VOLUME XXVI, NO. 26-35
JUNE 27, 1973

COMMUNITIES OF TOMORROW

WHEN Walt Whitman was of a mind to celebrate the Universe, or give it some instructions, he usually wrote verse. But for criticism, he used prose. The choice was reasonable. If you are filled with feeling, prose doesn't work very well, or not as well as poetry. Or, you could say that prose freighted with feeling tends to assume rhythmic forms, shaped by the energy of the poetic content.

It was in behalf of a revival of the community spirit that we went to Whitman, since he is above all the poet of the uncommon common man. After some saturation in *Leaves of Grass* we turned to *Specimen Days*, and then read again in *Democratic Vistas.* The spirit is there, implicitly when not explicitly. Whitman felt in community with all America, although his sense of fellowship was large enough to include the world. But reading the poetry is saddening, today. Whitman hoped for so much. In *Democratic Vistas* he revealed his longings, anticipating the second centennial of the United States, which is only three years from the present:

> In fond fancy, leaping those hundred years ahead, let us survey America's works, poems, philosophies, fulfilling its prophecies, and giving form and decision to its best ideals. Much that is now undream'd of, we might then perhaps see establish'd' luxuriantly cropping forth, richness, vigor of letters and of artistic expression, in whose products character will be a main requirement, and not merely erudition or elegance. Intense and loving companionship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man—which, hard to define, underlies the lessons and ideals of the profound saviours of every land and age, and which seems to promise, when thoroughly develop'd, cultivated and recognized in manners and literature, the most substantial hope and safety of the future of these States, will then be fully express'd.
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> It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship, (the adhesive love, at least rivaling the amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it,) that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream, and will not follow my inferences: but I confidently expect a time when there will be seen, running like a half-hid warp through all the myriad audible and visible worldly interests of America, threads of manly friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and lifelong, carried to degrees hitherto unknown—not only giving tone to individual character, and making it unprecedently emotional, muscular, heroic, and refined, but having the deepest relations to general politics. I say democracy infers such loving comradeship, as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself.

On what could Whitman base these expectations, so trusting and uninhibited, so gloriously idealizing on so little evidence? Early in this essay he explained the ground of his hopes. During the Civil War he had tended the wounded, the sick and the dying in the military hospitals in Washington. He saw the young men die—some hardly more than boys—"perfectly calm, and with noble, spiritual manner." A surgeon told him he had never seen one of these soldiers die in fear. It was this memory that uplifted Whitman when depressed by the post-war spectacle, for he came to believe that the same heroic qualities were latent in all humans; and, he added, "if there be exceptions, we cannot, fixing our eyes upon them alone, make theirs the rule for all."

America, for Whitman, was the place where the community spirit could be born anew, and he gave numerous examples among people he had met of what he conceived to be models "fit for the future personality of America." He spoke of the time when women would take part with men in "the arenas of practical life, politics, the suffrage," and told his readers:

Of course, in these States, for both man and woman, we must entirely recast the types of highest personality from what the oriental, feudal, ecclesiastical worlds bequeath us, and which yet possess the imaginative and esthetic fields of the United States, pictorial and melodramatic, not without use as studies, but making sad work, and forming a strange anachronism upon the scenes and exigencies around us. Of course, the old, undying elements remain. The task is, to successfully adjust them to new combinations, our own days. Nor is this so incredible. I can conceive a community, today and here, in which, on a sufficient scale, the perfect personalities, without noise meet; say in some pleasant western settlement or town, where a couple of hundred best men and women, of ordinary worldly status, have by luck been drawn together, with nothing extra of genius or wealth, but virtuous, chaste, industrious, cheerful, resolute, friendly and devout. I can conceive such a community organized in running order, powers judiciously delegated—farming, building, trade, courts, mails, schools, elections, all attended to; and then the rest of life, the main thing, freely branching and blossoming in each individual, and bearing golden fruit. I can see there, in every young and old man, after his kind, and in every woman after hers, a true personality, develop'd, exercised proportionately in body, mind, and spirit. I can imagine this case as one not necessarily rare or difficult, but in buoyant accordance with the municipal and general requirements of our times. And I can realize in it the culmination of something better than any stereotyped *éclat* of history or poems. Perhaps, unsung, undramatized, unput in essays or biographies—perhaps even some such community already exists, in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, or somewhere, practically fulfilling itself. . . .

In short, and to sum up, America betaking herself to formative action, (as it is about time for more solid achievement, and less windy promise,) must, for her purposes, cease to recognize a theory of character grown of feudal aristocracies, or form'd by merely literary standards, or from any ultramarine, full-dress formulas of culture, polish, caste, &c., and must sternly promulgate her own new standard, yet old enough, and accepting the old, the perennial elements, and combining them into groups, unities, appropriate to the modern, and democratic, the West, and to the practical occasions and needs of our own cities, and of the agricultural regions. Ever the most precious in the common. Ever the fresh breeze of field, or hill, or lake, is more than any palpitation of fans, though of ivory, and redolent with perfume; and the air is more than the costliest perfumes.

It is natural to ask: What can we *do* with Whitman's vision? Well, we can do as much with it, and perhaps more, than we can do with the latest sociological study of urban congestion and rural impoverishment. For Whitman gives a poet's portrait of America, and it is the vision of poets that stirs men's hearts. Again, in the early 1880s, he wrote:

> I conceive of no flourishing and heroic elements of Democracy in the United States, or of Democracy maintaining itself at all, without the Nature-element forming a main part—to be its health-element and beauty-element—to really underlie the whole politics, sanity, religion and art of the New World.
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> Finally, the morality: "Virtue," said Marcus Aurelius, "what is it, only a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature?" Perhaps indeed the efforts of the true poets, founders, religions, literatures, all ages, have been, and ever will be, our time and times to come, essentially the same—to bring people back from their persistent strayings and sickly abstractions, to the costless average, divine, original concrete.

These are hardly new ideas, and they have never been more eagerly repeated than they are today, although without Whitman's grandiloquence. And if we reflect upon *why* they are so much in the public mind, we soon realize that this new recognition of the importance to us of preserving the natural is owed to men and women who have shared in the poetic vision—all the way from Thoreau to Rachel Carson.

The modern community movement, originally inspired in this century by Arthur Morgan, provides ample documentation for Whitman's contention that democracy cannot survive without a vigorous rural community life. Morgan has often pointed out that urban centers invariably die from lack of healthy population replacement unless they have periodic infusions of new blood from the countryside.

It is often remarked by American travelers how friendly and helpful they find the country people in other lands. The simpler the lives

people live, the more spontaneous, it seems, is the expression of amiable feelings. In small communities, people know one another. Not only are all one's neighbors known, but the feeling of interdependence is strong. In the country, there is much more consciousness of living in a web of human intelligence made of three generations, and community feelings of responsibility include immediate response to emergencies and evidence of human need. In the city, the network of life-support has become largely technological and impersonal. The services and facilities may be good, but they are expensive and often lacking in personal contact. Only technology "with a human face" can restore the spirit of community to urban life, and this would mean, first of all, a deliberate effort to subordinate abstract and technological relationships to human relationships, by using tools and techniques to bring people closer together instead of isolating them from human contact. This is not a question of loss of privacy, but rather one of whether people are able to depend upon other people or upon machines. A psychologist warned recently that "Taking drugs is the danger sign of the fact that most of the population turns to things rather than to people for their everyday legitimate needs." He added: "Research must be tied into preventive measures which not only focus on stopping something but give us alternatives for starting—for building something; and that something should be not only for a person but for his community as well."

Wherever you turn, you encounter counsels of this sort. The restoration of community is the revival of what Arthur Morgan called "the seedbed of society." It is the best possible environment for childhood education, especially in areas where specialization has not yet made industry large and almost incomprehensible. Community is the place where a natural balance between agriculture and industry can still be achieved. Community is a social formation where it is possible to see that one's efforts for the common good may bring visible and sometimes immediate improvements.

In community social problems have a human scale, and their causes can at least be understood. The health of a community can be achieved by the people who live there, through giving local leaders the kind of support and guidance they need. Residents of community are able to gain confidence in democratic procedures by watching them work on a comparatively small scale. The passions of ideology diminish in the presence of concrete demonstrations, and ideas and proposals have more chance of being discussed on their merits. A nation made up of effectively maintained small communities would be likely to have a foreign policy which reflects the heightened moral intelligence of the people, who have found ways to be better informed. At present, we seem to learn essential facts about other countries only after the damage of aggressive action is complete. There is for example this letter to *World* (May 22) in which the writer, Bill Zimmerman, says:

> The editorial entitled "Vietnam: Let Us Begin" (Feb. 27) advises Americans that "Vietnam can become a jewel among nations." It calls on our government to send in "mobile health units . . ., literacy vans, sanitation and agricultural crews." It claims that "we can provide higher education for talented young Vietnamese," and concludes, "We can make of [Vietnam] a symbol for everything associated with decency, reverence for life, and human creativity."
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> Vietnam was an organized society when Greece was in her infancy and the founding of Rome was centuries away. Three thousand years ago Vietnam attained the technological and social organization necessary for sophisticated metallurgy, and today complexly designed bronze urns can be found throughout Indochina dating back to that period.

This writer continues, describing the elaborate health care provided in the villages, districts, and provinces of North Vietnam, and the doctors who are trained in decentralized universities and medical schools. Arguing that any government aid program "will be to serve American, not Vietnamese interests," this writer urges that help be given to provide specific medical supplies requested by the health services of North Vietnam, and to rebuild Hanoi's largest

national hospital, which was completely destroyed by U.S. aircraft on Dec. 22 0f last year. Zimmerman, who represents Medical Aid for Indochina (Cambridge, Mass.), concludes his letter:

> "Mobile health clinics . . . , literacy vans, sanitation and agricultural crews have been provided for years by the Vietnam revolutionaries themselves. We, of all people, cannot "provide higher education for talented young Vietnamese." Let us understand once and for all that American benevolence is a two-edged sword in the Third World. Our own cultural arrogance must not lead us to believe that "decency, reverence for life, and human creativity in Vietnam can be achieved by anyone but the Vietnamese people themselves, acting free of any foreign intervention or "foreign aid" constraints. For indeed, in the words of the editorial, "there is no limit to . . . what we are capable of doing."

This seems a good place to notice that the present military budget of the United States, according to the editorial in the May 22 *World,* is "more than $80 billion, representing a *$5 billion* increase over the previous year, during the active phase of the Vietnam war."

What has this to do with "community"? Such attitudes and such facts have a great deal to do with the dying out of the community spirit throughout the country. At the heart of the community-building process is faith in one another, and the divisions produced in the country by such policies and by the ignorance, apathy, and suspicion which make such wars possible, cannot help but infect whatever community life that exists with feelings of exclusion, separateness, and distrust. Vision cannot thrive in such an atmosphere. The dreams of poets sound like cries in the wilderness. Who could feel comfortable today, reading aloud Whitman's large-hearted hopes for America? His essays are more to the point, although here, too, his expressions of confidence and optimism call up an opposite imagery, taken, not from dreams, but from a large catalog of actual horrors.

Nor is it useful to ignore these things. If one seeks health, the obstacles to be overcome must be understood, the barriers to mutual trust admitted, for it is only by the disarming strength of knowledge that new foundations for a common life can be laid.

Community need not, of course, depend upon any "national" idea. Yet anything that takes place in America cannot help but have roots in some aspect of the American Dream. America has a role in the affairs of the world, even though its national behavior, especially in recent years, has grown bitterly discouraging.

Whitman knew that he was idealizing his conception of the American people, and admitted it from time to time. But he could no more help doing this than ordinary folk can avoid thinking of themselves and their hopes for the future in ideal terms. Those boys he watched die during the Civil War—an experience which made him war's first wholly truthful historian—had not been "heroes" all through their lives. Apparently, in the presence of death, their finest qualities came to the surface. Why should death make people calm, sometimes eloquent, and fill their final moments with dignity? Is it, perhaps, because death is the last great rhythm of life that one feels before he leaves the scene? There is no time or occasion for petty things at such an engrossing interval. The soul is both reduced and exalted by death—and its simple beinghood, here for only a moment, soon there—is explanation enough for those who sense that beginnings and endings have their own meaning, and that mysteries, problems, and fears are met only between these two sacramental events.

So death, one could say, "exaggerates" or isolates in a natural way the essential excellence of the human being, whose mien at the last moments awes the spectator who is still under the sway of a different perspective. But Whitman's perspective was that of the poet; he saw in death the promise of hidden splendors in the quality of all human beings, and he built that promise into his thought about America.

Death and birth are community affairs. They have more significance in a village than in a town, and more in a town than in a city. When people are members of a community, their lives are known and remembered. Their part in the common life is understood and valued. Community then becomes a flow of sympathy and support to the bereaved. So there are common resiliences natural to those who live in community. Even the eccentric and the odd find their place, often revealing unsuspected talents that would be wasted elsewhere.

Communities have their weaknesses, of course. There is the gossip which feeds the curious who have nothing else to talk about, the suspicion of people who are "different," and envy of the successful and strong. The cosmopolitan life is difficult in a village, but when men and women go to community to renew their lives and to raise their children, they often find it healthful to live with less sophistication. And daily contact with people who know how to do simple, necessary things, with no fuss, can be an exciting experience for "city people."

Whitman hoped that all his countrymen would someday speak a common tongue, and he wanted poetry that would be an expression of the people. He wrote:

> I hail with joy the oceanic, variegated, intense practical energy, the demand for facts, even the materialism of the current age, our States. But woe to the age or land in which these things, movements, stopping at themselves, do not tend to ideas. As fuel to flame, and flame to the heavens, so must wealth, science, materialism—even this democracy of which we make so much—unerringly feed the highest mind, the soul. Infinitude the flight: fathomless the mystery, man, so diminutive, dilates beyond the sensible universe, competes with, outcrops space and time, meditating even one great idea. Thus, and thus only, does a human being, his spirit, ascend above, and justify, objective Nature, which, probably nothing in itself, is incredibly and divinely serviceable, indispensable, real, here. And as the purport of objective Nature is doubtless folded, hidden, somewhere here—as somewhere here is what this globe and its manifold forms, and the light of day, and night's darkness, and life itself, with all its experiences are for—it is here the great literature, especially verse, must get its inspiration and throbbing blood. Then we may attain to a poetry worthy of the immortal soul of man, and which, while absorbing materials, and, in their own sense, the shows of Nature, will, above all, have, both directly and indirectly a freeing, fluidizing, expanding, religious character, exulting with science, fructifying the moral elements, and stimulating aspirations, and the meditations on the unknown.

REVIEW
PLAN FOR NEW MEXICO

PETER VAN DRESSER, who lives in a mountain village in the New Mexican Rockies, has written a plan for the development of the uplands region of northern New Mexico, within which lie four cities—Taos, Los Alamos, Santa Fe and Las Vegas. There are some Indian lands in the area, and large sections of National Forest. Total population is 133,000, or about 10 persons per square mile. While there is activity going on in the urban areas, the region as a whole is in economic decline, implying, Mr. van Dresser says, "an ultimate complete decay and disappearance of the traditional culture and economy."

His book, *A Landscape for Humans*, was published in 1972 by Biotechnic Press (P.O. Box 26091, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125) at $3.00. The first part deals with the history and background of the northern region, once a wholly representative example of the Spanish settlements in the New World. Adobe villages were clustered about the churches, and community irrigation systems were supervised by the *mayordomos.* Large landowners were *patrons* to their less affluent neighbors.

> These settlements—which, incidentally, stretched over a region almost as large as Switzerland—were for generations sustained by a simple but effective subsistence and pastoral agriculture, had evolved an architecture and handicraft technology well adapted to the land, and were enriched by folkways and ecclesiastic institutions of considerable stability and dignity. Santa Fe, the tiny capital of this mountain province, had a provincially old-world and Latin character quite unlike any other North American city.

In 1910, the inhabitants of this northern area amounted to 30 per cent of the population of New Mexico, although in 1970 they had diminished to 16 per cent. By 1930, the deterioration, so long resisted, had become a habit. Other ways brought by the Anglo invasion were changing the patterns of life, and the young of the uplands villages began the migration to the cities. Villages were abandoned as the people left, and customs and traditions began to die. There were other changes:

> At the same time, the attempt to participate in the new commercial economy through massive livestock grazing and export, carried on both by the immigrating Anglo ranchers and such of the old *hacendados* and *encomienderos* as could maintain a grip on the necessary financial and land resources, was responsible for accelerating the soil and grass destruction resulting in much of the plague of erosion, arroyo-cutting, and flooding which harassed the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District administrators. From the primarily subsistence grazing of relatively small herds and flocks in the neighborhood of settlements, characteristic of colonial and provincial days the number of sheep herded in the Middle Valley leaped from 435,000 in 1870 to 1,732,000 in 1900, while cattle grew from 14,000 to 211,000 in the same period. For the State as a whole, the cattle census reached an all-time high of 1,095,000 in 1910, and the corresponding sheep count climbed to 3,759,000.

Strenuous efforts were made during the 1930s to reverse or interrupt the economic decline of the region, but these New Deal measures could not survive World War II. Mr. van Dresser also describes in detail the programs initiated by President Kennedy and the later efforts of President Johnson, mainly in the areas of aid to the rural poor and general economic development by means of irrigation systems and flood control.

Meanwhile, the continuing failure of the traditional economy was leading to further urbanization, so that here, as elsewhere, the process has been regarded as inevitable. Mr. van Dresser says:

> The slow historical "drift to the cities" has accelerated into a dismaying proliferation, worldwide in extent, of urban slums, ghettos, *barriadas, favelas,* and the like, mostly populated by the residues of demolished rural and provincial communities and societies. This proliferation has vividly demonstrated the widespread inability of contemporary industrial economies to integrate uprooted masses into their systems in any useful, humane, or ecologically sound way. The arsenal of technological wizardries at the

command of these economies has spectacularly failed to alleviate the results of this trend.

The drain on natural resources—fossil fuels, soils, forests ores, water, now even the atmosphere itself—imposed by the gigantic logistic mechanisms necessary to maintain these nonproductive but cancerously growing agglomerations of humanity even at the bare subsistence level, threatens to overwhelm our hopes for mankind's future. The psychic strain engendered by the overcrowding, deprivation, and frustration of the new superghettos has already generated massive civil disturbances and promises greater ones to come. At the same time the bypassed and semi-abandoned rural and provincial regions from which the new urban masses come, continue to decay, deteriorate, and spread.

Dysfunctions of this magnitude and severity strongly suggest that the processes of industrialization and urbanization, as we have experienced them since before the Civil War, will certainly not resolve the problems of our Southern Rocky Mountain microcosm any more than they had resolved those of scores of similar provinces and lands around the globe.

It seems a tragic circumstance that most of our accumulated "conventional wisdom," as it bears on economic progress and technological development, leads only to intensification of trends that contain the seeds of self-destruction. The classic formulas calling for mass production and mass merchandising, for capital-intensive mechanization and automation, for massive public investment in "social infrastructure," and for massive corporate investment in machinery and plant are, after all, operative only where they can recreate or intensify the megalopolitan environment, with all its entrainment of increasingly unmanageable problems.

The fact seems to be that urban-industrial civilization itself—under whatever political ideology it operates—is entering a transitional, if not a crisis, phase. The computer-borne projections of the economists, demographers, and planners of all nations, with their foreshadowings of unprecedented population congestion, natural-resources depletion, mass famines land-water-and-air pollution, and the like, are deeply disquieting indications of uncertainties ahead.

Mr. van Dresser hopes that the working out of these ominous projections can be interrupted, and the pattern of decay reversed, through a deliberate return and strengthening of the old ecological balances of the area, which would mean replacing the present theory of development, based on machine-, capital-, and system-intensive operations, with a labor-, skill-, and people-intensive pattern of land use and productive organizations. The existing operations amount, Mr. van Dresser says, to *"orderly evacuation of the region."* He maintains that it should be possible to take advantage of "the fundamental logic and the functional validity of the original pattern of land use," especially since the new technological knowledge could be constructively applied. Instead of a technology indifferent to the unique characteristics and opportunities of the region, a rural program involving micro-urban areas could soon yield products to which the local conditions are favorable. Since beef cattle and sheep are major elements in the economy, specialized production such as meatpacking, tanning, and woolscouring could be undertaken for the regional market. Draft horses could be restored with profit, with large-scale power needed at only a few points within the area. By terracing, ditch lining, and soil conditioning, it should be possible to grow highly nutritive foods for domestic consumption.

It is important, Mr. van Dresser says, to think more broadly and humanistically about the meaning of "natural resources." The mistake has been, he shows, to think in the classical mercantile pattern—to regard as resources only the familiar products such as "rubber, cotton, wool, tobacco, sugar, coffee, tin, copper, petroleum," as well as coal and wheat and timber. As he says:

> This single-minded view of the nature of economic processes has pock-marked the nation with enclaves of permanent depression—the coal counties of Appalachia, the cut-over lands of the upper Middle West, the eroded cotton and tobacco hinterlands of the Southeast. In these regions, an initial dominance of monocultural cash crop has impeded the growth of a diversified economy and forced a specialized export-oriented one, which later collapsed—due to the exhaustion of the single natural resource on which

it was based, to more efficient production elsewhere, or to obsolescence of the product.

The irony in all this is that a great many of these rural and provincial hinterlands and enclaves actually do possess a range of natural resources defined in a broader and more basic sense, to generously fill the bulk of human needs. . . . Shaped by an appropriate technology, agriculture, and architecture; distributed by a reasonably efficient and equable system of trade and exchange, they can go far toward provisioning, housing, and equipping a thriving regional community.

This sort of ability to "live within one's means," in terms of the basic environmental resources of a reasonably well-endowed territory has been, of course, the norm for most human communities throughout most of history. It is probable that, despite the spectacular feats of high-energy technology and massive transport, a return to this norm—at a new and higher level of sophistication and scientific competence—offers the one bright hope for the many have-not, "underdeveloped," and proto-industrial regions of the globe. It is also possible that this sort of socio-technical evolution will do much to correct the serious ecologic and environmental unbalances which overdependence on giant industry, supertransport, and the megalopolitan version of habitat, have generated.

Since in northern New Mexico the old pattern of life and livelihood is still in operation, although in continuous decline, the region offers a special opportunity for its thorough-going revival. Timber and forest products are available, so that small industries could be founded on this resource, making jobs for many. Building and architecture could return to the famous *adobe-and-viga* construction, using the virtually free material of the land itself for housing.

This would give more employment to local craftsmen. A spinning and textile industry could be based on the sheep of the region. Hides could be processed into good leather instead of being sold for very little money. The beauty of the country could be the background for appropriate resort and recreation facilities, ecologically scaled and developed.

All these and many more possibilities are spelled out in considerable detail by Mr. van Dresser. Readers with an interest in land reform, ecology, organic agriculture, Schumacher's sort of economics, solar energy, and wind-power, will want to own this book. It is the most intelligent and well-developed model for regional socio-economic planning that we have ever seen.

COMMENTARY
VARIOUS "CURES"

IN this week's "Children," Ruth Hill Viguers says we want to *"cure* children of childhood." There's not much doubt about what she means. She means that in our haste to make children like ourselves, we prevent them from reaching maturity in their own way. Children want to mess around, play with things, and learn what they are supposed to mean when they get ready to. But we worry about the delay. We want them to learn how to use things the way we use them, and for the same reasons, as soon as possible. It's *risky* to put off growing up. The competition is fierce and if children don't get on with growing up they may not "develop" at all. So they have to be cured of childhood. Childhood wastes a lot of time.

With a thing like this going on, it's hardly surprising that another movement has been started—an attempt to cure adults of growing up. People who do things like that to children shouldn't be allowed to have any authority, and since grown-ups have authority, the thing to do is prevent maturity, or growing up. The founders of this movement say: "Just look at what people do when they grow up! They've got to be stopped!"

Kenneth Keniston calls these enemies of maturity the "disaffiliates." He says: "The defining characteristics of the disaffiliate is his generalized rejection of prevalent American values, which he rejects largely on esthetic, cultural and humanistic grounds." The disaffiliate believes that "American society is ugly, trashy, cheap and commercial; its middle-class values are seen as arbitrary, materialistic, narrow and hypocritical." For him, "what matters is somehow to seek a way out of the 'air-conditioned nightmare' of American society." Since this is what happens when Americans grow up, they need to be cured of this tendency. If everybody could be held in a state of arrested development, then there would be no grown-ups and none of these evil things would come about.

The disaffiliates are wrong, of course. Maturity doesn't bring those qualities. But the argument of the disaffiliates is persuasive because American society does look the way they say it looks in a great many ways. So there are a lot of immature older people who repeat the arguments of the disaffiliates. As a precociously mature young man said recently: "Worst of all are editors and politicians assuming a youthful image without the illogical, spontaneous passions of youth." This makes for a great deal of confusion, since maturity is hard enough to identify without all this misrepresentation and the attacks of grown-up misfits.

Well, what *is* maturity, and how do mature people act these days? The question is hard to answer, but what started us on this subject was reading Peter van Dresser's *A Landscape for Humans*, which seemed such plain common sense, even though the language of the book is a little formidable in places. Here is a man, we thought, who is not swept away by slogans, and who sees how to make the best of what is natural and good. A man who won't work at anything else. Mr. van Dresser is that kind of a dropout. In fact, all the really mature people are dropouts from the processes which are turning America into an air-conditioned nightmare. They won't have anything to do with what makes society "ugly, trashy, cheap and commercial." So you have to look for them, and then see what they do, what they say and how they behave. It takes time. It even takes some maturity to recognize maturity.

The next issue of MANAS will be dated Sept. 5. During July and August, when we are not publishing, subscribers who don t have a MANAS READER might want to order one (from the Manas Publishing Co. or from any bookstore) for summer reading. This book was issued in paperback in 1971 by Grossman Publishers, at $4.95. It contains reprints selected from back volumes of MANAS, starting in 1948.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS

MARGIN FOR SURPRISE, by Ruth Hill Viguers, is about the best book on reading for children that we have come across. It was published by Little, Brown in 1964, and how we escaped hearing of it or being told about it cannot be explained. Mrs. Viguers is an experienced children's librarian. She became editor of *The Horn Book Magazine* in 1958, so that she has background in writing about children's books as well as knowledge of the books themselves. In *Margin for Surprise,* she draws on all her experience to help people who want to help children read more good books.

Her first chapter is about the reviewing of children's books, an activity which didn't, she says, amount to much until Anne Carroll Moore, in 1918, was asked to contribute an article to the *Bookman* on the children's books of that year. So, she began to read them. Time passed. She didn't find any worth writing about. She was about to give up when, by happy accident, she picked up the proofs of W. H. Hudson's *A Little Boy Lost.* Hope dawned, but her discouragement and uncertainty were by then so deep that she "wrote a group review with a single star which appeared to the editor unduly magnified." But *Bookman* published the article unchanged and later put Miss Moore in charge of a regular department. She soon got other reviewing jobs. It was Miss Moore's idea, and it is Mrs. Viguers', that the person who buys a book for a child ought to pick something that he wants to read himself, too. No good children's book is "written down" to them.

Another reviewer Mrs. Viguers thinks well of, Dorothy Lathrop, believes that the good books for children are like—

> the world which is not divided up into bits and classified for those from four to six, from six to eight, from eight to twelve and so on through our three score and ten years, with a special bit for octogenarians, but the same world for all of us, undivided, its riches spread out for us to choose from according to our ages in spirit rather than our ages in years.

People can make terrible mistakes in deciding what is "good" for children, or what they "ought" to be reading.

> When George Macdonald read the manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Underground* to his son Greville, the little boy said, "There ought to be sixty thousand volumes of it." The first edition of *Alice in Wonderland,* in 1865, was only two thousand copies. The first fifteen hundred copies brought to the United States by William W. Appleton lay in a stockroom for months, and Mr. Appleton "was unmercifully chaffed about his silly book." Suddenly someone read the book and the stock disappeared overnight.

Books have various uses, but the best books offer something more important than "utility." Mrs. Viguers borrows a rule from C. S. Lewis:

> The first demand any work of art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way. (There is no good asking first whether the work before you deserves such a surrender, for until you have surrendered you cannot possibly find out) . . . the many *use* art and the few *receive* it.

Books may improve minds, manners, and morals, but these utilities aren't enough justification for reading them; anyhow, they come free in works with a deeper content:

> Today we have many fine books for children, some of them works of art; but we still expect children to *use* that art rather than to *receive* it. Much book criticism is concerned with analyzing books in terms of social values as well as curriculum values. Some of us make a great point of emphasizing that a book teaches brotherhood, or kindness to animals, or a dozen other specific things. We forget that the child who has fine books available to him will receive all this naturally. Every book a child reads will become part of him. He does not have to have books angled at his specific problems or needs.

In a later chapter, Mrs. Viguers quotes from Dorothy Broderick, who spoke of having missed *Alice in Wonderland, Tom Sawyer,* and *Caddie Woodlawn* in her childhood:

> I was an adult when I first encountered these books and all the others that we say belong to the children of the world. Perhaps I am wrong in thinking that I would have better understood the

rebellion I felt at having to give up playing football if I had had Tomboy Caddie to share the experience with me. . . .

It wasn't that I didn't read. I read everything in sight, everything the local library offered. But of these endless hours spent with books, my only concrete memory is of the now-vanished three-in-one volumes of sports stories. . . .

The librarian was a nothing. . . . She never suggested a book, offered an opinion, nor seemed glad to see us. . . . We were nothing to her; she was nothing to us.

I feel I have been cheated. . . .

More by Mrs. Viguers:

It is difficult, however, for grownups to accept the fact that books in childhood need not be educative, that, in fact, although children learn from everything they read, the best books are without informational, educational, or any solemn purpose. Any moral teaching in them is fundamental and natural to the story. . . .

We are still inclined to destroy what is native to childhood by employing too many devices, making too many plans, allowing too little play for the imagination, and writing, and publishing and distributing too many books that we, who have long since forgotten our childhood, decide "fill the needs" of children.

We are not too different from the adults of the seventeenth century, who hastened to *cure* children of childhood. We see children batting balls in a vacant lot and haggling happily over "choosing sides," and we rush in to organize their competition. A small boy spends his free hours trying to build a computer and we push him into an accelerated class at school, where he discovers that the problems he was happily working out for himself have long since been solved.

A ten-year-old proves to be an avid reader, so we take away the fairy tales and see that she "gets ahead" on the books she will have to read in high school when she will not "have so much time." Thus childhood is lost, and lost too are the books that would prepare her for the enjoyment and the emotional impact of great literature.

In one part of this book Mrs. Viguers gives some "storytelling poems," or parts of them, she has used in relating hero tales to children. These poems are in the Benéts' *A Book of Americans.* One of them has only four lines:

When Daniel Boone goes by, at night,
The phantom deer arise
And all lost, wild America
Is burning in their eyes.

Mrs. Viguers has plans for changing the popular idea of the library and of librarians. If librarians begin to think of themselves as serving and creating *readers,* instead of being people trained to extend the functions of the public schools, they may be able to get the publishers to select better books for children—books that aren't market-oriented. She says:

My dream of the future shows the public library, no longer concerned with school curricula and class assignments, accomplishing its unique goals. Cooperation with the schools will always be important. All agencies serving children should work together. . . . The public librarian will still be meeting school classes; but she will be able to talk more about books, since the lessons on how to use the library will be taught in the school. She will have more time for story hours in the library for speaking and storytelling outside the library. . . .

With less money and time spent on specific school needs there will be money for more duplication of good older titles and there will be time to get acquainted with the new books before buying, assuring wise expenditure of the book budget. Thus, too, the children's librarian will be doing what she can to discourage the publication of inferior books.

My hopes for the future of public library children's work do not add up to an extravagant dream, for they are not mere hopes. They are actualities in some places. I know they are possible; but they are not general. Books and a building are not enough. To serve children well the books and the library must be in the care of librarians who enjoy people and books and who have creativity, understanding, and enthusiasm.

Mrs. Viguers think of librarians as "hosts"—"hosts at the greatest feast of mind and spirit that the world has known continuously since the days of ancient Alexandria."

FRONTIERS

Gandhi's Views

A KIND of famine exists today in the world of printed matter—a famine of good will. Hours spent with the MANAS exchanges produce at least the potential for deep depression, since most of the papers we look at are filled with inventories of the evil done by weak, ignorant, or malicious men. It is as though there were nothing else to write about—or nothing that is not soon displaced by the higher priorities of evil events. And while ignoring the evil in the world could lead to sentimentality and false optimism, neglect of the good leads to infection with hopelessness. So, in preference to accounts of these nakedly discouraging reports, we turn first to a letter from a friend in India. Our correspondent is secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation. After speaking briefly of the paradox of American affairs—revealing expert journalistic capacity to expose the scandal of the Watergate affair, but at the same time the enormous capacity of the country to absorb such revelations in what seems a mood of indifference—he turns to the immediate concerns of the Gandhian movement in India:

> Twenty-five years after Gandhi, we are in our country almost at the crossroads of history. Although one would claim that a number of Gandhian values have percolated in different walks of life, it cannot be said that in any one field Gandhian ideas have made great impact. Perhaps the very nature of Gandhian ideas and the fact that they form an integrated philosophy makes the impact in any field unrelated to others difficult if not almost impossible. But the way the country is moving makes one feel that unless the entire process of politicalization and development is rooted in the Gandhian concept of the country, we shall reach nowhere.
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> We have been developing a number of programs in the Gandhi Peace Foundation. Currently, we are engaged in a mobilization of 100,000 young men and women to fight the drought situation in different parts of the country. This is the first occasion when such a huge number is being involved in what is obviously a countrywide campaign of creating social awareness. In thirty small clusters of villages dedicated workers are digging themselves in, in an effort to build rural communities.
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> All this is exciting. Still, there is no denying that the country is so big, the problems are so complex, and the effort needed is gigantic. We have our periods of frustration as well as reward.

Since Gandhi is often mentioned or invoked with little understanding of what he stood for, there can hardly be too many reminders of the foundation of his thinking. An article in the January *Gandhi Marg,* the quarterly journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, provides basic definitions. The writer, Ram Rattan, says: "Gandhi is essentially a philosopher of the politics of peaceful protest." This does not, however, imply passivity, weakness, or expediency. Satyagraha, which Gandhi called "firmness in a good cause," requires the greatest courage of which a man is capable. "Satyagraha," he said, "is just a new name for the law of self-suffering." Ram Rattan quotes Joan Bondurant on a crucial distinction often ignored by modern advocates of nonviolence:

> Joan V. Bondurant clearly distinguishes Gandhi's satyagraha from its obverse, duragraha. She discovers that, in contra-distinction to the former, the latter means stubborn resistance of the opponent's policy or action, "prejudged" to be ipso-facto wrong. The duragrahi regards truth, justice, rightness his monopoly and does not allow the possibility of the opponent also being in the right.
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> In duragraha, the opponent is regarded as the embodiment of evil. He is not allowed to explain his standpoint. Even the distinction between the wrong and the wrong-doer is not maintained. The duragrahi first destroys his opponent's position in order to destroy his misdeeds. The latter is subjected to maximum suffering. As a matter of fact, there is no meeting ground between the duragrahi and his adversary. The former forces the latter to accept defeat and to grant the desired concessions. The satyagrahi, on the other hand, enables the alleged evil-doer to prove his point and allows a fair chance of its acceptance.

It should be clear that Gandhi aimed at erasing the spirit of partisanship in the fight for justice. The ideal outcome of a conflict, for

Gandhi, would be the dissolution of the issue through the agreement of the opponents, instead of a defeat of one with victory for the other. There would be no separate triumph, but a common friendliness. This involves the remaking of attitudes and ideas of "interest," so it requires great patience and persistence. The objective is to see in what direction the good of all lies, and this often requires a purification of values. Ram Rattan writes:

> Gandhi's Satyagraha movements proved that even the dumb and illiterate participants become politically conscious and acquire a better sense of distinction between justice and injustice, right and wrong. . . . The South African satyagraha, for instance, ennobled the so-called coolies and gave them self-confidence and self-reliance. On its conclusion, Gandhi was himself a transformed person. To quote G. Ramachandran: "Deep within him (Gandhi) there stirred the first awareness of a great mission and we witness the rebirth of the man Gandhi into Gandhi the Mahatma." . . . By precept and example, Gandhi proves that satyagraha can tear tyranny and injustice to pieces and yet "redeem alike the tyrant and his victim.

This article ought to be made available in pamphlet form, since it deserves study. Gandhi is careful, for one thing, to give examples of situations where Satyagraha has no application. There are other good reasons for going back to Gandhi and learning what he believed. For even if we think we know better, we ought at least to know the difference between what he actually thought and vague and misleading impressions of his views. Ram Rattan shows that much of what is now called Gandhian protest is simply duragraha, not satyagraha. In other words, it is not Gandhian at all.