

St. John's Collegian

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9:30 THURSDAY NIGHT

I am sitting in seminar, slumped down in my seat as thoughts wander lazily through my mind. Ever and anon a particularly intriguing wisp of smoke is wafted my way and momentarily occupies my attention as it curls and dissipates itself in the general haze. I have decided the mental effort of following the topic is just too much, and am content to watch the changing smoke patterns and indulge in uninhibited reverie.

Drone number one is occupied in an exposition of some opinion or other, I don't quite know what, but *he* seems to be convinced of its importance and so I'm glad he's so usefully and happily employed.

This state of peace and general aura of good will is presently interrupted by Drone number two who feels it incumbent upon him to challenge Drone number one, probably not being very sure what he is saying either, but aroused by his presumption to say it so confidently. Taken by surprise in the warmth of his most convincing point, Drone number one listens incredulously as Drone number two induces a vague generality meant to demolish all his well-considered arguments and rouse the very Gods by its profundity. Drone number one is visibly grieved at this manifestation of doubt on the part of one of his beneficiaries, and painstakingly and magnanimously builds up his case again. Before long he is interrupted a second time by his inconsiderate antagonist who now feels he has enough of a hold on Drone number one's prejudices to ask a direct question. No un-

derlying feelings are concealed as the two engage in exchanging heavy-footed banalities in which Shakespeare and several others are quoted.

Balefully surveying the situation, a Tutor stirs in his chair slumberously, and rumbling in preparation, attempts to help out by synthesizing the two points of view and showing it leaves no difficulties whatever. Being now stimulated, he cannot refrain from making some observations on one or two sentences that have filtered through to him in the course of the last half hour. An Intellectual is aroused at this and as the smoke accelerates alarmedly, his mortal enemy, Intellectual number two joins in and the three engage animatedly in extensive demonstrations and questionings of each other's logical ability. While not very clear of its relation to what they were saying, Drones number one and two feel they are involved somehow and hasten to defend what they have said. Another member now stirs in his seat, blows away the enfolding smoke, and feels sufficiently sympathetic to clear up the problem and enlighten everyone present with his long-considered opinion. The opinion not being only long-considered but long, and the individual capacity for being enlightened short, the rest of the Seminar begin to feel they must assert their independence and join in.

The situation is showing signs of becoming a first-class brawl and passes to the higher echelon for handling. The Seminar Leader tactfully catches at one of the short and fast opinions that just went whizzing by, and fastens on its perpetrator to find

out just what he means. The Perpetrator has no intention of relinquishing his grasp upon the former subject however, and utilizes the attention now thrust upon him in explaining the whole problem and grinding all other opinions to dust.

That does it. Rocking, raving, thundering, roaring, Homer's inspired imagination never envisaged such violent forces as these. Every Achilles sees in his neighbor his mortal enemy Hector and never undertook to drag him through the dust so thoroughly. Opinions clash and ring, arms brandish, the table is pounded, and all the Gods from Jupiter to Aphrodite are called upon. One violent member stands up and declaims at the top of his lungs, then stamps out in self-righteous disgust. In the hall outside passing Seminars pause in surprise as succeeding students grimly stalk out and march downstairs, never to speak to each other again.

Gradually the room is emptied of its seething inhabitants. Sighing, the Seminar Leader turns out the light as the dust gently settles on the scattered chairs, and the last wisps of disturbed smoke float out the window.

Anonymous

It is so good to know my love
For you has gone
And in the sun of truth
My heart is witness to the lies
I lied to it when roses bled
Warm blood across the melting snow.

Iceicles stab the edges of the wound
Why are they red and pointed? And
When will they melt again?

C. R. Powleske

THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS

Mr. Wind proposed to speak on the meaning of a painting: Raphael's "School of Athens" in the Vatican at Rome. This was a rare treat for St. John's and, indeed, for any audience since, as Mr. Klein's remarks before the lecture indicated, very few people had ever had the good sense to look seriously at painting in this way. Mr. Wind is not quite unique in the field of art scholarship, but very nearly so; a distinction in which he probably takes small pleasure. However, for St. John's, if not for the rest of the academic world, his remarks should thus assume a special importance as pointing the way to other things that can be done in this field and demonstrating the real intellectual excitement possible when results are obtained.

One may, of course, look at a painting without any reference to what its visual images mean when translated into concepts. I would even affirm (and so would Mr. Wind) that this manner of looking, an inexpressible awareness of what is sensuously satisfying in the art object, is essential to an ultimate understanding of it. There need be, however, no conflict between this manner of seeing a painting and an awareness or at least an hypothesis concerning the intellectual content contained in it. I was a little surprised that some members of the college revealed in the question period that they had never done both things and, in fact, doubted the very possibility of doing them together.

Mr. Wind declined, however, for good reasons, to attempt a formal analysis of the composition, color, line-arabesques, etc. of Raphael's fresco. The tradition for doing so in public is at present very poor, as Mr. Klein remarked, but that does not dis-

credit the activity itself. We must wait until philosophers of beauty succeed better than they have in presenting terms and methods for aesthetic analysis and for St. John's, in any event, the deciphering of symbols and the examination of ideas is of greater importance. In final explanation of Mr. Wind's restriction to the meaning alone, he had merely slides to convey the appearance of the original, not the original itself, and, although visual symbols can be commercially reproduced, visual beauty generally cannot.

The lecturer's principle colleague in the science of *Iconography*, Professor Irwin Panofsky of the Institute for Advanced Studies, has written a fine essay on the search for meaning in works of art (*Introduction, Studies in Iconology*, Oxford Press, 1939). He distinguishes between three strata of meaning: the pre-iconographical, or purely factual analysis, the identification of images, stories and allegories, and, lastly, iconographic synthesis, or the examination of intrinsic content or symbolical values, (what Panofsky later calls "cultural symptoms" or "symbols in general"). The first stratum, the pre-iconographical, would indicate, for example that there are men in the picture, grave, sad or happy, dressed in loose garments and set within a great marble hall, the size and appearance thereof vaguely realized from a mental comparison with experience: Grand Central Station, or a similar structure. The second stratum (or level, if you will) involves research into books, documents and the classics of literature in order to determine, from certain hints and attributes, exactly who the figures are meant to be. The examination of "cultural symptoms" or "symbols in general", which is just a long

and Germanic way of saying "ideas", involves something further and is by far the most rewarding activity of the three. It requires a general education, a familiarity with the "Western Tradition", whatever it is, and a faculty for logical analysis sharp enough to curb the extensive powers of imagination one must also possess. Needless to say, the truth of any conclusions in this third level must be firmly founded on the other two. Given criteria like these, I think it perhaps becomes easier to evaluate what Mr. Wind did with a single picture like the "School of Athens".

The appearance of the figures, their expressions and their setting are the facts presented to the eyes; the "Given" (like a description of the figure in a proposition) and the actual work of solution begins at the next level. Since, very wisely, St. John's does not encourage the taking of notes, let me, as briefly as I can, attempt to summarize the principal identifications Mr. Wind made of specific figures in the scene.

The crowned figure holding a globe of the world is Ptolemy, confused then with the later kings of Egypt. Deeper into the picture, facing out, is Proclus, turbaned and holding a celestial globe, conversing with the artist himself and Calcagnini, his humanist adviser and sometime astronomer. Euclid among his pupils is elaborating a proposition on the ground nearby (the construction of the world out of triangles; cf. *Timaeus* 54); and above them, on the steps, lounges Medicine, or Hippocrates, in the facetious guise of the Renaissance editor of Hippocrates' text, called the "New Diogenes" for his sloppy habits. On the left-hand side the brooding figure of Pythagoras, isolated in his concentration on the unseen and the

unheard, sits large and conspicuous. To the left of him Boethius who, as he declares at the beginning of *De Consolatione*, is grown prematurely old with sorrow, reads numerical books while a follower holds up his pythagorean diagram of the musical scale and the triangular perfect number ten. Next to him is Grammar, traditionally shown with children, but since it balances the figure of Raphael, who represents the art of painting among the spacial arts on the right, Grammar here, among the numerical and musical arts, must also represent metre or poetry.

On the upper level, from left to right, we have Phaedrus and Lysias as oratory and sophistry (cf. Plato's dialogue); Socrates next, with Alcibiades, Glaucon and Cephalus and a soldier, a "Silver Citizen" on guard to keep sophists out of the *Republic*. Past the central group of Plato's Academy and Aristotle among his Peripatetics, we find History eagerly transcribing the proceedings while Pyrrho the Skeptic watches him skeptically, and a Stoic, tall, unmoved and coldly serene surveys the crowd. In the corner at the extreme right is an allegory of the "golden mean" in Aristotelian thought shown by the three ages of man, a concept displayed frequently in art after this time.

The whole room of which the "School of Athens" is but a part, its four walls covered with frescos of Philosophy, Poetry, Theology and Jurisprudence with corner lunettes containing transitional subjects that connect adjacent walls, forms a pictorial version of the Renaissance "Encyclopaedia" the circle of intellectual pursuit in which, starting at any point, one can arrive elsewhere on the circle by the interdependence of the liberal arts. The "School of Athens"

itself is divided vertically and horizontally between inspired philosophy of the inner man and the search for empirical truth rooted in the actual world, and again, the concerns of moral philosophy as against the science of Nature. But for the Renaissance, and for ourselves as interpreters of it, it is of primary significance that those divisions are transcended in Raphael's painting, allowing the whole its necessary unity of idea as well as space in a great sweeping synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian systems. These last remarks are my lame attempt at illustrating what I meant by the third and highest level of interpreting pictures and I hope no one will misjudge the process by my inadequacy.

As the conveyor of large ideas in subtle ways and possessing its meaning on several levels, a great painting is not unlike a great book. Mr. Edgar Wind is performing a magnificent service to those interested in showing how great paintings can be understood. If he is able to show St. John's that great paintings are worth being understood, he will perform an additional service and one near to my heart.

Eugene Thau (Columbia Univ.)

THE BOYS FROM JULLIARD

(or, A Presumptuous Critic Digresses)

There is a tradition among string quartets, with the Budapest in particular, which demands that modern works, if they *must* be played, be played just before intermission. Thus, having dispatched their comrade's embarrassing offspring, they are able to follow it up, after intermission, with a soothing syrup of the romantic brand to restore the reactionary's outraged tongue to its accustomed state of

health. This admirable procedure not only secures for the performers an audience after the break, but satisfies the sophisticate in the audience that his pet has been given the place of honor on the program, that is to say, dead in the middle of it. The Julliard Quartet, aggressively modern as it is, broke the tradition and/or hypocrisy some Fridays ago and insisted on a logical and strictly chronological order of arrangement, whether in deference to its audience or for principles held, I cannot say.

Haydn's Quartet Op. 50, No. 4, or rather merely the first movement of it, provided the Julliard group with an admirable finger warmer and introductory piece. But it was not as well suited to its purpose as it might have been, inasmuch as there are more self-sufficient and brilliant Haydn first movements to be read. They did, however, bring out most of the work's intrinsic value with a performance, sometimes rough and thin in tone, but nevertheless quite exciting.

The four movements of Schubert's Quartet in G major, Op. 161, got rather uneven treatment I thought. A very dynamic and powerful going-over is what the first movement requires, and this is the sort it got, plus much more by way of variety. The boys from Julliard with their extremely soft tone played those mysterious pages in this movement, which seem to be manufactured whole out of a few tremolos and not much else, in a manner very seldom equaled. The last movement was admirably done also, though the first violinist, it seemed to me, had trouble with his intonation. It was in the middle two movements that the performance seemed to fall apart. The lyricism of the second movement and the trio of the Scherzo was not quite

adequately sustained, nor was the Scherzo proper given its full value in the way of a fleet and light touch. Enough of this carping criticism, however. The Julliard's performance was, on the whole, a fine one, quite different from the extremely polished one which a Budapest Quartet might give it, but, since what was lacking in polish was more than made up by a peculiarly catching sort of enthusiasm in their approach, an equally valid one.

Apropos of the Berg, let me make a small and possibly relevant digression on the charming subject of games, for children or for adults, intellectual or otherwise. Games, as anyone might tell you, are invented as a more or less pleasant way of passing time when no more pressing business or more profitable pleasure is at hand. As such, from bean-bag and spin-the-bottle, through bridge and canasta, to Russian roulette, they perform certain valuable functions in life, not the least of which is concerned with perpetuating it. But as any number of well-paid pundits will tell you, the way to get the most out of a game is to play it yourself. Now Berg, it would seem, plays a game called twelve toning, but the trouble is that he won't let us play too. My suggestion is: get a copy of the rules (Alhambra, California % Arnold Schoenberg), apply yourself diligently, and soon, who knows, you may be able to play.

So much for the digression (small and possibly relevant). I could not possibly quarrel with the performance of the *Lyric Suite*. It seemed to be very authoritative and sure footed. And I cannot even quarrel with the twelve-tone system itself, since I have heard certain compositions written in that style, some of them, such as *Wozzeck* and the *Violin Concerto*, by

Berg himself, which made considerable sense and which appeared to be worth hearing often. Rather, it is merely that, considering the rarity of these triumphs and noting that other modern composers, Bloch, Prokofiev, and Hindemith to name a few, turn out equally respectable work with considerably greater frequency, I think there might be better techniques to be used. As for the *Lyric Suite* itself, since better examples of his music, such as the two works mentioned above, can be heard, I simply conjecture that this time he slipped. I will say, though, that I enjoyed the titles tremendously.

Paul Cree

' DIALECTIC AT THE WALDORF

The 18th annual Herald Tribune Forum, entitled "What Kind of Government Ahead?", to which the senior class last month dispatched a couple of spies, was a dismal dialectical morass. As such, it seemed to reflect the failure of its subject, our American political machinery, to offer the voting citizen the intelligently formulated alternatives essential to significant choice and democratic process. Though billed as a "forum", the program involved little exchange of ideas, parading rather a three-day chain of set speeches which bore to one another a minimum of relevance. Yet, despite the fact that most speakers thus concerned themselves with interests of their own, some common problems evolved. This opinion-alignment, or implicit-debate, centered, curiously enough, about the very question of the nature and place of dialectic, logic, and first principles in our traditional two-party system.

Several speakers toyed with characterizations of our special kind of party government, which seems to be a fairly elusive thing. Most agreed with Professor Rogers, of Columbia University, that we have in fact two bottles with virtually the same (if any) contents. The two parties are alike in that both intend to represent everyone by embodying everything. To the universal complaint of the frustrated citizen, "Why don't our parties stand for something?", Representative Case of New Jersey replied that they do -- only of course it is the same thing. By this he referred to those supposed first principles on which all Americans agree and our democracy rests, or perhaps to certain maxims of freedom on which we certainly do somehow agree. Within the framework of this basic and resounding agreement, then, each party endeavors to incorporate all the divergent opinions and interests of our society. The speakers were fond of repeating that our parties are thus not *monolithic*, but all-inclusive, and therefore contain within themselves distinctions more genuine than those which exist between them. But thus to stand for everything, is to stand for nothing, and so we arrive at our two similar parties, neither of whose principles or programs are well defined. This Professor Odegard, of the University of California, quite sincerely extolled as "the wisdom of Tweedledee and Tweedledum."

Professor Rogers related this lack of definition to certain elements of our political mechanism, and to the American Mind. He justified it in terms of Madison and the *Federalist Papers*.

National parties are defined in terms of matters of national importance. Thus those aspects of our

elective process which tend to concentrate attention on state and local issues, as does the requirement that representatives be residents of the districts from which they are elected, blur the forms of the national parties. The fact that parties, to be national, must straddle sectional differences has the same effect. Further, parties have little meaning if their platforms are not in fact pledges of action, while our Congressional procedure, placing power in the hands of committees and committees in the power of seniority rules, prevents effective majority-party control of the legislative process.

The theoretical justification of such a state of affairs stems from the danger of factions. Factions result from the alignment of the citizenry on the basis of divergent interests, and such a split of the state destroys the conditions for a true general will, and raised in the minds of Forum speakers the spectre of minority oppression, street-barricades, and civil war. The essential virtue of our party system becomes that of reconciling such dangerous divergences of interest (and, incidentally, of opinion) within the party masses, and of thus avoiding their becoming national issues. In the legislative, as well as the elective, process, intra-party compromise replaces inter-party contest. This, incidentally, relegates the democratic process of decision to the party primary and the party conference. But it insures, as Mr. Case delightedly pointed out, smooth-running government. France, he willingly admitted, is better at dialectic -- but look at the chaos into which this throws their government!

The last-ditch defense of this concept of the party system is an outright denial of dialectic. The Pro-

fessor, scoffing at proposals that our parties hold regular conventions in addition to the nominating conventions for the purpose of formulating their principles, pronounced that the American Mind is allergic to cerebration on principles. The Representative, having admitted that the two-party system as he had painted it was not a particularly logical arrangement, relieved us of all qualms on that score by declaring that "life is not logical either." There is also the argument of practical wisdom: "We have contented people," he concluded.

The opposition to this concept of the party as a nebulous entity took two essentially different forms, one of which by far out-weighed the other. Only one speaker at the Forum advocated, in the face of Rousseau, the Federalists, and his fellows on the platform, that political parties should represent distinct interests; this was Mr. Patton, of the National Farmers' Union, whose specific thesis was that the Democratic Party should become a farm-labor coalition. The other form of opposition was led by Hubert Humphries, senator from Minnesota, and by Governor Peterson of Nebraska, who maintained that each party should set forth in "well defined, carefully reasoned statements" its principles and its position on issues. The difference between Mr. Patton's position and that of Mr. Humphries and Mr. Peterson can be regarded as the distinction between parties which represent "interests" and parties which represent "principles", provided that we do not imply thereby that principles are not matters of interest or that interests do not give rise to principles. Insofar as we have distinct interest-groups within the nation, we will have corresponding opinion-groups as well,

as it is contrary to the spirit and theory of democracy to separate one's interests from one's principles. But it is clear that the interests to which parties appeal, if we are to allow parties to take shape at all, must be some common interests in respect of which we are all equal, not such particular interests as those of farmers, in respect of which we are obviously not all equal. Our parties will not differ, theoretically, in the interests to which they appeal, but in the principles for which they stand as ways of attaining those interests. The advocates of undefined parties were right, then, in their argument against parties which represent factions, but they may be wrong in supposing that parties which seek the same end might not be quite distinct in respect of the principles of government by which they propose to achieve these ends. Mr. Patton may be said, then, to have advocated parties which stand for distinct ends, while the others advocated parties which stand for distinct means to one end.

Under the slogan, "party responsibility", Mr. Humphries set forth a scheme for the revision of the present party system to make our democracy more democratic. He sees a trend away from the federal concept of government, lessening interest in sectional problems, and correspondingly growing interest in national issues. In the face of this, parties which are not clear about national issues seem to him anomalous; parties should hold conventions every two years, committing themselves to platforms and "integrating" their now heterogeneous membership. Voters would then have the opportunity of considering issues rather than mere personalities, the democratic ideal in this respect being simply that a majority of the popular

vote should determine public policy. To achieve real party responsibility, however, he believes party discipline is needed; the majority party must have authority to put its platform into action. The traditions of seniority and committee rule in Congress, no part of our law or Constitution, must be reformed to make committees responsible to the majority party; and the party "caucus", which once insured that party membership would be responsible to party leadership, should be restored to the status it had, he said, forty years ago. In line with this concept of popular democracy, Senator Kefauver proposed to the Forum the obvious amendment of the electoral college system. Asking for parties answerable to their own memberships, Mr. Peterson praised a requirement of Nebraska law that primary candidates appear in person in the state to debate the issues of the election, thus he said bringing intra-party politics out of the smoke-filled room.

As for the rest of the Forum speakers -- there must have been fifty or so more -- some were politicking, some urged programs upon their parties, some pretended their parties had programs, some described the activities of their women's clubs, some discussed international affairs, while some, drawing a very reasonable conclusion from our present party arrangement, urged all those interested in democracy to work within some party, since they would find no significant choice between them. Some of these last explained that the innards of our parties are much nicer than you think they are.

We have saved for last mention the first speaker, whose words of darkness suggest the severe shortcoming of our present democratic

Thanksgiving

Wind blown news print thickens the hedge.
Trees stand in naked defiance,
fisted branches against the grey.

Soggy leaves follow me from door to desk,
where sitting I watch the frantic rain.

The muddie sash drip hurls skyward
In last rebellion.

Soon all will be white,
for a moment peace.

Lyric Suite

Decadent Sexuality
in forms contrived by swinish wit
Impotent expression of soulless impotence.
Other forms, a different artifax
might lend you potency
to express the soulless impotence of crawling death.

Washburn

A sky of blue above a crowded world of dust
Sunlight streaming through a windowpane
Pregnant clouds bursting, rain ticking
Snow falling and tickling.

People strutting forth and slaving
Side by side
Brothers loving working craving
Side by side.

Pierot

NOTICE

The Baltimore "Sunday American" has offered to print the next issue of the *Collegian* on an entire page of their Sunday Supplement. Reprints of this page will be distributed on Monday, December 12 in lieu of a regular issue.

THE EDITOR

technique. Dwight Eisenhower, of Columbia University, joined those who favored logical analysis, but with a difference: he didn't want to incorporate logic as a proper part of the democratic process, but saw it as a task for experts. He advocated a conclave of "leaders from every field" and "faculties of some of our great universities" for the purpose of finding out the best way to protect the citizen from his government. He proposed to do this by drawing a line where one cannot possibly exist in a functioning democracy -- the line separating the citizen from his government. Eisenhower's concern can only reflect a basic misunderstanding of democracy. It may be well that such a misunderstanding is inevitable in a democracy of amorphous parties.

Ranlet Lincoln
Thomas Simpson

CRITICAL CAUSES

The most important questions which a person may ask a critic are probably "What does a critic do when faced with an art work?" "Why does he do it?" and "How does he know a good work from a bad?" All these questions were demanded of Mr. Karl Shapiro in a memorable and querysome session following his lecture on "Anti-criticism." With the lecture itself, I, by choice, do not concern myself here except to record that in it Mr. Shapiro laid down some qualification to his now famous position (to be found set forth in *Poetry Magazine* of April 1948) that for poetry criticism on the whole is useless, or worse. The qualification which emerged seems to be that the criticism of antimodernists is the useless-or-

worse kind; hence to it is given the name of anti-criticism. The word criticism itself is abandoned for "The New Criticism" which turns out to be *The Kind of Criticism Which the Avant Garde Artist Likes*. Further it was pointed out that whereas the bond between peasantry and poet may be fruitful, that between the masses and the poet may only be debilitating. The distinction between peasantry and masses appears to be political rather than occupational.

It was in an attempt to find out more about The New Criticism (I capitalize it because I am not sure what relationship it bears to the new criticism which I already know something about, the criticism fathered by T. S. Eliot and godfathered by T. E. Hulme) that the question period got under way.

Now it is common for people to be what they are and to do what they do without knowing just what it is they are being (formal reason), just why they are doing what they do (final reason), or just how this gets done (efficient reason). And critics on the whole are no exception to this Law of Voluntary Ignorance. I really believe that Mr. Shapiro is an exception. But I must show in what sense there are exceptions to such laws: To supersede a law is a Christ-like action and such an action was performed by Socrates as regards this one I have just mentioned, in the place of which he set his famous formula. The Law of Self-Knowledge stands near The Law of Love as a thing of an analogous kind, but in order to operate both must be applied, in the case of any individual, with utmost pain and difficulty. Or else the lesser law operates yet for that individual, and citizenship in the lesser state is consequently retained.

Pain and difficulty are fearsome things, and this accounts for the fact that Mr. Shapiro succumbed to fright in the question period following his lecture. I believe it was a lapse to be sure and that Mr. Shapiro actually holds citizenship in the critic's precinct of The State of Philosophy. What Mr. Shapiro was asked to do (and he might have expected it from St. John's people) was to give an exposition of the causes of his habitual activities, poetry and criticism. For those who do not understand the question, it is a meaningless one, and such a person continues in felicity while adding more names to his growing list of fools. To one who understands the question, it is the most frightening one in the world and may send one into a nightmare state of mental paralysis in which the only motion is sideways and in which the only direct answers are precisely those he wishes he were not making. I believe the latter is what happened that Friday night to a man who has done quite enough thinking and enough *πομπις* easily to merit our respect.

I have made the theory outlined above in an attempt to save the phenomena of that late Friday evening. Following are the phenomena I singled out for attention because they seemed to me to be the most marked aberrations from the usual performance of a man of Mr. Shapiro's stature and achievement.

When asked what a New Critic does when faced with a poem, Mr. Shapiro answered by saying that he reads it. Now this is far from being necessarily an evasion, as anyone knows who tries to find out how properly to "read" an art object made with words or other materials. But it turned out to be an evasion for Mr. Shapiro; I call this an aberration for any known champion

of any known criticism. Having failed on the issue of "how's," or efficient causes, Mr. Shapiro toyed a bit with the more slippery-or more thorny, whichever it is--ball of formal causes. People started asking what kind of thing a poem is and what kind of thing the New Criticism of a poem is. They phrased their questions in the less direct way of asking for instance what in Mr. Shapiro's opinion the primary meaning of a linguistically obscure poem might be. His curious answer was that a linguistically obscure poem is a bad poem; now this is a perfectly good answer to some question, but not to the one asked. In the same area of inquiry some people asked what happens to a poem in translation: hasn't (some asked) a satisfactory translation of the *proposition* of a poem done the essential job? or perhaps a translation evoking the *mood* of the poem has done the job? or perhaps one reproducing the *music and rhythm* of the poem has done the job? So far as I recall Mr. Shapiro replied somehow to each case, "No." Asking what a translation does to a poem is one of the best ways to ask what a poem is, and "no" is a fairly useless way of citing a formal cause. It amounts, I say, to another aberration. If he had even gone so far as to add, "because a poem is not simply any one of these things, nor the sum of all of them," it would have been much less sad, although the answer were still in the negative. And something like that is what at the very least any new critic (the ones, without capitals, that I know about) would have done.

There was no separation of the discussion of the ends of poetry from that of the ends of criticism, and so it happened that the final causes of both came to be called for about the same time. It was here that Mr.

Shapiro began to speak of the New Critics as "using" criticism for their own ends—to make some point (presumably about the nature of literature.) This was another shock for me when I recalled one of Eliot's sentences, "No exponent of criticism has, I presume, ever made the preposterous assumption that criticism is an autoeolic activity." At any rate to maintain this strikes me as a highly unsatisfactory way of interesting us in the New Criticism and an even more unsatisfactory way of telling us what that criticism is really for.

It was also here (in the probing of final causes) that Mr. Shapiro came to speak of poems as "beautiful objects," but this required the qualification of good poems as opposed to bad poems. And that was where Mr. Shapiro went into an ivory fox-hole. When he was asked what the criterion for beauty was, and for good and bad, he said that it was a subjective criterion. As in most cases where this word comes up it was here an evasion of the issue. The issue was what is the end of poetry? and on what criteria then do you criticize it. To say that the criteria are subjective is to supply a psychological answer to a metaphysical question: that is, the question fails to be answered at all. When someone asks how you judge a poem bad or good and you say, "It's subjective," what you really mean is, "I won't tell," but you use a psychological term to express the notion that somehow you don't have to tell. That he could have told is shown by the fact that Mr. Shapiro immediately began to remind us that some people agree on their subjective criteria and further that the New Critics more or less generally agreed with Eliot. Nevertheless he did not go on to tell (Eliot could have) what these criteria

were; and when someone still trying to find out asked the obvious question of what it was that Mr. Eliot does or says, Mr. Shapiro gave the astounding answer that for one thing Eliot uses rhetorical devices. This is not astounding because it is false (on the contrary it is markedly true, as witness the "Hamlet" essay or the "Baudelaire"); it is astounding because it is almost the least important thing one can say of any good writer—it is somewhat equivalent to saying that he writes well.

Such responses to crucial questions about the ends of poetry and criticism given by a powerfully influential lecturer and writer of and on poetry and criticism amount, I repeat, to aberrations and therefore need to be accounted for. I have tried to suggest that philosophical yellowness may have been the reason and not philosophical ignorance. Some have suggested to me that Mr. Shapiro was in bad form because the blurring and the tongue-tripping effects of politics (not the science, of course, but the goad) played such a large role in his lecture. Upon this I do not have the facts nor the means to judge.

The most pitiable thing to me is that not only was Mr. Shapiro quite inarticulate about his own position, but his references to the positions of such critics as Eliot and Brooks were far from lucid. (He spoke of Allen Tate's critical exposition of a metaphysical image in MacBeth; in fact the exposition to which he referred is Cleanth Brooks' and in the context of Brooks' exposition, which turns on the organic or holistic nature of poetry considerable light could have been thrown on the problems which were posed.) I say this is pitiable because these men could (as also could Shapiro) be of great value to us at

St. John's in bringing before us what practically never gets treated here at all: not poetry as message or poetry as emotion or poetry as religion or poetry as a kind of understanding which is (rightly) in current disrepute here; but poetry as poetry.

John Logan

CLOUDLAND ANTICIPATED

On two occasions in my life I have come across copies of the *Trivium* — the College's first and only attempt at a monthly publication which appeared almost a decade ago. The first occasion was in the summer of 1943 when, in company with some fellow freshmen, I was exploring the musty delights of the McDowell attic. The second was late last summer when I came across it in a battered suitcase in the closet of a condemned East Side tenement. (As I was the only person who had inhabited that apartment in 9 years, it is fascinating to surmise how it might have gotten there.) In the six year interval between these two occasions much has happened to the College, but the *Trivium* has never reappeared.

However, a constant memory has been desultory talk of publishing the *Trivium* again and this talk still goes on — a kind of sentimental combination of reminiscing and ambition. This article is some more of that talk.

As the situation now stands there are three schools of thought, I have found, on a St. John's monthly publication. I propose to examine these three ways of thinking with some criticism of each.

The first school is what I would term the "back to the Golden Age" school. This group (and I must say it is, fortunately, small) feels that the *Trivium* represented the highest and best form of creative action the College can possibly take in a publication form. It feels that a publication of, by, and for the College, which is what the *Trivium* amounted to, is the desired end. A publication which, by means of poetry, criticism, articles, reviews, etc. is a running, though somewhat extended, commentary on the College, fulfills all of the College's needs for expression, they feel. This view is subject to question, I think, on at least two counts. The first is purely practical: There is not and will probably never be a combination of students and faculty at St. John's capable of sustaining the feverish pace of creativity required for putting out even a moderately good publication of this sort; the *Trivium* died for this reason and that was in the days of the Gods. (This of course also presupposes that from a practical standpoint, a publication, circulation 400, could be managed, for it would certainly have very little interest outside the College.) The second objection to a publication of this standard is the subjectivity about the College which it would engender. The College in the years since the pre-war era has become increasingly aware of the necessity of finding some workable relationship with the world at large. Certainly we have blundered in attempting to find this relationship and will probably continue to do so. The point is, a highly St. John'sy publication will do little towards that end and would seem to be a step in the opposite direction.

The second school of thought on a

St. John's publication might be termed the "literary fellows." This is, I am afraid, a rather large group although I lump together here a whole spectrum of opinion, all subject to attack on roughly the same grounds. The spectrum extends from those who feel that some real good would be served by another publication on the order of the *Sewanee Review*. The *Kenyon*, *The Bard*, etc. etc. reviews. Then there are the less conservative ones who want to out-Partisan the *Partisan Review*. Finally there is a small lunatic fringe of super *avant gardists* for whom the St. John's program is apparently a stepping-stone to Greenwich Village bohemia, and want to incorporate this into a publication.

It hardly seems necessary to say that the community itself would be utterly incapable of meeting the standards of even the worst of the above type of publications, and if we were to rely mainly on outside contributions our function in the review dwindles to merely collecting manuscripts.

The last group of opinion on a St. John's publication is the "Education Review" group. This feeling is strongly represented in the faculty and administration as would be expected. They feel that St. John's main

contribution to the world is in its unique approach to education, and that its primary expression to the outside world should be a running commentary and attack on present trends in education, with a concurrent defense and explication of the Program. Perhaps I paint their view too strongly but I am afraid that a publication too exclusively devoted to the above aims would tend to become an all-faculty production, and hence limited.

These are the existing answers to

the question: "What should a St. John's publication be?" Let us, at the risk of being somewhat ponderous, rephrase the question: "The St. John's program is an idea which has been shining for twelve years; the St. John's community is a group of people who have been exposed to the light of that idea for over a decade; is there anything that we have seen, done, felt, learned or expressed, that deserves or demands expression to the outside world?"

If there is, then we should plan for a review, a quarterly, a publication of some kind. If there is not, then I think that we must admit to ourselves that in the final reckoning St. John's is nothing but an unique, yea interesting, experiment in didactic methodology

I suspect that the answer is in the affirmative, however, and that with some skillful synthesizing of our three schools of thought, plus, perhaps, a look at Mr. Buchanan's recent attempt to find a relationship with the world, we may find the answer.

In a subsequent article I propose to examine this synthesis more closely and in addition, to give an account of some of the practical advantages and disadvantages of a college publication. Meanwhile, perhaps some more talk will be generated.

G. M. Van Sant

Did you know that Marshall Petain once received an Honorary Doctor's Degree from St. John's College???!

COME TO THE BLACK MASQUE!!!!!!!!!!