any of them, nor did they have to wonder about what he was thinking. Those things were apparent: they left him to himself. Frequently remarks had been made about the Homer paintings shortly after he had allowed two people into his studio; they did not find his ideas compatible with Homer's palette, and eventually he let that fact become a joke with him.

He then wanted no one admited into his thoughts or into his heart.

The other students all had their worlds too; which was, he supposed, why they had been more tolerant of him in his former place of study. At the university now, the students were less than that, principally because the art department was not much to speak of. He damned that fact, that he must be reduced to classes with people who didn't care about what they were studying—some of whom were even mediocre.

When he went home in the afternoons, often after long and unplanned walks to places he did not even know, the darkened stairs to his apartment effaced all his ambitions, and he could remember only what had once been. This he turned out of his mind purely out of fear. He could walk only slowly and listen to his steps die away flight by flight, turn a key and walk into a quietness that was more wholesome. But, that dread distance between the last thought on a long walk and the door of his apartment was a complete horror. It was a waste of time, a flight away from best truth—oh, a forced 20 minutes into the world of the people outside him.

□□

The room was restlessly cold after awhile and his stool had grown uncomfortable. His thoughts returned from the distance lying within the canvasses at the baseboard and with a beckoned intention to succeed he looked once again to the desk for his pictures of Hattie Black. He felt the spirit of some guiding inspiration, somewhere glowing above his fancies like a prolonged and halfway pleasant pain the resolution of which would bring joy. He prepared an easel and opened the window; the sun must shine for this event; it would guide his hand this time, and his thought would not falter. Perhaps this time he would even remove some of the portention from Hattie's eyes. Maybe this time he could love her. What was he feeling? He wrangled at the paint tubes and they opened for him with complete cooperation . . . start with white, today he would use white.

He pushed his thought into each tube; he changed the canvas to the best of his six styles, languished over the brushes that fell by his side, but did not pick them up. The joy of inspiration was too much with him; he flung things, he measured the walls and brightened his mind and heart with a laughable tune. Then he turned at last to the key that would unlock his desk and permit his now-creating hands to draw out and repress the canvas studies inside. Opening the drawer, he carefully felt for the last canvas, the bottom one which he knew would stare at him in disgust. But he did not care then; his mind could bear only the thought of his idea; he would take the last stroke on the painting of Hattie Black and she would be alive again; he could stand her this day; he could forget his hatred this day.

He scrambled nervously and his heart beat with tortured anxiety, for he felt that he must act quickly. His hands, his heart, could not hold for long in such exuberance, and he could be happy only so long as his inspiration remained. His shaking hand grasped four canvasses in the top of the drawer. Before this time there had been six of them. A quickened dread came over him; something was missing, and when he pulled the mounted trappings from the drawer he let his whole mind sink into a rhythmic uproar. The two portraits of Hattie Black were gone.

He did not think; he slumped, he cried, and then he accused. The landlady, the landlady had taken them—she could have been the only one. No reason pervaded his emotion; no ideal could release his thought; he did not know why he could accuse her, or how, and such distinctions of purpose or motive made no play on his heart. He merely accused: that was all he could do, and beneath all his horror and clouded rage he entertained a heightened vengeance.

In the clear horror of his mind he ceased to believe anything or know anything and the plaintive anxiety of his past humiliations came to the top of his thoughts; he must have his paintings returned!

A perverse quiet remained in the room all the while, and he stood numb before the large opened sun window, looking out only a short distance, for his eyes had receded into the top of his skull and he was a human soul without dignity or right.

A quiet knock at the door entered his silence and he tore to answer it in utter oblivion; and with its opening he let into his uncollected thought an image of the landlady. She was there standing at the door, and under her arms she held both his sacred portraits.

His recessed eyes followed the lines of her staggered frame from head to foot and fixed themselves hopelessly on the canvasses she held. She was ugly beyond all his earlier thoughts of her and now she was more than that: a thief, the leader of his feared rhythms and demons who were ready to destroy him at her first command.

He would not let them act first; he would not die under their perversion and he knew at last that what was before him must be destroyed.

Both his hands like some horrible and restless machine clamped strongly about her shoulders, and slowly he let his great fingers tighten about her throat. She screamed in horror; with each scream he tightened his grip until exhausted by the fear in his own soul he collapsed into the waiting hands of policemen. They came from every corner of the air about him, they stifled him in obtuse endeavors to hold him down, and in their weighted powers his heart had become clouded beyond any hope of sensible activity. He felt as though the whole world had died around him and there was no one to hold its last remnants in place but him. The feeling of loneliness was an anguish, for it prodded him and burned at his mind so severely that he could do nothing but cry. All he could think of was that he had been betrayed, that he must be dead too; and he cried out from the bottom of all that was ill and sick about him "bitch, damn bitch." And he cried it again and again.

It made him a child again and he remembered with the tortures of the dying moment the day of his grandmother's death when, languished and confused, he had watched the woman's face in the coffin and wondered why, so still and real, she did not breathe. He could not believe then that she was dead for she had been too much a part of his world, that unshakeable world. Yet she had lain there white and full of the acid embalming fluid that made funerals unbearable by its smell. It had been the smell not of death, but of despair, and now in the onslaught of the blue uniforms and their starry buttoned chests enclosing him with chains he began to fall into a dream.

The darkened studio was haunted with whimpers of discord and all his hatreds stared back at him from the corners of walls that seemed now unfamiliar. His paints danced in lines against each other and he imagined them parading into a single maelstrom where their color was absorbed. Every color was there, bright and beckoning, but as they passed in and out of their meeting place the point of their eclipse became a blackened mass. There he thought of the easter egg dyes he and his sister had mingled as children, mixing all the leftovers from the first dyeing into a single cup. The color had always turned out black, but he had each year hoped that once it might be golden. Now his paints had turned on him in the same way. They were the last possible hope for his escape; perhaps they would turn gold and take him from the hands of his captors, but he knew that they would not; it was not time for the gold yet. The day of his best faith had not come; he could not expect to be happy yet, and he raised his voice in further curses while he fought against the arms that caught hold of his legs and feet.

□□□

He awoke with bound arms in the back of what appeared to be an ambulance, and encircling him he saw the dim faces of white-clad demons. He tried to move but could not; he tried to think; in a sudden jerk he sat up hampered by the great arm of one of his captors. And in the few seconds that he saw what was outside his window he locked his mind in another quiet horror. Before him lay the huge parapets of a hospital and he knew what it was for. The reins of his personified sublimation process drew on his mind, and in an instant he believed himself to be at Hoanoke's foot; beyond him would lie a thousand joys for again it was April and he was free. He turned his mind upon the past and in solace thought of all that had gone before this day. Something of chance was to bring each moment into a reincarnation and he breathed quietly as his dreams began once more.

THE ROAD OF THE VALLEY *is a plumb line*

Road of the valley like a plumb line
full and terraced and treed at sight
holds a mystery of age and comfort
and of wisdom in the green realm . . .
of cherry beans and persimmon trees
plowed and met with the colors
of coming ripened days
And of rained-in roots and shoring sprouts
and the love of calling sun.
All in the valley along the road of descent;
Brown, call the earthy singing of my way, and I walk
a further place just to wonder
what is next? What is next
the free-flight swarm of the honey combs!
the pheasant painted aglow!
the starting murmur of hickory spring
and a few goodies from thereafter,
everafter calls and windy bushes
And a Bob-White I cannot see.

Lonely homestead out of the land-called days
the hill upon me has decorated
beyond its own truth the rightness
of what is before all,
the lonely being of satisfaction
And look, some pail should have been gathered but
looks better to sit on the trough—
and the birds that sway the sound of air
tuck the mirth of swarming breezes
under their wings to spry about
with a gust of humility.

And look, I have seen the willow sun
and parting pigeons lose themselves
at the turn of a wing,
invisible in this coming flight,
but let the sun come, and they glow
out of themselves a color of dawn
and I know that they are there.

And the road of the valley is a plumb line
its straight way ending now
because its designer has moved it to discord.

And the road of the valley is a plumb line

—ROBERT EARLY

Frank Bernat once again fuses his sarcasm with verse. A senior English major at the Abbey, Mr. Bernat is from Arlington, Virginia. He feels that most literature written by American students is Romantic—terribly so.

□

Margaret Bryan was a special student at Belmont Abbey when she wrote on "Becket." She is from Mount Holly, North Carolina.

□

Gerard Sherry is editor of the *Georgia Bulletin*. His essay "Freedom of Speech within the Church," originally given as an address to the senior class of Belmont Abbey College on Class Night, June 1, 1964, seems to the editors too significant and valuable to consign to the dim regions of bygone commencement-week addresses.

□

David Van Zile is a sophomore at Belmont Abbey. His main interest in academics is with the natural sciences, but he finds time to devote his talents to fine arts. This is Mr. Van Zile's second year with *Agora*.

□

Harry Golden, best-selling author *(Only in America, For 2¢ Plain, Enjoy, Enjoy, Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes)*, social and political commentator, syndicated columnist, editor of *The Carolina Israelite*, and valued friend of Belmont Abbey College, delivered the address *Cursillos in Christianity* to a *Cursillo* meeting at Michigan State University, on August 20, 1964.

□

Brother Robert Early Obl.S.B. is a member of the religious community of Belmont Abbey. While working in the college library, he has contributed his talents in painting, writing, and composing to the Abbey community.

□

Donald Neuland is a senior at Belmont Abbey who has a keen interest in contemporary literature, especially "beat" poetry. He is from Arlington, Virginia and previously contributed to the 1963 *Agora*.

THE STAFF: DONALD H. CRESSWELL, EDITOR.
REVIEWERS: BILL BAMBACH, FRANK BERNAT,
WILLIAM HALLAHAN, JOHN HAYDEN, DONALD
REULAND, GEORGE PROUDFOOT, JOHN SCHA-
POCHIS, ALAN WILLIS. ADVISOR: GEORGE HERNDL

AGORA