VOLUME XXIV, NO. 18
MAY 5, 1971

SHAKESPEARE'S REVOLUTION

REASONED analysis and exercise of the critical faculties are an unavoidable part of the attempt to meet the multiplying problems of human life, and this seems especially the case today, when the age itself is so largely the product of intellectual activity. Yet there comes a time when the brightest minds encounter only a broken field of contradiction and dilemma. This is a time when whatever is proposed can be rejected as either flawed or impractical. There is now a general feeling that all alternatives have been exhausted, since everything we know has been tried and found wanting, and thoughtful men wonder if they must not resign themselves to an interval in which only Passionate Believers are foolish enough to want to take charge.

Perhaps they are already in charge of some departments of our lives. There is certainly no over-arching conception of the meaning of human life which unites the people of modern societies in efforts for the common good. Maintaining the coherence of social structures is now a chief concern of political thinkers, and it is generally conceded that the short-term goals of self-interest are not sufficient to order the centrifugal energies of a vast collection of "free" individuals all bent upon private purposes. Nor do the warnings that all these divisive tendencies need to be brought under "control" have any noticeable effect.

Conceivably, the men who try to understand these things, who hope to find guidance for the responsible members of society in their search for remedies, should begin to think in another way. The mind, after all, is enriched by two kinds of thinking. One is essentially logical and formally metaphysical. This is scientific thought at its best, and we cannot do without it. The other sort of thinking, even more important, takes place in a matrix of imagery, often of art or poetry. The one imposes order and exercises control, the other stirs the imagination. Plato, for example, used both.

What, then, is the central problem of modern society? It lies in the conception of the individual in relation to the social whole. The elementary considerations are clear enough. The good of the individual has no meaning apart from society, since man is a social being as well as an individual. His polarities of self-existence and social existence need each other and obtain their content through contrast with each other. The good of one is therefore in some sense the good of the other, but *how this works* remains obscure. The tendency is to define the good of one in terms of the other, which plainly leads to disaster. On the other hand, it seems certain that the tensions between the two sets of values cannot be eliminated. In a thoughtful paper on this question (in *Interpretation* for the Winter of 1970), Marvin Zetterbaum says he thinks that there can be no resolution of these tensions. We could formulate the problem abstractly as requiring a conception of the self which identifies the one with the many, but this presents so many contradictions to our way of thinking (and feeling) that hardly anyone would be willing to adopt it. How, it must be asked, could there be a general ground of conviction for this idea?

Someone might answer that the birds and the bees succeed. Their social unities are all, so to speak, spontaneous. But they, it will be said, are not "free." Can free intelligences accomplish the same glorious concert of behavior as social animals, simply by choice? That would be one way of setting the problem. But it also generates what seems an insoluble psychological mystery, since it invites credence to the proposition that a man can feel opposition to some aspect of himself. No ordinary logic will suffice to win acceptance of such a proposition. Yet it plainly suggests investigation of the implications of Ruth Benedict's idea of a synergistic society.

This brings us to Shakespeare's Revolution. True understanding, which is for Shakespeare the one thing of importance, and therefore his revolution,

comes only to twice-born men. Understanding is born from an ordeal of deprivation and pain. The man who has everything he wants asks no questions. He is content with his temporary pleasures. He does not look around. As with Job, only the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune will prod him to the threshold of maturity, and even here he must take the step across it himself. Hamlet did not succeed. Prospero did. The old Duke found himself on the island, and then returned to Milan a reborn and wiser man, knowing that he had a work to do in the world. He went (almost) alone into the desert and came back to apply what he had learned. So with many of the other plays. As Goddard says in *The Meaning of Shakespeare:*

> . . . this theme of the King, Prince, Duke, or other person of high estate losing his place or inheritance only to recover it or its spiritual equivalent, after exile or suffering, in a sense in which he never possessed it before, is repeated by Shakespeare over and over. All stemming in a way from that early and under-valued study of King Henry VI, *Measure for Measure, King Lear, Timon of Athens, Coriolanus, Anthony and Cleopatra,* and parts of *Pericles, Cymbeline,* and *The Winter's Tale* are built on this situation. They all, in one way or another, contrast with and supplement *Hamlet,* whose hero propounds the same problem, wavers on the edge of a fresh solution, only to offer in the end the old erroneous answer. They all, in various keys, reiterate the theme of Timon of Athens: "Nothing brings me all things."

In the tragedies, awakening comes with death and deprivation. It is as Ortega said: only the shipwrecked man, the man who has been smashed by circumstance, can have a clear head. Is this really "true"? Well, Shakespeare thought so, but a play is not an article of belief. Yet the tragic view of life is itself a philosophy of transvaluation. As Harold Goddard says:

> Romeo falls in love with Juliet at first sight but he loves her utterly only when she lies "dead" at his feet. Hamlet realizes what Ophelia is to him only when he has driven her to madness and death and is literally with her in her grave. Othello recognizes the divinity of Desdemona only after he has killed her. Lear "sees" Cordelia fully only when she is dead in his arms. Anthony becomes conqueror of himself only when he believes that Cleopatra has committed suicide, and Cleopatra is translated into fire and air only when her Emperor has proved his faith by taking his own life. The number of repetitions o f this theme or situation in the Tragedies is startling and it is continued in modified form in the last group of plays. Posthumus discards his Italian weeds and his shame only when he believes he has murdered Imogen. Leontes falls truly in love with the "dead" wife he has wronged only when she is transformed into a statue. Symbolically this last instance might stand for all. The "illusion" of loss permits the senses to see life as if it were a work of art. In how many cases imagination is the child of death: in tragedy generally of death itself, in comedy often of a false report of death—death being the supreme "nothing" that brings "all things." In the dramatic romances especially Shakespeare seems to be asking whether some great shock short of death cannot awaken the imagination as death does itself in the Tragedies. In banishment, exile, or separation Shakespeare finds such shocks, but ever these understudies of death, as they might be called, are rather the necessary condition than the cause of the awakening. Prospero on his island is not enough. There must be a Miranda too. And in all the plays where this theme of exile is conspicuous, of which *The Tempest* is the typical and terminal one, we never fail to find childhood or childlike innocence preserved into maturity as seed for the soil that has been plowed by adversity. . . . Shakespeare is the last one to advocate the closing of eyes to fact. Only he keeps faith in the power of the imagination to subdue fact to its own shape. *The Tempest* seems like the summation and consummation of what he has been saying on that subject all his life. Prospero, when expelled from his dukedom, is a narrow and partial man. Thanks to his child, the island, and Ariel, he gives promise of coming back to it something like a whole one. But an integrated man is only another name for an imaginative man. And so the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda is not the only union this play celebrates, nor is the island the only symbol of wholeness. On this isle we have found ourselves, Gonzales proclaims in the end, "when no man was his own."

The wholeness, for Prospero, means a return to the social community and the assumption of responsibility at a higher level. But what has this to do with the social problems of the present? It *could* mean that social synthesis comes with recovery from the delusion of narrow, partisan ends, and that this release is not the result of some sagacious logical demonstration but of a dramatic ordeal in human

experience, leading to a richer, more extended sense of self. There is not of course any certainty in this suggestion. But is not lack of certainty a precise characteristic of the condition of human beings, in respect to the stuff and flavor of the maturity not yet reached?

Moreover, if freedom is the foundation ideal of all modern societies, and if *any* achievement would turn to dust if freedom were lost in the process of reaching after better social arrangements, then we might argue that the uncertainty that goes with the growth of free men is not only to be acknowledged as necessary, but also to be preserved as an Ariadne's thread.

Has Shakespeare any other revolutionary doctrine? Goddard finds *Measure for Measure* subversive in root and branch. There are in fact various parallels in this play for what is deemed the last word in modern sophistication and far-out indifference to respectable authority. Shakespeare sometimes chooses his best spokesmen among the most raffish of characters. In his essay on this play, Goddard sidles toward his point in a discussion of the good to be found in many of those accounted evil and "enemies of society." He begins by saying:

> I am not sure that honest readers do not find Barnardine, the condemned murderer, the most delectable character in *Measure for Measure*—he who for God knows how long has defied the efforts of the prison authorities to execute him. We like him so well that we do not wish to inquire too curiously into his past. For my part, I am certain the murder he did—if he really did it—was an eminently good-natured one. "Thank you kindly for your attention," he says in effect, when they come to hale him to the gallows, "but I simply cannot be a party to any such proceeding. I am too busy—sleeping." Let him sleep. Let anyone sleep to his heart's content who puts to rout one Abhorson. He has earned his nap.
>
> Like Falstaff, Barnardine tempts the imagination to play around him. No higher tribute can be paid to a character in a play, as none can to a person in life. The fascination he has for us—he, and in less degree, the rest of the underworld of which he is a member—is partly because these men and women, being sinners, have some tolerance for sin. . . . Never will anyone say of them as Escalus says of Angelo: "my brother justice I have found so severe, that he hath forced me to tell him he is indeed Justice." They are not forever riding the moral high horse. They make no pretensions. They mind their own business, bad as it is, instead of telling, or compelling, other people to mind *theirs* or to act in *their* way. It is a relief to find somebody of whom that is true. . . . For everybody with power—save a few Abraham Lincolns—is, *ipso facto,* professing and pretending all day long. "I am convinced, almost instinctively," says Stendahl, "that as soon as he opens his mouth every man in power begins to lie, and so much the more when he writes." It is a strong statement, and Shakespeare would certainly have inserted an "almost" in his version of it, but there are his works, from the History Plays on, to show his substantial agreement with it. Why does Authority always lie? Because it perpetuates itself by lies and thereby saves itself from the trouble of crude force: costumes and parades for the childish, decorations and degrees for the vain and envious, positions for the ambitious, propaganda for the docile and gullible, orders for the goose-steppers, fine words (like "loyalty" and "cooperation") for the foolishly unselfish—to distract, to extort awe, to flatter and gratify inferiority, as the case may be. Dr. Johnson ought to have amended his famous saying, Patriotism is only one of the last refuges of the scoundrel.

It must be confessed that not everyone who reads *Measure for Measure* will find in it the same stuff of revolution that is there for Dr. Goddard. Well, this, too, is consistent with the sort of growth or progress that is possible for free men. The intensive exercise of free minds may also be a requirement. Philosophical *knowledge* is what is at issue—not plausible or likely theory. The truth about how human beings can find in themselves an identity with both one and many doubtless dawns existentially before it can be formulated in doctrine. As doctrine, it may have no more persuasiveness than the ethics of the great, high religions, which have been known to us for a long, long time.

But we must return to Goddard's reading of *Measure for Measure.* In a speech to the false Duke, Angelo, Isabella says:

> O, it is excellent
> To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
> To use it like a giant. . . .
> Could great men thunder
> As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet;
> For every pelting, petty officer

Would use his heaven for thunder,
Nothing but thunder, Merciful Heaven!
Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Split'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak
Than the soft myrtle; but man, proud man,
Dress'd in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep . . .

Then Goddard says:

> If we do not want a world presided over by a thundering Jove—this play seems to say—and under him a million pelting petty officers and their understudies, and under *them* millions of their victims, we must renounce Power as our god—Power and all his ways. And not just in the political and military worlds, where the evils of autocracy with its inevitable bureaucracy of fawning yes-men, while obvious to all but autocratic or servile eyes, may be more or less "necessary." It is the more insidiously personal bondages to power that should concern us first. Revolution against authority—as Isabella in her great speech did not perceive, and as Barnardine did—begins at home. Let men in sufficient numbers turn into Barnardines, who want to run no one else but will not *be* run by anyone, even to the gallows, and what would be left for the pelting petty officers, and finally for Jove himself, but to follow suit? There would be a revolution indeed. The more we meditate on Barnardine the more he acquires the character of a vast symbol, the key perhaps to all our troubles. Granted, with Hamlet, that the world is a prison. We need not despair with Hamlet. We may growl rather with Barnardine at all intruders on our daydreams, and learn with him that even in a prison life may be lived—independently. Why wait, as modern gospels preach, until we are out of prison before beginning to live? "Now is a time."

This is the wisdom of the social depths, we might say, so long as we limit it to what Barnardine knows and practices. It is not enough, but we should add that nothing that we can know will be enough unless it is practiced, and this was Barnardine's almost unique virtue, that he did what he said. It is the wisdom of the depths, and it is close to being also what we think of as folk wisdom—what is known beyond doubt to the propertyless and the powerless. They know what they know, it having been ground into them. It is this that appeals to Goddard:

> The effect of power on those who do not possess it but wish that they did, Shakespeare concludes, is scarcely better than on those who do.
>
> And here is the deepest reason—is it not—why we prefer the "populace" in this play to the powers-that-be. The vices of the two ends of "society" turn out under examination to be much alike. But the lower stratum has one virtue to which the possessors and pursuers of power, for all their pretensions, cannot pretend: namely, lack of pretension. Here is a genuine basis for envying the dispossessed. Revolutions by the downtrodden, abortive or successful, to regain their share of power have occurred throughout history. The world awaits a revolution by the powerful to gain relief from the insincerities to which their privileges and position forever condemn them. Thoreau staged a one-man revolution based on a kindred principle. If this is what it implies, *Measure for Measure* may yet be banned by the authorities. . . . But no! it is as safe as the music of Beethoven. "The authorities" will never understand it.

So the question for social thinkers is rather: How would men living with no threatening authority over them, not wanting it and not fearing it, and, best of all, not *needing* it, conceive of themselves? It seems evident that the ground of their feeling about themselves would be different. Their sense of identity would be larger, so that the logical contradictions of a self which is both one and many would disappear in the solvent of a life that has already abandoned their ground. We do not suggest that this sort of achievement can be "understood," but only that its reality is within the reach of the future evolution of free human beings.

The Cartesian isolation of one mind and man from every other, as a separate substance, may be a heavy-handed superstition with much evidence against it, to be exposed by living upon other premises. The larger unities of human beings doubtless need to be felt before they can be conceptualized. And we feel only what we live by.

REVIEW
THE "X" FACTOR OF CREATIVITY

THE most useful essays in *Creativity and Learning* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967), edited by Jerome Kagan, fall into two categories. One group is concerned with the repressive effects of present-day education on the creative potentialities of the young, the other with psycho-philosophical speculations on the nature of creativity itself.

David Hawkins, a professor of philosophy, argues against the substitution of words for direct experience of nature in the teaching of science. The subject-matter of science, he says, except in a derivative sense, is not to be found in books. A great many things taught to children in science sessions are not yet, and cannot be, within their experience. The children should realize this, and learn to distinguish what they know from what still remains to be found out. Mr. Hawkins gives some illustrations of this, including the following:

> The direct evidence of chemical atomicity is not to be found in the elementary-school laboratory. Radioactive scintillations from a watchdial? Perhaps, but what absorption in previous subject-matter is implied, to see these as atomic events! The philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach disbelieved in atoms through all the evidence of nineteenth-century chemistry. What convinced him, in his old age, were the phenomena of radioactivity. I would not demand this much for children. Mach was stubborn. The important thing is not to *prove* the reality of atoms, but to bring them alive in the imagination and intellect. Otherwise, why push? To please parents with the appearance of understanding?

This seems a clear reiteration of the main point of Ortega's claim in the introductory chapter of his *Lessons in Metaphysics,* entirely on education, where he contends that the teacher's task is not to "transmit" knowledge but to try to inspire the young to discover it for themselves. The real student, he says, is one who simply refuses to accept *anything* at second hand.

So it is a great mistake to teach science as no more than the vast deposit of impersonal knowledge or fact, now to be learned by the pupil. The knower, as Mr. Hawkins says, "is always the artisan of his personal knowledge." Authentic science cannot be hearsay. This writer continues:

> And here I come to what seems to me to be the crucial and largely unsolved problem of science education (or of any education). Method consists in using knowledge to gain further knowledge. Yet what each individual knows that he can use in this way is, at any moment, a highly individual affair. In reducing our experience to order, the distance we must travel to achieve any component of this order is not a well-defined quantity; for there are many paths to a goal of understanding, and along any path there are *many* available important goals. . . .
>
> But there comes a time for harvesting, gathering, organizing, even programming, and here individual learners must be drawn together under a common discipline. In our schools, this time comes much too early. Or better, it is too little preceded and followed by periods—long periods—of individualized and diversified work of a more exploratory and self-directed kind.

Lawrence Kubie, the psychiatrist, writing on "Unsolved Problems of Scientific Education," provides a general confirmation of this view:

> Recently the dean of a major school of engineering said that he had become convinced of several things: that of this selected student body not more than five to ten per cent become creatively productive; that there are some who demonstrate a high absorptive capacity, but never produce ideas of their own; that there is little correlation between creativity and high marks, or even between creativity and the mere fact of survival through the engineering course; that forty to sixty per cent of all students leave because of failure or else drop out voluntarily in spite of passing grades, and that together these two categories of "drop-outs" include a major share of those with high potential creativity; and that our educational processes tend to destroy the creative potential of a large share of those who survive.
>
> My own observations in other educational fields point to similar generalizations. Yet I cannot pretend that I have conclusive evidence for the truth of this; nor has my friend, nor anyone else. For many reasons, however, I believe that it is possible to study this problem with special precision in engineering, and that a solution here would contribute to its solution in general.

Dr. Kubie goes on to cite evidence that men who did very well in graduate school often peter out in professional life, while poor students who develop slowly make original contributions to their fields. There seems, he says, to be "some 'X' factor in education which plays an important part and which we have not yet learned to recognize or to measure."

The "X" factor of creativity itself seems still more difficult to get at. Forrest Williams, another professor of philosophy, whose essay is titled "The Mystique of Unconscious Creation," believes that attributing creative activity to hidden or unknown psychological depths is the equivalent of making the "Unconscious" the asylum of ignorance, and he finds serious objection to this hypothesis on the even more important ground that it may encourage mere primitivism in thought. The act of creation, he maintains, bespeaks "a human power *at least* as complex and evolved as the power of conceptualization and discursive argumentation." He continues:

> Indeed, beside such exhibitions of intuitive "discernment tact, and delicacy," the discursive activities of consciousness would seem somewhat *less* complex and refined.
>
> Thus located upon, as it were, a Mount Parnassus rising on the landscape of intelligence, creativity draws our attention and, indeed, our admiration toward human consciousness and its powers. In our various portraits of what man is and ought to be, these would seem the functions which represent the better part of man. But if the thesis of a creative unconscious be true, then we shall have to accept an irrationalist conception of human culture that depreciates the conscious life of perception, imagination, and reason to just the degree that it identifies creativity with ontogenetically and phylogenetically primitive forces operating in an infra-conscious region. This would be to say, in effect, that the *toro,* not the *torero,* makes of the *corrida* a subtle science and an expressive art.
>
> Having been misled by an identification of the intuitive with the subconscious, Poincaré was only too understandably reluctant to abide by his own hypothesis of unconscious creation. The underground theory always bears with it an ethic of dark gods, proposing to lend an aura of scientific respectability to an atavistic mystique that, one fears, has only too sure an appeal in every time, ours being no exception. If human culture is indeed created in a pitchblack cave below the functions of perception, imagination, thought, and reasoning that empower our conscious life, then our incalculable gratitude and respect for the creative abilities of a Shakespeare, a von Kekulé, a Molière, a Poincaré, are properly owed to primitive, chthonic forces. We need not be surprised, therefore, that some of the proponents of a creative unconscious less committed than the great French mathematician to the worth of human intelligence, cheerfully score polemical points off clarity in thought, in the same breath that they praise creativity in the arts and sciences. Over the shoulder of the thesis of a creative unconscious, whatever its specific form grimace sooner or later the features of a mankind wittingly or unwittingly confounding the best in itself with the least in itself.

One can agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Williams, yet recognize that there are many difficulties. No doubt the key to the matter is as he suggests—the failure to distinguish between the intuitive and the merely impulsive aspects of human behavior or inspiration. Perhaps there are also "mixtures" of the two—in which an originally visionary perception is converted into only its reflection in terms of a grosser feeling or emotion. One suspects that this often happens in religion, and that the greatest vulnerability of religious devotion lies here.

This would suggest that the psyche is equipped to provide many similitudes of high intuitive vision, in which strength of conviction or certainty may remain, but without subtle perception or discrimination. Hence the wholly justifiable loyalty of serious thinkers like Mr. Williams to the rational, and his desire to raise the creative *above* the rational. This might be a canon of judgment: the truly creative will always bear inspection by the rational faculties, while the merely impulsive depends upon shutting it out.

Some of our trouble may come from supposing that we must find a source for every human quality and attribute in biology or physiology. The idea that mind and certain high faculties of mind may have an independent reality

is not easy for anyone trained in modern anthropology, yet this mode of distinction between the higher and lower in human behavior would certainly assist in forming at least a theoretical view of creativity that does not fall back on a dark unconscious. Plato's doctrine of Reminiscence, for example, is a resource for making this distinction—one that Michael Polanyi recognized and made use of in *The Tacit Dimension,* when considering the capacity of human intelligence to grasp the identity of a whole before the laborious process of studying all the parts.

To ask how a man may know something, apparently without the aid of reason, yet not in violation of reason—this may be one way of formulating the mystery of creativity. Is this knowledge something like a deliberated act that one has come to perform with such effortless skill that it can be called "second nature"? Is creativity an operation at this level of a man's being? Does it fail when some distraction gets in the way? When you think too much about some skills, they go awry. Yet thinking about them was essential to acquiring them.

Lock an essentially creative being up in a time- and space-bound body, obliging the higher intelligence to function through organs of sense, and you may get a qualification of those higher powers exactly like those used by ourselves in everyday life. Yet, once in a while, the splendor of what the being is in essence comes through, giving the poet his unearthly and transcendent imagery, and all the arts their moments of insight into eternity. From this point of view, the problem seems very similar to that formulated by Dr. Rhine and others as the basic question of psychic research: Not, why are we creative—or telepathic—in rare moments, but, why are we not creative all the time? What gets in the way? A better understanding of man's nature might grow out of inquiries from this stance.

COMMENTARY
WHENCE CREATIVITY?

AT the conclusion of this week's Review, it is suggested that the theory of certain psychic researchers—to the effect that the problem of, say, clairvoyance is not why clairvoyant perception sometimes occurs, but why it doesn't occur all the time—is an approach which might throw light on the mystery of creative ability. As shown in Review, Forrest Williams is reluctant to concede that the mystery is solved by attributing the rare powers of genius and originality to "primitive chthonic forces" which lie below the rational in the depths of man's animal nature. They are rather, he thinks, if anything, *above* the rational. Yet Mr. Williams does not develop the idea of supra-rational faculties. Perhaps this is because modern intellectuality has hardly any resources for doing so.

Following up the idea suggested in Review, we recall that Prof. H. H. Price, of Oxford University, years ago proposed that such strange capacities as clairvoyance might have an explanation in Leibnizian metaphysics. In a paper published in *Philosophy* for October, 1940, he said:

> Perhaps what we should seek a causal explanation of is the absence of clairvoyance rather than its presence? . . . Ought we perhaps to assume that Clairvoyance is our normal state, and that ordinary perception is something subnormal, a kind of myopia? . . . The puzzle would then be to explain why the ordinary human mind is in fact aware of so little. We might then conjecture that our sense-organs and afferent nerves (which, of course, are physiologically connected with our organs of action, i.e. with the muscular system) are arranged to *prevent us from attending* to more than a small bit of the material world—that bit which is so relevant to us as animal organisms. We might still have an unconscious "contact"—I can think of no adequate phrase—with all sorts of other things, but the effects of it would be shut out from consciousness except on rare occasions, when the physiological mechanism of stimulus and response is somewhat deranged. In that case, what prevents us from being clairvoyant all the time is—in M. Bergson's phrase—*l'attention a la vie.* If so, we should expect that habitual clairvoyants would be psychologically or psycho-physically "abnormal" or "unbalanced"; or at any rate that their "balance"—I have to speak in metaphors again—would be more easily upset than other peoples'.

Prof. Price points out that in the *Monadology* of Leibniz, "every monad has clairvoyant and telepathic powers, not occasionally and exceptionally, but always, as part of its essential nature." A similar view of the origin of creativity might locate the source of high inspiration and originality in the primordial spiritual nature of the beings involved.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
MISCELLANY

A CURIOUS book—one that should be in every school library or home where there are children—is *The Living House* (Lippincott, 1960) by George Ordish, an entomologist. It is about *all* the inhabitants of an old English house, both animal and human, over a period of four hundred years. If it were necessary to classify this book, you would call it science or nature study, but here what seems an almost endless collection of facts is woven into the story of a house, with plenty of attention to the relation of the insects and small animals who lived in the house, to the succession of people who owned it, through the centuries. All sorts of odd things become known to the reader—such as the fact that the dirt around the stables of sixteenth-century England was regarded as having special value. Urine from the animals led to the formation of potassium nitrate. This was the source of saltpetre in those days, which was an essential ingredient in gunpowder. So, Mr. Ordish says, the needs of the armed forces were served first, then as now:

> In fact the Queen's nitre men could commandeer any stable earth anywhere, dig it up and wash out the nitre and no one could resist them or complain of interference. Naturally, they rarely visited the farms but obtained most of their supplies in the towns, where there were big concentrations of horses.
>
> The Bartons [who built the house] occasionally prepared gunpowder for themselves, but it was very unreliable stuff and after an explosion had blown the roof off an outhouse and killed the young ordnance artificer they gave up the practice.

The old house of this book was built in 1555 in the village of Ashwell in the Weald of Kent, close to the far boundary of Squire Barton's land, to accommodate the needs of the Squire's eighteen-year-old son who was returning home and getting married. It was constructed mainly of oak, both new as well as ship's timbers salvaged from a wreck. There is much about the building of the house, the life of the times, and an account of the Squire's interest in progressive agriculture, which made him comfortable and prosperous, but John Barton and his new wife, the author points out, were not the first inhabitants: the wood-borers were in the house first, and second were the spiders who soon took occupancy. Borers and wood beetles, one learns, have varying and exacting requirements. The furniture beetle, for example, wants hardwood that has aged sixty years, to serve the peculiar needs of its metabolism. At the end of the chapter on these creatures there is this summary:

> This then was the position when John and Mary were married in 1556. There were ambrosia beetles, or pinhole borers both adults and larvae, boring in the new oak beams. As the green timber dried the wood became unattractive to the beetle and was no more attacked, so that the house was free of pinhole borers by March 1557.
>
> Next there were powder post beetles, or *Lyctus*. These were not very numerous because they only attacked sapwood and not much of this went into the building of the house. The starch in the sapwood was soon used up and the wood became of no more use to the *Lyctus*. It was free of them by 1560.
>
> The furniture, or *Anobium* beetle, was a different matter, for, coming in on the wattle and the old ship's timbers, the house was never again free from it. In fact it might be said that Bartons End belonged as much to the *Anobium* as to the humans who lived there; even so, a still more deadly enemy was waiting in the forest—the death watch beetle. Each year it appeared to send out scouts to see if the house was yet ready for it—"appeared" because these scouts were only part of the annual march of adults looking for new territory, most of whom perished. It was nearly a hundred years before the death watch beetle established itself; in order to follow the subsequent history of these insects we must first briefly consider the history of the house in the next four hundred years.

Beetles, spiders, wasps, ants, flies, bats, mice, and birds—all these become either residents or regular visitors at Bartons End—and the life cycle of each one is a part of the book. It is sometimes hard not to develop friendly feelings toward some of these voracious pests, as Mr. Ordish does in

respect to ants, when it comes to giving advice on how to get rid of them.

* * *

It is natural, these days, to have a very gloomy view of the newspaper business. More and more people are finding themselves able to get on without daily papers, by taking a weekly with highlight summaries of the news—which even then reminds one of what Mark Twain said about his correspondence. It is surprising, he said, how few letters need attention if you save them six months before getting down to answering them.

Yet there is evidence in William Rivers' book on journalism, *The Adversaries,* that a new sort of newspaper is getting born, without the millions of dollars which are said to be necessary for such enterprises. High school students ought to know that such things are happening. Mr. Rivers writes:

> There is some hope for a wide-ranging adversary journalism, however. It is evident in the birth of many little weeklies, biweeklies, and monthlies which have sprung up in several states, especially on the West Coast. These are *not* underground papers like the Berkeley *Barb,* which at first attract us with an amalgam of valuable muckraking and hymns to the sex-and-drug culture, then, because so few undergrounders have any real interest in journalism, lose us when the muckraking is all but submerged in a sea of four-letter words, stark pictures, and protests in the platitudes of the New Left.
>
> No, the underground press is quite different from the real adversary press, which questions and challenges pivotal institutions. One of the best is the San Francisco Bay *Guardian.* It has published solid exposés of giant powers like the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the Southern Pacific Railroad, Pacific Telephone, and the influential communications empire which is made up of the San Francisco *Chronicle* and *Examiner,* KRON-TV, and related enterprises.

Following is a policy statement by the editor of the *Guardian,* Bruce Brugmann:

> I aim my derringer at every reporter and tell him, by God, that I don't want to see an objective piece of reporting. . . . But this is not dishonest journalism; it is "point of view" journalism. Our facts are as straight as we can make them we don't run a story until we feel we can prove it or make it stick; we always talk with the adversary and try to print his side as part of the story; he always gets the chance of reply in the next issue (rarely do they, even when I offer in letter or by phone). We run almost all the critical reactions we get to stories; but the point is we don't run a story until we think it is in the public interest to do so.
>
> How do you talk about our major stories, environmental pollution, Vietnam, the Manhattanization of San Francisco, saving the Bay, unless you do some "point of view" reporting? We're not just covering meetings. We're not just checking in with the official sources. We're going after stories, hopefully before they become certifiable facts (as did the Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco—the *cause célèbre* of objective journalism—as did Candlestick Park, as will the Rockefeller Building and the TransAmerica Building and a whole host of things that don't become news until the Planning Commission or the City Council is ready to decide). Along with this come different forms of new journalism: letting participants write their own stuff, using experts with special knowledge, more literary writing, the use of irony, poetry, impressionistic writing—everything, really, that has relevance, and merit, and readability—and goes for the jugular. "Nothing is too good to print in a daily newspaper," Franklin Pierce Adams once said, and it ought to be graven in 64-point Poster Bodoni—hell, 96-point Garamond Bold—on every city editor's desk in the Bay Area.

This is intensive coverage of *local* affairs, where an editor can know what he is doing and exercise a corresponding influence. All that he requires is the support of the community.

* * *

In a paper which compares what he calls "the universal language of children's art" to modernism, published in the Winter 1970-71 *American Scholar,* Robert Motherwell takes dramatic note of what may be a little-known fact:

> Throughout the world, regardless of biological inheritance or cultural conditioning or environment, small children employ an identical repertoire of twenty or so painted signs at precisely the same ages

> in their growth, thus *creating an unqualifedly universal language* (whether the child is French, African, Indian, Chinese, North American or South Sea Islander) in order to express their vision of the world. Perhaps it is owing to my ignorance, but I know of no parallel universality of language among any persons in music or dance, or in the other arts, *above all, not in words. . . .*
>
> What a stupefying fact it is that, as modern anthropologists and psychologists seem to believe, all the small children of the world have a universal language, *painting,* with an identical iconography at the same ages of growth, a language that is taught to them *by no one,* that they need never have seen. A child reared in solitude uses a similar painting vocabulary as his more socialized contemporaries. In painting, the small children of the world have a language even more universal than sexuality (sexuality is culturally conditioned and the painting we are speaking of is not), a language of rudimentary but beautiful signs—a circular scribble, an oval, a circle a square, a triangle, a cross, and so on, colored or not, according to the materials available—with which they construct a completely adequate and beautiful, in its deeply felt drawing picture of the universe, both of inside the dome of their own craniums, and of the visible limits of the dome of heaven, and of everything in between. Who would believe, let alone hope, that a universal language, so universal that not a single exception exists on the whole of our globe, not only exists, but has existed unchanged or untouched since the dim beginnings of mankind, of our human world.

Mr. Motherwell wonders what we do to children, or the, do to themselves, that causes this universal language to be lost at a later age.

FRONTIERS

"The Art of Living Well"

IN a current review of recent major works on the troubles of modern industrial society, the writer points out that a hundred and fifty years ago, in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, European humanists were saying very much what so many embattled critics are saying today. It is true enough. Schiller and Carlyle foresaw the ugly future, and others like William Morris took action against the trend. Today there is a wide gamut of critics, from scholars such as Jacques Ellul and Herbert Marcuse to the anti-pollution campaigners and the publishers of the Whole Earth Catalogue.

It is doubtful that the modern writers have improved very much on Carlyle. And useful and necessary as their analyses are, one supremely important ingredient of enduring change seems consistently left out of their reckoning. They—some of them, at least—say a great deal about what we ought to do, but almost nothing about the kind of human beings we ought to become. A man who lived and worked and wrote in America while Carlyle was writing in England has set an example that might be studied in all its parts.

There is in that pleasant chaos of reading matter referred to as the Manas Library an apparently original edition of some of the writings of Henry David Thoreau, published shortly after his death. It is called *Excursions* and appeared in 1866 in Boston, issued by Ticknor and Fields. It is a long book, containing Thoreau's review of *Natural History of Massachusetts,* published by order of the state legislature, a collection of essays on his walks, one on the succession of forest trees, and discussions of several other subjects. Thoreau on Nature is a tonic and restorative, since he cannot help but think and write as a member of the fellowship of life.

The book begins with a biographical sketch by one R. W. Emerson, which is probably the best introduction to any attempt to understand so strange and wonderful a character. Emerson loses no time in getting at his subject. On the first page he tells how, after Thoreau graduated from Harvard (without distinction) in 1837, he undertook to improve the product of his father's factory, which was lead-pencils. He experimented a while, then brought his new pencil to chemists and artists of Boston, who testified that the pencil was indeed the equal of any made in London. Friends congratulated Thoreau, now, as they thought, on the way to fortune and a fine business career. But Thoreau told them he would never make another pencil. "Why should I? I would not do again what I have done once." A very odd young man who spent his life going for walks, "making every day some new acquaintance with Nature, though as yet never speaking of zoology or botany, since, though very studious of natural facts, he was incurious of technical and textual science."

This is Emerson's portrait:

> At this time, a strong, healthy youth, fresh from college, whilst all his friends were choosing their profession, or eager to begin some lucrative employment, it was inevitable that his thoughts should be exercised on the same question, and it required rare decision to refuse all the accustomed paths, and keep his solitary freedom at the cost of disappointing the natural expectations of his family and friends: all the more difficult that he had a perfect probity, was exact in securing his own independence, and in holding every man to the like duty. But Thoreau never faltered. He was a born protestant. He declined to give up his large ambition of knowledge and action for any narrow craft or profession, aiming at a much more comprehensive calling, the art of living well. If he slighted and defied the opinions of others, it was only that he was more intent to reconcile his practice with his own belief. Never idle or self-indulgent, he preferred, when he wanted money, earning it by some piece of manual labor agreeable to him, as building a boat or a fence, planting, grafting, surveying, or other short work, to any long engagements. With his hardy habits and few wants, his skill in woodcraft, and his powerful arithmetic, he was very competent to live in any part of the world. It would cost him less time to supply his wants than another. He was therefore secure in his leisure.

Well, it goes on in this way, filling out the dimensions of a man whose terrible simplicities become a threat to a man of our time.

> He had no talent for wealth, and knew how to be poor without the least hint of squalor or inelegance. Perhaps he fell into his way of living without forecasting it much, but approved it with later wisdom. "I am often reminded," he wrote in his journal, "that, if I had bestowed on me the wealth of Croesus, my aims must still be the same, and my means essentially the same." He had no temptations to fight against,—no appetites, no passions, no taste for elegant trifles. A fine house, dress, the manners and talk of highly cultivated people were all thrown away on him. He much preferred a good Indian, and considered these refinements as impediments to conversation, wishing to meet his companion in the simplest terms. He declined invitations to dinner-parties, because there each was in every one's way, and he could not meet the individuals to any purpose. "They make their pride," he said, "in making their dinner cost much; I make my pride in making my dinner cost little." When asked at table what dish he preferred, he answered, "The nearest." He did not like the taste of wine, and never had a vice in his life.

We spoke of Thoreau setting an example for the changes that are needed in the world. In one sense this is ridiculous. Apart from the differences in the times—which in any case are only a small matter—there is the fact that no one could possibly imitate Thoreau. The point worth considering is that if more men had felt as he did, acted something like the way he did, and shared in the values he felt to be more important than anything else, the world would now be a very different place. The point is that that is what it takes to change the world—men who *make* it different by caring about different things. Thoreau is a good example for the reason that he stands out in high relief etched in his writings and in the memory of men like Emerson.

In the essay on Walking, he wrote:

> We hug the earth,—how rarely we mount! Methinks we might elevate ourselves a little more. We might climb a tree, at least. I found my account in climbing a tree once. It was a tall white pine, on the top of a hill; and though I got well pitched, I was well paid for it, for I discovered new mountains in the horizon which I had never seen before,—so much more of the earth and the heavens. I might have walked about the foot of the tree for three-score years and ten, and yet I certainly should never have seen them. But above all, I discovered around me,—it was near the end of June,—on the ends of the topmost branches only, a few minute and delicate red cone-like blossoms, the fertile flower of the white pine looking heavenward. I carried straightway to the village the topmost spire, and showed it to stranger jurymen who walked the streets,—for it was court-week,—and to farmers and lumber-dealers and wood-choppers and hunters, and not one had ever seen the like before, but they wondered as at a star dropped down. Tell of ancient architects finishing their works on the tops of columns as perfectly as on the lower and more visible parts! Nature has from the first expanded the minute blossoms of the forest only toward the heavens, above men's heads and unobserved by them. We see only the flowers that are under our feet in the meadows. The pines have developed their delicate blossoms on the highest twigs of the wood every summer for ages, as well over the heads of Nature's red children as of her white ones; yet scarcely a farmer or a hunter in the land has ever seen them.