

—but surely not by unaided reason alone, for as the Doctor explains, “There was a mystery in the destiny of man beyond fathoming, except in the light of divine revelation; at the very bottom of life there is an unanswerable riddle, and it is just there . . . where man leaves off, that God begins.”

Not only does Dr. Schumann embody and express the highest Christian ideals (imperfectly, of course, because he is human), Katherine Anne Porter herself—like Ecclesiastes, the Fathers of the Church, and the medieval allegorists—gives most explicit directions to all pilgrim fools who will shake off their lethargy and *look*. Heading the last section of the book, in ironic contrast with the first sentence of the allegory, is a quotation from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews: “For here we have no continuing city . . .” This and the whole of the Epistle is the vision and meaning of *Ship of Fools*: “*Let the charity of the brotherhood abide in you. And hospitality do not forget; for by this some, being not aware of it have entertained angels.*”

—Edward F. Murphy

*Christianity in Modern Art*, by Frank and Dorothy Getlein; Milwaukee; The Bruce Publishing Company; 227 pp; \$5.00.

A book on Christianity in modern art is not (nor can it ever be) like other books on other movements in modern art: for no style defines the Christianity in modern art in the way that styles and idiomatic ways of seeing define every other kind of “movement” in modern art. What the authors are faced with, then, is writing a book which covers the whole of modern art and architecture insofar as it falls into the light of Christianity.

Where to turn in search of that body of work that has fallen into the light of Christianity? The answer is not at all what it would have been in Medieval or Renaissance times.

Then one would have turned to the Church, mother and patron of the arts. Now the rift between the modern man and the Church, the artist and the Christian tradition, forces us to look elsewhere, for it has become impossible for an artist to be born, to live and to create entirely within the Christian heritage, since that heritage is simply not there for the modern man. As the authors state, “unlike the Christian art of most other times, modern art in Christianity has been produced for the most part without the patronage of the Church. It has come solely from the faith of the artists, from the artistic vocation, and from the awareness of the artist of the situation of modern man.”

The Getleins maintain that the new Christian artist, born outside of the heritage, has both an advantage and a disadvantage. On the one hand, he runs the risk of losing himself in self-absorption. On the other, he is left free to go “directly to the meaning of things rather than confine himself to appearances.” One of the weaknesses of this book is the kind of over-simplification involved in such statements. It never quite carries beyond simple assertion. Although the book is generously illustrated and the commentaries on the illustrations are quite detailed, the commentaries generally confine themselves to purely descriptive analyses of the quality of the line or the richness of the color or the heaviness of the shape. How the works reflect, on a level beyond the appearances of a Christian subject matter, a uniquely Christian outlook on life is not made clear, and this failure constitutes the chief weakness of the book. Recalling Romano Guardini’s remark that one should be able to sight a Christian even by the way he clambers up a tree, one aches for a Guardini-like elucidation of what makes a piece of Christian art Christian and not simply religious in subject matter.

Though the Getleins have not gone beyond the subject matter to justify the presence of most of the

works discussed in their book, they have taken subject matter a long way. The book opens with a treatment of the 19th century German artist, Heinrich Hofmann, whose saccharine kind of Christ-image they hold largely responsible for the degeneration of Christian sensibility and the misrepresentation that Christianity suffers in the plaster-cast “art” of churches today. The reaction against Hofmann was violent. The authors deal in detail with two leaders of the reaction, the German Expressionist Emil Nolde and the French Expressionist Georges Rouault. Salvador Dali receives a dishonorable mention for the professionalism of his “Sacrament of the Last Supper” and the “Christ of Saint John of the Cross.” An interesting chapter is devoted to the religious painters in Paris and America who have matured within the abstract expressionist tradition. The chapter entitled “The Hand of Craft” includes a whole range of art that rarely receives mention in art books, on the quite valid ground that craft work does not require, or even permit, the kind of intense self-expression that the plastic arts engage in. Through crafts many amateurs who could not otherwise achieve self-expression are able to produce much skillful and worthwhile work. The sculptures of Sir Jacob Epstein, Ernst Barlach, Gerhard Marcks, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Jacques Lipchitz receive a chapter to themselves. The modern churches of Antoni Gaudí in Barcelona, and several of the new churches in Europe and America are described in detail. One other chapter is devoted to prints, and another to the theme of “the Cross.”

The Getleins make it clear that what they are interested in is not the legally baptized kind of Christian art, but the art of men, Christian or not, who voice the great Christian themes. One finishes reading this book with the assurance that these artists and craftsmen all share a unity of spirit, and this is a good thing to behold. Together they are trying, as

moderns, to express the theme of salvation, be it in the context of a roaring beast or a family group, a prophet or a clown, a cross or a cathedral, a triumph or a crown of thorns.

This spirit and assurance are captured in an imposing bronze sculpture by Jacques Lipchitz entitled "Our Lady of Joy," which is in the church of Notre Dame de Toute Grace in Assy, France. It embodies the action of the Holy Spirit on men. Our Lady is its subject. She stands within a canopy-like stream of bronze held in the beak of the Dove poised directly above her head. Where we look for a face on the Virgin, we find only a dark recess. Standing alone, she would be called blind, but standing as she does, within the open bell of the Dove's canopy, she lives and fully mediates His kind of life. Here man's darkness is looped and encompassed with the flowing energy of the Holy Spirit. Out of what alone was blindness comes a deep and whole kind of vision; what on its own would have been a faltering stance assumes universal proportions as a posture of benediction and encouragement over the whole world. Applying to the work of the artists represented in this book, this statue seems to speak of that wholeness that is inherent in their otherwise dark and fragmentary efforts at self-expression, efforts pointing in the same direction, but originating from conflicting camps of the spirit. The statue is done by a Jew. It stands in a Catholic Church. This church also contains a mosaic exterior by a Marxist (Fernand Léger), a baptistry by another Jew (Marc Chagall), a stained glass window by a Catholic (Rouault), and altar pieces by two agnostics (Matisse and Bonnard). In an Age of Faith, this church would be considered a blasphemy. In an age when artists must work on their own, outside of, rather than within, a religious heritage, one cannot doubt the sincerity of this enterprise.

The Getleins' book, is, at its best, like this church. Unfortunately the book is not always at its best. At

times it amounts to little more than a rapid survey of who did what and how it is religious, leaving the reader with the kind of feeling a tourist gets after visiting too many museums too quickly.

—Robert Del Tredici

*The Contemporary English Novel.*

By Frederick R. Karl. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy. 304 pp. \$4.95.

This book is of mainly clinical interest. It illustrates all the ills of writing on current literature, with the additional complication that it is one of those books that get there first. Karl has undertaken to survey and evaluate the English novel from 1930 to the present. He devotes chapters to Samuel Beckett, Lawrence Durrell, C. P. Snow, Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen, Joyce Cary, George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green, and Ivy Compton-Burnett. In composite chapters he treats the Angry Young Men, another group he calls the Moral Allegorists (William Golding, Iris Murdoch, Rex Warner, and P. H. Newby), and a group of comic writers (Anthony Powell, Angus Wilson, Nigel Dennis). Inevitably, in an enterprise like this one, there will be an exceedingly mixed last chapter into which Everyone Else must be packed. Karl's includes Pamela Hansford Johnson, L. P. Hartley, Alan Sillitoe, Christopher Isherwood, V. S. Pritchett, Brian Glanville, and numerous others. Then there must be a philosophic foreword and afterword. The former will attempt some retrospective generalizations, and the latter will be a mixture of exhortation and augury. About the whole enterprise, there will be an air of desperate and breathless urgency. Someplace in the title and as often as possible in the text must appear the word *contemporary*, it being a favorite honorific with writers of books that get there first.

On a subject like the one Karl has here addressed himself to, perfection is not to be had. More or less as Karl settles Waugh's hash, Waugh brings out another novel. This is inconvenient all right, but there are ways of dealing with it. One can decide, for example that his will be a *well-written* book. This is the solution favored by the British. "I may be wrong," the reasoning runs, "but I'm going to be entertaining." The result is often a book that exhibits a cheerful irreverence about fact but one sharply conceptualized and written, also one that shows taste and an acquaintance with the classics. The other way of doing it, the American Way, is to write a book that looks *sound*. This will have approximately the bulk and texture of a doctoral dissertation. It will, in general, play safe. Its author will feel obliged to read all the books he mentions or to pretend that he has, and he will dump down in his pages elaborate synopses of a goodly share of them. He will confine himself to low-level inferences about the books in question, and these he will clothe in a high-flying language that he hopes will pass for scientific. It is the language of the literary specialist, you see, and it must have the appropriate ponderousness. Wit must be avoided as frivolous, also taste. Instead of being quickly sensed and wittily presented, judgments must be laboriously arrived at and supported. And the labor must show. There is a third approach, but this is rare because it requires abilities not often found in one person: analytic power, scholarly stamina, and stylistic sense. Karl's book makes the mistake of trying this approach. Hitherto a writer mainly of Reader's Guides to this and that, he has got badly out of his depth.

His book is worst stylistically. For the usual difficulties of writing on current writing are here made worse by the fact that this is one of those books that get there first. The results of this and of bad editing are to be seen on every page. There are plain solecisms, as when Karl writes