

times present

Now gather up seashell,
And write down brave words.
Your prayers are unanswered,
Your idols absurd.
Procol Harum

Jesus Christ! It's almost time for another Christmas and what can I say that glitters with the sparkle of originality?

Absolutely nothing. What I am going to say has been interated time upon time before-and, no doubt, this will continue to be the case. Yet I am 'The Gateway's' spirit of Christmas Present; it is my duty to fill your minds with tidings of great gloom. Sorry-but bull shit is still bull shit-even if I do risk charges of 'humbuggery'. By seeking to grapple with the abomination that has become Christmas perhaps I can clarify, for myself, at least, some of the peculiar phenomena that make up the Event and thus arrive at a position to understand; a pivotal point for action; a state of grace.

Firstly, for all intents and purposes, the factor of Christ in present-day Christmas celebrations has lost its content of meaning. Recently I asked members of a high school class if any of them celebrate Christmas primarily for its significance as a Christian event. Not one of them said he or she did. In fact, for most of them, it has been a day when relatives congregate, exchange gifts and gorge themselves on turkey and dressing. Of course, one could say that Christian elements still pervade Christmas; I mean, the whole gift-giving routine is in emulation of the Magi, is it not? And doesn't the tribal gathering aspect of Christmas hearken back to early Christian communities? Yes, yes...but these rituals no longer possess their original emotional power. They are vacuous, redundant exercises carried on long after the initial mind-boggling event: indeed, it's hard to feel for the baby Jesus two thousand years later. Certainly I can indulge in an intellectual appreciation of the West's Christian heritage and of Christ the Man. I can also go bananas over Frederick Handel's 'Messiah'. Yet they do not shake me to the very depths of my being. I am not transformed. In fact, I am just as moved by Lenin as I am by Christ; I am equally moved by the Grateful Dead as I am by Handel.

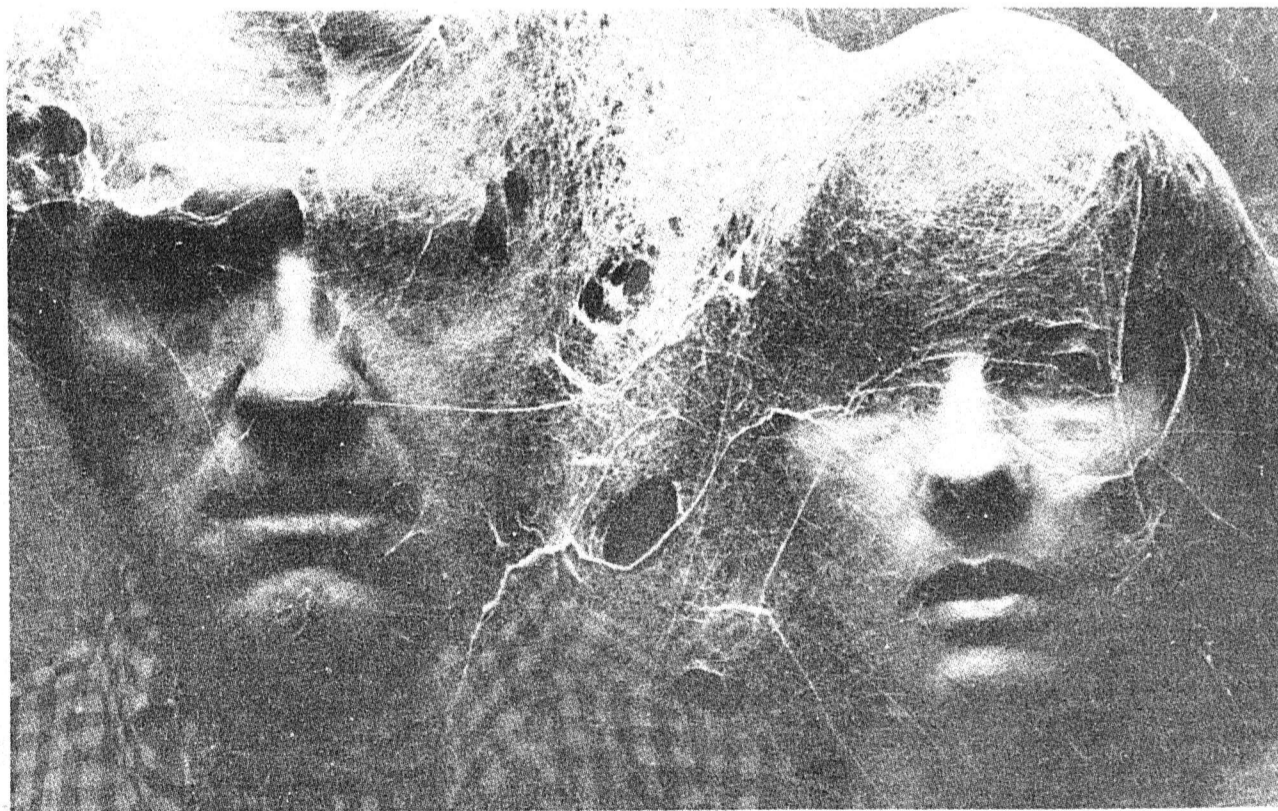
Those people who wish to see the 'Christ' re-emphasized in 'Christmas' are objectively reactionary at this point in history. I am afraid they will have to wait for the pendulum to swing to a continuum of simplicity and restraint. Christmas as it is presently constituted, is a thoroughly secularized phenomenon. It is representative of capitalist-consumer society gone amok. I do not think I need to go into the insidiousness of showing G.I. Joe commercials to children while they are watching television's Bugs Bunny-or the sycophantic coddling of thwarted libidinal needs and insatiable socialized greed by the department stores. Despite Canada's colonial relationship to the United States this nation is part of the world's birthday cake. And while we engage in aberrant, perverse overconsumption in December, the rest of the globe, the wretched of the earth, burn with anger and cry from hunger. It is important to realize that our gross material affluence is a direct consequence of our exploitation of what economist Paul Sweezy terms 'the periphery'. But it's not gonna take it: as Tom Hayden writes in 'Trial': 'The change toward which we are inevitably moving is one in which the white world yields power and resources to an insistent humanity. There is no escape...from this dynamic of world confrontation.'

In addition, the so-called charity which is evinced by the 'haves' towards the 'have-nots' at Christmas time is utterly nauseating. We give them one day of dubious happiness followed by 364 of misery, deprivation and desperation. If



painting by Bob Carmichael

TIMES FUTURE



North American society ever does decide to eliminate poverty then it had better realize that this goal will not be achieved by the gesture of invoking an investigatory commission (and then sweeping its findings under the rug.) No, we must first realize that extensive readjustments in the entire polity will be required to provide lasting solutions.

But what's the use? I am sure that most of you will get a nice batch of functionally obsolescent presents this year and I suppose Christmas does provide a nice break in the cold monotony of winter. Yet, from my perspective, the whole fandango is rapidly approaching the point of the cosmically inconsequential.

Oh people look among you
It's there your hope must lie
There's a sea bird above you
gliding in one place
Like Jesus in the sky...

Jackson Browne

Jim Adams