

# Humanities

## Never Such Innocence Again

*I am saying that there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War—Paul Fussell*

In Victoria's long reign (1837-1901) the British Empire multiplied fourfold through what Kipling hymned as "the savage wars of peace." These were fought by a relatively small army officered from the English governing class—a class serenely convinced of its superiority to the "lower orders" at home and, by extension, to lesser breeds abroad.

The pleasure-loving Edward VII had put his stamp on the succeeding decade, providing, in his funeral, the hugely theatrical spectacle of royal pomp described by Barbara Tuchman as "the old world's dying blaze of splendor." Sober-sided George V assumed the throne, unruffled by wars in the Balkans and a coal strike at home, although sharing his ministers' concern over Irish home rule and the German fleet.

By 1914 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (120,000 square miles, population 45 million) held sway over 12 million square miles of the earth's surface and more than 400 million subjects. A correspondingly pumped-up complacency permeated English life, obscuring the lessons of the Boer War and enervating the army's readiness to counter imperial rivalries then building to a flash point in Europe.

"The rest is history."

And more than history: how has the hellish 1914-18 experience of three million British casualties (over 27 million for all combatants) been assimilated, remembered, mythologized? With what effects on English literature (read literature in English), and on the mind and psyche of our own time, 60 years and a half-dozen wars later?

Such are the daunting questions plumbed by Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford University Press, New York and London). Winner of the 1976 National Book Award in the "arts and letters" category, it is a work of scholarship that has earned both critical success and a wide public sale—at \$13.95 a copy. A paperback edition has now been issued, at \$3.50.

Fussell is a professor of English at Rutgers University, an authority on 18th century literature whose ear-

lier works include *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing* (wherefore his son's name is Sam; a daughter is Rosalind, "from Shakespeare"). His attachment to England, and his own front-line memories of war—"WW II"—beguiled him into the years of research that are evident in his new book. A Humanities Endowment fellowship freed him for the actual writing. The result, in the words of the late Lionel Trilling, is "an original and brilliant piece of cultural history and one of the most deeply moving books I have read in a long time."

*The Great War and Modern Memory* draws on a hoard of English literary and historical materials. These had of course been heavily mined already, suggesting the temerity of an outsider's sifting them again. But Fussell (rhymes with tussle) dug out unsuspected gems, working them into a mosaic of the broadest erudition. If as an American he brought a certain detachment to the task, he was at the same time a parti-

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san—a partisan of inarticulate troops caught up in modern wars, and of those writers who have probed for the truth of their experience. His book is dedicated "To the memory of Technical Sergeant Edward Keith Hudson, ASN36548772, Co. F, 410th Infantry, killed beside me in France, March 15, 1945." Fussell, a platoon leader, age 20, was severely wounded by the same shell-burst.

Early in *The Great War* there is a quotation from Henry James, writing to a friend the day after the British entered the war on August 14, 1914:

The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness . . . is a thing which so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be . . . gradually bettering, that to have to take it now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and *meaning* is too tragic for words.

Words, to be sure, poured forth—in recruiting posters, communiqués, propaganda, censored press reports and letters, diaries, journals. These were followed by the studied reconstructions of historians, and of novelists, poets, and writers of memoirs. But James was right. The victor in the Great War was war itself, soon to break out again in Spain as prelude to the bloodshed of 1939-45 and more recent nightmares.

Imperial War Museum

General Plumer, King George V, and Field Marshal Haig



By war's end, as Hemingway was to put it in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."

"The idea of endless war as an inevitable condition of modern life," Fussell writes, "would seem to have become available to the imagination around 1916," when the British army "fully attained the knowledge of good and evil at the Somme." *The Great War* traces the struggle to express that knowledge in the works of Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen and other mole-like denizens of the Western Front.

The progress is from innocence to irony to disillusion. In the lowered estimate of man, what had been "too tragic" is recalled in Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929) as farcical and preposterous. From this, as Fussell points out, it is a short step to modern apprehensions. For example, there is Durrenmatt's observation that "tragedy presupposes guilt, despair, moderation, lucidity, vision, a sense of responsibility," in the absence of which "comedy alone is suitable to us." And there are the "paranoid melodramas" of Mailer, Heller, and Pynchon where—at last—the full lexicon of the obscene and absurd in war is given vent.

Few shared the Jamesian sense of doom in 1914. In a release from boredom, English crowds cheered the declaration of war with hectic appetite for a quick, brave adventure. (Waterloo had been a mere three days' fighting.) Censorship hid the early defeat at Mons, and no one could believe that the huge stalemate in trenches stretching from the Channel through Belgium and France to the Swiss border—already fixed by the first Christmas—would last four more years. C. E. Montague, in *Disenchantment* (1922), recalls how in 1915

All the air was ringing with assurances. France to be saved, Belgium righted, freedom and civilization to be re-won, a sour, soiled, crooked old world to be rid of bullies and crooks. . . . What a chance! The plain recruit . . . said to himself that for once he had got right in on the ground-floor of a topping good thing . . .

which exactly matched a Rupert Brooke sonnet of those early months:

Now, God be thank'd who has match'd us  
with His hour,  
And caught our youth and waken'd us  
from sleeping . . .

Fussell traces the failed attacks of 1915 which were later stigmatized in the *Official History* as a "useless slaughter of infantry." Volunteers being no longer sufficient to fill the ranks, conscription was introduced at the New Year. What followed (July-November 1916) was "a vast ironic catastrophe" costing 400,000 British casualties: "The Somme affair . . . was the largest engagement fought since the beginnings of civilization."

It was "the end of illusions about breaking the line and sending the cavalry through to end the war." What

Blunden recalled as “a sad scrawl of broken earth and murdered men” was a serious blow to respect for the regular army command, which began the attack with greatly superior forces. Ahead lay Passchendaele (370,000 British casualties) and other bog-battles; the entry of the Americans; the German advance and collapse of 1918.

All this but a half-day's journey from London.

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Reviewing *The Great War*, C. P. Snow reflects that “a world which thought itself civilized had never imagined such killing.” The whole hierarchy of the British class system with its feudal make-believe was deeply shaken. Fussell skillfully shows how Englishmen with literary pretensions, if they served in the trenches, joined in this revulsion and gave it utterance. Most of them were of the privileged class, open to the special ironies of defective leadership and euphemistic communiques in which “brisk fighting” in fact meant 50 percent casualties.

Graves was commissioned on the strength of having gone to one of the “right” schools, a crucible of forced “manhood” (and homoerotic excitation) where he had been miserable. He found himself in a regiment in which an officer had traditionally been expected “to possess a guaranteed independent income that would enable him to play polo and hunt”; and he felt uncomfortable at having a personal valet—an officer's batman—assigned to him. Sassoon in his memoirs remarks that “it is always a distinct asset, when in contact with regular army officers, to be able to converse convincingly about hunting.” Both writers were wounded, and in portraying the carnage around them they show how it fed the growing estrangement between line troops and Staff (and behind the Staff, the press lords, politicians, and profiteers of the Home Front). Thus, Sassoon's “Base Details:

If I were fierce and bald and short of breath,  
I'd live with scarlet Majors at the base  
And speed glum heroes up the line to death . . .

This “versus habit” of the war, Fussell points out, survived to sustain the General Strike of 1926 and the electoral defeat of Churchill and the Tories in 1945, not to mention the long internecine warfare of the intelligentsia which so aroused George Orwell's scorn. It runs through the work of Waugh, Huxley, Isherwood, Burgess, Amis, and the modern Americans. Invocations of God, authority, progress became suspect as “enemy” blandishments.

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*The Great War* reports on “the collision between events and the language available—or thought appropriate—to describe them.” Besides the public jargon used to celebrate “progress,” there was the high diction and imagery of the Authorized Version, and of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Bunyan, William Morris, Hardy, Housman, and other celebrants of the English model world. The romance of the Grail, the Slough of Despond, the arcadian resources of the Oxford Book of Verse (larks, nightingales, flowers), the homoerotic doting on “lads”—such was the literary

baggage brought to the trenches.

Compared to the imagined heroics, sufferings, and consolations of this canon, the brute realities of the war proved all-but-indescribable. (The idiom of “The Waste Land” was not yet at hand.) The “presence and authority” of this literature was, however, inescapable, and Fussell shows how writers drew upon it through inversions, understatement, and caricature—in a word, through irony, satiric or demonic. Irony-assisted recall, intensified by the dishonesties of official history, was the mode of reconstructed first-hand testimony. Actual experience, even in memoirs, was fictionally retouched in the interests of coherence and drama, as in the comic stage-effects achieved by Graves. There was nevertheless a feeling of accountability to “the facts,” and the greater innovative fictions of the era were to come from others who were not at the front—Eliot, Joyce, Lawrence, Pound, Yeats. The war affected these writers, too, for they heard in it a death-rattle of civilization.

Paul Fussell has likened *The Great War and Modern Memory* to a military cemetery—“a memorial to the men in whose imaginations I have lived for many years.” So living (with what Graves called the poison of war memories) sometimes excited feelings of “depression and terror.” The book is made from that ex-

The Central London Recruiting Depot, August 1914

Culver Pictures



perience, playing against "what I knew in my bones."

There are the eerie premonitions: of mass graves in Hardy's poems, written on the eve of war, and "the lovely lads are dead and rotten" of Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). There is Wilfred Owen (born in Shropshire) sublimating a keenness to "lads," writing of "the truth untold, the pity of war, the pity war distilled." And Owen the officer: "For 14 hours yesterday I was at work—teaching Christ to lift his cross by the numbers, and how to adjust his crown. . . . I see to it that he is dumb, and stands at attention before his accusers. With a piece of silver I buy him every day, and with maps I make him familiar with the topography of Golgotha."

There is Sassoon—the brave, scarred "Mad Jack"—saved by Graves from court-martial for anti-war declarations, sent to a mental sanitarium in Scotland from which both he and Owen return to the Front. Winston Churchill harangues him: "War is the normal occupation of man—war, and gardening!"

There is Graves, once officially reported "Died of Wounds" but now home again, "still mentally organized for war," shells bursting on his bed at midnight, conscious of a "difficulty in telling the truth," swearing "never to be under anyone's orders for the rest of my life."

There is C. E. Montague, sickened by post-Armistice hate-mongers, reviling the non-combatant British general who hoped "there is going to be no rot about not kicking a man when he's down," a sentiment leading to "the meanest of treaties" at Versailles.

There is H. M. Tomlinson's ritual of military memory: "I still loaf into my past, to the Old Front Line, where now there is only silence and thistles. I like it; it is a phase of my lunacy."

And classics of the English sporting spirit, like Captain Neville presenting a football to each of his platoons, with a prize to go to the one which first kicked it up to the German trenches in the Somme attack; Captain Neville was killed in the ensuing slaughter but two of the footballs are preserved in English museums.

To which add "the finest legend of the war," concerning a battalion or regiment of "half-crazed deserters from all the armies . . . harbored underground . . . living in amity and emerging at night to pillage corpses and gather food and drink." A legend whose power lay in projecting "the universal feeling of shame about abandoning the wounded" in No Man's Land, and the "universal fantasy—the Huckleberry Finn day-dream—of flagrant disobedience to authority."

No wonder, Fussell is saying, that the Great War's invasion of the mind is still with us, late and soon, the "modal grandfather" of modern war literature and other adversary proceedings. The passage of the Great War memoirists from pre-war freedom to wartime bondage, he holds, is one with the passage of modern writing "from the low mimetic of the plausible and the social to the ironic of the outrageous, the ridiculous, and the murderous."

It is a stirring, original (*and* scholarly) book. Its view

is sharply focused on the Western Front and the British experience, not attempting a report on allies and enemies or events elsewhere in the war. One London critic, John Terraine, worried that it "echoes all the ancient insular blindness of a sheltered race"; but Terraine is notably given to chastising English writers for ignoring (e.g.) the war's importance to the Belgians and the several nations which owe their independence to it. The principal locus chosen by Fussell—6,000 miles of trenches in the British sector—affords an ample examination of a grotesque epic among wars, disclosing its deep lodgments in the imagination of English and American writers, and in modern consciousness itself.

*The New Yorker* discovered a "last irony" in *The Great War and Modern Memory*: that the soldiers of 1914-18 "were heroes as great as the cast of the 'Iliad,' and yet their words destroyed the concept of themselves, of all warriors, and of war itself as heroic." True, as Beckett's Gogo might say. The newer concepts are of total war, of men diminished further by instruments of perfect annihilation.

Paul Fussell doesn't get into this. But the logic of his book calls up a suitable image:

Waiting for Godot, we encounter Dr. Strangelove.

—Patrick O'Sheel



## I Had to Write About War...

Paul Fussell, author of *The Great War and Modern Memory*, remembers from childhood dressing up in the U.S. Army uniform and tin hat his father had worn in France in 1918. He was born in Pasadena and traces his family via Philadelphia to the West of England, circa 1830. Coming back from the Second War, he took degrees at Pomona and Harvard, embarked on teaching, and has been at Rutgers since 1955. The campus riots of the 1960s tempted him to "quit the whole trade," but he hung on. With his wife Betty, also a scholar, he lives at Princeton and admits to the avocations of compulsive reading, social life—and cooking.

A poised, lanky, pipe-smoking individual, Fussell has a quizzical air about him that suggests what the *Saturday Review* saw in his book—"a literary intelligence more than academic." This traces to his long stay in military hospitals in 1945, haunted by memories of "dead German boys, their faces white as marble, clutching machine pistols and rifles in their 17-year-old hands . . . I knew I had to write something about war."

So while teaching and writing about English literature's golden age, he read the Great War poets and memoirists. Getting down to it, he spent the summer of 1971 at the Imperial War Museum and prowled some of the old battlefields, dotted with 2,500 British cemeteries. The NEH grant supported the final scholarly work and the writing.

Had this been a struggle? Fussell laughs: "No—it took time, but I'm a writer of books the way some people are bus conductors." He has two new books in train. The first will look into British travel writing of the 1920s and 1930s—Waugh, Lawrence, Greene, Auden, Huxley and others having gone out to examine a shaken Empire. The subject appeals to Fussell because it invokes "a degree of elegy for something that's gone." And because "by the late '30's travel books are mutating into war books again." They thus offer a linkage to his second project, "an ambitious cultural history of the Second War."

High praise and sales (30,000 copies to date) of *The Great War* have had corresponding effects: Rutgers created an endowed chair for its author; and the book made money. The timing, "coming out soon after the Vietnam war," was a help, Fussell thinks. "And I've had letters from hundreds of doctors, lawyers, amateur scholars who evidently read everything on the First War and modern European history."

He counts this a success for the Humanities Endowment, too, in reaching people outside the academic setting. As he told his NBA awards audience, literary criticism should "show everyone, not just our fellow professionals, why literature is indispensable." Its rightful concern is not with "transforming literary texts into



mathematical formulas, but with reading the humanity back into them."

*The Great War* combines literary history and criticism, with a background of military/political history that is perforce somewhat cursory: "I read 40 of the best, but there are 400,000 volumes on the subject." A suitable irony attended the first of the book's three major prizes, an award by the National Book Critics Circle. Huddled in judgment on his tour de force, the Circle telephoned Fussell "to make certain I wasn't British." (Soon after, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.) The National Book Award came next, then Phi Beta Kappa's Emerson prize.

Provocatively, Fussell calls his book "an act of autobiography cleverly disguised as scholarship." Moreover, he said in a Rutgers speech, "to a degree all works of scholarship, certainly in the humanities and social sciences, are like acts of autobiography"—for example, the books of Veblen, Matthiessen, and Frye. That is to say, scholarship and research worth the name are not truly dispassionate, but on the contrary reflect choices and obsessions arising from a need for personal fulfillment through an often-arduous quest. Discipline then applies the tests of truth.

Another Fussell opinion, from an interview.

On the "decline of English": "I think there are more Americans now who can use the language resourcefully and wittily, if often incorrectly, than ever before. The number who can speak and write elegantly has no doubt declined. We tend to proletarianize language, we let more people in on it. Let's accept that. I do regret the disappearance of literary magazines like the old *Scribner's* and when the *Atlantic* first put a picture on its cover I thought it was the beginning of the end. As for my students, there are as many who are good with the language as ever."



## Cézanne Exhibition in New York

"Cézanne, The Late Work" is the title of a major exhibition being shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City from October 7, 1977, through January 3, 1978, and at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston from January 26 to March 19, 1978.

Funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a gift from the IBM Corporation, the exhibition emphasizes the last decade of Paul Cézanne's life, ending with his death in 1906. Cézanne's aesthetic, cultural and historical significance can be illustrated by Matisse's tribute, "He was the father of us all." He had a strong influence on Fauvism, Cubism, and every other art movement since the late nineteenth century.

The exhibition has been organized by William Rubin, Director of Painting and Sculpture of the Museum of Modern Art; John Rewald, Professor of Art History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; and Theodore Reff, Professor of Art History at Columbia University. It contains more than 60 oil paintings, 55 watercolors, and six lithographs painstakingly selected from public and private collections and museums. Several are on loan from The Hermitage in Leningrad and have never been seen in this country before. The Endowment's interest in the exhibition is to enable the public to view Cézanne's work in its place in art history. The paintings are organized around the persistent motifs of his late work. Regardless of medium, different subjects are grouped together, such as portraits of his gardener Vallier, Mt. St. Victoire, the Château Noir, and the Bibémus Quarry. For increased understanding of the exhibition, there are Orientation Galleries with slides, photographs, and printed documentary texts. There is also a major publication, *Cézanne, The Late Work*, with essays contributed by noted scholars relating Cézanne's influence on twentieth-century art, and defining his work in relation to the development of French philosophical and psychological thought. The exhibition serves as a focus for a series of Cézanne symposia, two series of public lectures, and lecture tours.

# POPULAR CULTURE: MIRROR OF AMERICAN LIFE

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Popular Culture: What Manner of Mirror?

- How is the larger fabric of American life shaped by popular culture?  
**David Manning White**—course coordinator, Professor of Mass Communications, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Story-Tellers and Story-Sellers: The Makers of Popular Culture  
**Herbert Gans**—Professor of Sociology, Columbia University
- Popular Culture: Who Pays?  
**George Gerbner**—Dean, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania
- America's Popular Culture: Growth and Expansion  
**Ray Browne**—Director, Center for Popular Culture, Bowling Green State University (Ohio)

### Popular Culture Themes and American Institutions

- Hollywood: The Dream Factory  
**Robert Sklar**—Professor of Cinema and Chairman of the Department of Cinema Studies, New York University
- Television: The Pervasive Medium  
**Robert Sklar**
- Popular Culture and Popular Music: Changing Dreams  
**Nat Hentoff**—Staff writer for *The New Yorker*, columnist for *The Village Voice*
- Popular Music: Sounds of the People  
**Nat Hentoff**
- Sports: The Pleasure of the Flesh  
**Robert Lipsyte**—A columnist for the *New York Post*
- Sports: Instant Legends and Super-Heroes  
**Robert Lipsyte**

### Popular Culture and Social Change

- Politics and Popular Culture  
**Andrew Hacker**—Professor of Government, Queens College, City University of New York
- Popular Culture: Minorities and the Media  
**Nathan I. Huggins**—Professor of History, Columbia University
- Popular Culture: Mirror of Women Moving  
**Betty Friedan**—Founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW)
- Popular Culture and American Life-Styles  
**Bennett Berger**—Professor of Sociology, University of California, San Diego

### The Future of Popular Culture in America

- The Death of the Mass Media?  
**Alvin Toffler**—Futurist; author of *Future Shock* and *The Culture Consumers*

"Popular Culture: Mirror of American Life" is the topic for the next in the series of Courses by Newspaper to begin in January of 1978.

The course considers the process by which we choose our contemporary life styles and leisure pursuits. The subjects for discussion include popular culture as big business and arbiter of change, the themes of popular culture that recur in movies, sports, and politics, and the heritage and future of today's popular culture.

Under the direction of David Manning White, professor of Mass Communications, Virginia Commonwealth University, a group of thoughtful observers will map the contours and impact of today's popular culture. They will encourage their readers to explore the effects of such aspects of popular culture as contemporary music, Hollywood films, television; they will consider the influence of popular culture on the society as a whole, the economic impact of such industries as magazines, television, records, and motion pictures, America's passion for sports, and how today's trends grew from yesterday's popular culture, and what current trends portend for leisure pursuits at the turn of the century.

Among the well-known authors presenting essays to be printed in a nationwide group of almost 500 newspapers are Nat Hentoff, on the themes and appeal of contemporary music, Betty Friedan on the cultural effects of popular culture on the changing role of women, Nathan Huggins on the effect of mass media on the struggle for equality, and futurist Alvin Toffler on expectations for the year 2000.

Courses by Newspaper, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities for the past five years, has been created and administered by University Extension, University of California, San Diego, under the direction of Dr. George A. Colburn. Articles in essay form are offered without charge to newspapers from the largest cities to the smallest rural areas, with annual circulation of 16 million. With two or three readers per family, these articles may reach as many as 50 million individuals.

Not only are the articles printed in newspapers for the information and enlightenment of their subscribers, they also serve—along with a *Reader*, *Study Guide* and audio tapes—as the basis for credit or non-credit courses in participating nearby colleges and universities. Nearly 500 newspapers and 300 colleges are enrolled for this joint offering to the American public. Those colleges and newspapers interested in becoming part of this growing movement may find out more about signing up through: COURSES BY NEWSPAPER, University of California, San Diego, Q-056, La Jolla, California 92093, telephone (714) 452-3405.

Enhancing the value of the articles is a *Source Book* for the use of community groups planning their own programs based on the series appearing in their local newspapers. Educational institutions will use it for planning class meetings with students enrolled in the course. There is a provision for aged, shut-in, immobile, or isolated students to earn credit from the Division of Independent Study, University of California.

The *Reader* (\$6.25), the *Study Guide* (\$2.95), and the *Source Book* (\$2.50) are available through Publisher's Inc., 243 12th Street, Drawer P, Del Mar, California 92014.

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges is conducting an NEH-funded national demonstration program to make CBN available to community groups through community forums. Six new junior and community colleges will be added to the original pilot group of six. One of them, a regional model in Western Michigan, is a consortium of two- and four-year institutions with community college leadership. Another is a statewide model in Washington involving 20 community colleges.

The colleges will form community advisory groups, with community co-sponsors, to present forums on a bi-weekly basis. Activities such as debates, role-playing, panel discussions, films, and book reviews will use the CBN course materials, with discussion following each program. Radio stations will air the CBN audio tapes; TV stations will telecast the forums. For more information, write or call: Diane U. Eisenberg, Project Director, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1 DuPont Circle, N.W., Suite 410, Washington, D.C. 20036, telephone (202) 293-7050.

## DUFFEY SWEARING-IN

Joseph D. Duffey was sworn in as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities by Vice President Walter Mondale in a ceremony October 18 at the Executive Office Building auditorium in Washington. Distinguished guests included Rosalynn Carter, Joan Mondale, and Anne Wexler, Mrs. Duffey in private life. Mr. Duffey departed from tradition by asking four leading humanists to speak in his behalf after the oath-taking, soliciting their ideas on future directions for the Humanities Endowment. Speakers were Isabel Charles, dean of Notre Dame's College of Arts and Letters; Robert Coles, Harvard research psychiatrist and author of Pulitzer prize-winning *Children of Crisis*; M. Carl Holman, poet, professor and president of the National Urban Coalition; and Alexander Heard, chancellor of Vanderbilt University.

# Late Antique and Early Christian Art at Metropolitan



Emperor Gratian, Constantinople, about 375, the George Ortiz Collection, Geneva

Agate vase, late 4th century, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore



Ivory plaque depicting an elk hunt in an arena, Rome, first half of the 5th century, the Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool, England

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Bridging the gap between pagan classical culture and Christian culture is a major exhibition which opened at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City on November 19 and will continue until February 12, 1978. Called *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, the display of nearly 500 works of art has been loaned by 100 public and private collections and was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, with matching funds contributed by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and an additional grant from the Robert Wood Johnson, Jr., Charitable Trust.

To protect the objects in transit from their home collections to the Metropolitan and back, the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities has granted indemnity under the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Act.

The transition from pagan classical to Christian culture in the Roman Empire was a long, complex process. In the four centuries covered by this exhibition the traditions of the classical world were transformed by social and political upheaval, by constant warfare against invaders, and by the rise and development of Christianity. The art of the period expresses this diversity of influences by which the artists, using images from pagan and imperial Rome, imbued them with spirituality and abstraction of forms leading to an individual and innovative style.

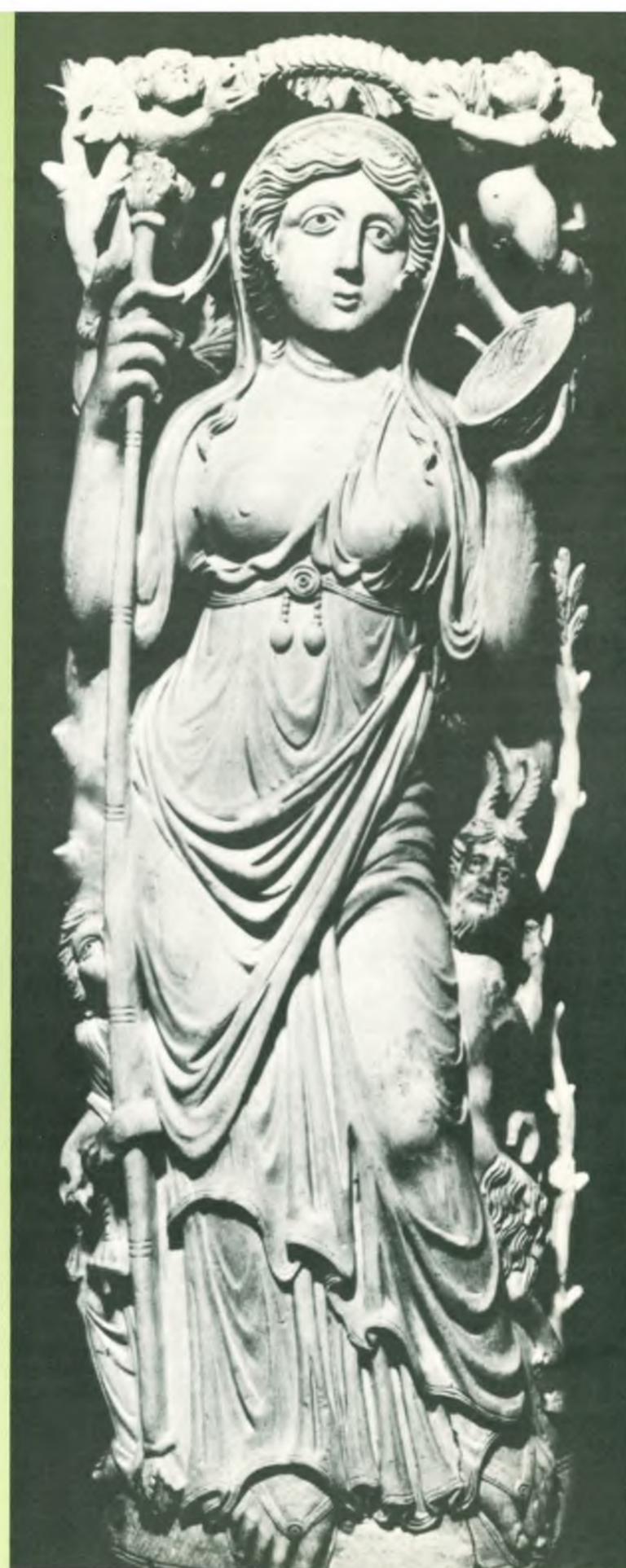
Among the public and private collections that have sent works of outstanding quality are the British Museum, the Louvre, the Vatican, and the museums of Berlin, Vienna and Jerusalem. The works of art range from magnificent sculptures, ivory carvings, illustrated manuscripts, and textiles to luxurious liturgical and domestic objects and exquisite jewelry. They are arranged by patronage and subject matter in order to emphasize the close alliance of political and historical as well as esthetic factors which guided the production of works of art in this period. The exhibition is organized into five major sections: the Imperial, Classical, Secular, Jewish, and Christian Realms.

Kurt Weitzmann, Professor Emeritus of Princeton University and Consultative Curator at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, is organizing the exhibition with the aid of Margaret Frazer, Curator of Medieval Art, and Jack L. Schrader, Curator in Chief of The Cloisters.

*All photos lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

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Ariadne in ivory, Egypt, 6th century,





## Vico—An Italian Renaissance

*But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never failing light of truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind.*

—Giambattista Vico (1688-1744)

After languishing in relative obscurity for more than two centuries, Giambattista Vico, an early 18th century Neapolitan philosopher, has suddenly become a center of interest to an extraordinary variety of scholars. Spearhead of the new movement is Dr. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, an Italian Professor of Economics turned philosopher, whose opposition to fascism led him to emigrate to the United States. In 1943, he started working for the Voice of America where he became editor of a "Radio University" series for Italy. "I dealt with every topic under the sun," he recalled, "and I had to find some unity of knowledge, how it could be organized." He discovered the key in Vico, who became his hero, mentor and patron saint.

Tagliacozzo shares with Vico a passionate Italian



temperament, causing one scholar to remark, "Were it not for the bullying of Dr. Tagliacozzo, I fancy that most of the appropriate academics would have his book on their shelves as 'one of those things I will read one day.'" The book he was referring to was Vico's magnum opus, *La Scienza Nuova*, "The New Science."

Tagliacozzo was the recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to organize a six-day international conference on "Giambattista Vico and Contemporary Thought in the Humanities and Social Sciences" in celebration of the 250th anniversary of this masterpiece. The conference took place last year in association with the Casa Italiana of Columbia University and the Graduate Center of the New School for Social Research, both of which offered their facilities. Already, the 1976 Winter and Autumn issues of *Social Research* contain more than 500 pages of contributions from the 30 principal participants. Among them are such notables as political scientist Sir Isaiah Berlin, linguist Noam Chomsky, anthropologist Sir Edmund Leach, sociologist Talcott Parsons, psychologist Rollo May, philosophers Max Fisch and Stephen Toulmin, Professor of Art Meyer Shapiro, and historian Hayden White.

The presence of a large contingent of social scientists among the traditional humanists is explained by Vico's original thesis that the social sciences belong with the humanities in a single structure, since they are all concerned with the explanation of how men create cultures and civilizations. But Vico goes further and advances the startling idea that man can achieve truer knowledge in the humanities than in the natural sciences. Against Descartes he argues that "we can know for certain only that which we have made or created." This criticism underlying all his work he called the principle of *verum factum*—"the true (*verum*) and the made (*factum*) are convertible." On the other hand, Vico is surprised that so many men have bent their energies "to the study of the world of nature which, since God made it, He alone knows." This kind of switch from the traditional view is one of the things that excites the academic world.

But how does the truer knowledge accessible to man come to him? Vico's answer: Through the inward faculty of imagination—in particular, fantasy, which creates myth, poetry and language and a kind of recol-

lective knowledge which, as one scholar described it, "discovers itself as the original form of the human spirit." These are the *universali fantastici*, the "imaginative universals," which Vico discovered in mythology—called by him "the master-key" of his new science.

Even though mythology was so important to Vico as a foundation of his epistemology, he remained a devout Catholic and regarded his work as a kind of "rational civil theology of divine providence." As with so many original, innovative and intuitive geniuses, the archaic, poetic ambiguity of his language led one scholar to the conclusion that "Vico is all things to all men." But he also noted that "Vico sometimes seems to have the knack of getting it right even when he appears to get it wrong."

Scholars have often commented upon the obscurity of Vico's baroque literary style and this perhaps may have been one of the reasons that he has been neglected. Nevertheless, he strongly impressed such thinkers as Michelet, Coleridge, Marx, Sorel, Croce, Collingwood, Carrirer, and deeply influenced some of them. Joyce, who wove Vico into the texture of *Finnegans Wake*, declared: "My imagination grows when I read Vico as it doesn't when I read Freud or Jung." Recently, in a letter to Dr. Tagliacozzo, Lewis Mumford wrote: "I have been familiar with Vico's work for fifty years, and regard myself as one of his true continuators, confirming and expanding on the basis of fresh knowledge many of his profound intuitions. . . . My own masters, Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford, placed a high value on Vico's pioneering work." This latest conference, as well as several previous symposia organized by Tagliacozzo, bear witness to the fact that philosophers, psychologists, historians, sociologists, educators, among others, can profit greatly from Vico's insights.

How much more gold can be extracted from this rich vein? Giorgio Tagliacozzo thinks we have only scratched the surface and sees Vico as a figure not only ahead of his time, but in many respects ahead of our own.

—Roger Lyons

As an indication of the influence of the conference sponsored by the Endowment and the publication of papers resulting from the conference in *Social Research*, an international conference celebrating the 250th anniversary of the original appearance, in Venice, of Giambattista Vico's *Autobiography* will be held in Venice in August 1978.

## Every Hour a Stranger

"What all my work shall be, I don't know that either, every hour being a stranger to you until you live it."

One would not expect an American author of three novels, three books of folklore and anthropology, fifty short stories and essays, and an autobiography to be buried in an unmarked grave, especially if that author had been recognized in her lifetime and had died as recently as 1960. The three novels of Zora Neale

Hurston (1901-60) have been reissued since her death, but the author's body lies in a segregated paupers' burial area in Fort Pierce, Florida. The exact location is unknown.

When Robert Hemenway of the University of Kentucky set out in 1970 to study this prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, he came to discover that only a fraction of her memorabilia was to be found in libraries and organized collections. Curators, apparently, were more interested in the papers of white writers than in those of black ones. Hemenway countered by using the funds from his Younger Humanist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities to set forth in a camper on a 30,000-mile sojourn in which he covered a dozen libraries, hundreds of personal interviews, public records offices, attics, and old files. He discovered the fact of Hurston's second marriage (1939-43), which was unknown to some of her own family, and added immeasurably to the material on her life by his imaginative search for the facts and elements of her existence.

Student of anthropologist Franz Boas, friend of Langston Hughes, trained folklorist, successful theatrical producer and performer, drawing-room celebrity, and active participant in the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston spent her last years ghostwriting a vanity autobiography, writing pieces for the *American Legion Magazine*, and working as a live-in maid and cook. Yet during most of her life she wrote steadily and movingly of her own black experience, incorporating into her works much of the knowledge and wisdom gleaned from her lifelong study of black folklore.

Talented and extroverted, Hurston attracted the attention of the black intelligentsia and its white supporters from the moment in 1925 when she arrived in New York. Black publisher Charles S. Johnson had included one of her stories in *Opportunity*. "Drenched

Zora Neale Hurston (1901-60), Harlem Renaissance novelist and folklorist



in *Light*" used material from Hurston's childhood in Eatonville, Florida, a matrix of experiences which was to dominate most of her fiction and much of her work in folklore. Under the protective tutelage of the Johnsons, Hurston met people rapidly and was soon regarded as an important young figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Her flair for drawing-room showmanship won her friends and contacts while she continued to write. Novelist Fannie Hurst engaged her as a secretary.

At Barnard College she resumed the education she had begun at Howard University, and under Franz Boas she received the training which would permit her to become a significant black folklorist over the next decade. It would also set up a delicate but persistent tension between the novelist's imagination and the scholar's accuracy which was characteristic of all her works. Her first collection of folk materials, *Mules and Men* (1935), is strung together in semi-novelized fashion, with Hurston herself as the main character.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) is her most notable novel. Showing an autobiographical influence, it tells of Janie Crawford who is raised to "take a stand on high ground" in order to avoid the subservient life to which black women were sometimes relegated. Over a series of marriages, Janie rejects wealth linked to domination by men in favor of a young laborer who respects her as an equal. Hurston, herself, had two

brief marriages, neither of which was permitted to interfere with her personal independence.

Demonstrating a fine flair for captivating titles, some of Zora Neale Hurston's other writings were *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), *Tell My Horse* (1938), *Moses Man of the Mountain* (1939), *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), and *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948). Whether publishing folklore, autobiography, or novel—and usually a combination of all three—Hurston was absorbed in "the problem of womanhood in general and black womanhood in particular—the loves, cares, frustrations and joys that attend the woman's experience, complicate it, and endow it with such rich possibility."

□ □ □

As Hemenway's mileage on his camper increased, so did his collection of Hurston facts and anecdotes until his projected book of literary criticism grew, with the aid of an NEH research grant, into a full literary biography published by the University of Illinois Press.

Zora Neale Hurston's books, articles, and stories have been preserved and are being reissued—the University of Illinois Press will bring out a new edition of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* next year). The approximate area of her grave has been marked by a stone. But it is the record of her life, perhaps her most interesting work, which Hemenway has done so much to bring back into the public domain.

—Hank Johnson

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