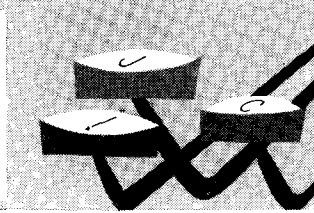


# Manner of Speaking



## CRECHE (ADVT.)

These Angels really fly!  
The Herald really sings!  
The Camels (two feet high)  
Walk, kneel, and nod. The Kings  
(In their authentic clothes)  
Carry real Frankincense!  
The Infant really glows!  
The Shepherds (by real Tents)  
Look up at Stars that light!  
Works AC or DC.  
For a real Xmas Night  
Get ROBO-CRECHE, Mark III.

## OH COME ALL YE FAITHFUL CONSUMERS:

By now Main Street, in your town as in mine, has been hung with wreathes and lights for the full twenty-plus shopping days since Thanksgiving, and "*Adeste Fidelis*" has wound on and on in close harmony with the click and jingle of the local cash registers everywhere. Merry Christmas, friends: a child is born! And Merry Xmas, consumers: come and get it!

Who was it said "No idea can survive its own institutionalization"? G. B. Shaw, I think. Marx had to declare he was no Marxist. Could Christ think of himself as a Christian on your Main Street and mine?

Think of him as the Father of Charity and it could be possible. But remember not to suffer by the mistranslation of words. Charity is cognate with *caritas*, but our word seems to have become a matter of budgeting out checks for the annual drives while maybe slipping a quarter or a half to the Santa on the corner. *Caritas*, however, means specifically, and far more inclusively and demandingly, the love of others.

It may take the full exercise of *Caritas* to find the sweet metaphor of the birth of a child truly there on your Main Street and mine. But every ritual must change. That cash register is only the mechanical extension of the street hawker grinding out the pittance of his Asiatic poverty. And chances are he was even noisier than the registers, though with a human rather than a metal sound. But let us never hate ourselves for being prosperous.

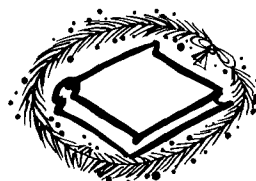
That last may be an unchristian thought if we think of the rich man's gate to heaven as the needle's eye. Yet in whatever dream we see heaven, I suspect something no more extraordi-

nary than Levittown might look like a paradisaal landscape to the poor of this world.

Merry Christmas to your good luck and to mine. But still I confess to some uneasiness on my Main Street, as I suspect you may feel a little on yours. Is it because we are too lucky? Or because we suspect our ranch houses and our split levels only *look* like heaven to that dream of the world's poverty? No, I am not joking. As a matter of physical plant, some sort of Levittown-in-the-Sky would certainly do for at least a minimum heaven for this world's poor, as it certainly will do for more heaven than we have physically achieved for the kids of the shack-and-alley countries.

Perhaps I am uneasy, and guess you to be, because whatever heaven we set out to dream never was a matter of physical plant but more nearly a matter of communication between souls, selves, psyches, or whatever we are. Our Main Streets (and now the shopping centers) have the goods all right, and come and get it, but how do you communicate there on whatever it is to think of the birth of a child? It is a badly cluttered—or at least a heavily inventoried place—that "*Adeste Fidelis*" is blaring from, and the clutter cannot fail to confuse us if we come with the simple metaphor of a birth in mind.

We are—do you see?—partial anachronisms. Our base metaphors are still from a simpler place than this world's clutters. As a matter of fact, part of the clutter is the jostle of just too many people. As Joseph Wood Krutch once pointed out, there has always had to be some ground on which people could tolerate the pressure of other people. For there *are* too many of us and some fool is forever leaving his beer cans and garbage in our favorite picnic spot. One simple way to keep our picnic spots (physical and psychic) uncluttered is to kill off other people. One of the early reasons the race gave itself for not killing off excess neighbors was that each man was sanctioned by the possession of a soul. He was a property of God.



Nowadays, however, it seems easier to think of him not as a soul but as a psyche. As a property of Freud. It is a bit less comfortable that way, isn't it? There are obviously too many psyches cluttering up Main Street.

So the theological sanction became the psychiatric. (Krutch, let me say, cannot be held responsible for the way I am littering up the picnic ground of his ideas.) There was also the social sanction. We began to tolerate other people because they were useful as producers. We needed what they raised, or brewed, or manufactured. But—and here I am back to Krutch—we now produce more than we can use. What we really need is not producers but consumers. We have to tolerate people in order to get the stuff used up.

And there is another reason for discomfort. We should all like to think we amount to something more than digits on the seasonally adjusted Index of Retail Sales that will be showing up in the *Wall Street Journal* before long. With inventories the way they are, let us not, in any case, tinker about with any more miracles of loaves and fishes!

I really am trying to wish us all a Merry Christmas. As you can see, it isn't easy. We should all like to say simply that a child is born, but we have trouble saying the simple thing simply. We cannot be sure but what it is a new taxable unit that is born. It has something to do, I think, with a dream of ourselves we cannot read clearly because there are too many price tags (exclusive of sales tax) on it. The trouble with living in our kind of clutter is that inevitably some of it accumulates inside us.

The joy of the soul's (or the psyche's) great metaphors is that they do finally keep the simple dreams first. Remember that what is born is always a child, which is to say the uncluttered impulse. What clutter there is, is *around* the child, not *of* him. That picnic place on the greensward of the dream is always there, and it is what the season is finally about. Merry Christmas on that greensward.

Sure, go ahead and buy up all the clutters there are. The economy needs you. So long as the clutter is around the dream and not of it, there is still with us some part of the essential language any heaven must speak. We have the physical plant for it. But remember that the physical plant is no good without the language that joins us.

Which is the one thing that has to be said through all the noises of your Main Street, and mine, and of all the world's: I wish us the conjoining language that is Merry Christmas in the mother tongue of dreams.

—JOHN CIARDI.

# Saturday Review

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## Bats in the Guava Trees

FARMING is at best a parlous occupation, and farmers on the West Coast of Africa often encounter hazards that verge on the bizarre. Until recently, for instance, West African guava growers were beset by an infestation of bats. Every day, after the sun set, hordes of these purblind creatures would come swooping down on the guava groves to sink their teeth in the delectable guava fruit. The bats' shrill cries of delight were matched only by the shrill cries emitted by farmers watching their cash crops being devoured.

Then, several months ago, one of the embattled farmers outlined his problem to an American visitor. Did the American by any chance know, he asked, how to get rid of the bats without damaging the crops?

As it happened, the American visitor was a volunteer member of a non-profit organization in Palo Alto, California, called DATA International. Within a few weeks, DATA, working through its network of volunteers, had consulted an expert on bat control, and had forwarded to West Africa a special new pesticide which sent the furry intruders fluttering to their reward.

This operation typifies the work of DATA, a pocket-size volunteer group that has been called "a stay-at-home Peace Corps." DATA's rationale is straightforward to the point of naïveté. It simply asks Americans who are traveling or living abroad to keep their eyes open for local problems that can

be solved by American know-how. When such problems are forwarded to DATA, the staff, most of them volunteers, gets in touch with its expert consultants, who are also volunteers. Especially sticky problems are sent out to several experts, to insure an answer within a few weeks. With an office staff of seven full-time paid workers and thirty-five part-time volunteers, DATA (Development and Technical Assistance) International has in its four-year career processed more than 1,600 difficult questions. The number of new friends it has made for the United States is beyond calculating.

DATA is the creature of Wil Rose, a wry, witty thirty-two-year-old ex-Marine from Ohio. When Rose was wounded in the Korean fighting and given his discharge, Los Angeles City College sent him abroad to make an educational film about folkways in different countries and cultures. This trip, which eventually took Rose to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, touched him deeply and set him to thinking. Everywhere he saw people struggling manfully but ineffectually with technical problems that Americans had conquered decades ago. Couldn't American know-how be shared, Rose wondered, on an ad hoc, person-to-person basis, outside the formal structure of the government aid programs?

Returning to America, Rose set about creating DATA early in 1959. The big question, of course, was this: Would highly paid American engineers, sci-

entists, architects, doctors, mechanics, and other experts contribute their time and expertise gratis? Or, for that matter, would Americans living the good life abroad take time out to serve a DATA's eyes and ears?

He needn't have worried. At the moment there are 2,000 representatives overseas and 1,000 consultants in the U.S.; and problems are coming in at the rate of a hundred a month.

One striking thing about these problems is that many of them get beneath the carapace of politics and government, and give us a sort of X-ray picture of the everyday struggle-for-life:

From Greece: "I've watched children drinking water full of green scum. . . . Can you put me in touch with someone who can advise?"

From Japan: "Can you supply plans of a home-made tractor for use in rice paddies?"

From New Guinea: "How do you tan crocodile hides?"

From India: "How do you make a rope-making machine?"

From Ethiopia and Korea: "How can we make a water-distilling unit utilizing solar power?"

The following is a selection of questions recently received by DATA and still in the hopper awaiting answers:

From Indonesia: "Do you know of a breed of chicken that will 'live off the land' and not need close care and grain-feeding?"

From Brazil: "How can we safely shell babassu nuts? Their shell is so hard it can be cracked open only by an axe blade; so we can use only 5 per cent of our crop."

From Guatemala: "Can you give me a list of organizations, preferably located in Central America, that help people? I'd like to work with such a group."

Anyone who can answer the foregoing questions, or knows someone who can, is invited to get in touch with Wil Rose at DATA International, 437 California Avenue, Palo Alto, California. In fact, anyone of any age, background, or previous condition of expertise can qualify as a DATA consultant, or representative, since the problems it deals with are as variegated as is human need. There remains, of course, a third category of membership: the sponsors, who do not participate directly, but who instead give donations to DATA, and spread the good word generally.

Whatever role they choose to play, DATA members have the immense satisfaction of knowing they are part of a flexible, private-initiative Peace Corps that operates squarely in the tradition of American selflessness.

—HALLOWELL BOWSER.