

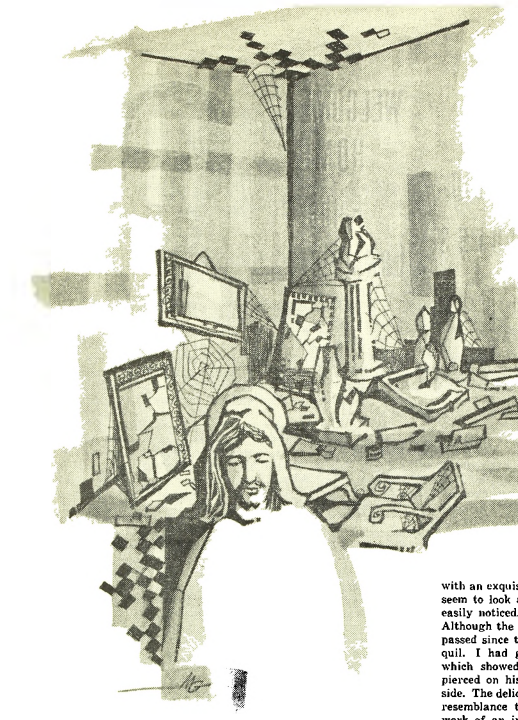
Drama In Everyday Life...

THE WHITE CHRIST

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with an exquisitely transparent pale blue veil, the Christ would seem to look at me. The little crack on its shoulder was not easily noticed. His face had an expression of divine piety. Although the eyelids drooped softly, the agony seemed to have passed since the countenance looked serene and divinely tranquil. I had gazed and gazed upon his two stretched arms which showed the sacred manly muscles. The nails cruelly pierced on his wrists were there and the open wound at his side. The delicate bones on his ribs were done in a most realistic resemblance to the actual crucified Christ. It was truly a work of an inspired sculptor, an accomplished artist.

Who could have thought of the crucifix were it not for the Centennial project undergone by the fathers, when for more than two years it was lying down under a pile of rubbish and the dust and dirt were heavy and thick around it. It was in a most pitiful condition up there at the topmost part of a huge cabinet in the research room of the department of science. As technician and preparator of fossil materials, I used to work in that room before I was transferred to another department. I happened to see that crucifix when the janitor dumped discarded things on it. I inquired from him who owned it and why it was placed in such condition. "Don't know. Can't understand it myself why it's there." he said.

Everytime someone took something from the cabinet and the dirty crucifix was dragged and pushed I felt pain in my hear. It was only escayola and wood yet the figure of Christ was important to me for I was taught to revere things like that ever since I was a small girl. Six months passed still I couldn't forget the poor white Christ at the top of the cabinet. Incidentally, it just occurred that one of the Fathers, a history professor talked to me about old wooden saints and antiques for a religious museum a Centennial project now on its way

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TWICE the Science Department Head saw me get in and out of the research room in so a stealthy manner that she thought I was a thief or something. Perhaps hoping to find me guilty of any criminal act, she called me, and investigated me. I was "clean". Nevertheless, she scolded me, because — as she said — my behavior irritated her.

"You have no business there and for goodness sake, don't get there again," she said. "Understand?"

I said to myself, what a terrible woman! "Yes ma'am, yes ma'am."

All of a sudden she changed and calmed down, and — to my surprise — even apologized for the words she said. I saw that she was a little bulky at the middle; and I understood the cause of her temper.

We parted in good terms.

But I was a bit sad, for I was prohibited to enter the research room anymore. The fact was I always felt myself summoned into it.

There was something in it that attracted me. It was a sculptured white Christ.

Nailed on a polished oak wood cross, reverently covered

YOUNG POET: RAGE, RAGE, RAGE . . .

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boogie-woogie by learning the fundamental steps, acquiring an inner grace and probably a little talent. And after we have mastered these fundamentals, we move slowly toward the variations and that is, learning rock n'roll, the twist and the new dance craze, the jerk. And applying these to poetry, the young poet starts with language, acquires an inner ear for melody and rhythm, and develops the proper usage of form, figurative language, symbols ideas, effects, imagery, etc. And after learning these, the young poet can hope to descend into poetical variations as the narrative poetry and prose poetry. In this manner, his anguish and rage, instead of becoming a cry of a fool in the wilderness, will have proper direction and he can hope to arrive at something definite, at least, the poetic sensibility.

In explaining the development of a young poet, W. H. Auden, a professor of poetry himself, has this to say: "If the young man, after being asked why he writes poetry, answers, 'I have important things I want to say,' then he is not a poet. If he answers, 'I like hanging around words listening to what they say,' then maybe he is going to be a poet."

Then Auden adds: "In the first stages of his development, before he has found his distinctive style, the poet is, as it were, engaged to language and, like any young man who is courting, it is right and proper that he should play the chivalrous servant, carry parcels, submit to tests and humiliations, wait hours at street corners, and defer to his beloved's slightest whims, but once he has proved his love and been accepted, then it is another matter. Once he is married, he must be master in his own house and be responsible for their relationship."

In his explanation, it is apparent that Auden compares the writing poet to a young lover courting. And

like any lover, there is the rage to love. Perhaps this is the rage of the young poet: his search for identity. And once he has found his lover and is married to her, he must learn to control her and become her master. Otherwise, if he would become a henpecked husband, all his rage would turn to ashes and his poetry would become as meaningless as a fallen leaf. And as Thomas warned him before: "Do not go gentle into that good night! Rage, Rage, Rage against the dying of light!"

But in the ultimate conclusion, however, as George Barker would have it, "All Poems are Elegies and soon all the poets would have died." And he further declares: "That moment of truth when God with the sword in his hand profiles in front of the poet to deal him the kill of a poem is the moment when the poet sees home to the heart of things: the inspiration which is the assassination. . . . To be so closely caught up in the teeth of things that they kill you, no matter how **infinitely kill you**, is, truly, to be a poet: and to be a poet in fact it is additionally necessary that you should possess the tongues and instruments with which to record a series of deaths." But beneath these deaths rise the light and the poem weaving the universe in the blues of the world. And Dylan Thomas, in his craft of sullen art, decries the yell of poetry from the poets' dead hearts:

"Not for the proud man apart
From the raging moon I write
On these spendrift pages
Not for the towering dead
With their nightingales and psalms
But for the lovers, their arms
Round the griefs of the ages,
Who pay no praise or wages
Nor heed my craft or art.

THE WHITE CHRIST

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to completion. I helped him secure a 300-year-old tabernacle owned by one of my mothers' kins. He was greatly impressed. We talked more about old wooden saints. Suddenly I struck upon an idea. "Father", I said, "the best thing to do in order to secure those old wooden saint images is to exchange them with new ones. Most people would not part with their old things easily for sentimental reasons. They regard them highly and consider them as heirlooms, but if we exchange them with new ones or some of your discarded images, Father, for sure, we can persuade them," I said, and I was filled with zest and enthusiasm.

"Quite a good idea," he said.

"Oh Father", I cried. "There's one image I know. It's the right one we need. In the research room in the science department, on top of one of those big cabinets, there is a crucifix about three or four feet high. The image is still intact but maybe there's some slight damage since it was dumped there, but someone we don't know who. I'm sure the natives will like it. And you must know Father how they value things coming from religious people like you. In not less than two seconds, Father! . . . studied the floor. Then he said: "Come and show me this crucifix right now."

We went down to the next floor and found ourselves talking to a young faculty member. We asked for the head of the department. The head of the department was not in the office at that moment so we managed to let him open the door after

asking his permission to get something from the research room.

The priest wasted no time in climbing the cabinet to get the white Christ. He saw the miserable condition and gave instruction to the faculty member that I could get it anytime. . . .

I looked at the bruised knees and the cuts on his legs, his precious blood stained the escayola white sculptured work. My eyes were misty. It looked real — the image. His precious blood no longer dried dark brown but red and fresh. How could this thing be discarded and left to lay under a pile of rubbish and allowed to accumulate dirt.

I recalled the letter sent to me from an esteemed artist and also a member of the faculty. The letter was deeply hurting at the beginning and finally explained how the crucifix was left to him by a priest who was out of the country. According to him the crucifix was to be painted and would undergo some repair and that he was bringing with him a sculptor the next day to fix the broken parts. He was making it clear that I had to return the crucifix immediately to the place where I got it.

Days passed. The crucifix was retrieved but it never went back to its dirty place on top of the cabinet where the smell of badly preserved marine organisms and cadavers of cats gave off a most repugnant odor.

I felt greatly relieved.