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A FORMIDABLE ASSIGNMENT

THE tenth conference sponsored by the Institute of the American West was held last August 15-18 at Sun Valley, Idaho. Discussion was on "Parks in the West and American Culture" and was amply reported in *High Country News* for October 1. One speaker pointed out that in 120 nations around the world there are 2,300 national parks and reserves, most of them modeled on the park system of the United States.

How did we get our park system? A historian told the conference that it began with the labors and inspiration of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer and first superintendent of Central Park in New York (1858). The conference devoted much attention to the present-day issue of preservation versus multiple use, various views being presented, but the evident concern on the part of nearly all the participants for the good of the country, the people, and the planet, leads naturally to the question: What in human beings sparks and sustains this attitude, and why isn't it more widespread? Olmsted, one speaker noted, "saw parks as an experiment in democracy." What moved him to think in this way? Others named in the discussions were John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. To whom do we owe our national parks?

In an account of the labors and achievements of Muir, Stewart Udall says in *The Quiet Crisis:*

> Although many years earlier such naturalists as George Catlin, Emerson, and Thoreau had vaguely recognized the need to preserve some of our finest landscapes, the first specific steps toward doing so had been taken only a few years before John Muir arrived in California by a young landscape architect named Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York's Central Park. Impressed by the grandeur of Yosemite Valley, Olmsted and others persuaded Congress to pass a bill to preserve it "for public use, resort and recreation." The measure was signed by President Lincoln in 1864, Yosemite Valley, ceded to the State of California and administered along lines suggested by Olmsted, was the first scenic reserve created by federal action, and the event is a landmark in the history of conservation.

The story of Yellowstone is of similar interest. A group of explorers were so impressed by the drama of the scenery, the beauty of the geysers, the forests, canyons, and waterfalls that the members of this expedition talked about ways and means "of saving a few superlative parts of primitive America for all time." As Udall puts it:

> If these men had shared the raider mentality of their day, they might have staked out a commercial bonanza for themselves. They could, quite lawfully, have filed homestead or mining claims in the nearest land office and exploited key tracts of this masterpiece of nature for private profit.
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> But to some of these explorers monopoly of such scenery was unthinkable, and the idea of a permanent public reserve was discussed over a campfire one night in 1870 at the confluence of the Firehole and Gibbon rivers. One of the explorers, Judge Cornelius Hedges, later wrote a newspaper article on the subject. The idea generated support and it was only two years later that President Grant signed a little-debated and little-understood Yellowstone Park bill, providing that more than 2,000,000 acres—a region larger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined—be "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. . . ."
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> Because Wyoming was still a territory, Yellowstone was placed in the custody of the Secretary of the Interior and became our first national park. The concern of a few people for the rights of future generations made the difference, and this factor of foresight would mean the success of most future park proposals.

The recent book, *Speaking for Nature* (Sierra Club), by Paul Brooks is a valuable source for understanding the quality of the men and women who have the "concern" spoken of by Udall. It is, we may think, a quality that needs renewal from

generation to generation. The following is from Brooks:

> Olmsted was a complex character: a man with the imagination and sensitivity of an artist and the iron will of an executive; an idealist, a perfectionist with a driving social conscience who nevertheless remained uncertain for many years about the choice of a career. Born in Hartford in 1822, he came of Puritan stock, dating back to the early days of the Bay Colony and the founding of Connecticut; his forebears were simple people, seafarers, farmers. Fortunately his father had an innate love of nature, which expressed itself in family excursions through the Connecticut River Valley, the White Mountains, and along the coast of Maine; to Lake George and the Hudson; to Quebec and Niagara Falls. These vacation trips sharpened young Olmsted's powers of observation. They gave him a feeling for rural scenery and a first hand acquaintance with agricultural practices. . . .

For a time Olmsted wrote about American farming and his first book resulted from a trip abroad, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England.* At the time of the Civil War Charles Eliot Norton described Olmsted's appearance in a letter (quoted by Brooks):

> "All the lines of his face imply refinement and sensibility to such a degree that it is not till one has looked through them to what is beneath, that the force of his will and the reserved quality of his character become evident." He had already shown these qualities in his government service and in cutting his way through the political thickets that had blocked the establishment of Central Park. . . . He would show them again as he planned the future of Yosemite. . . .
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> His approach to landscape, however, was not purely esthetic Everything he set his hand to—scientific farming, the study of the South under slavery, the Sanitary Commission [forerunner of the Red Cross, which he headed during the Civil War]—was directly concerned with human welfare. . . .
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> Olmsted was ahead of his time in recognizing man's joy in nature as an integral part of his culture, comparable to his appreciation of art or literature or music. . . . Olmsted was an idealist who dreamed of a harmonious relationship between man and nature that has yet to be realized. "The essence of Olmsted's theory of environmental planning," writes Albert Fein, "was a reverence for the fundamental characteristics of all living matter. . . . If ecological laws were violated, there was little hope for social planning based on a belief in a rational relationship between human beings and the physical environment."

In last week's "Children" article attention was given to the "values clarification" courses now offered in many of the country's schools as a form of moral education. One of its advocates, Sidney Simon, of the University of Massachusetts School of Education, suggests that the cultural heritage is not likely to be of much moral benefit to students, saying that the need is to teach young people "to set their priorities and rank order the marvelous items in life's cafeteria." A critic in last Summer's *American Scholar,* Christina Sommers, finds this way of speaking of well she may. Why couldn't moral educators make use of such books as *The Quiet Crisis* and *Speaking for Nature,* and turn also to Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac,* especially the chapter on "The Land Ethic"? There is certainly moral point in asking what kind of a country this would be without individuals like George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, John Burroughs, and the dozens of men and women who, through the years since, have kept their vision alive and carried forward their work. Something of what might be learned by study, say, of the life of Rachel Carson is given in the closing pages of Brooks' *Speaking for Nature,* and getting this across to students would certainly accomplish moral education, and without either preaching or indoctrination. Paul Brooks says:

> Rachel Carson died in 1964 at the age of fifty-six, having lived just long enough to witness the initial impact of her solitary crusade. The final phase of her life was at once the saddest and the most splendid. The product of immense labor and talent, *Silent Spring* also represents an act of great moral courage. She had abandoned other plans to tackle this repugnant subject, aware that she would be personally vilified. And though only her closest friends knew it at the time, she was suffering from what she later referred to as a "whole catalog of illnesses." She was convinced of the importance of what she was doing, and somewhere she found the strength for this final effort. Not only that, but she

managed to make this book about death a celebration of life.

As she neared completion of the manuscript of *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson wrote to a close friend: "No, I myself never thought the ugly facts would dominate, and I hope they don't. The beauty of the living world I was trying to save has always been uppermost in my mind—that, and anger at the senseless brutish things that were being done. I have felt bound by a solemn obligation to do what I could—if I didn't at least try I could never again be happy in moral education "alarming," as nature. But now I can believe I have at least helped a little. It would be unrealistic to believe one book could bring a complete change."

Brooks adds a concluding line: "It may have been unrealistic, but history has proved it true."

In the section of his book on "Wild and Park Lands, which is a chapter on John Muir, Stewart Udall says:

Muir saw that men were eyewitnesses to creation if only they opened their senses to it. Each journey into the wilderness was for him a trip to a fresh wonderland. It was also an experience of self-knowledge and self-fulfillment. He felt the same reverence for the land—the sense of wholeness and oneness—that had been experienced by the Indians and the early naturalists. In the wilderness, he wrote, "life seems neither long nor short, and we take no more heed to save time or make haste than do the trees and stars. This is true freedom, a good practical sort of immortality."

Early in his mountain career Muir came to a conclusion that decisively affected his own future and to some degree the future of his country: wilderness freedom, like political freedom, was perennially in danger and could be maintained only by eternal vigilance. It was necessary, he became convinced, permanently to preserve large tracts of choice lands in public ownership.

Lovers of nature and the land seem to need no special instruction in concern for their fellow humans. Thoreau's passionate defense of John Brown is well known, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, now remembered chiefly as Emily Dickinson's mentor, attracted her attention by his *Atlantic* articles on birds and flowers. The-youngest member of his class at Harvard—he was a freshman while still thirteen—Higginson became a Unitarian minister but was ousted from the pulpit because of his inflammatory sermons on women's rights and his attacks on slavery. Brooks relates:

For two and a half years, Higginson himself had plenty of outdoor life, as a colonel in the Union Army, in command of the first black regiment. . . . Higginson's own career refutes the comment that Thoreau made in his journal, in a moment of gloomy introspection: "It appears to be a law that you cannot have a deep sympathy with both man and nature. Those qualities that bring you near to the one estrange you from the other." For Thoreau this may have had some validity, but for Higginson the very opposite was true. His sensitive response to nature was part and parcel of his response to his fellow man: to his countless literary friends, to the illiterate ex-slaves under his command, to the reformers and suffragettes, to the shy recluse at Amhurst [Emily Dickinson]. It was his response to life.

The lover of nature almost inevitably becomes a writer because he is one who seeks allies in the struggle to gain respect, if not reverence, for the natural world. It becomes evident from Paul Brooks' book that these writers strengthen one another and collaborate in the creation of a culture in which there is spontaneous concern for the welfare of our environment. John Muir was eleven when in 1849 he came to this country with his father from Scotland to take up a quarter section in the wilderness of Wisconsin. The boy supported himself by farm work and school-teaching while he attended the University of Wisconsin, where a professor recognized his ability and introduced him to the writings of Emerson and Thoreau. Meanwhile a course in botany sent him "flying to the woods and meadows in wild enthusiasm." Because of his talent in mechanics, he worked in a carriage machine shop for a while, but an accident dangerous to his eyes freed him for a naturalist career. It was while sheepherding in the High Sierras of California that he found his lifework. The awesome beauty of this country and its need for defense against rapacious intrusion mapped his future. His magazine articles attracted national

attention and the reception of his first book, *The Mountains of California*, gave him encouragement. According to Brooks:

> Ever a reluctant writer—aside from his journals and personal letters—Muir was nonetheless moving inevitably toward his principal life work: the preservation of our wilderness through scientific knowledge and the power of the pen. His purpose was "to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness." It was a formidable assignment. "The love of Nature among Californians," he remarked, "is desperately moderate." He sought to stir them up with a fiery article in the Sacramento paper entitled "God's First Temples: How Shall We Preserve Our Forest?" In it he attacked the sheepmen who, by overgrazing and burning of the mountain pastures, were destroying both the woods and the watersheds, to the eventual impoverishment of the whole state. Already he was enough of a politician to stress the economic loss, in his plea for legislative action. He was not too hopeful.

With some others he founded the Sierra Club in 1892, serving as its first president. When Muir died in 1914, with the manuscript of a book on Alaska beside him, John Burroughs, who had become his close friend, set down in his journal: "A unique character—greater as a talker than a writer—he loved personal combat and shone in it. He hated writing and composed with difficulty, though his books have charm of style; but his talk came easily and showed him at his best. I shall greatly miss him." Burroughs himself was not aggressive but he was blessed with a facile pen. But Brooks adds:

> Not that Burroughs was always gentle when his convictions were at stake. In attacking the "nature fakers" during the early years of the century, he wielded almost as heavy a club as Theodore Roosevelt. And Henry Fairfield Osborn, a close friend of Muir, described Burroughs as "an ardent and sometimes violent prophet of conservation." Burroughs himself felt somewhat guilty about not having played a more militant role in preserving the world he loved. But as Peter Wild has written "The early activists [in the conservation movement] succeeded only because of widespread sympathy and political support from a public made aware of nature's fragility by such writers as Burroughs. That has been one of the most essential, if uncelebrated roles in the story of protecting the environment."

And Emerson, Brooks notes, predicted that Thoreau's massive journal, if it were ever published, would produce "a plentiful crop of naturalists." Brooks also says:

> The concern of the few grew to be the concern of the many, until no less than the federal government itself became involved in protecting what was now recognized as a national heritage. Ten years after Thoreau's death, the United States Congress created the first of our national parks—a radical concept, unique to America, later imitated all over the world. The national park system was slow in getting under way, but meanwhile national forests were established to halt the squandering of a priceless resource. In 1901, for the first time since Thomas Jefferson, a naturalist became President of the United States. When Theodore Roosevelt entered the White House, our nature writers suddenly gained stature in the public eye. Their work had been quietly preparing for the bold strokes that the government now took to implement a new policy called "conservation."

Where did the term "conservation" come from? Shortly after the turn of the century a forester, Overton Price, remarked that government forests in India were called "conservancies." Stewart Udall says: "Pinchot and Price liked the ring of the word, and thus a concept that had originated in the seminal thinking of men such as Thoreau and Marsh now had an expressive name—conservation."

Marsh was the author of *Man and Nature* (1864), a massive study of the effect on the earth of human activity, called in a later edition, *The Earth as Modified by Human Action* (1874). Gifford Pinchot had been made Chief Forester of the United States Forest Service, an agency inaugurated in 1905 by President Roosevelt. Of Pinchot, Stewart Udall says:

> Pinchot was one of the great teachers of his time: he taught frugality when waste was the accepted creed; he turned his back on the race for riches and sought the higher goal of public service; and when money power was king in parts of our land, he aroused in the people a sense of their own power.

What led Gifford Pinchot to adopt this career? An easy answer, and not entirely wrong, would be: his father. In his autobiography, *Breaking New Ground*, he begins his first chapter:

> "How would you like to be a forester?" asked my farsighted Father one fortunate morning in the summer of 1885, just before I went to college. It was an amazing question for that day and generation—how amazing I didn't begin to understand at the time. When it was asked, not a single American had made Forestry his profession. Not an acre of timberland was being handled under the principles of Forestry anywhere in America.

We began this discussion with a wondering about what causes a number of unusual citizens and human beings to commit their lives to careers of service. The question is still basically unanswered, yet it has become plain that people of promise and ability learn from one another, are influenced by examples set. Fine writers and wise parents are transmitters of inspiration, and great generators of commitment. Yet the best among us, to whom we owe the most, are shapers of themselves. Above all a country like ours needs to create special environments which are hospitable to such decisions.

REVIEW
APPEARANCE AND REALITY

A BOOK we have long been curious about—Owen Barfield's *Saving the Appearances—A Study in Idolatry*—now that it is available in a Harcourt Brace Jovanovich paperback edition and we have a copy, turns out to be difficult reading, although worth the effort. The author, today a man of eighty-seven years, made a lasting impression on the world of philosophical literature with his *Poetic Diction*, published in 1928. His subject, whatever he writes, is the human mind and how it works, with some attention to the question of what its object or fulfillment may be. He is difficult because he is so at home at a level of abstraction which few readers are familiar with. His writing is clear enough, but he doesn't use enough illustration to make the rest of us comfortable with what he says. In discussing *Saving the Appearances* we'll try to remedy this by providing some quotation from another writer.

The book is about the evolution of mind. Barfield undertakes to show that the evolution of the world is little more than a projection on our surroundings of the changes in our thought processes. He begins by asking, in effect, What is the world out there? He shows the difference between the sensations produced in our body by experience, and the "things" we identify as making that experience. Sensations, after all, are not things. In a given period of history, people represent what they experience in particular ways, by selecting from their experience what seems important to them. When they tell each other what they think they experience, confirming each other's impressions, a representation of the world is achieved—which Barfield calls a collective representation. What writers speak of as the scientific world-view is such a joint representation. Most people, and until recently most scientists, are far from aware that in the process this human report is turned into an account of reality itself, even though its terms are a series of more or less connected abstractions based upon what has been presented to the senses. These abstractions are highly selective. Some are held to be more important than others, as in the case of the distinction made by Galileo between primary and secondary qualities. The primary qualities were those which he could subject to mathematical manipulation—they were measurable matters, such as weight, volume, and motion. The secondary qualities were things like color and sound which affect our feelings but do not contribute to our measuring of the things which may have these effects. So, in time, by this mode of definition, we eventually evolved a man-made world instead of a natural world in its totality. Barfield regard this as an externalizing of our thinking, making an unnatural separation between the world and ourselves. Early in the book he says:

> It can do no harm to recall occasionally that the prehistoric evolution of the earth, as it is described for example in the early chapters of H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*, was not merely never seen. It never occurred. Something no doubt occurred, and what is really being propounded by such popular writers, and, so far as I am aware, by the text-books on which they rely, is this. That at that time the unrepresented was behaving in such a way that, *if* human beings with the collective representations characteristic of the last few centuries of western civilization had been there the things described would also have been there.

Since the "things described" were in fact particular impressions developed through human consciousness, they are largely our creations, and in that sense could not have happened without human consciousness. Moreover, since the representations of early man, sometimes referred to as "primitive thinking," were very different from our mode of representation, we must be careful not to suppose that past races and cultures before the age of science saw the world as we see it. Such people, as cultural anthropologists now agree, thought about the natural world in terms of their sense of *participation* in its being, without the idea of complete separation from nature, as in the case of the "ideal" objectivity of the man of science.

A passage from Benjamin Lee Whorf's *Language, Thoughts & Reality* (MIT Press, 1964) on the culture of the Hopi Indians may give an idea of Barfield's conception of "participation." Whorf says:

> . . . to the Hopi, one's desires and thoughts influence not only his own actions, but all nature as well. This too is wholly natural. Consciousness itself is aware of work, of the feel of effort and energy, in desire and thinking. Experience more basic than language tells us that, if energy is expended, effects are produced. WE tend to believe that our bodies can stop this energy, prevent it from affecting other things until we will our BODIES to overt action. But this may be so only because we have our own linguistic basis for a theory that formless items like "matter" are things in themselves, malleable only by similar things, by more matter, and hence insulated from the powers of life and thought. It is no more unnatural to think that thought contacts everything and pervades the universe than to think, as we all do, that the light kindled outdoors does this. And it is not unnatural to suppose that thought, like any other force, leaves everywhere traces of effect. Now, when WE think of a certain actual rose bush, we do not suppose that our thought goes to that actual bush, and engages with it, like a searchlight turned upon it. What then do we suppose our consciousness is dealing with when we are thinking of that rosebush? Probably we think it is dealing with a "mental image" which is not the rosebush but a mental surrogate of it. But why should it be NATURAL to think that our thought deals with a surrogate and not with the real rosebush? . . . The Hopi thought-world has no imaginary space. The corollary to this is that it may not locate thought dealing with real space anywhere but in real space, nor insulate real space from the effects of thought. A Hopi would naturally suppose that his thought (or he himself) traffics with the actual rosebush—or more likely, corn plant—that he is thinking about. The thought then should leave some trace of itself with the plant in the field. If it is a good thought, one about health and growth, it is good for the plant; if a bad thought, the reverse.

Barfield's goal is a conscious return to participation. He says:

> It is only necessary to take the first feeble step toward a renewal of participation—that is, the bare acknowledgement in beta-thinking [reflective or philosophical thinking] that phenomena are collective representations—in order to see that the actual evolution of the earth we know must have been at the same time an evolution of consciousness. For consciousness is correlative to phenomenon. Any other picture we may form of evolution amounts to no more than a symbolical way of depicting changes in the unrepresented. . . .
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> By treating the phenomena of nature as objects wholly extrinsic to man, with an origin and evolution of their own independent of man's evolution and origin, and then by endeavoring to deal with these objects as astronomy deals with the celestial appearances or physics with the particles, nineteenth-century science, and nineteenth-century speculation, succeeded in imprinting on the minds and imaginations of men their picture of an evolution of idols. One result of this has been to distort very violently our conception of the evolution of human consciousness. Or rather it has caused us virtually to deny such an evolution in the face of what must otherwise have been accepted as unmistakable evidence.

Mr. Barfield explains that the object of his book is simply "to demonstrate on general grounds the necessity of smashing the idols" in order to recover "the old unity of man and nature." The danger in idolatry is that it "can not only empty of spirit—it has very nearly succeeded in doing so—not only nature, but also Man himself." He goes on: "For among all the other idols is his own body. And it is part of the creed of idolatry that, when we speak of Man we mean only the body of this or that man, or at most his finite personality, which we are driven more and more to think an attribute of his body." Some pages later he writes:

> The plain fact is, that all the unity and coherence of nature depends on participation of one kind or another. If therefore man succeeds in eliminating all original participation, without substituting any other, he will have done nothing less than to eliminate all meaning and all coherence from the cosmos.

Of the arts, he says that "insofar as they are genuine, they are genuine because the artist has in some way or other experienced the world he represents."

> When a lady complained to Whistler that she did not see the world he painted, he is said to have replied: "No, ma'am, but don't you wish you could?" Both Whistler and the lady were really referring to that activity—which in Whistler's case was intenser than the lady's. Ought it to be called a "mental" activity? Whatever it ought to be called, it really is the percipient's own contribution to the representation. It is all *that* in the representation which is not sensation.

COMMENTARY
UNSETTLING QUESTION

RECENT books and articles (such as David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*) have made us increasingly aware of the part played by human consciousness in physics or physical theory. Absolute separation between the natural world and the way we think about it is seen to be practically impossible.

Now, with a book like Owen Barfield's *Saving the Appearance—A Study in Idolatry* (see Review), by a man of literature, we find the same conclusion stated. It helps to realize that if we were equipped with a different set of sense organs, and if our ways of conceptualizing and abstracting for scientific purposes called on a library of mind which is in no way familiar, then the account provided of the major events in the history of the planet, if given in those terms, would not even be recognizable to us—we would have no way of discovering that it is our earth that is under examination.

If we find the thinking of new physicists and of writers like Barfield persuasive, what becomes of our idea of "knowledge"—of the security once felt in believing in scientific certainties? The question is unsettling. Was this, one wonders, the reason why the wise Buddha said so little on far-reaching metaphysical questions, making his message largely ethical and embodied in a moral psychology?

We add here another quotation from Barfield, showing the implications of his position:

> The systematic use of imagination, then, will be requisite in the future, not only for the increase of knowledge, but also for saving the appearances from chaos and inanity. Nor need it involve any relinquishment of the ability which we have won to experience and love nature as objective and independent of ourselves. Indeed, it cannot involve that. For any such relinquishment would mean that what was taking place was not an approach towards final participation (which is the proper goal of imagination) but an attempt to revert to original participation. . . .

One of his chapters ends with a poem written by a friend, and we may repeat it here as embodying the difference between a participative outlook and our own view. The poem is called "Reflection" and has two stanzas:

> When hill, tree, cloud, those shadowy forms
> Ascending heaven are seen,
> Their mindless beauty I from far
> Admire, a gulf between;
>
> Yet in the untroubled river when
> Their true ideas I find,
> That river joined in trance with me,
> Becomes my second mind.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

PLATO, DANTE, AND BERNARD SHAW

[Just 69 years ago (and a day), Harold Goddard, who was then teaching English at Swarthmore College, and who years later wrote *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, contributed these reflections on Bernard Shaw after attending a performance of *Major Barbara.* It is the sort of criticism one longs for, these days. His article appeared in the *New Republic* of February 12, 1916. Only the criticism of Lewis Mumford, and perhaps Wendell Berry, has similar qualities, yesterday and today.]

ACCORDING to Bernard Shaw himself, most of the critics who have been talking about his *Major Barbara* are fools and liars. Not that he has bestowed these names on any of them individually, but it would be a fair inference from the final sentence of his preface to the play. "This play of mine, *Major Barbara,"* he writes, "is, I hope, both true and inspired; but whoever says that it all happened, and that faith in it and understanding of it consist in believing that it is a record of an actual occurrence, is according to Scripture, a fool and a liar, and is hereby solemnly denounced and cursed as such by me, the author, to all posterity." In the face of this appeal and of the plain testimony of the play itself, the critics proceed to take "Major Barbara" as a literal transcript from life instead of as a work of creative art, with the result that they have been saying preposterous things about it.

Some of them appear to find it the most brutal document in militarist literature, which is an odd thing to think of a play that is all about religion. Others find it so pacific that they conjecture it to have been the inspiration of Henry Ford, which seems equally queer in view of the part played in it by cannon and gunpowder. Many of them complain that Shaw gets nowhere in the last act, which is like saying that Bunyan gets nowhere at the end of *The Pilgrim's Progress.* And practically all of them talk about Barbara's ultimate conversion as if it were the surrender of salvation to worldly power—which leaves totally out of account the fact that conversion does not turn on whether you accept a thing or not, but on what you do with it after you have accepted it. Barbara and her husband accept the cannon factory. But does not Barbara vow to die with the colors, and does not Cusins promise to make war on war, The trouble with every one of these judgments is that the critic is blind to the poetry of the play. To speak of the poetry in Bernard Shaw may sound absurd to people brought up on nineteenth-century definitions of poetry; but others, if they have read and seen Shaw with their imaginations, will understand the statement that to be blind to the poetry of one of his plays is generally to miss its main point.

To read *John Bull's Other Island,* for instance, and miss the fact that the firm of Broadbent and Doyle prefigures a real as contrasted with a merely nominal union of England and Ireland, is to read that play prosaically and to miss its creative mainspring. To read *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* and miss the fact that the story of the estate in the West Indies is an allegory of the land situation in England and its relation to the law, is to read that incident prosaically and miss its principal dynamic implication. To read the last words of Androcles to the Lion, "Come, Tommy. Whilst we stand together, no cage for you, no slavery for me," and not to see that Shaw is saying that when power and genuine Christianity join hands the freedom of the world will be achieved, is to read those words prosaically and to miss the entire import of the play. For "a parable must not be taken literally," as the Devil observes in *Man and Superman.*

To fail to catch touches like these in writers whose philosophy is an incidental part of their work may be to miss the incidental, but to miss them in an author whose philosophy is the core of his art is to miss the whole point. Ideas follow one another so fast in Shaw's dialogue that we may forget that they play an even more important part in his architecture. The intellectual structure

of his plays is hidden by the everlasting loquacity of his characters. But it is there just the same. It happens that *Major Barbara,* more almost than any other play of Shaw's, needs to be read with an eye to what may be called its structural ideas. Perhaps that is why the author saw ht to insert that warning in his preface.

If you take this play prosaically you will complain, as one instance of the general grotesqueness and eccentricity of its plot, that the handing on of the Undershaft cannon factory to a foundling is grossly improbable. If you take the play poetically you will perceive in this part of the story the truth that power properly descends not to the son and heir but to the strong and fit. If you take the play prosaically you will shudder at Shaw's profanity in having Major Barbara say, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and you will be pleased at the stage settings of the last scene, especially. by the "pretty pink light" (to appropriate a phrase from a lady behind me at the Playhouse) from the blast furnaces. If you take the play poetically you will see that Barbara is crucified in Act Two and descends into hell in Act Three. If you take the play prosaically you will see in Cusin's prospective marriage with Barbara and their acceptance of the Undershaft inheritance the conventional happy ending of a three-act comedy. If you take the play poetically you will see in it Shaw's answer to the social question of our time: the declaration that religion and philosophy must join hands and seize the sources and instruments of worldly power; or, to put it less pedantically, that salvation must marry wisdom and take over the cannon factories.

If there could be any possible doubt about all this it would be set at rest by the passage in which Shaw, driven to desperation possibly by the poetic blindness of his generation, gives the whole thing away: the remark of Undershaft to Cusins, "Plato says, my friend, that society cannot be saved until either the Professors of Greek take to making gunpowder, or else the makers of gunpowder become Professors of Greek." If we are among the fools to whom Shaw alludes in his preface, we probably, on hearing that sentence, mutter something about "this mountebank's inveterate tendency to turn even the most serious matters into a jest." But if we are attending to the meaning of the play, we shall look up, if we cannot recall, that great passage in *The Republic* where Plato declares: "Unless it happen either that philosophers acquire the kingly power in states, or that those who are now called kings and potentates be imbued with a sufficient measure of genuine philosophy, . . . there will be no deliverance, my dear Glaucon, for the cities, nor yet, I believe, for the human race; neither can the commonwealth, which we have now sketched in theory, ever until then grow into a possibility and see the light of day." After reading which, the Armorer's Faith of Andrew Undershaft, "I will take an order from a good man as cheerfully as from a bad one," ought to assume clearer meaning.

But the sad fact is that the good men do not place the orders And in that fact, as Plato and Shaw alike divine, in the divorce, namely, between spiritual insight and worldly power, lies the tragedy of humanity, a tragedy that Shaw has set forth with characteristic force and vividness in *John Bull's Other Island.* It is not mere chance, I think, that *Major Barbara* follows *John Bull's Other Island* and is bound up in a single volume with it. At any rate, *Major Barbara* gives us a hint of what the union of spiritual insight and worldly power might mean for the race. But we must go back of *John Bull's Other Island* if we are to trace the evolution of this idea in Shaw's mind. *Widowers' Houses* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* among his plays, are its progenitors. Harry Trench, in the former work, discovering that he is a partner in slum landlordism, is shocked beyond measure, but recovering from the blow, conforms to the system. Vivie Warren, making a parallel discovery, washes her hands of her mother and all her mother's concerns and plunges into her own work, which, by an admirable stroke, is connected with insurance. Barbara Undershaft,

awakening to a similar truth, decides, not like Trench to conform to evil, nor like Vivie Warren to reject and turn her back on it, but, like Barbara Undershaft, to accept it and use it as a weapon against itself.

"We are all in the same boat"—that truth is at the heart of all these plays, and as various persons are discovering, the boat shows symptoms at present of being headed for the cataract. The impulse of the weakling, after the first shock of that discovery, is to settle back and drift to destruction in good company with the devil at the oars. The first impulse of the strong man is to leap overboard, only to find himself, if he does so, more completely at the mercy of the current. The vision of the wise man tells him that the boat itself must be headed in the opposite direction, and if he is strong as well as wise, he will demand an immediate position at the oars.

On the afternoon of the day when I saw *Major Barbara* at the Playhouse I was reading the last cantos of Dante's *Inferno.* At eleven o'clock that evening I sat looking at Barbara, Cusins and Undershaft, grouped together in the center of the stage against a fiery background: Barbara the savior, with her love for all humanity; Cusins the poet, with his philosophical insight; Undershaft the millionaire, with his command over the powers of life and death. And suddenly, by the association of contrast, perhaps, there flashed into my mind Dante's picture of Satan, Satan with the three faces that are impotence, ignorance and hate. Impotence, ignorance, and hate! Power, wisdom and love! How the two pictures lit each other up!

Plato, Dante, and Bernard Shaw. I admit the basest of motives in making that collocation. But it should be made, if for no other reason than to see who will squirm the most: the pedantic classicist whose reverence for the great names of the past is a pose rather than a reality, or the shallow radical who thinks nothing is wisdom which was born earlier than last week.

HAROLD C. GODDARD

FRONTIERS

Good Things Happening

ORLAND (Maine) is a small town close to a narrow finger of Penobscot Bay where a few hundred people live, described as within the northern extension of "that picturesque but oppressed section of America known as Appalachia," which means that the inhabitants are mostly poor and a lot of them are unemployed. (Maine ranks with the bottom ten of the states of the Union in per capita income.)

But something good is happening there. In an article in the last August *Witness* published by Episcopalians, Robert L. DeWitt, one of the editors, tells about H.O.M.E., Inc., which means "Home workers Organized for More Employment." It got going about fourteen years ago, largely through the efforts of Lucy Poulin, a Carmelite nun who grew up in the area and knew at first hand the plight of the women in the community. Some of these women in Orland "were struggling with a marginal existence, trying to ease the pinch by making for sale various articles in their homes. They were tourist-type items—simple toys, quilted pot holders, aprons, rag mats, mittens, socks, dolls." DeWitt relates:

> From many conversations with them it occurred to Sister Lucy that a cooperative, central store for selling these articles and a setting of standards as to type and quality, would benefit the crafters. So it was that the homeworkers organized for more employment. And more employment they found.
>
> There are now three outlets for the voluminous production of these items. One is located at H.O.M.E.'s base in Orland, with branch stores in Ellsworth and Belfast. Annual gross sales now approach $300,000 per year.
>
> Meanwhile, Sister Lucy Poulin was finding her vocational validity more in this community work than in the contemplative life of her order. She tried to combine both for a while, but finally wanted, and was encouraged, to leave so that she might devote her full efforts to H.O.M.E.

As the merit of this activity became evident, people in neighboring towns joined and participated. There were two reasons for this: They were making at home things that could be sold, and they were lonely. Maine is an enjoyable place to live for people with money, but for those with little education and no job it can mean isolation and depression, bad diet, poor health, alcoholism and even suicide. Many suffering in this way were once farmers who had to sell their land, leaving them without income "in a beautiful setting of green hills dotted with patches of blueberries and clear streams."

> As Sister Lucy and others worked with the crafters, each desperate need, confronted, revealed another. Mimeographed instructions for knitting patterns were not followed by some—they could not read. And so it was that the group's concerns were led from literacy training to life-coping to child care, to child psychology. From nutrition to family planning to home management to consumer education. And this educational effort was not in the tradition or style of U.S. colleges and universities. The instruction was given by amateurs to novices, small groups meeting in kitchens, in living rooms, and a few at H.O.M.E. itself, which at that time boasted sparse space facilities.

They needed to expand and have larger quarters in order to do all the things they found needed doing, and after appealing to various public agencies without much response they undertook to rely on private support, using volunteer help and the money the store was earning. This, they found, was the best way—addressing needs, not academic or political theories. To meet the threat of loss of land, H.O.M.E. organized a Land Trust to preserve access to the land for those who need it. The Trust has more than 150 acres where five family homes have already been built. H.O.M.E. also went into the firewood business. "It has provided volunteer labor, a sturdy team of horses, private donations, state fuel subsidies, and sales to those who can afford to purchase, in order to provide free wood for those who cannot."

> All of these activities, and many more, are beamed out to those involved in H.O.M.E. through the pages of a bimonthly paper, *This Time.* It carries a potpourri of program announcements, personal

> profiles of staff and program participants, notes on farming, household hints, announcements about peace rallies and the White House Conference on Aging, pithy quotes from Helen and Scott Nearing, Pope John Paul II, Karl Marx, and the local staff carpenter/construction expert, Phil Gray ("I suppose manual labor is the best thing for frustration there is."). . . .
>
> Who are the people who motivate and administer this arresting array of activities, programs, and services? It is acknowledged by all that H.O.M.E. would probably not exist had it not been for Lucy Poulin. It is equally clear that it could not continue were it not for a host of volunteers and the 15 or so staff people who somehow keep all these wheels turning, as well as giving instruction in the basics of weaving, ceramics, leatherworking and other skills.

There is more in the *Witness* article, which tells of a notable effort to organize academic credit for the kind of teaching and learning H.O.M.E. has been able to accomplish, but the main thing to say about the work seems to be that what these devoted people have done is to start *doing* it, and use the facilities of organization for what they are—simply *facilities*—and not originators or "inspirers." They do not let organizations or institutions redefine their objectives, and if organization can't or won't help, they find their own way to preserve their direction.

(*The Witness* is published monthly at $12 a year in Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002—P.O. Box 359.)

Another good thing happening is the growth and spread of the organic farming movement, well reported in *Northwest Magazine*, with, naturally, a focus on Oregon.

> Eugene, in fact, has the greatest per capita demand for organically grown produce of any city in the United States. The college town supports a $10 million-a-year natural foods business, according to Cornucopia Institute, which is funded by publisher Robert Rodale. . . . Meanwhile, Eugene-area growers have started three new institutions to help themselves in the areas of finance, land acquisition and marketing: Oregon Community Land Trust, an Association for a Regional Agriculture Building a Local Economy (ARABLE), and Organically Grown, Inc., a farmers marketing cooperative linking some 15 Oregon organic farms with 25 stores in Western Oregon, San Francisco, Seattle, and even Madison, Wis. . . . The land trust, funded less than a year ago, is based on a 20-year-old model created by the American social philosopher Ralph Borsodi and activist Robert Swann. It aims to acquire land as a non-profit corporation, protect it for farm use in perpetuity and make it available to low-income stewards. Similar projects have been carried out with remarkable results. Ottauquechee Land Trust of Woodstock Vt, is 7 years old and has acquired 10,000 acres of land and developed 40 projects. In another fashion, voters in King County (Seattle), Wash., have voted to spend some $50 million in tax money to buy and preserve in trust some 10,000 to 15,000 acres of farm land.

ARABLE, we are informed, grew out of an application of the principles and funding methods of SHARE (Self Help Association for a Regional Economy), a group that is happy to send information to inquirers—P.O. Box 125, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230.