
in my heart I suspect Schiller is probably right. When one considers the swollen ranks of middle-class socialists and Gucci liberals, then maybe there's noth-

ing so remarkable about working-class or bourgeois tories. And turnabout is fair play, after all. Pass the Stroh's, Rabbi. □

Youth's Labors Lost

David Holbrook: *A Play of Passion*; W. H. Allen; London.

by Gordon Pradl

Has there ever been an adult who at first blush did not wax nostalgic over adolescence? We seem to have an endless capacity for such idealized retrospection. Yet when these reflections are challenged, we readily admit to the pain and suffering, the clumsy and awkward moments, that actually characterized the series of passages preceding adulthood. Indeed, it would be hard to disagree with the extreme position Shakespeare expresses in *A Winter's Tale*, "I would there were no age between ten and three and twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest. For there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancients, stealing, fighting." Although youth might well have been a time of boundless possibility before our categories froze and "shades of the prison-house began to close upon the growing boy," essentially it was a time of things only half-known, the "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realized."

The trials that an adolescent faces involve seeking answers to what it means to be an adult, to what makes for life and what works against it. For this quest to be successful, for the agony of youth not to be offered up in vain, adolescents need an image of a coherent adult world they can eventually merge with. They need a facilitating environ-

ment, one which fosters integrative social values, as they struggle to infuse meaning into their probing relationships with the opposite sex, into their search for a fulfilling vocation, and into their desire for a creative interplay between self and community. Such are the major themes the British poet and novelist, David Holbrook, takes up in his latest novel, *A Play of Passion*, which chronicles the transitional seventeenth year in the life of Paul Grimmer whom we first met as a young tank officer in *Flesh Wounds*, (1966) Holbrook's powerful and graphic recreation of events surrounding the D-Day invasion of Normandy.

In *A Play of Passion* the time is 1940, the place Norwich, an east coastal town particularly susceptible to the hostilities that have already broken out. Thus the disintegrating social values which concern Holbrook have their concrete analogue in the missiles which nightly threaten the well-being of the city. Paul Grimmer is completing his final year of school before going up to Cambridge, but his benevolent and progressive headmaster has decided that at this particular juncture additional book-learning would not benefit him, so he has arranged for Paul to work part-time at the Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich. This opportunity places Paul in the larger world of art and imagination, while providing him with new bearings as he begins shaping his identity, independent of his parents and free of the materialism which clashes so with his youthful idealism.

Paul's idealism grows out of his inner feelings of communion with the ebb and flow of the natural world, an at-oneness

Holbrook evokes for us early in the novel as Paul is slowly gliding down a river in a small rowboat.

"As he watched a shoal of very small fish all lying in the same direction, and then suddenly all turning at once, to face another direction, translucent yellow, with a similar but distinct masking pattern on each back—he knew that he existed in a meaningful world. He could not formulate any meaning in relation to it; nor did he strive to . . . all belonged to a world that went on, under the sun, flowing and leaping and breathing, a slow unfolding and sweeping through the current, which had its own rhythm and purpose. And he belonged to it."

Yet from this calm center Paul goes on to experience a range of conflicting emotions. And it is Holbrook's particular strength as a novelist to be able to faithfully render the complex relationships that Paul must sort through during this troubled time. His parents, for instance, fail to understand his fears and ambitions and violent disagreements ensue, but their basic concern is revealed when they support him against a new martinet headmaster who is threatening to revoke Paul's association with the Maddermarket. Another relationship which confuses Paul is with Annie, his first girl. Although Annie awakens feelings of warmth and tenderness in Paul, she is unable to share his newly discovered intellectual and cultural interests, and thus at the end Paul is torn between jealousy and relief when she goes off to marry another.

Yet such struggles seem the normal fare of adolescence and should pose no special difficulties for the novel's protagonist. Holbrook, however, has a more pernicious drama in mind, namely that the adult landscape, increasingly dominated by the vacuous and trendy world of nihilistic culture and ideas, is failing to offer youth viable role models. It is this state of affairs which threatens to seduce Paul into false solutions to the problem of living, threatens to leave him in a void even as he works through

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the relationships with his parents and with Annie. This antihuman position Holbrook is attacking is embodied in Roy Short, an older school-friend of Paul's who is already up at Cambridge spouting all the "correct" left-wing slogans.

"Short seized the opportunity to persuade (Paul) towards nihilism. A new orthodoxy took over now his belief had failed—the metaphysics of chemical and physical laws, and the Final Cause of Ultimate Entropy, of everything seeking equilibrium in death. He forgot himself . . . He forgot that all living creatures strive, and succeed or fail; by contrast with physical phenomena even thunderstorms, which do not strive, do not try to use their world, and cannot be said to succeed or fail. And he forgot man's moral dimension, even the dimension of being."

It is Roy's voice that serves to entangle Paul in various misadventures and almost brings about his downfall at the end of the novel.

Mediating this tug-of-war for Paul's loyalties are the good offices of Nugent Monck, the aging director of the Mad-dermarket, who stands for the translucent world of literature and art.

"[Paul] had felt swamped, suffocated at home and didn't know why. With Monck, every moment was taken up with an energetic attention to the nature of the world, what it could teach one, how one could interact with it and change it."

It is precisely on this confrontation between the *passionate* and the *passive* that the whole novel turns. Ironically, both terms derive from the Latin "Passus" meaning suffering and submission and relating to the Crucifixion and its surrounding drama of betrayal. The modern betrayal is the nihilistic commercialism which Holbrook is seeking to expose because it renders us passive in the face of our true human passions and desires.

Through Monck's eyes Paul begins to realize how the wholeness of the imagination and the redeeming qualities of love serve to overcome man's existential anxieties. But poetry alone will save no man, and so Monck's mediating presence is imperfect at best. The "larger-than-life" depersonalized world, which fans our hatred and aggression and denies our vulnerability, continues to pervade Paul's thought. Yet in realistically portraying Paul's struggles, Holbrook has given us a picture of how it is possible for a youth to enter the adult world with resources deeper than the plastic facade of commercial culture which paralyzes so many other adolescents before they have the chance of knowing the wider realms of experience in love and relationship.

To explore as Holbrook has the delicate moral relationship between social institutions and the inner life of the personality is to risk a narrowness of vision because many "anti-life" forces are too easily dismissed. This in turn leaves the author with a limited scope of effective persuasion, and we should not forget that the primary task of such a moral examination is to convince one's readers that the credo one assumes in daily living will result naturally in a true and meaningful identity, that the world transformed into art corresponds to our real human experiences. What is

needed to persuade, of course, is the enactment of real dramatic situations—the "showing" dimension of literature. When Holbrook's fictional voice falters, as it does on occasion, it is in part because he slips into the "telling" strategy of the self-assured upstage sermon and thus interrupts his correspondence of faith with the reader. Salvation after all must be earned, not merely asserted. These are minor annoyances, however, for in using fiction to explore problems of personal experience and development, Holbrook has undertaken a significant journey of self-definition, and like the work of all serious artists, *A Play of Passion* widens the reader's vision of the human potential, reinfuses the world with intentionality.

Holbrook's courage, in making his novel face up to the questions of value in modern society, will impress many as old-fashioned; he will gain little popularity by advocating an end to commercialism and a return to the culture of personal relationships. But to have accomplished the fine achievement of *A Play of Passion* is to have vindicated the essence of his undertaking—the continual search for viable responses to contemporary life—and in the process helped sketch out a reality in which youth's labor will not be lost. □

In The Rockford Papers, February 1979, Vol. 4, No. 1, Pawel Mayewski on "THE USES AND MISUSES OF POWER (Notes on Foreign Policy)":

It is assumed that "the nuclear rationale" places upon the world leadership, in totalitarian states as well as in the democracies, something like an obligation to proceed with caution, because rash action automatically opens up the risk of catastrophe for all. In a reality where practical solutions are constantly sought, this nuclear imperative demands that we constantly keep in mind the need to compromise. We have thus willy-nilly arrived at an equation that reads something like "compromise is action." The word "compromise" today has an extremely high value and in practice becomes interchangeable with reasonableness—a government which is willing to compromise is reasonable, a government which firmly insists on something and holds steadfastly to its position is not . . . It is this kind of reasoning, a state of mind, that seems to persuade our policy in all but the most "close to home" problems, especially since Vietnam. The notion prevails that if only one side meets the other at some point between two *a priori* positions, the problem will be solved satisfactorily.

This is, of course, a paralogism and one wonders how it came to be so widely accepted. It happens very often that A is in possession of what is right, whereas B is wrong—as in the context of the Second World War. Any sane person would admit that at least in that context, compromise, any compromise, was bound to lead to disaster, as it in effect did, whereas firm insistence on what was right could have prevented it. The alternative to being firm when one is right is giving up at least part of one's "rightness"—with all the consequences that must follow.

Feds & Narcs in a Comparative Scholarship

James Q. Wilson: *The Investigators*; Basic Books; New York.

by Charles E. Rice

Since the death of J. Edgar Hoover in 1972, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been subjected to extensive scrutiny and criticism. In the process, the realities of what the Bureau actually does have been obscured. We have needed a balanced look at those realities. Fortunately, we now have it in this volume.

The author, the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard, has already established himself as a perceptive analyst of crime and police matters. This volume is a comparative study of the management systems of the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration. In Chapter One, the author analyzes the influence of the bureaucratic structure on law enforcement agencies, noting the effect of outside political influences in impeding the attention of those agencies to their tasks. Professor Wilson stresses the differing tasks of the FBI and the DEA, especially comparing the emphasis of the FBI on detection of crimes already committed and the instigation by DEA agents of drug offenses where otherwise there would be no complainants. This is one of the crucial distinctions between the two agencies, accounting for the FBI's emphasis on clean-cut, presentable agents who would inspire trust in interviewees (most of whom are law-abiding) and the DEA's reliance on agents capable of blending into the drug world and of getting cooperation by inducements and threats.

This distinction is further discussed in Chapter Two which details the day-to-day tasks of the investigators in the two agencies. "Talking to people is the

name of the game," the author quotes a veteran FBI agent. "Everything else is just overhead." With the DEA, however, "the dominant strategy of these investigators is not that of detecting or randomly observing a crime but of instigating one under controlled circumstances."

One problem confronted by the DEA is that "the federal courts appear to regard narcotics trafficking about as seriously as interstate shipment of stolen motor vehicles and much less seriously than bank robbery . . ." Added to that is the difficulty created by federalism. Unlike other nations, such as France which has a national police force, or England which has a single police force for each city, police responsibilities in the United States are divided among local, state and federal authorities with often overlapping and competing jurisdictions. The author analyzes well the problems this situation creates in

drug cases, but that such a federal role "will inevitably entail the development by federal agents of their own stock of informants." Professor Wilson takes a measured approach, too, to the subject of "dirty tricks," such as the allegations that the FBI "wrote anonymous letters designed to embarrass members of the Klan, the Black Panther Party, and various leftist organizations." He suggests that "there are circumstances in which one might reasonably contemplate authorizing such acts," but that their employment should be strictly defined and limited.

The book contains a good analysis of the difficulties involved in dealing with that undefinable category, "white collar crime." With respect to the use of informants, plea bargaining and offers of immunity, the author aptly observes, "Those observers who find such methods objectionable when employed in

"There remains enough evidence . . . that fascism will come disguised as the means of suppressing illegal drugs . . . Wilson might have exhibited more awareness of the FBI as a suppressor of civil liberties . . ."

—Nation

dealing with a drug traffic which operates without regard to political boundaries.

Wilson brings to his work a refreshing calmness and spirit of realism. He demonstrates that the use of informants is essential in many FBI cases and indispensable in virtually all DEA cases. The DEA's problem here is aggravated by the fact that the DEA usually requires its informants to testify in court, with obvious risk to the informant, while the FBI does not require its informants to testify unless they are defendants in the case. The author's treatment of informants is balanced and practical. He recognizes that only the federal government can adequately develop large interstate or international

narcotics cases should pause before erecting their objection into a principle and reflect on whether they wish to bar the use of these methods in investigating corporate or governmental consensual crimes."

One useful point emphasized by Professor Wilson is that the desire for autonomy, rather than for larger budgets, more personnel or larger powers, is the dominant motive of public executives generally. This is true particularly of the FBI and DEA. The essential difference between the two agencies, from the perspective of their executives, is that the FBI was able to establish a high degree of autonomy while the DEA was not. He credits J. Edgar Hoover with the "great achievement" that