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On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so.

—John Donne

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AN EDITOR'S VIEW:

We feel that the moment is opportune for a brief discussion of ERA's orientation. We are concerned with the extra-curricular dissemination of ideas; our hope is to expand and to liberalize as best we may the channels of communication between members of the University.

Such a goal is worth the pursuit of students and faculty; and in such an endeavor, ERA desires a significant role. But, we wish to stress this point, that such an ambition requires contributions from the several aspects of our community.

Since we seek a breadth of form and content and authorship of expression, we want our readers to know that ERA does not exist solely for the publication of faculty material. We feel strongly that the efforts of students also deserve a place where their quality may be appreciated. ERA, then, exists for the publication of intellectual and creative efforts regardless of origin. In this manner, we can provide access to subjects and authors perhaps not readily available elsewhere and add our share to the creation of a more fluid academic environment.

All manuscripts and correspondence should be sent to: The Editors, ERA, Philomathean Society, Logan Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. Unsolicited work cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Charles Cashdollar,
Janet Liscarz, and
Harry Taplin

I CHRISTEN THEE . . . ?

■ No doubt one of the most disconcerting things for the historical profession which prides itself upon accuracy, is to find discrepancies in factual material among its secondary sources. In the course of our reading, we have discovered that, although historians were certain that Jamestown had been founded by a group of adventuresome Englishmen arriving in Virginia aboard three ships—under the command of Christopher Newport—in the spring of 1607, they were far from agreement on the names of the three ships.

There seemed to be general consent that the smallest of the ships was the *Discovery*, a pinnacle of twenty tons. But, the name of Newport's flagship varied, some authors giving it as *Susan Constant* and some as *Sarah Constant*. The third ship's name also showed inconsistency and was rendered as either *Godspeed* or *Goodspeed*. At first confused, then curious, and finally thoroughly intrigued by the matter, we set out to, at least, find the source of the enigma.

The origin of the trouble was easily traced to two conflicting 17th century sources. In 1612, the Reverend Samuel Purchas published the first edition of his *Pilgrims*. Although he had no access to the records of the London Company, he did have personal contact with Captain John Smith

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and later had the papers of Richard Hakluyt in his possession.¹ In his 1625 edition of *Pilgrims*, he lists the three ships as:

Susan Constant Admirall with 71

God speed Vice-admirall with 52 Commanded by Cap Gosnol

Discovery Rear-admirall, with 21

In 1869, however, Edward Neill in his *Virginia Company of London* uncovered and reprinted some new 17th century documents from the Virginia Manuscripts in the Library of Congress. Among these was a document containing the *Instructions* given to the expedition by His Majesties' Council for Virginia. Neill quoted its preamble as stating:

First, Whereas the good ship called the Sarah Constant and the ship called the Goodspeed, with a pinnace called the Discovery are now victualled, riged, and furnished. . . .

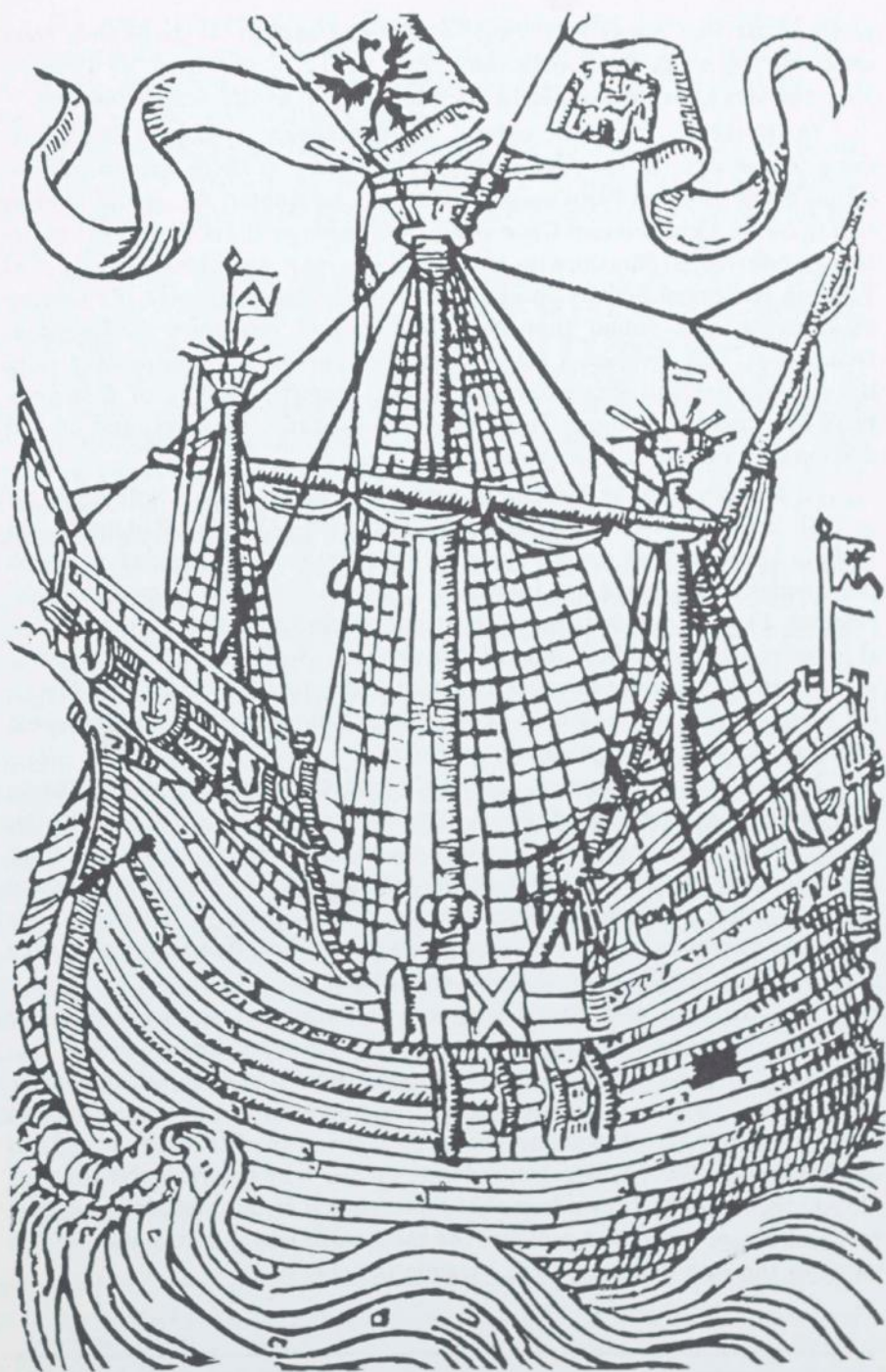
Thus we now had two 17th century sources—Purchas and His Majesties' Council for Virginia—giving different names for the ships. Here the controversy began.

Beginning with Alexander Brown (*Genesis of the United States*, 1891), most reputable historians have concluded that Neill's reprint of the official source was more reliable than Purchas. Thus the ships were commonly known as the *Sarah Constant* and the *Goodspeed*. During the first part of the 20th century such distinguished historians as Andrews, Savelle, Morison and Commager, Chitwood, and Tyler all followed Brown's lead.

Standing almost alone against this impressive array of colonial historians was the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. From its inception in 1893, it indexed all references to the ships under *Susan Constant* and *Goodspeed*. This was done primarily on the basis of testimony given by John Laydon and John Dods in the Muster of 1624/5. Laydon is registered as coming to the colonies on the *Susan* in 1607 and Dods is registered as coming on the *Susan Constant* in the same year. Both men are listed among the records of Newport's passengers. It seemed logical, at least to the *Virginia Magazine*, that since there were numerous references to a *Susan* belonging to the London Company and sailing to and from Virginia between 1616 and 1668, that these were all the same ship and that *Susan* was merely short for *Susan Constant*.

This line of reasoning is quite strong until one checks the records of the House of Burgesses and finds that there was also a *Sarah* engaged in Virginia-England traffic during the early 17th century. Certainly if one could argue that *Susan* was short for *Susan Constant*, one could just as

1. Smith does not, as far as we can determine, list the names of the three ships anywhere in his writings.



Printer's mark from Antwerp, dated 1487, showing a contemporary style of ship.

easily argue that *Sarah* was short for *Sarah Constant*. Perhaps they were assuming too much and Laydon and Dods were a bit confused. By 1937 the *Virginia Magazine* also began to refer to the ship as the *Sarah Constant*.

In the 1930's, however, careful scholars began to suspect that something was wrong. In the first place they noticed that there was an odd internal discrepancy in Neill's work. Although he quoted the *Instructions* as saying *Sarah Constant* and *Goodspeed*, in his own introduction to the material he referred to the ships as the *Susan Constant* and the *Godspeed*. The Virginia Historical Society checked the original manuscripts in the Library of Congress and found that Neill had in fact miscopied *Godspeed* as *Goodspeed*. This revelation resolved at least part of the controversy since the *Instructions* and Purchas really agreed over the spelling of *Godspeed*. Neill had copied the name *Sarah Constant* properly, however, and so this discrepancy remained unresolved.

At this point many historians were ready to write the whole affair off to 17th century laxity in orthography. Two men—Gregory Robinson and Robins Goodison—were not so easily discouraged and decided to check the *London Port Books* for 1606-1610.² Several problems immediately developed. First, the records were scanty and in places illegible; second, if the ships were sailing for the London Company, they would have been duty-free and therefore might not have been entered in the *Port Books* (the *Mayflower*, for instance, was not listed in 1620); loose orthography and abbreviated ship names further complicated the matter.

They found at least two "Sarahs" using the port of London during this period. One, the *Sarah of Maidstone*, was quickly ruled out as too small. The second ship, the *Sara of London*, is far more interesting since it was loading in London about December 4, 1606. No precise connection could be made between this ship and the Virginia voyage, however. They found no reference to a *Sarah Constant* as such, but, due to the duty-free provision, this does not preclude its existence.

The two men also found a group of suspicious ships listed under *Content* or *Consent* and a large number of ships listed under various facsimiles of "Susan." The most interesting of these was a *Susan Constance* recorded as carrying tobacco, horse bells and knit woolen stockings to London in 1608 (most probably it was engaged in the Muscovy trade and had stopped in the Spanish Netherlands on the way back). Robinson and Goodison, although they admit that the matter is by no means closed, feel that this *Susan Constance* provides the most satisfactory explanation of the name of the ship which came to Virginia in 1606-1607.

2. Gregory Robinson and Robins Goodison, "Sarah versus Susan," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XVI (1936), p. 515-521.

The next year Minnie G. Cook argued that the mere existence of a ship named the *Susan Constance*, when added to Purchas and the testimony of Laydon and Dods, makes the conclusion that the ship's real name was the *Susan Constant* almost inescapable.³

These studies, regardless of their merit, did not attract much attention. Although the *Virginia Magazine* did return to its indexing the ship as the *Susan Constant*, historians generally continued to refer to the ship as the *Sarah Constant*.

The matter reached critical proportions in 1956 as the Jamestown Festival approached. The three ships were to be reconstructed, christened at Norfolk, and sailed down to Jamestown for the festival in May, 1957. Obviously, if one is going to christen a ship, one has to be certain of its name. So as historians debated, the Virginia Assembly came to the rescue of the profession and, in 1956, passed a law stating that "hereafter they shall be known as the *Susan Constant*, 100 tons, Captain Newport commanding; the *Godspeed*, 40 tons, Captain Gosnold commanding; the *Discovery*, 20 tons, Captain Ratcliffe commanding."⁴

With all qualms thus allayed, the Virginia Historical Society proceeded to christen the ships and send them up to Jamestown. Quickly following this scholarly decision, many distinguished historians (Savelle, Morison and Commager, Morison in his *Oxford History*) dropped the use of the *Sarah Constant* and began to use the now accepted *Susan Constant*.

What then, in conclusion, do we know? There never has been any trouble with the name of the *Discovery* and now with the uncovering of Neill's error there seems to be no dispute over the use of the *Godspeed* for the second vessel. But what of Newport's flagship? The possibility still exists that there could be a *Sarah Constant* not registered in the *London Port Books* or that some connection could be drawn between the *Sara of London* and the Virginia expedition, but this would require documentary evidence which, if it exists at all, is currently unknown. For the present, at least, it appears that the burden of evidence points to the name *Susan Constant*; we have Purchas, we know that a ship of a similar name did exist, and we have the Muster of 1624/5 which gives the testimony of John Laydon and John Dods. And, of course, if all else fails, we have the comforting assurance that the Virginia Assembly has spoken.

3. Minnie G. Cook, "The Susan Constant and the Mayflower," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XVII (1937), p. 229-233.

4. As quoted by Samuel M. Bemiss, *Significant Addresses of the Jamestown Festival* (Richmond, 1958), p. 4.

Marvin E. Wolfgang

THE MASCULINE PROTEST AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

■ Social scientists have long stressed the importance of the theme of masculinity in American culture and the effect that this image of the strong masculine role has had on child rearing and the general socialization process. The inability of the middle-class male child to match himself to this masculine model, and the neuroticism that is the consequence of this increasingly futile struggle, were vividly brought to our attention years ago by Arnold Green.¹ The continuity of this masculine role in the lower classes has often been asserted and was made one of the "focal concerns" in Walter B. Miller's² profile of the lower-class milieu.

There is reason to believe, however, that this once dominating culture theme is dissipating, especially in the central- or middle-class culture, and

1. Arnold W. Green, "The Middle-Class Male Child and Neurosis," *American Sociological Review* (February, 1946) 11:31-41.

2. Walter B. Miller, "Lower-Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," *Journal of Social Issues* (1958) 14:5-19.

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THE MASCULINE PROTEST AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

that this dissipation is diffusing downwards through the lower classes via the youth subculture. It may be argued that, while the status of the sexes in many social spheres of activity in the United States has been approaching equality, there has been an increasing feminization of the general culture. Instead of females becoming more like males, males have increasingly taken on some of the roles and attributes formerly assigned to females. It is not so much that maleness is reduced as a goal motivating young boys; rather, physical aggressivity, once the manifest feature of maleness, is being reduced and the meaning of masculinity is thereby being changed to more symbolic forms. The continued diminution of the earlier frontier mores which placed a premium on aggressiveness in males, has been replaced by other attributes of masculinity. The gun and fist have been substantially substituted by financial ability, by the capacity to manipulate others in complex organizations like economic and political bureaucracies, and even by intellectual talents. The thoughtful wit, the easy verbalizer, the computer programmer, even the striving musician and artist are, in the dominant culture, equivalents of male assertiveness where broad shoulders and fighting fists were once the major symbols. The young culture heroes may range from Van Cliburn to the Beatles, but Billy the Kid is a fantasy figure from an earlier history.

It may well be true that in many lower-class communities, violence is associated with masculinity and may not only be acceptable but admired behavior. That the rates of violent crimes are high among lower-class males suggests that this group still and strongly retains notions of *maschismo*, continues to equate maleness with overt physical aggression. In the Italian slum of the Boston West End, Herbert Gans³ describes families dominated by the men and where mothers encourage male dominance. On the other hand, lower-class boys who lack father or other strong male figures, as in the case of many Negro families, have a problem of finding models to imitate. But, rejecting female dominance at home and at school and their association of morality may be a means for their asserting their masculinity, and such assertion must be performed with a strong antithesis of femininity, namely by being physically aggressive. Being a bad boy, Parsons⁴ has said, can become a positive goal if goodness is too closely identified with femininity.

Whatever the reasons for this stronger masculine role among lower-class youth, its retention will continue to witness violence. Because the young male is better equipped physically to manifest this form of masculinity than the very young, the middle-aged or the very old; because the

3. Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers*, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962.

4. Talcott Parsons, "Certain Primary Sources and Patterns of Aggression in the Social Structure of the Western World," *Psychiatry* (May, 1947) 10:167-181.

lower-class young male, having learned this normative value, needs no special education to employ the agents of physical aggression (fists, feet, agility); and because he seeks, as do we all, reinforcement from others for his ego and commitments, in this case to the values of violence, he comes to play violent games of conflict within his own age-graded violent subcultural system. So does the artist play games, of course, when he competes for a prize, the young scholar for tenure, the financier for a new subsidiary, and nations for propaganda advantage. But, the prescribed rules for street fighting produce more deadly quarrels with weapons of guns and knives than do competitions among males who use a brush, a dissertation or a contract.

Jackson Toby⁵ has recently suggested that if the compulsive masculinity hypothesis has merit, it ought to generate testable predictions about the occurrence of violence, and lists the following: "(1) Boys who grow up in households headed by women are more likely to behave violently than boys who grow up in households headed by a man. . . . (2) Boys who grow up in households where it is relatively easy to identify with the father figure are less likely to behave violently than in households where identification with the father figure is difficult. . . . (3) Boys whose development toward adult masculinity is slower than their peers are more likely to behave violently than boys who find it easy to think of themselves as 'men'. . . . (4) Masculine ideals emphasize physical roughness and toughness in those populations where *symbolic* masculine power is difficult to understand. Thus, middle-class boys ought to be less likely than working-class youngsters to idealize strength and its expression in action and to be more likely to appreciate the authority over other people exercised by a physician or a business executive."⁶ As Toby indicates, it is unfortunate that evidence at present is so fragmentary that these predictions are not subject to rigorous evaluation.

The male self-conception is both important and interesting. Recently, Leon Fannin and Marshall Clinard⁷ tested for differences between lower-class and middle-class boys through informal depth interviewing and by forced-choice scales. While self-conceptions were quite similar, lower-class boys felt themselves to be tougher, more powerful, fierce, fearless, and dangerous than middle-class boys. "It was unexpected," claim the authors, "that they [the lower-class boys] did not feel themselves to be significantly

5. Jackson Toby, "Violence and the Masculine Ideal: Some Qualitative Data," in Marvin E. Wolfgang (ed.), *Patterns of Violence, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (March, 1966) 364: 19-27.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

7. Leon F. Fannin and Marshall B. Clinard, "Differences in the Conception of Self as a Male among Lower- and Middle-Class Delinquents," *Social Problems* (Fall, 1965) 13:205-214.

more violent, hard, and pugilistic." The middle-class boys conceived themselves as being more clever, smart, smooth, bad and loyal. The self-conceptions were also related to specific types of behavior, for the "tough guys" significantly more often "committed violent offenses, fought more often and with harsher means, carried weapons, had lower occupational aspirations, and stressed toughness and related traits in the reputation they desired and in sexual behavior."⁸

Should the lower classes become more like the middle class in value orientation, family structure and stability, there is reason to believe that the emphasis on masculine identification through physical prowess and aggression will decline. The need to prove male identity may not disappear, especially if Parsons is correct about the importance of this problem for the middle-class male child. But, even being "bad" in order to sever the linkage of morality and femininity may become increasingly difficult to perform in a purely masculine way. And if there are available, as some writers believe, new and alternative models for demonstrating masculinity, ways that may be neither "bad" nor physically aggressive, then we should expect masculine identity to be manifested differently, that is symbolically, even by lower-class boys. Symbolic expressions have always been available, and some contemporary vulgar types are closer than others to the use of physical force. Cars, motorcycles, boots and helmets; football and other sports with body contact; debating societies, musical virtuosity and literary talent—in gross terms represent gradations of distance from the more earthy, mesomorphic masculinity. As the larger culture becomes more cerebral, the refined symbolic forms of masculinity should be more fully adopted. And as the disparity in life style, values, and norms between the lower-and middle-classes is reduced, so too will be reduced the subculture that views ready resort to violence as an expected form of masculine response to many situations.

If this social prognosis proves correct, there may not always be functional and virtuous expertise in the masculine symbolism. We could witness, for example, a shift from direct physical violence to detached and impersonalized violence or to corruption. The dominant, middle-class culture has a considerable tolerance for distant and detached violence expressed in ways that range from dropping heavy bombs on barely visible targets to the stylized, bloodless violence of a James Bond or Batman, and 50,000 automobile deaths each year. This same culture, for reasons too complex to

8. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

detail here, not only tolerates but sometimes creates structural features in its social system that seem to encourage corruption—from tax evasion to corporate crime.⁹ To transform the masculine protest and to dethrone the *machismo* theme among lower-class youth may mean assimilation with the larger culture, but may merely increase the distance between the user and consumer of violence, and increase the volume of contributors to corruption. It may be hoped, of course, that changes in the current direction of the dominant culture may later produce a more sanguine description of this whole process.

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9. We have borrowed from a quite different context in which George Sorel expressed similar ideas about the shift from force to fraud, from violence to corruption as the path to success and privilege. The first edition of *Reflexions sur la Violence* appeared in 1906; also, Paris: M. Riviere, 1936. For additional reference to this work, see Marvin E. Wolfgang, "A Preface to Violence," in *Patterns of Violence*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (March, 1966) 364:1-7.



Vincent G. Dethier

THE DECAPITATED SNOWMEN

■ It was mere accident, of course, that the third snowfall of the year began about midnight on a Saturday. The vicar had no choice, therefore, but to build his snowman as soon as it was light enough on Sunday morning. Thus, it came about that early worshippers were treated to the astonishing sight of the round, aged cleric building a snowman in the cathedral close.

He worked against the impressive backdrop of one of England's most magnificent early gothic cathedrals. The structure had been completed entirely within the fifteenth century when St. Mary's, the village that surrounded it, was truly a marsh and the cathedral occupied an ancient island. Miraculously it had survived the bombings of World War II. It had fared less well at the hands of desecrators in previous centuries. The desecrations had been more discriminating than bombings but, despite the constant reminder of their presence, had passed beyond notice and memory.

From the point of view of the jackdaws which inhabited the lofty spire, the vicar appeared as a small black period in the middle of the broad expanse of snow in the walled close surrounding the cathedral and vicarage.

For his purpose, the snowman had to be where everyone could see it, or, at least, where a certain person could see it. At the same time, it had to be visible from the vicarage. As a consequence of the inopportune time that God had chosen to loose the snow from the heavens and of the

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strategic position required, the vicar could not enjoy the comfort of constructing his work surreptitiously. So, not unmindful of the comment his actions would engender among the parishioners, he hewed doggedly to the self-appointed task.

Before beginning he had briefly weighed, against the justification of his purpose, the possibility that his actions might be sinful in giving cause for scandal. He could not claim that he was dealing with a matter of life and death nor even with matters concerned with transgression of the law, spiritual or temporal. On the other hand, deep thinking on the matter had convinced him that a question of character was involved, and to his way of thinking, character was the only basis of all things ethical, moral, and spiritual. It encompassed all that was of importance. If aberrations of character existed among the souls for whom he was responsible, it was his duty to ferret them out while corrective measures were still possible.

The matter in question concerned snowmen. The first snow of the year had come early for Stroat-in-Marsh—on the twenty-seventh of November to be exact. There had been an accumulation of barely two inches. The ground had not yet relinquished the residual warmth of autumn so, although the flakes had swept across the countryside in blinding sheets, most of them had been absorbed by the ground while the rest had coalesced to form a thin but heavy and wet blanket. The consistency was perfect for snowballs, forts, and snowmen. The children and adolescents of Stroat-in-Marsh had not been slow to respond to the invitation. Nor had those of their elders whose offspring were too young to construct their own creations of snow. Accordingly, a whole race of snowmen appeared as if by miracle among the population of the village.

The snowmen were as varied as their flesh and blood architects. As the vicar fashioned his own snowman, he pondered the fact that this art form probably revealed more clearly the thoughts, emotions, and deep stirrings of human currents and tides than did any other human activity. Snow was an infinitely malleable substance. Above all it had no permanency so that one could allow himself absolute freedom of creation secure in the knowledge that within a matter of hours his confession would have vanished forever.

Some snowmen were small—constructed by small children whose idea of correct stature was their own height or by adults who were lazy. Some were giants whose construction reflected a certain sense of megalomania. Some were mere piles of snow whose creators harbored no illusions of artistry. Others resembled stone age goddesses of fertility in that they were constructed of a series of round balls. Others were attempts at caricature. In the caricatures it was possible to read whether the architect had worked in a spirit of warmth, humor, charity, or vindictiveness.

The snowmen stood on various spots throughout the village. And

sometime during that evening, before the expected thaw had wrought its own expressive etching, exaggerated all features, and begun the erosion of age, all of the snowmen had been decapitated. Decapitation of one or two snowmen might have passed as a boyish prank. After all, the very geometry of a head invites decapitation instinctively. A head is a large unstable object mounted on a thin stalk. What impulse is more natural than to topple it? The normal impulse, however, is to topple one or two heads, or even three or four. But surely after that the novelty palls. It ceases to be amusing and becomes only work. In Stroat-in-Marsh not one or two but every snowman had been decapitated: little ones that hardly resembled human figures at all; huge ones whose heads rested so high that they could be dislodged only if the person who did it climbed the body; snowmen that stood close by public ways; snowmen standing in private gardens where their presence could have been known only to the makers unless betrayed or deliberately sought out.

The village as a whole did not realize the extent of the massacre because people did not compare notes on so trivial a matter. Each knew simply that his snowman or that of his immediate neighbor had been beheaded. The thoroughness of the action became apparent only to the vicar, the unwilling recipient of all news, tales, and gossip. He could collate the data. So he had realized that a curious and virulent epidemic had been visited upon the snowmen of Stroat-in-Marsh.

He had puzzled over the event for a number of days. It required no astuteness to realize that this was no mere prank. And he knew the villagers well enough to be assured that nothing sinister lay behind it. On the other hand, exactly what did it signify? And who had done it? The vicar enjoyed intellectual puzzles, and here one of the first magnitude had been presented to him.

In time, however, more pressing matters usurped his hours so that even the next snow did not automatically remind him of the earlier incident. But once again all the snowmen that had appeared in the village were methodically beheaded. The vicar decided then and there that he had to find the culprit. His plan was simple. All he must do was wait for the next snow and then build a snowman on a spot where he could keep vigil from the vicarage. This decision accounted for his untoward activity on the morning of the sabbath.

When he set out to build a snowman, the vicar had little idea of how to proceed and even less of the characteristics he desired in the finished product. He dimly recalled having made a snowman or two in his youth, but the details of the memory eluded him. He knew that the first step required accumulating a large quantity of snow in one spot. He had already seen enough snowmen to realize that the least arduous method consisted of rolling balls. He had completed the first ball before the earliest parishioners

appeared. He was in the process of rolling a second when the Misses Perkins came through the gate in the wall encircling the close. Having used most of the snow in the immediate vicinity of his proposed site, the vicar had had to roll rather far afield to gather his second ball. His path had placed him astride the walk when Sarah and Emilie Perkins arrived.

What they saw was a round man in very wet clericals pushing a snowball about the size of his own ample belly. He had trouble grasping the ball, and when his feet slipped, as they frequently did, he half fell across the top of it. Perspiration rolled down his burning cheeks, and his face steamed like a dray horse.

"Good morning, Vicar," intoned Emilie Perkins in an ill-concealed, holier-than-thou voice.

"Humph!" sniffed Sarah.

"Eh?" exploded the vicar, caught short-winded and by surprise. "Oh, yes. Good morning, Miss Emilie. Good morning, Miss Sarah." He straightened up cautiously to ease the ache in his back.

The two nodded without changing expression and proceeded up the path as though nothing unusual had occurred, but they were only postponing their comments. As soon as Mass was concluded they would spread the news; by that time, however, many others would have seen for themselves, because the vicar's physical condition prevented him from working either efficiently or rapidly.

Others did indeed see him as he rolled his ball across the yard. The local physician stopped to stare for a full minute and muttered to himself, "A man with his heart should have more sense than to exercise that way. By jove, he looks like a big, black dung beetle rolling that silly ball." Squire Smithson also paused, leaning on an elegant walking stick. "It's high time," he mused, "to put the old boy out to pasture." Others reacted in character to the sight. Nobody asked him what he was doing; nobody offered to assist.

When the vicar got the second ball near the first, it had grown somewhat larger than he had planned. Even to an amateur it was clear that only an athlete could lift the second ball onto the first. After studying the problem for a while he hit upon the idea of slicing the ball in two and erecting it in place by halves. So it was that various members of his flock saw him slicing a large snowball, or lifting pieces into place, or moulding them together—depending upon which phase of the operation they encountered. In any case, the scene was ludicrous, droll, pathetic, or simply astonishing in relation to the attitude of the beholder.

Having at last aligned three balls in the vertical in order of decreasing size the vicar paused to reflect upon the kind of snowman he wished to make. For his purpose there was actually no need to progress further. Clearly there already existed the rudiments of a head, chest, and abdomen.

Until this stage his incentive and need to know had suppressed any self-consciousness with regard to the figure he cut. Now, however, mild human pride tempted him. Once he had gone so far as to produce a snowman, people would surely act as self-appointed critics of his effort. But what kind of a snowman should his be? A religious figure perhaps? No, that could be construed as sacrilegious, the more since his artistic talent had been a small gift indeed. Moreover, a religious figure might deter the decapitator. A devil? He nursed the idea for a while. It appealed to him. But no, some of his parishioners would surely interpret it as some form of idolatry. In the end he fashioned simply an anonymous postcard genre of snowman. Since it did not look especially mannish, he reached into his pocket as an afterthought for his pipe, which he stuck where the mouth was supposed to be. Not a bit too soon either, because the sexton had begun ringing the bell for the High Mass for which he was the celebrant. Wet clothes and all he hurried around to the sacristy door. Two of his altar boys, twelve-year-old Johnny Scrivens, the green-grocer's son, and ten-year-old Ian Bayliss, the barrister's son, were already vested and waiting. With a catch of breath, he prepared himself.

The remainder of the day passed uneventfully. At vespers his snowman still stood—squatted seemed a more fitting description—unmolested. Similarly throughout dinner all remained peaceful outside. After dinner the vicar took his port, reached for his pipe before remembering that it served another purpose this night, and settled himself in a comfortable wingback chair facing the casement window. Fortunately a full moon, early risen, lighted the scene. Against the distant dark mass of the cathedral the snowman, placed not too close to the vicarage yet not too distant for recognition, stood bravely on guard. Once a dark figure passed across the snow behind, but it turned out to be only someone taking a short cut through the close.

At half past eight, just when the vicar thought that his plan had failed, a boy came up behind the snowman. The vicar had cleverly built it so that the head could not be toppled in a moment. Whoever had designs on it would have to kick a foothold in the body to stand high enough. This delay, the vicar had calculated, would permit him time to walk out and accost the intruder—which was precisely what he did.

"Good evening, Ian," he said pleasantly.

Ian Bayliss turned quickly to run, then realizing that he had been addressed by name, hence was known, waited.

"You must be quite cold," continued the vicar. "Have you beheaded many yet?"

"Twelve," replied Ian beguiled by the moderate voice.

"Why don't you come in with me and have a cup of hot chocolate?" continued the vicar placing his arm around the boy's shoulders. Ian had

no choice but to yield to the gentle urging. The vicar stooped to retrieve his pipe from the shattered fragments of head before the two went in.

Seated before the fire he tried to coax some smoke from his somewhat soggy pipe, as Ian sipped cautiously a steaming mug of chocolate. He watched curiously until the boy had finished.

"Well, Ian," he said at last, "is it fun knocking the heads off snowmen?"

"No," replied Ian candidly.

"Don't you like snowmen?"

"I don't like them and I don't hate them."

"Do you dislike the people who make them?"

"No."

The vicar gave up his pipe.

"Would you care for more chocolate?"

"Yes, please."

The vicar called to the housekeeper who returned almost immediately with more chocolate.

"I am interested in knowing why you do it. As far as I can see there is nothing wrong with what you have done," he added quickly, "but why do you do it especially now since you tell me that it is not for fun and that you do not hate anybody? It must be quite a lot of work."

Ian looked puzzled. "I don't know why I do it."

"Oh come now," the vicar chided, "you must have a reason."

The boy's brow wrinkled in thought, and he scratched his cowlick.

"I guess it's the church," he said at last.

The vicar had heard the Church blamed for many things in his time, but this was a novel accusation. "What do you mean?" he asked in some surprise.

"The statues, they have no heads." Ian's eyes brightened. "None of them have no heads."

"None of them have any heads," corrected the vicar.

"None of them have any heads," Ian repeated. He went on almost eagerly. "First I only saw the big statues around the altar and I wondered why they didn't have no heads—any heads. I thought maybe they broke off accidentally. Then I saw the little ones way up near the ceiling. Did you know that there were lots of them up there? I used to count them while you talked. Sometimes I would lose count and have to start all over again. It's very hard to count so many so far away. Do you know that there are one hundred and thirteen on one side and only one hundred and twelve on the other? I'm sure; I counted them many times. They're just little ones. And none of them have heads. They all look the same without heads. I can't tell whether they are man statues or lady statues. It's hard to tell from way down on the floor if the heads broke off or if they didn't ever

have heads. Why haven't they heads? I think they really used to. Did somebody break them off? Why?"

The vicar sat back astounded. He had never given any thought to the headless statues in the cathedral. One sized up the situation the first time he entered the building, satisfied his curiosity by evaluating the fact in its historical context, perhaps experienced a passing regret at the defacement of man's artistic expression, then dismissed the matter from mind. The vicar had even forgotten whether it was Cromwell's men who had desecrated the church, or whether the destruction had occurred earlier during the period of the suppression of the monasteries. He had never paid much attention to statuary. There were too many other pressing repairs to be made constantly on the fabric of the cathedral. Stone facing on the north wall of the nave was flaking badly; the deathwatch beetle continued to wreak havoc with the oak beams of the roof; and much of the copper downspouting needed replacement.

But this boy. Good Lord, was that all he did in church, count statues? And, he thought, how poorly we adjust our teaching to the level of interest of youth and how we underestimate their acuity. He looked at Ian. A bright boy. Good home. But the vicar only half understood. Obviously the headless statues had made a profound impression.

"Yes, Ian, I realize many of the statues have no heads."

"None of them," interrupted Ian.

"None of them," the vicar amended. "Still I don't quite understand why you had to knock off the heads of snowmen."

"It's just—it's just—I have never seen any other statues except God, and He has a head."

Why of course, recalled the vicar, the crucifix was a modern acquisition. Couldn't celebrate Mass without a proper crucifix.

Ian continued. "Snowmen are statues. I guess if statues are supposed to have heads, they would have heads in church. It didn't seem right for snowmen to have heads when the angels and all the others didn't. I don't know. I just—" Ian bogged down in confusion. "I don't know why I did it. I just felt like it." He spread his hands helplessly.

"Of course, my boy, of course. Indeed there is no harm done." The vicar was deeply troubled. Not about Ian's behavior. The boy, it seemed, had been quite open about the decapitations. There had been no particular deceit or stealth in his actions. As he had freely admitted, he had knocked off some heads in broad daylight. Several of the other boys had even showed him where some of the snowmen were located. No, what troubled the vicar was the moving effect that the desecrations had had on the boy. Of all the things in the church and all that they stood for, what impressed the boy most was the work of the devil. What a fascination evil had! What an insidious way of triumphing! What was the vicar to say? He could not

tell Ian the truth. It would only involve him in hopeless attempts at explaining what nobody could ever comprehend. Soon enough Ian would see the world for what it was.

"Ian," he said, "statues are indeed supposed to have heads. It is much more difficult to make a head than any other part. You have to be much more clever to make a head than to destroy one. The statues in the cathedral lost their heads by accident." Yes indeed, it was an accident. "Perhaps some day we will find an artist clever enough to carve new heads for all of them. It would take a great man. Perhaps you could be that man. Now, don't you think it is getting to be time to go home?"

The vicar's puzzle had been solved, but its solution, instead of satisfying him, had left him saddened and troubled.

Ian picked up his cap and mittens as the vicar rose to show him to the door.

"Good night, Ian, my boy."

"Good night."

The vicar stood at the open door oblivious of the chill air and watched the small figure run lightheartedly across the bright snow without a glance at the decapitated snowman. Snowmen always melt, and boys grow into men.

The vicar gave another troubled sigh. As he closed the door he had a last brief glimpse of the snowman. I wonder, he thought, if I can make a better one.



Stella Kramrisch

THE ART OF NEPAL

■ The art of Nepal hitherto has hardly been known to exist. A vague familiarity in the West with gilded bronzes, crude or overwrought but generally lifeless, of uncertain provenience, Tibetan or Nepalese, and made during the last two centuries did little to stimulate a search for hidden treasures in the mountain kindgom of Nepal. For the last fifteen years the towering pagodas of its temples and palaces glowing gold and deep brick-red against Himalayan snow peaks and a deep blue sky above verdant hills have drawn admirers from all over the world to Katmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, the three ancient capital cities of Nepal. Even before these were founded, the art of Nepal was famous in India and China. At the height of artistic achievement in these countries, Wang Hsüan Ts'e, the Chinese envoy to the court of King Narendradeva of Nepal, marvelled at the towering structures of the country and its wondrous sculptures. They were adorned with precious stones and pearls, he wrote in the year 657. A few years before, Hsüang T'sang, the Chinese pilgrim had heard in India about the "skill and facility in the arts" of the people of Nepal, whose capital then was Deo-Patan. Its foundation goes back to the third century B.C. according to legends. Nepal itself tells little of the history of its art. In the fifth century King Manadeva set up two images in order to increase

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the religious merit of his mother. These two relief slabs, each inscribed in the year 467, show the identical composition of Vishnu Trivikrama in two different styles. Were it not for the exceptionally full documentation one would be tempted to assign them to different ages. It is not excluded that the relief in the Bir Library, Katmandu is a somewhat later copy. Both the reliefs point to an unknown Indian prototype.

The high quality and splendor of Nepali art was displayed for the first time in an exhibition held by the Asia Society in New York in 1964. That assemblage of fifteen hundred years of the sculpture and paintings of Nepal put them on the map of the art of the world. Many of the exhibits could only be assigned tentative dates; after Manadeva's inscribed reliefs, the next dated sculpture was assigned to the year 983.

The art of Nepal is the creation of the Newars, a Mongoloid people who formed the bulk of the ancient population of the valley of Katmandu. The gods of India, Hindu as well as Buddhist, came to Nepal with their images. Before they arrived, stones in their own, natural shapes were seats of the numinous, above and below ground. They are sacred to this day and so are the images. As in India these are not considered as works of art but as made by art, whereas the worshipped stones are made by nature. Both result from creation, which is sacred, in its different aspects.

From the earliest known images in the fifth century, the art of Nepal has paradoxical qualities all its own. The deep tremors which reverberate in the modelling of Indian sculptures are gentled and flow in elegant curves while its mass is accentuated in its different specific gravity, by an assertive energy of some of the figures. The Nepali countenance of one figure confronts the world with a determination which the retracted elbows carry over into the form of the statue. It is indebted to the Indian Kushana school of Mathura and its style corresponds to early Gupta sculptures of northern and central India. Plasticity together with a planar effect, balancing the voids between arms and body against the disk of the halo and fusing its perimeter with the silhouette of the chest, yield a distinctly Nepali form. A concentration on formal clarity is part of the assimilation of Indian prototypes by the Newar craftsman. He depends on existent forms coined in a tradition which becomes his own. He re-experiences its contents and arrives at a synthetic vision in which gods of Hinduism coalesce with those of Buddhism and images emerge whose Indian form is stayed, smoothed and caressed by his touch. Many of the gods of Nepal represent an amalgam of Hinduism and Buddhism, two religions which have their roots in common. The creativity of Nepal is one of adjustment of images, the one to the other, according to their content, and of all of them to a loving consideration of their form. The mode of contemplation of an already concretely existing image, the inner rhythm of the act of contemplation remoulds the original image. The new image if it is more distant from the original cre-



Figure 1. Devi. Seventh century. Copper. George P. Bickford Collection, Cleveland, Ohio.

ative impulse presents it more consciously than does the original Indian form. Newar art is form conscious, elegant and suave.

It took its prototypes from widely distant Indian schools. Some of the Nepali bronze figurines have the quality of the large goddesses carved in the living rock of the Deccan, in Aurangabad of the seventh century (Fig. 1), others relate in motif, though not in their form, to the art of the Deccan of subsequent centuries. An image of Shiva together with Uma,



Figure 2. Uma-Maheshvara. Ca. 8th-9th century. Collection Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery, India.

hitherto assigned to the sixteenth century (Fig. 2), shows this indebtedness and appears also related to elements from other Indian schools which have not as yet been traced.

They are blended in an equilibrium of playful serenity comprising volumes and voids, structure and ornament. This group, of obvious spontaneity, has many parallels in stone reliefs in Nepal. Two of them having inscriptions of the 11th and 12th centuries respectively, are obviously posterior to the type related to the little bronze. This group of sculptures shows inexhaustible variations on the theme of togetherness of the Great God and the Goddess. Though they are two figures, as a group they are a unit, the goddess completing the presence of Shiva who in his being combines and transcends both the male and the female and, in his form as Uma-Maheshvara, embraces his female hypostasis.

This theme is also a favourite one of the Eastern Indian school whose rich output in these images, in its earlier phases, the eighth to tenth centuries, has little in common with the Nepali sculptures. In its later phase, traits of the Eastern Indian school under the Pala dynasty are blended in Nepal with its combined heritage and living tradition, reaching, at times, as in the image of Avalokiteshvara of the Golden Monastery in Patan (Fig. 3), a perfection of meditative and sculptural poise. Subsequently, under the rule of the Sena dynasty, the Muslim conquest of Eastern India at the end of the twelfth century brought an increased number of artists and their works who found safety and patronage in Nepal. Under their impact the Newar craftsman sensitized the sumptuously vigorous Sena style to an acutely lyrical mode (Fig. 4). Following this climax in the late twelfth and the thirteenth century the Nepali tradition flowed on without further significant contributions from India. New inflections of form from then to the sixteenth century tend towards a more summary treatment of the mass (Fig. 5), and more sweeping silhouettes (see cover photo). From the seventeenth century a lively narrative style, refreshed by Rajasthani elements, of painting long scrolls on cloth found its way also into the hieratic art of the pata or temple hangings, where however its role was only marginal. The art of Nepal remained creative into the nineteenth century.

One of the recurrent themes of Tantrik Buddhist art—not only in India and Nepal but also in Tibet and China where artists from Nepal had worked for centuries—now almost familiar to the West in its provocative inscrutability, is the hieroglyph of a god in sexual union (*maithuna*) with his goddess. Their figures are seated erect in yoga posture or, if they represent wrathful divinities (Fig. 6), the god, standing with legs wide apart, generally in the attitudes of an archer or dancer on the prostrate bodies of demons, clasps to himself the goddess whose limbs entwine him. Unlike human figures these couples do not unite lying down. They are beyond the human condition.

They are visual symbols of the inner realization of absolute transcendental bliss (*paramamahasukha*). Their evocative formulae are collected in Tantrik texts like the *Guhyasamaja-tantra* and the *Sadhanamala* of about the twelfth century and go back to much older conceptions. Tantrism is an ancient Indian path of redemption. It was taken from the early centuries of our present era. Some of its aspects are, it seems, represented in sculptures from Mathura of the second century.

The images of the embrace of god and goddess are not of a couple in union but of the inner experience of union on the physical, emotional and spiritual plane. To the devotee who contemplates their image his body is the place of the realization which these figures help him to accomplish. To a Tantrik his body is the place and means of transcendental realization. Through bodily experience he enters ultimate reality. Its symbols, therefore, are given shapes like those of human bodies. Their transformation in art conveys the transformation in the practicing Tantrik.

They are its visual result if the practitioner is an artist. They are the result of inner discipline and inner, supranormal experiences. They affect the devotee by the magic of their form.

On the physical plane, at the moment of sexual union, the person loses itself, its ego, its boundaries. "A man closely embraced by a beloved woman knows nothing more of a without or within" (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*). It is a moment of intense concentration, fulfills desire, releases from desire. To ordinary man the sex act is the only means of entry into the experience of freedom from himself. It is the fundamental experience of man in this world age, the Kali Yuga, when man no longer is able to see the gods face to face and is chained to his mortal lot. However, even in the act of physical union, the experience of boundless freedom is not truly freedom. It is but a moment in a chain in which nature takes its course. Only then would man be truly free if while experiencing the bliss of consummation he could counter nature, undo the chain of existence, of procreation, life and death. This can be experienced by the practice of sexual yoga. It activates dormant potentialities in the body and leads by inner experience to states of realization otherwise not within the range of mortals. These are precipitated in and evoked by the images painted in symbolic colors or resplendent in golden effulgence.

The overcoming of man's mortal state is the chief aim of Tantrism. It attacks and uses the human condition at every point in order to transmute it by the means and possibilities at that particular point. Tantrism does not suppress any faculty of the body. It uses and disciplines them, refines them to subtlest possibilities, makes them capable of playing effortlessly at their highest pitch. The way of attainment, however, is an unceasing violent effort towards their complete mastery which while allowing and demanding their perfect functioning knows how to control and even how to

Figure 4. *Indra*. Ca. 1200. Gilt copper. Lent anonymously.



Figure 3. *Avalokiteshvara*. Ca. 11th-12th centuries. Copper gilt. From the Golden Monastery, Patan, Nepal.

stop their functioning. Tantrism introduces into the spontaneous process of living its conscious direction and imposes its will on breath itself, the movement of life, on the muscles of the body, the voluntary as well as the involuntary muscles and on thought. Its discipline is not that of abstention but of practice and of concrete experience of the movements of breath, sex and thought. The mastery of each is attained by the means and conditions peculiar to it.

The aim of this discipline and of its resultant mastery is to transcend the human condition, to overcome its limitation, by encompassing the opposites contained within it and to re-integrate them into wholeness where there is no duality of object and subject, no separation, no suffering, no death. This transcendency is one of life and death which are inseparable in their temporal succession where death seems to follow and finalize life. The Tantrik aim is to master life by the will to death in life, by a power of dying at will to one's life. This dying at will, dying to life, arresting life, is affected by a stoppage of the breath. Whatever the duration of the surcease it is dictated by the will and can be repeated in its autonomy.

This mastery on the physiological plane is concomitant with a transformation of the practitioner. He follows up his "dying" to the mortal condi-

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tion by living on a new level of consciousness which knows itself the master of life, beyond the power of death. He does not acquire this power unaided. His initiation is performed by a teacher (guru) who alone is competent to communicate the knowledge that goes with the practice. This



Figure 5. Prajnaparamita. 14th century. Gilt bronze. Collection Christmas Humphreys, London, England.

knowledge is not conveyed by words alone nor by psycho-physical training. Together with other subtle means of concentration and meditation the inner journey is guided towards re-integration of life and death and all the other pairs of contraries which are man's lot.

The integration of death and life was realized with such intensity because life in its process was felt so strongly. From the very beginning of



Figure 6. Samvara, China. 18th century. Gilt copper. Lent anonymously.

Indian art it had made the forms of art its visible vessels. Unlike those of Greek art and of any Western naturalism, they do not depict the outer shape and structure of the body. Rather the figures of Indian art appear as pneumatic vessels whose limits are filled by the sap of life and swelled by breath. The joints accentuate the pervasive movement. It relieves the figures of their weight, makes them resilient in their luscious modelling and flowing contours. Nepali paintings even more than the sculptures retained the flowing line suggestive of the full body-vessel even where the modelling had become residual or had altogether given way to an almost evenly opaque color surface.

The visualization of the body-vessel of the life breath is the equivalent made by art of an experience wherein the entire body is felt to be pervaded by vital currents. These are not identifiable with the ducts, veins or nerves of the physical body. They belong to an inwardly felt subtle organism by which the physical body is felt to be permeated. In it is vested the experience of living and breathing together with the tensions and sensations of yoga practice. The latter are not shared by the average man to whom the heightened consciousness of the yogin is unknown. The subtle body of the yogin exceeds in its faculties those of ordinary man. They are activated in trans-conscious states of experience which are not open to the untrained and uninitiated. They also act upon the physical body and control its muscles, even the non-striated ones.

The inner discipline which leads to a heightening and conquest of the psycho-physiological functioning of the body achieves its aim of progressive spiritual realization in conjunction with meditations and concentrations. In them the breaths are experienced as equivalent to the cosmic winds, the spine to the cosmic axis, the entire cosmos is felt within the body, the microcosm is lived in its macrocosmic correspondence. The inner centres (cakras) of yoga-experience have no anatomical reality. They are imaginatively felt to lie along the spine, seven in number or less, corresponding to the strata of the imagined universe, each of them representing states of awareness of which the inner-worldly spheres (akras) are accessible only to the supra-sensory valuations and associations of which the adept has become capable. In order to transcend even those inner states of realization, consecutively and in ascending order, these cakras have to be traversed and absorbed the one by the other in order to attain the highest point assigned to the apex of the head where the last and essential union of all the states of realization and of all the currents, tensions and polarities is experienced. The range of these extends beyond normal experience, though it takes place within the physical limits of the body. Within it, this total of trans-physiological experience which is the instrument of transcendental realization constitutes the subtle body (sukshma sharira) of the adept.

The subtle body is given form in the images of divinities. They are

drawn on an invisible but inwardly felt mould which has the perfections of the subtle body yet resembles the physical body. It is not encumbered by the structure and mechanism of the physical body of which it does not intend to be a likeness. The image is projected, not from a vision but from a lived inner experience. It carries in its lineaments the tensions of inner experience on its many levels from the sensuous to the spiritual. The images of the gods have the "subtle bodies" of man. They carry lightly their many heads and many limbs which play their role on many levels of consciousness.

This consciousness has for its contents the experiences of the inner path. Its role is not that of the censor, it does not condemn or suppress, but witnesses spontaneously every experience. Self-consciousness does not exist for there is no self, no ego to be conscious of. Its knots of contraries, problems and tensions have been dissolved in the far greater tension between each state of realization and the ultimate aim of realization, which is the coincidence and cancelling out of all dualities, unconditioned, limitless freedom, Release. The images of the gods incorporate in their "subtle bodies"—they have no other—experiences within, but transcending the human frame and given form by art.

The images as likenesses of powers potent on different levels of realization are helpful on those levels only. The divinities have the appropriate appearance, attitudes and attributes to fight the antagonistic tendencies which arise on the respective levels. Thence they attack normal consciousness sustained by dichotomies. They are shown in sexual union for the intensity of sensual pleasure abolishes normal consciousness. They are co-creative partners of a bliss which also destroys. At no level are these couples progenitive. Their union is a state beyond the mortal, a state which the adept reaches and where he leaves no residue of mortality. No semen is emitted in the rapture of union, the breath is controlled and arrested and all thought is stopped. In this transcending moment death is not. It is the moment of the conquest of immortality. The physiology of the physical act being defeated, the maithuna, the union of the couple is the symbol of the union of all opposites, of their transcendence, the all absorbing "supreme great bliss."

The goddess in maithuna is always nude revealing the sacredness of the power in her seductive shape which is enhanced by transparent, lace-like ornaments made of human bones. These are also worn by the god together with other symbols of death and the power over it, garlands of severed heads and skulls, the skin of tiger or elephant. The co-creative pair in possession of its creativeness unspent and inexhaustible has for its hieroglyph a paradoxical appearance of bliss and horror. These also emanate from their faces. They mirror the entire experience of the path, for the wrath of god reflects the fear of man, of the unknown, the unconscious which rears its head before consciousness knows its spontaneity and sets

it on the shoulders of the gods. One in divinity all the emotions look out, one from each face, facets of the "unity of enjoyment" (samarasa) in which all the polarities are at nought.

The Maithuna group as a polarity symbol in the Buddhist art of Nepal assigns a role to each of the two partners which differs from that played by the male and female in Hindu iconography. There the female part is that of Shakti, energy, creative nature. Without her the god could not create. His being would not become effective. He is the recondite cause to which she gives effect. It is by her activity that he becomes known. In this respect the goddess is also Knowledge. The main accent is on her activity. In Tantrik Buddhism the female partner in the union of the complementaries is Gnosis (prajna) or Shunya, the Void, the ultimate reality. She is and symbolizes the ultimate and its transcendental Knowledge. The active part, however, is assigned to the male partner. He symbolizes compassion (karuna) and is the means (upaya) of reaching and becoming one with Shunya. He plays the active part for he incorporates the principle of Buddha-hood. The images do not show this contrast in the partners. The goddess participates in the powerful movement of the limbs of the god. His body is her support, whereas her torsion would seem to convey an ecstasy more wrathful than erotic.

Tradition describes the goddess to be dishevelled, intoxicated, fearless. These conditions are ritually met by the practicing Yogini and they are depicted together with the alluring beauty of her body. It is, as a rule, glowing red in the paintings. The colour of the god is deep blue.

The art of Nepal celebrated the glory of the body of man as inwardly experienced in the discipline of yoga.



SOME HAIKU

Breeze from the mountains
harvests big leaves in town
from sycamore saplings.

Pink clouds flaked sooner
today, I noticed, as I
strolled westward alone.

Mountain snows floating
rose over gray in the east,
fading rose over gray.

—*Paul Hopper*

AVEBURY EXCAVATIONS

Along the Icknield Way to Somewhere,
Down the Pilgrim's Way to Salisbury Plain
We search for the logic or for the passion
That lifted stone on Avebury
Against the weight of worship's pain.

And more startling than Stonehenge finds,
The blanched skeleton of King Edward's tailor
Broken like a doll beneath a boulder.
Seven centuries ago
Someone awaited his return
Just as we today unpaste his bones,
To learn.

Of no importance this unattended tragedy.
Yet not complete:
Among his dreary implements,
Small shears, leather bag intact
There is no pattern, no thread of meaning
To unwind us from the overwhelming fact.

—*Aaron Poller*

Dona Kagan

THE STATE OF ME THIS SPRING

■ The earth moved "splat" beneath my foot today, so I know that spring is truly here, and I must be on the move again. Controlled and directed I have been this winter—bound tight criss-across my chest. A flawless flint. Guarded in my tiny griefs, morose, afraid as I flicked a shoulder at a breakfast smile. This winter of my gloves lying dead on stairwell steps, of limp asparagus on the bottom of my plate. A tight winter even with my words until I found the typewriter click at the tip of my fingers. But they were only words that unrolled for me this winter; the rest left coiled about my throat.

Shameful first steps on hard April tennis courts—awkward shiftings, kneading flint to muscle; feeling it pull between my shoulder blades, beneath my lungs, above my eyes. Weight jolting heedlessly from foot to foot. Nothing beginning without a thought; too many thoughts to think at once, and so each limb going its own pace. Leaving me twitching mindless and bodiless—reminding me how long and frozen a winter it has been.

Slowly learning to move naturally again, as I become a flywheel this spring day, moving out in all directions like the quick earth. Darting among sights and smells of former seasons. From summers hot and sticky behind porch screens; thick with tar at the bottom of my toes. To an autumn under Blodgett trees, on paths where pine has woven me thick carpets. From the taste of forgotten raisins, sweet, caught in the corners of my mouth where I left them on high school afternoons. To the wet of a sneeze on my upper lip, one goldenrod sunlit day across the hockey field.

Feeling again the coughing float of our Ford beneath me down a Northern Boulevard that is stark and cold. Cold like the winter day I sit with Ann on a Manhasset bench waiting for a bus: gray, bright with traffic

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Pablo Picasso, Pan, 1948. Lithograph.

lights, Christmas lights. Watching through my teleidoscope that turns gray days to glass puzzles, patterns them in stars. And again I feel the warmth that told me from my stomach on the bench, that this I would not forget. For the wondrous gray and red, for the cold up my sleeve, for my friend's beloved nose beside me; I would not—did not—lose this moment.

And I smell again Kenilworth's summer tennis courts, antiseptic-sour like the yellow soap in Kenyon's bathroom. Walk the narrow cow lane lined with low flung bushes that cannot hide white feet and solid "pucks"

ERA

across the nets. Summers warm like the first word David blew across my ear.

Yes, even to him I dart, this humiliating unravelling thaw of a year. To David, an ancient and a gentle love, smiling across the table as I try so hard to be expert in my then thin nineteen years—reaching for the peeled green teapot with magnificence. But only burning my hand there with a childish gasp. Then tactlessly dropping my beads down into my own cup: great white plastic tears. And I feel the blush again, hear his laugh, see the corners of his mouth where I would curl in peace. Resting there with a new wholeness to last only for that oh, too short an age when I once gave laughter to a quiet man.

All of these and others clinging to my flypapered mind out there on hard April courts. All still warmly wriggling, so that I moved as Philip and I did one night along the Taconic, through fog so thick it turned headlights into milk. When we lost a wheel cover with a clatter and heard it roll behind us down the fog. A part of us winding ahead, a part rolled back; we straddling a lonely space between. Like me today, empty with no present on a campus I am soon to leave. Asking myself today: what does a person do with so much remembered life? old sights and smells demanding energies which, by right, are reserved for now and later?

As I think all this—spread far away from my body—a wondrous thing begins to stretch beneath my skin: a synchronized, thoughtless swing rising from the ball of my foot, hanging taut to the gut of my racquet, reaching straight and hard across the net, until all of me flies over with it as surely as if I rode a broom. And suddenly I am moving right, muscles rising smooth and even, like escalator steps.

You rhombazoidal trapezoidal, green-as-a-lichen piece of land!—you are mine now! Pushing you square or round with my eye, flying free to your corners, now I am on top of you, never even thinking what I run! Clouding horizon, dark with tree, you, too, are mine—crumpled in the bottom of my grip if I willed. For once again I am the solid master of myself, free and warm with motion. Laughing as the wind splits the ends of my hair and the breath of my chest.

Welcome back, my arm! my lovely, loose control.

Welcome me a thoughtless spring with you—a regretless season, that I, too, might move in giddy splats beneath the toeprints of my former life. Today God grant me an impatient laugh—tomorrow, a certain summer away from this campus I have grown to know. For it has been a cramped winter in my laughless little room; and now, I think, I am ready.

Charles W. Bassett

THE UNPOPULAR JOHN O'HARA

■ In almost all of the bookstores surrounding American college and university campuses, one large rack is devoted to a series of black-and-yellow, shoddily bound paperback pamphlets called "Cliff's Notes." One surmises that Cliff, in some kind of Strangelove-ish, computerized war room out in Lincoln (Nebr.), directs a large group of gnomes whose job it is to turn out plot summaries of and idiotic critical comments on those novels and plays most "read" by American undergraduates. No longer need the harried freshman puzzle his way through *The Return of the Native* or *Hamlet*; good old Cliff has predigested these difficult wonders for him, and, for one dollar, anyone can become an instant "expert"—as incisive as any one of Cliff's gnomes. This business has undoubtedly made Cliff a very rich man and the undergraduate a functional illiterate.

His professors, however, do little to help the undergraduate. They continue to teach the same old wonders, claiming that one cannot be aware of truth and beauty in the world without some acquaintanceship with Shakespeare and Milton, Melville and Joyce. Occasionally, academicians will discover a new prophet—say, Saul Bellow or Ralph Ellison—assign the new book, and force a class of frightened students actually to read the thing. Panic results for a while until its subtle waves are detected by Cliff's sensitive academic radar in Lincoln. He waits until the blips occur from coast to coast, then sets one of the gnomes to work chewing on *Henderson the Rain King* and *Invisible Man*. Sighs of relief. Floods of dollars. More illiteracy.

On the other hand, Cliff and his wizened friends do perform one valuable function: they are an infallible guide to academic literary taste in the United States. Incense must burn before icons of Henry James and

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Geoffrey Chaucer in Cliff's war room. But one need never worry about anyone like John O'Hara out in Nebraska; he raises not even a flicker on that radar screen. "There's no money in O'Hara, baby!" is the word. "Maybe a few kooks teach him somewhere, but he's not worth it. He's not *with* it." And Cliff, as usual, is right. John O'Hara, perhaps the most popular serious writer in the country, is not now and probably never will be on the same rack with "*Canterbury Tales*—Notes."

Yet John O'Hara, unfashionable as he is in Academe, is not without his fanatical devotees. Leslie Fiedler, academic critic, shudders when he recalls the night when he was bored almost senseless by a young man who claimed that his soul was saved because he had read *Butterfield 8* eleven times. Such addiction, completely mystifying to Fiedler, keeps each new O'Hara book on the best-seller lists for months at a time, sells countless paperback editions, fills theatres for film adaptations, and makes John O'Hara almost as rich as Cliff! An O'Hara book is greeted with cries of glee from the nation's bookbuyers, notwithstanding his remarkable productivity (at least one book each year, sometimes two; a total of seventeen since 1953). Even O'Hara's occasional popular failures (two books of essays, a book of plays) are gladly published by Random House so that his novels and stories will continue to bear Bennet Cerf's imprimatur. Mr. Cerf knows that there's money in O'Hara. Lots of it.

John O'Hara's enormous public popularity owes to several definable factors, most notably to his rather frank treatment of the sexual act. In all of the fiction, from 1932's *Appointment in Samarra* to 1965's *The Lockwood Concern*, O'Hara's characters perform their sexual exercises with all of the gravity and seriousness of some kind of religious ritual. O'Hara and his readers take sex very, very seriously, treating it, as Leslie Fiedler has pointed out, as "the root of all joy and sorrow in life." However, relationships in O'Hara are healthily heterosexual; the reader need not puzzle over the kind of arcane homosexual, inter-racial experience portrayed in the work of James Baldwin. Furthermore, important as sexual relationships are in the lives of his people, John O'Hara does not seem to regard sex with the cosmic, apocalyptic vision of a Norman Mailer or a William Burroughs. When an O'Hara man meets an O'Hara woman, the reader can be positive that each is thinking about hopping into bed with the other (a consummation devoutly to be expected); for all that, however, the eventual coupling has about it a faint glow of romance, a kind of Hemingway-esque wonder.

Moreover, not only are O'Hara's characters engaged in "normal" sexual activities, but they are also peculiarly American in their sense of guilt about these very activities. The countless adulteries in O'Hara's fiction have never destroyed a certain underlying conventionality in the characters and in their creator. Gore Vidal, writing in *The New York Review of*

Books, calls O'Hara's treatment "of sexual matters seldom irrelevant, though touchingly old-fashioned by today's standards. . . ." O'Hara's people still worry over virginity, still get ulcers because of infidelity, still drink themselves cirrhotic in the face of a cheating wife. Only in O'Hara can one still find "love at first sight" followed irrevocably by "guilt at first thought." Perhaps the modern sexual revolution, often heralded by abstruse commentators, has not been completely successful; O'Hara's popularity would seem to indicate that the old guilty Puritanism is not dead.

Also still alive is another fascination which promises to die very hard in America—the nebulous character of the rich. F. Scott Fitzgerald began a marvelous story called "The Rich Boy" with this statement: "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me." It is perhaps oversimple to say that America's enchantment with the rich owes to the absence of stratified, historical, and recognizable social class distinctions in a "democratic" nation. Still, it seems to be true that great numbers of people need to look up to someone, need to seek the vicarious thrill of identification with their "betters." And while O'Hara would not claim that the rich are necessarily happier, smarter, or even *better* than the great mass of us, he does recognize the continued glamor which surrounds one who has money (preferably inherited money).

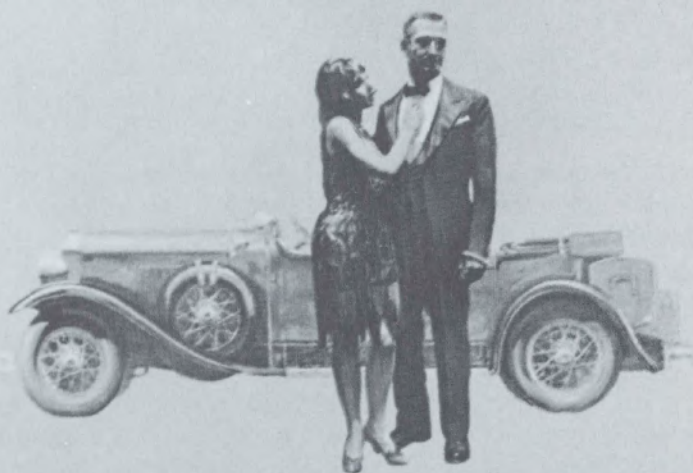
In much the same way that O'Hara is paradoxical in his attitudes toward sex—investing it with romance, yet analyzing it as a physio-psychological phenomenon—he is ambivalent in his attitude toward the rich. Like Fitzgerald, O'Hara regards the rich with mingled awe and disgust, admiring their independence and single-mindedness, loathing their heedless cruelty and complete egocentricity. And occasionally the rich can be different in O'Hara's fiction: Joe Chapin, the protagonist of *Ten North Frederick*, is pathetic in his ineffectuality, almost a Marquand-like innocent trapped by social convention; Grace Tate, *A Rage to Live's* leonine heroine, is closer to Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan in her brutal pursuit of sensual satisfaction. Indeed, O'Hara's very ambivalence mirrors the feelings of most of his readers—avid for the glamor, wary of the responsibilities of wealth.

Even his sharpest critics do not fault O'Hara for his wonderfully accurate depiction of the trappings of wealth. If clothes do make the man, one may be certain that O'Hara's people will wear exactly the right clothes, and drive the right automobiles, and use the right tobacco, and drink the right Scotch. Ian Fleming's accuracy has been praised in his Bond sagas, but O'Hara was playing that game more skillfully years before Fleming set pen to paper. The setting in O'Hara's fiction is scrupulously exact, finical in its detail, its brand names, its historicity. And his readers feel that glorious shock of recognition that outweighs all other aesthetic considerations. "By God, my grandfather had a Pope-Toledo exactly like this



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JOHN O'HARA'S MOST FAMOUS NOVEL APPOINTMENT IN SAMARRA



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one. That O'Hara knows what he's talking about!"

In conjunction with his fanaticism about accurate detail, O'Hara is further possessed of what *Time* magazine loves to call "a tape-recorder ear." An O'Hara character talks "naturally," i.e., ungrammatically, confusedly, slangily. Each speech rings true in accent, in colloquial rightness, further drawing forth that shock of recognition so often confused with credibly thorough characterization. "Lord, my mother always used to say 'as queer as Dick's hatband' too." The reader becomes more and more comfortable.

When these comforting shocks of recognition are coupled with another O'Hara trademark—a thorough-going irony of tone—the reader feels even closer to the author. In all of his fiction, O'Hara projects the kind of man-of-the-world cynicism so attractive to those who would like to have seen all those things. It is the tone of one who was there when Shoeless Joe Jackson was bribed to throw the 1919 World Series, who looked on at Teapot Dome, who checked the label in Sherman Adams' vicuna coat. Alfred Kazin finds this tone in metropolitan journalism; it has the voice of one who has seen everyone go wrong, who confidently expects everyone to go wrong. "You can't con me," this voice says. "What's in it for *you*?" In it for the reader is the sense of being in the know, the sense of superior detachment indigenous to the quasi-omniscient reporters of *The Front Page* era. In the modern sense, O'Hara never loses his "cool," and for many, "coolness" is a categorical imperative.

Finally, O'Hara's fiction is not "hard" to read. Faced with the stylistic complexities of James Joyce or William Faulkner, many men reading a book on a train will stop twenty minutes out of Grand Central. The woman trying to "keep up" on modern fiction will puzzle only briefly over John Hawkes, then drop *The Cannibal* in relief for a new O'Hara novel or collection of stories. No one need read *Elizabeth Appleton* only with the aid of Webster's Unabridged as one had to read J. G. Cozzens' *By Love Possessed*. Those who number themselves among The Great Unread will not have to fear missing the whole point of an O'Hara book (as one might in books by Updike, Barth, and even John Hersey) through ignorance of the myth which underlies the narrative. There are no centaurs, Christs, or Faustus lurking behind the Julian Englishes, Lute Fliegler, and Al Greccos of *Appointment in Samarra*. O'Hara's narratives flow on, straight-forwardly, unambiguously, unexperimentally. By now, many of his readers are so charmed that they can hardly wait for the next one. John O'Hara has disproved the old vaudeville axiom "Never follow a banjo act with another banjo act." For millions, he can keep playing the same tune forever; they will pay to listen.

Even on the side of the scholar, there are those who will occasionally join the mass O'Hara public in their hosannas; e.g., the eminent Lionel

Trilling. In the Introduction to the Modern Library's *Selected Short Stories of John O'Hara*, Trilling does not back away from comparing O'Hara favorably with Franz Kafka, an equation that might dismay Trilling's fellow critics. "There is a recurrent imagination in O'Hara that brings him very close to the author of *The Trial*. It is the imagination of society as some strange sentient organism which acts by laws of its own being which are not to be understood; one does not know what will set into motion its dull implacable hostility. . . ." O'Hara, says Trilling, half loves, half fears the absurdity of society. Other fixtures in the literary establishment—Alfred Kazin, Norman Podhoretz, Arthur Mizener, Harvey Breit, Elizabeth Janeway, Irving Howe, Maxwell Geismar—have at times said pleasant things about O'Hara's fiction. At other times comparisons have been favorably drawn between O'Hara and Fitzgerald, Edith Wharton, Henry James, Hemingway, and others far more renowned than he.

O'Hara, of course, is not completely without honors of a literary nature. Though he has not gotten the Pulitzer Prize he feels that he deserves, he did win the National Book Award (1956) for *Ten North Frederick*. And in 1964, the American Academy of Arts and Letters gave O'Hara its Award of Merit, placing him on the same level as the other recipients of this honor: Theodore Dreiser, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway, and Aldous Huxley. He has refused honorary degrees from American colleges, but he is an honorary citizen of the city of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, most critics only cursorily review O'Hara's books, and just one formal critical study—E. R. Carson's *The Fiction of John O'Hara*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1961—attempts any kind of extensive analysis of his work.

On the debit side, however, a touchstone for one kind of critical evaluation of John O'Hara's fiction is Henry Seidel Canby's famous review of *Appointment in Samarra* (1934). Mr. Canby called it "Mr. O'Hara and the Vulgar School," and he obviously feels that O'Hara's "lack of inhibitions and still greater lack of interest in values" make him the headmaster in "the school of smart vulgarity." Canby's feelings are shared by various boards of censorship across the nation (most notably in Detroit); O'Hara's books have been banned in several American cities.

Actually the tumult over the alleged obscenity of O'Hara's work has been muted of late in the light of the American publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Fanny Hill* (not to mention *Candy*). The reader seeking titillation can find in many "modern" novels far grosser depictions of the sexual act than occur in O'Hara's books. As was noted earlier, John O'Hara is now considered rather tame; his erotic fancies pale beside the vivid scenes of anal intercourse darkening the fiction of Norman Mailer. Canby's objections to O'Hara's "vulgar" allusions to menstruation are even more passé than are O'Hara's own romantic, even "sentimental"

musings on virginity. Even the most frigid academic critic denies that O'Hara writes pornography, and all know that the "blush to the maiden's cheek" school of literary criticism, its major concern the moral effect of the work on the chastity of the impressionable female reader, last mattered to William Dean Howells.

This, however, is not to say that the professors are convinced of the completeness and depth of O'Hara's understanding of the very sexual activities that he describes so well. Edmund Wilson is convinced that O'Hara is fascinated by "Freudian behavior-patterns," but Wilson also is uncertain "whether the author himself does quite know what he is doing." Obviously, O'Hara knows some Freud, and certain of his characters are almost pure Freudian case-studies. Pathetic Gloria Wandrous of *Butterfield 8* is the classic example: the pretty little girl, ravished in childhood by a middle-aged pervert, gives herself over completely to neurotic love-seeking in order to alleviate her guilt feelings. But guilt increases, love never comes, and Gloria ends her wretched life with an hysterical leap from a boat. Elizabeth Taylor won an Academy Award as the silver screen's Gloria Wandrous, a tribute to Miss Taylor's bosom and the American public's taste in heroines.

That Gloria Wandrous should prove such an archetypal figure in the minds of many is indicative of the pervasiveness of quasi-Freudian ideas in America. Yet these ideas, only half understood and only partially practical, are in the realm of what *Time* magazine calls "Pop-psych"—the popularization of an extremely complex system of psychological theories, and through this popularization, an oversimplification. What critics object to in O'Hara's characterizations is not the importance of sexual urges in the conduct of his people; rather, it is O'Hara's apparent inability to explore his characters' psyches in any depth. Freud found that his hysterical female patients had not been violated by wicked seducers, but O'Hara never seems to have followed Freud to the end, never seems to have gone beyond the sensational (and dramatic) act to analyze the motives beneath it.

Therefore, with considerable justification, O'Hara's more thoughtful critics refuse to allow him to use Freud without understanding all of the implications and subtleties involved in such use. To hint that the heroine of *Hope of Heaven* (1938) is the victim of an Electra complex and has incestuous yearnings is not enough; O'Hara refuses to delve into the mind of his heroine to show us that the Freudian explanation is wholly satisfactory and plausible. The reader might feel comfortable and learned by neatly tagging one of O'Hara's people with a Freudian diagnosis, but the suspicious critic wants to see more penetration into the mind before that glib diagnosis is applied. It may be said, then, that one of O'Hara's chief weaknesses is his attempt to write a psychological novel without truly understanding the process of writing such a novel.

If, as seems to be the case in O'Hara's fiction, a man's sexual nature, his sex-centered activities, and his need to gratify his sexual urges determine what that man actually is, then O'Hara would be justified in concentrating his attentions even more narrowly than he has upon sex and Freudian theory. Too often, however, one is expected to accept half a loaf, to remain forever outside the character's mind, to accept the undemonstrated and perhaps the undemonstrable. As a psychologist, O'Hara leaves too many questions unanswered.

John O'Hara, on the other hand, does seem competent to assess the powerful social effects of sexual activities, most particularly illicit sexual activities. In this assessment, however, O'Hara leaves Freud for sociology and the psycho-social vicissitudes of the war between the classes in the United States. Here again, O'Hara disappoints certain critics because he ignores any kind of Marxian hypothesis for the class warfare that rages continuously in his fictional Gibbville. And anyone who has noted the pervasive war imagery in *Appointment in Samarra* realizes that O'Hara indeed looks upon life in America as a kind of war, as dangerous as any ever fought anywhere.

More serious than ignorance of Marxist dogma, however, is the charge that O'Hara's concentration upon the irrationality of the social beast involves him in a logical paradox. For O'Hara is a determinist for the most part, a behaviorist who seeks to demonstrate rationally that man's character is chiefly shaped by environmental influences. The training and/or conditioning that one receives determines what one is; man is a product of the things that happen to him. And things do happen to O'Hara's characters, supposedly because they are rich or because they are poor. Money irrevocably defines the individual; indeed, an *individual* is rare in O'Hara's fiction. From Julian English of 1934 to the Lockwoods of 1965, one finds only types (albeit sometimes excellently drawn types). By delineating the environmental factors that he thinks form his characters, O'Hara often removes the frightening irrationality which might really bring his fictional world nearer Kafka's.

Perhaps one could say that O'Hara again oversimplifies his environmental determinism. The reader might be pleased to recognize the kind of cigarette smoked by Julian English, but one should hardly be expected to agree that Julian English is what he is because he smokes Luckies. O'Hara's fascination with badges, brand names, inanimate data of all sorts continues to delight the nostalgic reader, but the enormous symbolic weight given this data in O'Hara's world causes consternation in those who do not agree that facts are necessarily truth.

In a Foreword to *Ten North Frederick* (1956), O'Hara apologizes for distorting the "historical facts that help give truth to fiction." But the key word here is *help*: facts, things, do not, as O'Hara often seems to think,

equal truth. In fact, the pernicious ubiquity of facts in O'Hara's fiction makes for inadequate characterization, since many critics are unwilling to admit that a man is defined by his Brooks Brothers' suit, Madison Avenue to the contrary. F. Scott Fitzgerald showed that the rich are different from us, but this difference is more significant than the disparity between shoes hand-made in London and Hushpuppies.

When one considers these two shaping factors—sex and environment—one can see that O'Hara is indeed part of a tradition in American literary thought and practice: naturalism. Undigested Freud becomes heredity, and the class structure is environment. And *moment* (acquired momentum, the brooding spirit of the times, circumstance), the third decisive factor in the naturalist's world, becomes "luck" in John O'Hara's fiction. If a character is lucky (as is Grace Tate in *A Rage to Live*), he becomes a kind of superman, answerable to no one, afraid of nothing. Still, most of O'Hara's people are patently unlucky, and *Appointment in Samarra's* Julian English, irresistibly ruined by circumstance as well as by his own ego, is O'Hara's prototypical doomed hero. These pathetic heroes almost always conveniently break legs or lose coin-flips, victims of a malevolent force that seals their dooms. As O'Hara sees it, the world is truly a desperate place, alive chiefly in the sense that it is out to kill most of us.

It is not this pessimistic conclusion that most critics object to; rather, it is the naturalistic theses which lead to it that call O'Hara's mind into question. Paul Pickerel, writing in *Harper's*, feels that critics are "bored with naturalism"—bored by the naturalist's plethora of details, multiplication of instances, attempts to prove his theory. The naturalist considers "facts" the only truth; for others, truth consists in the impression that "facts" make upon the rational-moral consciousness of a sensitive and intelligent man. And though O'Hara's characters are not as vulgar as H. S. Canby claims, they are rarely sensitive or intelligent.

Furthermore, the neat naturalistic trio—heredity, environment, and *moment*—seems just too neat for complete credibility. This systematized theory ignores man's thinking, and O'Hara's characters almost never think. Indeed, Lionel Trilling feels that their creator shares their fault: "The history of American literature is white with the bones of writers who, like Mr. O'Hara, relied too much on their fresh, bright talents and refused to think." And while O'Hara might reply that thinking never did anyone much good, his critics would argue that even an O'Hara character might give evidence that he tries once in a while.

The irony, even cynicism, with which O'Hara views the plight of his unfortunates is vitiated by this mindlessness. While John O'Hara might seem to be "in the know," we are never actually certain *what* he does indeed know. Listing the contents of Princeton's entrance examination in 1915 may demonstrate to O'Hara's fans that he "knows" his facts, but it

does not prove to the critic that O'Hara knows how the human spirit operates. If all human beings are as stupid, neurotic, venal, self-seeking, driven, and cruel as O'Hara would have us believe that they are, then it is difficult to justify any kind of ironic superiority of *any* man except on grounds of shrewdness or luck. The winner in O'Hara's world has no moral superiority, only a kind of animal cunning and a fortunate horoscope.

The style that carries O'Hara's irony—that easy-to-read style beloved of his supporters—further reflects his essentially naturalistic view of the world. A writer who says that "I keep away from figures of speech. . . . I distrust all similes and metaphors. . ." certainly would please the literal-minded reader; few intelligent critics, however, are literal-minded. And O'Hara's style, spare and accurate as it is, only confirms the critics' earlier conclusions that almost nothing exists behind the fable itself. If memorable and quotable lines do exist somewhere in O'Hara's fiction, one is hard pressed to discover them. O'Hara writes what novelist Jerre Mangione calls "edible prose," but this prose is a Chinese dinner: it satisfies while one is reading it, leaving the reader to seek more nourishing fare elsewhere.

Additional animadversions on O'Hara are infinite. He never demonstrates a sense of humor beyond the snide and ironic tough-guy superiority of his tone. His rich people's manners are too much like his poor people's for credible delineation. He has very little sense of truly relevant detail. And his most recent offering—a book of essays called *My Turn*—reveals O'Hara personally to be a still-angry, easily hurt, and aging man whose political philosophy is to the right of Barry Goldwater's, fretfully anathematizing the Kennedy family.

But perhaps the most serious of all critical reservations can be drawn from O'Hara's own statement of the "purpose" of his fiction: "The United States in this Century is what I know, and it is my business to write about it to the best of my ability, with the sometimes special knowledge that I have. . . . I want to record the way people talked and thought and felt, and do it with complete honesty and variety." This is an admirable goal for the social historian, but art is traditionally supposed to transcend history in its attempt to achieve universal timelessness. There must certainly be social historians who are able to record the sights, sounds, and social data of America with the accuracy of an O'Hara. Tape-recorder ears have been replaced by tape recorders, and antique car museums proliferate. Should not the American artist, then, leave history to the historians in order to get on with his own business?

On the other hand, perhaps John O'Hara has outsmarted even his serious academic critics. Perhaps, out there in Lincoln (Nebr.), the ubiquitous Cliff is looking over the market for predigested social history books. Perhaps even now, a squad of gnomes whose specialty is "the way people

THE UNPOPULAR JOHN O'HARA

talked and thought and felt" is being given space in the war room. If so, then John O'Hara will be up there on the rack with the rest of Cliff's immortal money-makers. And the unpopular John O'Hara will at last achieve academic prestige.



FRAGMENT OF AN ODE

I stood by the water
to watch the wind,
and saw what the wind blew:

partitioned by time, light
tumbled on the empty water,
endlessly burning.

Light,
wet, sparkling, and forgotten,
light fell, flaking,
into my hands.

July—August, 1965

—Larry E. Kramer

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