

ably liable to fall a prey. Instances of this falling off occur particularly in "Mr. Cash and the Proto-Dorian South," an otherwise judicious review of W. J. Cash's *The Mind of the South*, in which he attempts, among other things, to rationalize the principle of white supremacy by saying that, without it, the "equilibrium" of southern society and "democracy for white people" could not be maintained. Admittedly, the relaxation of the principle of "white supremacy," "integration," and other so-called liberal movements involve a great risk for the southerner and his society. Yet realism of the most soul-searching kind and—I will dare to say it—Christian charity, which always involves the risk of the Cross, command no less. There are times, also, when in an effort to carry conviction he affects a quaintness and a familiarity with his audience which are unworthy of him.

But Mr. Davidson is never pusillanimous. I would say, rather, that he displays here the same nobility which he ascribes to Pro-

fessor Jay B. Hubbell's *The South in American Literature* in its routing of many of the national "phantasms" about southern literature; and he speaks with the same gallantry and chivalry which he observes in John Gould Fletcher in his memoir of that unhappy expatriate who came home again to Arkansas. For, truly, here is that magnanimity which Spenser depicted as "the noble hart that harbours vertuous thought," which is not afraid to hate fiercely and love strongly, which, though it dwells in the midst of a people of unclean lips, can still cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem." For Mr. Davidson is himself one of the Tall Men he has written about, who at the summit of a long career as artist and apologist stands forth in a nation of what James Thurber has called "bowel-fearful people" as a man afraid only of God, never of Leviathan. And, like Spenser's "noble hart," he can never rest until he has brought forth the fruit of eloquence and glory.

The Scattered Limbs of the Poet

PAUL CARROLL

Cycle For Mother Cabrini. By John Logan. Grove Press. \$3.50 (\$1.00 in the Grove Evergreen Series.)

"WHEN I TRY to put it all into a phrase I say, Man can embody truth but he cannot know it," wrote Yeats from his death bed on Cap Martin: "You can refute Hegel," he goes on to explain, "but not the Saint or the Song of Sixpence."

Not that these poems in Mr. John Logan's first book, *Cycle For Mother Cabrini*, have the wisdom and audacity of a dying Yeats,

but they should take a legitimate place among the company of poets who, like Yeats himself, know that if one is to bring forth more than occasional garden-party verses, he must be involved in the truths of the body as well as those of the spirit; and that perhaps the two are not so very dissimilar. *Disjecti membra poetae*, the Ancients said about the mutilation of Orpheus on the coast of Thrace: his scattered limbs, it is told, sang on the sand while the severed head rolled into the Aegean where, mourning in song for his bride, it was

carried by the waves to Lesbos. It is as if Orpheus embodies his own truth in the legend. And possibly this is why one frequently feels tempted to quarrel with men of the philosophical appetite, who would build a mansion for reality by means of the intellect alone. *Non ignoravi me mortalem genuisse*, the poet also should be able to say. And he might add: this means my flesh and bones as well.

It is out of this mysterious condition that these poems of John Logan have come. Generalities and paraphrase are foreign, if not odious to poetry, its life being in the very lines themselves. Despite this, I cannot resist thinking that so much in these ten poems seems to be implicated in a modern experience of the Resurrection of the Flesh.

High cold keen the Cumbre air
As the light from the stone and shattering
stars

But there is nowhere mountain air
So cold or keen or bright or
Thin as is Francesca's wrist
Humming hyaline
Along the risen limb.

At other times it is sort of a premature intimation of that Resurrection. "And racing along the rim/ Of Indian Gully," Logan recalls in a poem about an incident from boyhood,

As fear light as laughter I sudden felt
A creature flare with beauty

At the back of my eye;
I knew my limbs and body
Sang on me sometimes—
But this was brighter than my arms.

To read what may seem like dogma into these lines does not, I hope, conveniently wrap and knot the poems into some kind of apologetic parcel. Whether or not Logan's view of Resurrection is even orthodox for the moment is superfluous: that is better left

to the harangues of his secular and neo-Catholic critics; what does matter is the solemnity and profundity of such an experience. It is this which gives *Cycle For Mother Cabrini* its peculiar, demanding, exciting integrity, and which more than persuades me a new poet has come into American letters.

One evening several years ago, the late Wallace Stevens delivered a lecture at the University of Chicago. The one thing that sticks in my mind is his insistence that such an idea as the Eternity of the World was a poetic idea, and eternally true, regardless of the theorems of the modern science, or of the prejudices of the theologians.

The Eternity of the World, Stevens argued, was the only kind of subject worthy of the true poet. Portentous indeed, and Stevens was possibly speaking from a platonic couch: it is within the implications of his opinion, nevertheless, that Logan's poetic belief in Resurrection might best be considered.

At the Second Coming of Our Lord and Saviour, the bodies of the dead shall leave their graves and, breathing and walking about again, be reunited finally with their souls forever. After the general judgment in the valley of Jehoshapat, so the Patristic Fathers teach, time will be no more. But what is time? asks Augustine. Resurrection, like any dogma of the Church, invokes the ancient Christian paradox of its intricacy only a poet perhaps can comprehend: that is to say, even as we exist in this world, there is a sense in which we are in eternity already so that our nature, corruptible, dying, is also even now incorruptible, and glorious. Not a thing for intellect alone, possibly not even for faith alone, an idea like this must be borne by the poet in his limbs as well. And so one finds Logan asking in "Prologue and Questions for St. Augustine," which has some of the best writing in the book:

Is not Lethe best

Of the streams of heaven,
Not most whispered

With the slow blowing
Lotuses of the stars? I have
Felt this rain and it was
Cool in my neck's root;
Saint, is our forgetting
The *least* of the memories of heaven!

Here it is almost as if the body itself asks the questions. The questions, in fact, arose in part out of an earlier intuition of the effects of sin, always a spiritual reality in the end, upon mortal flesh:

And I lift bread to mouth
Without trouble, at the corner

Turn right sin is like this
Why sin is natural as blue is
But drags at joints
Unnaturally
Dries membranes with sand

Is most clinging most cold most
Crabbed of all the casual
Things.

Any of a dozen or so pious poets could fancy and describe the resurrecting flesh and the geography of the life after death, but Logan alone, as far as I know, is the one who can experience while still in this life such a bewildering glorious moment. For when he considers the River of Forgetfulness, it is far from comforting. The intellectual, and physical, intensity of his lines almost echo the *riconoscenza il cor mi* that gnawed at Dante on the banks of Lethe in Purgatory: however, whereas Matilda plunges Dante into the waters, and purified them of all memory of sin, he is led to the eyes of Beatrice on the farther shore, Logan abruptly halts at the more frightening, intense, poignant part of the experience. To drink of Lethe in Logan's poem is not to find oblivion; it is hardly a *locum refrigerii, lucis, et pacis* like in Dante; it is instead

that moment when we are most humanly aware: the moment when, simultaneously, a man forgets all and remembers all of his transgressions. Imperative, acutely conscious, a cold sensuous rain on the root of the neck, his experience of Lethe is also the conventional one: we shall drink the waters and forget, no longer need, our memory of sin. And the very act of forgetting is realized as it were by intimation by the poet in whom the memory of sin remains quite active; time is suspended, for the intimation involves the future Day of Wrath, and also an immemorial past in which, as the Platonists said, we all may have seen Paradise before we came into this world; and the body which bears such a moment is both the flesh that has sinned and the glorious limbs about which the Apostle spoke.

This kind of passionate moment one finds only in the best poetry.

II

A belief in Resurrection, even if that belief be a poetic one, is quite out of fashion today. But what difference if the vast bleak atom-world of Lucretius is clumsy according to the opinions of our science? Or if the Angels of Rilke outrage the orthodox with their peculiarities, and embarrass his secular admirers by their existence? Nevertheless, if, as I have supposed, there actually exists a platonic world of poetic ideas, there remains a dimension in which such ideas in order to have validity must, as it were, put on bone and flesh. They must exist in a particular time and in a particular place. There must be a contemporaneity. Why is it, then, that an experience like Resurrection should be given to a poet of our generation?

Asked by a contemporary, a question like this can only admit of false or lop-sided answers. There is a way, however, in which Logan himself suggests part of our answer. About his own poems he has said:

They are concerned with the Saints as heroes of the will and lovers, as incredi-

bles. . . . They reintroduce the superstition of ghosts and the lonely fallacy of the lack of a natural place for man.

These heroic Saints seem quite another thing from the Daimons who came bringing metaphors to Yeats. They insist in fact so unreservedly upon a life of their own that one suspects the poet of trying, at times, to exorcise them by allowing them speech in his lines. Still, in what way can an antique notion like the Communion of Saints have any contemporaneity?

In addition to the great perennial human truths which each succeeding age must learn, if often only fragmentarily, there seem to be private and minor truths each generation must bear for itself. Eventually one grows bored at finding the truths of this century embodied, almost exclusively, in the nymphomaniacs, raw adolescents, the pederasts, the bogus angels and criminals of our modern literature. The Saints of Logan—so prodigal, interrogating, often so gorgeous—seem more interesting figures to convey some of our truths; and if they do not always flatter our prejudices, if they occasionally outrage, this is only a tribute to their powers, and an indication of Logan's authenticity as poet.

What could be more outrageous to an enlightened modern, for instance, than a man who at once is both great intellectual and profound, almost extravagant believer? Who more outrageous than Bishop Augustine? Although all of Logan's curious stringent mind is in his poem about the Saint, what makes it more than the usual, prosaic, crabby modern intellectual search and doubt, is the deep and troubling intuition, which haunts in the very midst of the mind's questions, that the body, both mortal and resurrected, is part and parcel of any permanent spiritual truth mind or soul may find. A union of matter with spirit is preposterous, as Blaise Pascal knew: even more preposterous, perhaps, is when they meet with such gentleness and such violence, as in this poem.

Another of the fine biographical poems

tells of Antony the Copt, who went into the wastes of the Thebaid in his early manhood, emerging over eighty years later a monument of Christian sanity. In Logan's poem, the Solitary—illiterate, obstinate, a despiser of logic and the polite Greek learning—becomes a hero of the will because, instead of merely shadow-boxing with psychotic goblins and minor lusts, he battles against the Fallen Angels, the powers and principalities. M. Maritain has suggested how the latest, most subtle stratagem of Satan in our time is to ensnare men into the proud illusion that He and His hosts could not possibly exist. But the devils' eyes, St. Antony tells us in some strange lines, "are dead as the agate/Dawn. Their stony paws/Click on the eggs of souls." And although Antony gave a lifetime to fighting the devils with his body, his fiercest temptation in Logan's poem is not one of the flesh; it is a pernicious haunting intimation of Resurrection which, however beautiful, one suspects is actually a kind of fake gnostic vision intended to lure the Saint away from the battle he is waging with his body in the midst of a dying civilization dedicated as much to "ever-present, ever-pressing temptations to idolatry, fornication, and unnatural vice" as our own.

And once he felt his ghost
Stand aside, saw it
Climb the lower hills of air
To meet the fallen Lord
Whose morning beauty still
Shivers in the brightness there,
And flings its protean hands
Of light. His soul fought and turned
And stood again in him.

These Saints of Logan, then, are a mirror for a profoundly troubling area of contemporary experience, one which we probably prefer to describe by more secular and medicinal names. And if there often is something baroque, even gaudy about these poems (indeed, one of the titles reads: "The Death of Southwell: A Verse Melodrama with Homilies on Light and Sin"), it is a gaudiness, a masculine excess Logan

shares with Wallace Stevens and Robert Lowell. And it seems high time that, among the carefully-caught-regrets, *billets-doux*, and fashionable hard-boiled ironies of so

much recent American verse, now with this book there are a few more scattered limbs for the Muses to collect along the Thracian shore.

Alanbrooke's Memoirs

HARRY ELMER BARNES

The Turn Of The Tide. By Arthur Bryant. *New York: Doubleday and Company.* 624 pp. \$6.95.

THE SUBTITLE of this book is "A History of the War Years Based on the Diaries of Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff." Another volume is expected to follow, for this one covers only the period from the outbreak of the War to the Quebec Conference of August, 1943. General Alanbrooke became British Chief of Staff and would have been made "Supreme Commander" of the Anglo-American forces in Europe had it not been deemed the best *policy* to give this post to General Eisenhower. In light of the fact that Alanbrooke was far and away the most important British military figure in the second World War, it seems strange that few Americans had heard of the man before the appearance of this volume.

Three outstanding presentations of the British case and point of view regarding the War have now been published: Churchill's own books, the two-volume account by the late Chester Wilmot, and the work under review. When the second volume comes along it will probably be conceded that the Bryant treatise is the most substantial and reliable of the three.

The book is full of interesting and not generally known details, such as that Hitler might well have won the war in the winter of 1939-1940 had not a German airplane

bearing his invasion plans been forced down in Belgium in January, 1940, and the plans seized and transmitted to the British. This, and the ensuing very cold and stormy weather, led Hitler to postpone his invasion of the West until late spring when the Allies were better prepared to deal with it. It is also revealed that there were repeated and fundamental clashes in strategic and logistic plans as between Britain and the United States over such things as the North African campaign, the invasion of the "soft underbelly of Europe," the cross-Channel attack, and the like. Whatever England may have lacked in carrying her share of the military burden after the American forces arrived in Europe in great numbers, she partly made up by averting the disaster which would have followed execution of the precipitate American plans for an attack across the Channel, one as early as 1942. The better-known clashes with Stalin are also amply described.

Equally absorbing are Alanbrooke's impressions of various personalities in the war. Churchill was full of determination, courage, and indomitable energy, but was conceited, rash, and impetuous. Had it not been for Alanbrooke's restraining influence, Churchill might have lost the War by pulling off a number of "Gallipolis." This restraint was not an easy task, for, whereas Roosevelt recognized that he did not know very much about military matters and was easily controlled by General Marshall, Churchill thought himself a second Marlborough as a strategist. Stalin is presented as a shrewd, bargaining realist utterly de-