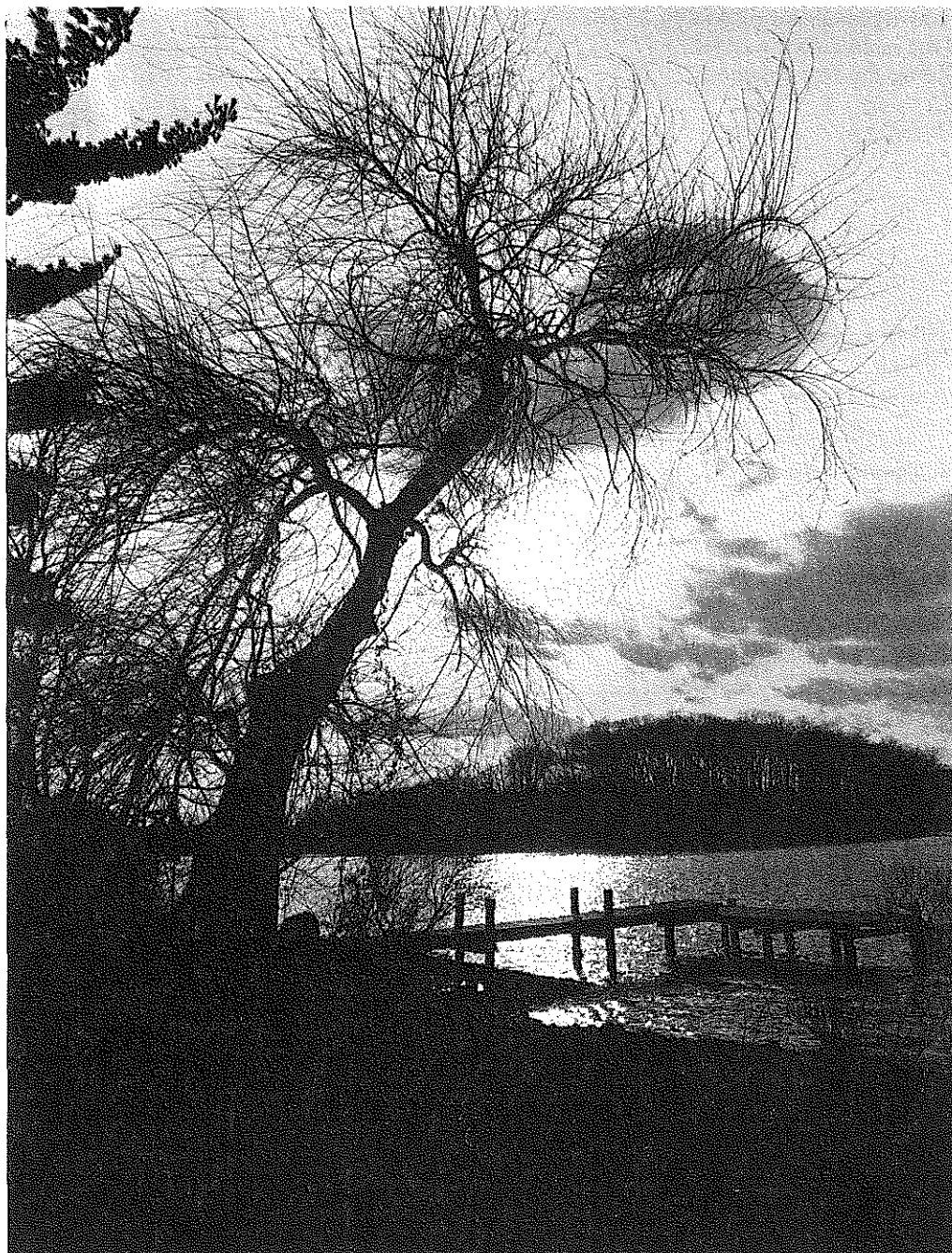


THE COLLEGE

St. John's College
Annapolis, Maryland
Santa Fe, New Mexico



April, 1977

ON THE COVER:

Sunset on College Creek. The pier in the foreground was replaced during the fall of 1976, but the replacement was destroyed by ice during the now-infamous Winter of 1977.

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Translation of Poetry:

Some notes on theory and practice

by Jonathan Griffin

Even computers can have trouble with translation. Some years back, a British computer was set the task of translating an English phrase into Russian and then translating its own Russian phrase into English. The phrase fed in was: "Out of sight, out of mind." The phrase that came out was: "Invisible idiot."

In theory, translation is impossible; in practice we get down to it and do it. Mainly because there is a need for it. Translations of scientific papers, or again of diplomatic documents, are regularly required, and in those fields the problems are relatively few and usually manageable. But what concerns us here is the need for translations of literature. In the present time, probably more than in any earlier one, people want—and feel they need—to read the best that has been written in other countries than their own, and most of us cannot hope to learn many languages; so the demand for translations is now huge, and they ought to be good ones. Any translation of a fine book or poem will involve problems different in kind from those presented by scientific papers or even (except rarely) by diplomatic documents—problems like the one which made that British computer good for a laugh: elusive ones, which it takes a human being, and sometimes a poet, to pin down, let alone manage. I think most people would say that translating poetry is the extreme case, though there are competitors: for instance, the translating of farces.

Jonathan Griffin is an English poet, playwright, and translator. This text is substantially the same as that of a lecture given at St. John's College, Annapolis, on February 22, 1974. Some of the thoughts in it appeared, in their first form, in *The Dancer in Chains*, *The Journals of Pierre Menard*, London, vol. 4, which consisted of essays and translations by Jonathan Griffin. Some of the Rimbaud translations which follow the lecture were read by Mr. Griffin at a second visit to St. John's, Annapolis, on February 25, 1977. They are to be included in his forthcoming book *Rimbaud: All the First-Rate Poems*. It will be a bilingual edition.

Academic people, just because of the high standard they spend their lives on upholding, tend to dismiss the translation of poetry as impossible: many of them maintain that it should not be attempted, while others say that this is at least true of all metrical poems, let alone of any rhymed one. Well, is it true? We all know Robert Frost's judgement, that poetry is the part of a poem that will remain untranslated; du Bellay said the same thing four centuries earlier. But facts, facts: some very fine poems have been translated into real poems closely similar to them. When I was still young I stumbled on a vivid example of this. I came across, in the *Oxford Book of Italian Verse*, a poem that thrilled me, a sonnet on the ruins of Rome, by Baldassare Castiglione; and a little later, reading for the first time du Bellay's *Ruines de Rome*, I suddenly felt: "But I know this!"—it was the same sonnet, in French. Later (I have to admit) I found the same sonnet in English by Edmund Spenser. Each of the three is a genuine, singing poem in its own language: they are in the same exacting metrical form: they are the same poem in content, though they sound different—as they must and should, being written in languages whose sonorities differ. There is another well-known instance, the translation of St. John of the Cross into French by a seventeenth-century French monk, Father Cyprien. Valéry, when he discovered it, was so excited that he wrote:

"This ex-*Inspecteur des Finances* or high-ranking Treasury official, turned Carmelite, was a consummate artist in the fine art of writing verse in the pure state . . . The translation being extremely faithful, nothing was left to the versifier except the very narrow freedom jealously allowed him by our severe language and the strictness of our prosody. It was a case of having to dance when loaded with chains . . . His originality is to admit none, and yet he makes a kind of masterpiece by producing poems

whose substance is not his, and whose every word is prescribed by a given text."

These two cases, of course, contain exceptional factors: in the first the three poets shared the same culture, that of Renaissance Europe, to which their theme, the ruins of Rome, was central; and in the second the two poets had a common commitment to the same vision of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, in face of this evidence, it cannot be maintained simply that poetry is untranslatable.

The translatable part of poetry is, I think, larger than many people suppose. It includes, for instance, those parts of a poem that affect us in the way in which, say, Utrillo's paintings taught people, early in this century, to see Paris. But to the obvious elements of this individual vision—to the simple images, the word-pictures—I would add the myths, many of the symbols, most of the metaphors. (Shakespeare is much more translatable than Racine because his writing is so rich in metaphors that *something* is bound to come over). Indeed Mr. George Steiner contends that "arguments against verse translation are arguments against all translation." That judgement—and indeed the whole of his superb introduction to a Penguin Books anthology called *Poem into Poem*—is worth careful thought, for it restores a sense of proportion. So do a couple of lines from a fairly recent poem by Adrienne Rich:

"When they read this poem of mine, they are translators. Every existence speaks a language of its own."

The fact remains: to create an equivalent poem in another language—and that is the question—takes a lot of doing, and many translators fall short of this. Ought poetry therefore to be translated into prose? Robert Lowell has said flatly: "Most poetic translations come to grief and are less enjoyable than modest prose translations." But surely the truth is that prose paraphrases of poems are wonderful things to have by you when—and, with few exceptions, only when—you can also read the original poems. Not all that long ago, for instance, the Penguin Mallarmé brought me nearer to Mallarmé than I had ever been before: it gives the poems in French with plain English prose cribs at the bottom of each page, as well as an excellent introduction. I find, too, that Mr. Burnshaw's *The Poem Itself* has plenty to teach me. But if the original poem is out of reach, only a verse translation will convey it as a poem. With long narrative poems the case for a prose version may at first seem strong; but experience appears to qualify it. To me, for years, when I wanted to read the *Divina Commedia*, the

Temple edition—which gives Dante on the left-hand pages and on the right a line-by-line prose crib, plus a few useful notes at the end of each canto—has seemed (since I do know some Italian) a pretty well perfect arrangement; so it did to Ezra Pound, until Lawrence Binyon's translation of the *Inferno* came into his hands. Pound says in a letter:

"Binyon sheds more light on Dante than any translation I have ever seen. Almost more than any translation sheds on *any* original. Gavin Douglas and Golding create something glorious and different from the originals. I strongly suggest use of Binyon in place of Temple edition for introducing student to the *Commedia*."

Similarly with Homer: I myself have still just about enough Greek to be able to read some of the original, rather slowly, and so I have been very grateful for the straight prose translations by Rieu and by T.E. Lawrence, which enabled me to read the *Odyssey* quickly, like a novel; but now there is Robert Fitzgerald's translation of the *Odyssey*. It has everything: it is scholarly and it is poetry: sustained, with plenty of the surprises of beauty, but also easy, carrying one through like a novel (and so making questionable the often repeated contention that epic is a dead genre). I shall go back to the original whenever I have time, but from now on probably never to a prose version.

So then it is worthwhile to translate a poem into a poem. But how? What is required?

The first requirement, to my mind, is the one stated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti: that "a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one." A daunting dictum. What it implies is that, for a translator of poems, *priority number one is ambition*. The surest way to betray the original poem is to offer, as a translation, dead words set out as verse, an academically correct non-poem. After (perhaps) a learned and appetising introduction, the reader turns eagerly to the specimens of the poetry so highly and convincingly praised, but soon turns away in disgust, thinking: "Is that all?" It would have been better to offer a plain prose crib, which (as I have said) can be a great help to readers who can at least partly follow the original; those who cannot will need a translation that is a poem, a real one, both singing and faithful. So the translator of a poem must be ambitious. Its author was ambitious—he was a poet.

The second requirement is fidelity to the content of the original. I put it firmly second, but I also believe that in most

cases it ought to be a good second: in many, neck and neck. And by "the content" I mean not just the prose sense of the original, though this is very important, but its deeper meanings and often elusive overtones.

Is it really possible to convey all this and still achieve a poem? To reconcile such faithfulness with the freedom which the translator-poet is likely often to need? Cecil Day Lewis said simply:

"No translation can do everything; you concentrate upon reproducing one element in the original, and hope that some of the others will follow."

And Mr. Jackson Matthews:

"Deciding to translate a poem is, at the start, a matter of perceiving what the translator hopes to be faithful to."

I myself have found it to be rarely as simple as that. You partly discover what you *can* be faithful to, *and* what there is to be faithful to, as you work. Cecil Day Lewis expressed my own repeated experience when he said:

"If I fully understood the meaning of a poem, I should feel no need to translate it, any more than a poet would want to compose a poem out of experience which he altogether comprehended."

As I see it, a translator of a poem ought to go on working until he has been faithful to more of it than he expected.

There may well be a good many cases—though fewer than is generally thought—where great freedom is essential if the translation is to become a poem. Largely because of the genius of Pound, an old genre has come into new favour. Dryden called it "imitation" (as distinct from "translation"), and condemned it; we welcome it frankly. Taking the original poem as a basis, you write a quite new poem which, by being outwardly very different, may restore through shock the effect the original had on its early hearers or readers. I personally think "imitation" is a misleading name for something that is trying to be so little like its original (though of course I see how its use arose); what I would like to call such a poem is "a take-off." The pejorative sense of the word is an accurate warning; but the other sense also can be true—such a creative mistranslation can really take off, become air-borne and soar. Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius* does just that. So does Christopher Logue's *Patrocleia*, a very free adaptation of Homer's *Iliad*, book 16. An "imitation", a "take-off", a "creative mistranslation" demands extremely high imagination and craftsmanship, and can deserve them. If I ever achieve one, I

shall be a happy man. And yet—

And yet close translation of poetry into poetry must go on being attempted. Because it is wanted. It is what is chiefly wanted: there are more and more readers who, if not given something very near what the foreign poet actually said and the shape he said it in, will be either disappointed or deceived. At the same time, in very many cases (including some that at first seem unlikely), a close translation into a real poem is what will serve the source-poem best: will serve it much better than a free adaptation could. *We should never lightly assume that infidelity is necessary.* To me, personally, this is a strong conviction, based on early experiences of my own and often confirmed. When I was very young, the music of Bach, Couperin, Purcell, and earlier composers was played on instruments it was not written for: piano instead of harpsichord or clavichord; great galumphing orchestras; violins, not viols; etc. Suddenly I came across Arnold Dolmetsch. A pioneer, still at that time ridiculed as a crank (though understood by Pound and Yeats among others), he devoted his life to finding out what instruments the music was written for, collecting or making them, learning and then teaching the authentic style of playing them, what the composer's expression-marks and abbreviations meant. The chief thing he taught me was that scholarship applied to an art is not dry and dulling, but revealing and life-giving: that Bach, for instance, had devised not only marvellous structures but ravishing sounds; that there was a wealth of fiery music lying neglected and despised because it didn't sound well when condescendingly falsified.

Then I heard the pianist Artur Schnabel and, soon afterwards, came to know him. At that time most people played Beethoven's piano sonatas, for instance, from heavily edited texts, sometimes inaccurate and always overlaid with the editor's expression-marks—which quite often contradicted the composer's. Schnabel went back to the manuscripts and in every way tried to find and do what the composer had written and intended. And yet—this is the point—this strict scholarship did not prevent his performances from being the most passionate, tender and surprising that I have ever heard. He was faithful, he was logical—but he was always spontaneous. You knew you were hearing the music itself, the truth—and this although, or because, he never played it exactly the same way twice. He said to me once, about Schubert's great piano sonata in B flat, that when he sat down at the piano to play it he had in mind thirty different ways of playing it; and he

meant thirty ways, each of which would fit all Schubert's indications of what he wanted. The principle that interpretation should be both scholarly and passionate is by now accepted generally among musicians. I am convinced that it has its applications to other arts. Certainly to poetic translation. A translation of a poem is likely to become a more vitally beautiful poem in itself if the translator has "wrestled closely with the original" (Day Lewis again), if (in Valéry's phrase) he has "danced when loaded with chains"—has tried hard to find out and carry out what the composer intended.

Translation—the process of doing it—is a dialectic. At the start, or soon after, it will seem quite impossible to render everything in the poem, essential to decide which bits to be faithful to; there will be a ruthless, perhaps snatched-at, decision on priorities. But then, very early on, an assertion of freedom, the start of a lively alternation of freedoms and revisions. And, personally, I find that very often, as the dialectic proceeds, revision coincides with a perception that to make my version more nearly true to the original as a whole will involve making it faithful to details which I had at first renounced rendering.

Is it possible to be faithful to the whole content of the original and not be faithful to its form? As I have stated already, more and more people require a poem-translation to give them something very near what the original poet actually said *and the shape he said it in*. But obviously the verbal music of the translation must sound very different from the original, simply because the two languages differ greatly. (The contrast between the sounds of English and of French, for instance, is particularly deep in spite of the amount of Latin they have in common). And yet between the musical forms of the two poems—the translation and the original—there ought, in my view, to be a close organic connection, not direct but at one remove: through the content. A poem is a work made of words, in which a content and a form (or verbal music) have become one—they have indeed grown together and shaped each other. A translation of a French poem into English should be an English poem with the same content as the French one, a poem having the English form (or music) which fits that content. So the two poems will sound clearly different, and yet—masked by the obvious contrasts between

the languages—there is bound to be some resemblance. To take a crude instance, a translation of a sonnet into prose is unlikely to be very satisfying.

Then must translations of metrical poems be metrical, and of rhymed poems rhymed? It depends—chiefly on how vital the metre and rhyme-scheme are to the essence of the original poem. The chances are that, if this is a true poem, the metre and rhyme are indeed part of its essence: otherwise the poet would not have used them. So the translator must not take facile refuge in the present prevalence of unrhymed, non-metrical poetry and in the profound reasons there are for this. But equally, he must not sacrifice to conventional scansion and rhymes either faithfulness or naturalness. Here, again, a firm decision on priorities: in translating a rhymed poem, rhyme is likely to be necessary: necessary, but nearly always secondary. I have come to think that the right solution is, at least in principle, quite simple: to take a fresh look at rhyme—to shake free from conventional rhyming and to rhyme by ear. The rhymes established by convention can still be used, but in addition to, and in meaningful contrasts with, all sorts of other rhymes, half-rhymes, broken or inverted rhymes, which the ear thinks up. These can be infinitely various, beautiful, sometimes surprising, sometimes elusive. And this much wider choice of rhyme-words gives the translator the free play which he must have if his poem is to sing and be faithful and natural.

What can happen then is that the discipline of metre and rhyme, instead of distorting the translation, shapes it closer to the content, and makes it more alive. How? By the closer questioning which it provokes, by intensifying the dialectic. You have to decide, early on, which are the lines or phrases that absolutely must be brought across straight. More often than not, these are the places where the original poem becomes either poignantly simple—perhaps a hair's breadth from banality—or raw. Then you have the job of building the rest so that the pattern fits round these. And the effort keeps forcing you away from facile word-for-word rendering (which, however, must not be ruled out, but used frankly when it is the best), to find some free equivalent for the content, and so to ask yourself more searchingly what the content is. Translating is one of the closest ways of reading.

OPHÉLIE

I

Sur l'onde calme et noire où dorment les étoiles
La blanche Ophélia flotte comme un grand lys,
Flotte très lentement, couchée en ses longs voiles...
—On entend dans les bois lointains des hallalis.

Voici plus de mille ans que la triste Ophélie
Passe, fantôme blanc, sur le long fleuve noir.
Voici plus de mille ans que sa douce folie
Murmure sa romance à la brise du soir.

Le vent baise ses seins et déploie en corolle
Ses grands voiles bercés mollement par les eaux;
Les saules frissonnants pleurent sur son épaule,
Sur son grand front rêveur s'inclinent les roseaux.

Les nénuphars froissés soupirent autour d'elle;
Elle éveille parfois, dans un aune qui dort,
Quelque nid, d'où s'échappe un petit frisson d'aile;
—Un chant mystérieux tombe des astres d'or.

II

O pâle Ophélia! belle comme la neige!
Oui, tu mourus, enfant, par un fleuve emporté!
—C'est que les vents tombant des grands monts de
T'avaient parlé tout bas de l'âpre liberté; [Norwège

C'est qu'un souffle, tordant ta grande chevelure,
A ton esprit rêveur portait d'étranges bruits;
Que ton cœur écoutait le chant de la Nature
Dans les plaintes de l'arbre et les soupirs des nuits;

C'est que la voix des mers folles, immense râle,
Brisait ton sein d'enfant, trop humain et trop doux;
C'est qu'un matin d'avril, un beau cavalier pâle,
Un pauvre fou, s'assit muet à tes genoux!

Ciel! Amour! Liberté! Quel rêve, ô pauvre Folle!
Tu te fondais à lui comme une neige au feu;
Tes grandes visions étranglaient ta parole
—Et l'Infini terrible effara ton œil bleu!

III

—Et le Poète dit qu'aux rayons des étoiles
Tu viens chercher, la nuit, les fleurs que tu cueillis,
Et qu'il a vu sur l'eau, couchée en ses longs voiles,
La blanche Ophélia flotter, comme un grand lys.

OPHELIA

I

Upon the calm black waters where the stars are sleeping
The white Ophelia like a great lily floats,
Onward very slowly floats, reclined lapped in
Her long veils . . .—From the distant woods you can
hear morts.

More than a thousand years it is, the white
Ghost, sad Ophelia, has haunted the long black stream;
More than a thousand years it is, her sweet
Madness has murmured to the evening breeze its dream.

The wind kisses her breasts, fans out to a corolla
Her great veils which, softly, the ripples dandle;
The willows, shivering, are weeping on her shoulder,
Over her great dreaming forehead the rushes bend.

The waterlilies that she brushes past sigh round her;
She wakens sometimes, in a sleeping alder,
A nest, from which escapes a single small wing-shudder
—A mystery song falls from the stars, from their gold.

II

O pale Ophelia, beautiful as snow!
Yes, you died, still a child, abducted by a stream.
—It's that the swooping winds from Norway's peaks had low
Voices for you, which spoke and spoke of bitter freedom.

It's that a gust, twisting your great glory of hair,
Brought to your dreaming spirit strange rumours; that your
heart

Was always listening to the song of Nature, there
In the plaint of a tree and the sighs of each night.

It's that the vast death-rattle voice of the mad seas
Was shattering your child breast—too human, too gentle;
It's that, one April morning, a handsome pallid noble,
A poor mad man, sat down in silence at your knees.

Heaven! Love! Liberty! What a dream, poor Mad Maid!
Into it, a snowflake in fire, you'd melt away:
Those great visions of yours choked the speech in you dead
—And dread Infinity gripped your blue eye!

III

And so, the Poet tells, by the rays of the stars
You come seeking, at night, the flowers you did cull—
He's seen, too, reclined in her long veils on the water's
Darkness, the white Ophelia float like a great lily.

The College

LES EFFARÉS

Noirs dans la neige et dans la brume,
Au grand soupirail qui s'allume,
Leurs culs en rond,

A genoux, cinq petits—misère!—
Regardent le boulanger faire
Le lourd pain blond.

Ils voient le fort bras blanc qui tourne
La pâte grise et qui l'enfourne
Dans un trou clair.

Ils écoutent le bon pain cuire.
Le boulanger au gras sourire
Chante un vieil air.

Ils sont blottis, pas un ne bouge,
Au souffle du soupirail rouge
Chaud comme un sein.

Quand pour quelque médianoche,
Plein de dorures de brioche
On sort le pain,

Quand, sous les poutres enfumées,
Changent les croûtes parfumées,
Et les grillons,

Quand ce trou chaud souffle la vie,
Ils ont leur âme si ravie
Sous leurs haillons,

Ils se ressentent si bien vivre,
Les pauvres Jésus pleins de givre,
Qu'ils sont là, tous,

Collant leurs petits museaux roses
Au treillage, chantant des choses
Entre les trous,

Mais bien bas,—comme une prière . . .
Replier vers ces lumières
Du ciel rouvert,

—Si fort, qu'ils crèvent leur culotte
—Et que leur chemise tremblote
Au vent d'hiver . . .

THE SPELL-BOUND

Black in the snow and in the haze,
Kneeling near the big oven's blaze,
With rounded rumps,

Five children—O poverty!—stare
At the baker making fair
Bread from dull lumps . . .

They see the strong white arm kneading
The grey paste and with it feeding
A hole of glare.

They hear good bread cooking within.
The baker, with a shiny grin,
Sings an old air.

They're huddled—not one of them moves—
To the breath of the red oven,
Warm like a breast.

And when in brioche forms—to embellish
Some midnight feast—out, sizzling, yellow,
Is brought the bread,

When, below beams with the soot clinging,
All the sweet-smelling crusts are singing,
The crickets too,

And life puffs from that warm hole,
Under their rags they have their soul
So ravished through,

They feel themselves so well alive,
Poor little Christs full of hoarfrost
—That there they are, all

Sticking their small pink snouts right in
To the barrier trellis, singing things
Through its holes,

But very softly—like a prayer . . .
Bent over towards that glare
Of heaven unclosed,

—So hard over, they split their breeches,
—And from the slit the white cloth twitches
To winter's blast.

ROMAN

I

On n'est pas sérieux, quand on a dix-sept ans.
—Un beau soir, foin des bocks et de la limonade,
Des cafés tapageurs aux lustres éclatants!
—On va sous les tilleuls verts de la promenade.

Les tilleuls sentent bon dans les bons soirs de juin!
L'air est parfois si doux, qu'on ferme la paupière;
Le vent chargé de bruits,—la ville n'est pas loin,—
A des parfums de vigne et des parfums de bière...

II

—Voilà qu'on aperçoit un tout petit chiffon
D'azur sombre, encadré d'une petite branche,
Piqué d'une mauvaise étoile, qui se fond
Avec de doux frissons, petite et toute blanche...

Nuit de juin! Dix-sept ans!—On se laisse griser.
La sève est du champagne et vous monte à la tête...
On divague; on se sent aux lèvres un baiser
Qui palpète là, comme une petite bête...

III

Le cœur fou Robinsonne à travers les romans,
—Lorsque, dans la clarté d'un pâle réverbère,
Passe une demoiselle aux petits airs charmants,
Sous l'ombre du faux-col effrayant de son père...

Et, comme elle vous trouve immensément naïf
Tout en faisant trotter ses petites bottines,
Elle se tourne, alerte et d'un mouvement vif...
—Sur vos lèvres alors meurent les cavatines...

IV

Vous êtes amoureux. Loué jusqu'au mois d'août.
Vous êtes amoureux.—Vos sonnets La font rire.
Tous vos amis s'en vont, vous êtes mauvais goût.
—Puis l'adorée, un soir, a daigné vous écrire!...

—Ce soir-là,...—vous rentrez aux cafés éclatants,
Vous demandez des bocks ou de la limonade...
—On n'est pas sérieux, quand on a dix-sept ans
Et qu'on a des tilleuls verts sur la promenade.

ROMANCE

I

One's not serious, when one's seventeen.
—One fine evening, to hell with bocks and lemonade,
cafés and clustered lights, dazzle and din!
—You walk under the linden green of the promenade.

Lindens smell good in the good nightfalls of June!
Sometimes the air's so soft, you close your eyes;
Loaded with noises—it's not far, the town—
There are vine scents and beer scents in the breeze . . .

II

Now you notice a quite small scrap of sombre
Azure stuff that a small branch hems in tight,
Pricked by a sinister star, which with soft shivers
Dissolves—it is a small one, perfect white . . .

June night! Seventeen!—You let joy take its course.
The sap's champagne, goes to your head, the mere smell...
You wander; you feel on your lips a kiss
Which quivers there, like a small animal.

III

The daft heart goes Crusoeing through romances
—When, in a pale street-lamp's space of light colour,
A girl passes, with enchanting demureness,
In the shade of her father's grim stiff collar . . .

And, since you strike her as immensely naïf,
While she still, with her small boots trotting, trips
Along, she turns, alert (one movement, lively) . . .
Then cavatinas die upon your lips . . .

IV

You are in love. Till the month of August, taken.
You are in love.—Your sonnets make her laugh.
All your friends go away. You're out, forsaken.
—Then, one evening, she's deigned to write—she, your love!

That evening . . . —to dazzling cafés you return,
Order bock after bock or lemonade . . .
One's not serious, when one's seventeen
And has green lime-trees on the promenade.

The College

LE MAL

Tandis que les crachats rouges de la mitraille
Sifflent tout le jour par l'infini du ciel bleu;
Qu'écarlates ou verts, près du Roi qui les raille,
Croulent les bataillons en masse dans le feu;

Tandis qu'une folie épouvantable broie
Et fait de cent milliers d'hommes un tas fumant;
—Pauvres morts! dans l'été, dans l'herbe, dans ta joie,
Nature! ô toi qui fis ces hommes saintement!...—

—Il est un Dieu, qui rit aux nappes damassées
Des autels, à l'encens, aux grands calices d'or;
Qui dans le bercement des hosannah s'endort,

Et se réveille, quand des mères, ramassées
Dans l'angoisse, et pleurant sous leur vieux bonnet noir,
Lui donnent un gros sou lié dans leur mouchoir!

EVIL

While the red gobbets the quick-firers fling
Whistle all day through infinite sky azure;
While, green or scarlet, near their taunting king,
The bunched battalions crumble in the fire;

While an appalling folly is grinding, making
A hundred thousand men a smoking hillock;
—Poor dead! in summer, in grass, in your mocking,
Nature! yes, yours, who did make these men holily!...

—There is a God, laughs at the damascened
Altar-cloths, incense, big chalices of gold;
Who drops off, in the hosannahs' rocking lulled,

And wakes up, when a few mothers, convened
In anguish, weeping under their old black caps,
Give him a coin their screwed handkerchief wraps.

MA BOHÈME

(Fantaisie)

Je m'en allais, les poings dans mes poches crevées;
Mon paletot aussi devenait idéal;
J'allais sous le ciel, Muse! et j'étais ton féal;
Oh! là là! que d'amours splendides j'ai rêvées!

Mon unique culotte avait un large trou.
—Petit Poucet rêveur, j'égrenais dans ma course
Des rimes. Mon auberge était à la Grande-Ourse.
—Mes étoiles au ciel avaient un doux frou-frou.

Et je les écoutais, assis au bord des routes,
Ces bons soirs de septembre où je sentais des gouttes
De rosée à mon front, comme un vin de vigueur;

Où, rimant au milieu des ombres fantastiques,
Comme des lyres, je tirais les élastiques
De mes souliers blessés, un pied près de mon cœur!

MY GIPSY LIFE

(Fantasy)

Off I'd go, with my fists into killed pockets crammed;
My overcoat, too, was getting to be ideal;
I'd go beneath the sky, Muse, and I was your vassal;
Oh! la! la! the gorgeous loves I've dreamed!

My only breeches had a huge hole in them.
—A dreaming Tom Thumb, all the way I'd still
Be sowing rhymes. The Great Bear was my hostel.
From my stars in the sky a silky swishing came.

And to them I, sitting at road-sides, listened,
Those good September evenings when, like a lusty
Wine, I could feel drops of dew on my forehead;

When, rhyming in the midst of the fantastic
Shadows, I plucked my wounded shoes' elastics
Like lyre-strings, close to my heart one foot.

LES POÈTES DE SEPT ANS

Et la Mère, fermant le livre du devoir,
S'en allait satisfaite et très fière, sans voir,
Dans les yeux bleus et sous le front plein d'éminences
L'âme de son enfant livrée aux répugnances.

Tout le jour il suait d'obéissance; très
Intelligent; pourtant des tics noirs, quelques traits
Semblaient prouver en lui d'âcres hypocrisies!
Dans l'ombre des couloirs aux tentures moisies,
En passant il tirait la langue, les deux poings
A l'aine, et dans ses yeux fermés voyait des points.
Une porte s'ouvrait sur le soir : à la lampe
On le voyait, là-haut, qui râlait sur la rampe,
Sous un golfe de jour pendant du toit. L'été
Surtout, vaincu, stupide, il était entêté
A se renfermer dans la fraîcheur des latrines :
Il pensait là, tranquille et livrant ses narines.

Quand, lavé des odeurs du jour, le jardinet
Derrière la maison, en hiver, s'illunait,
Gisant au pied d'un mur, enterré dans la marme
Et pour des visions écrasant son œil darne,
Il écoutait grouiller les galeux espaliers.
Pitié! Ces enfants seuls étaient ses familiers
Qui, chétifs, fronts nus, œil déteignant sur la joue,
Cachant de maigres doigts jaunes et noirs de boue
Sous des habits puant la foire et tout vieillots,
Conversaient avec la douceur des idiots!
Et si, l'ayant surpris à des pitiés immondes,
Sa mère s'effrayait; les tendresses, profondes,
De l'enfant se jetaient sur cet étonnement.
C'était bon. Elle avait le bleu regard,—qui ment!

A sept ans, il faisait des romans sur la vie
Du grand désert, où luit la Liberté ravie,
Forêts, soleils, rives, savanes!—Il s'aidait
De journaux illustrés où, rouge, il regardait
Des Espagnoles rire et des Italiennes.
Quand venait, l'œil brun, folle, en robes d'indiennes,
—Huit ans,—la fille des ouvriers d'à côté,
La petite brutale, et qu'elle avait sauté,
Dans un coin, sur son dos, en secouant ses tresses,
Et qu'il était sous elle, il lui mordait les fesses,
Car elle ne portait jamais de pantalons;
—Et, par elle meurtri des poings et des talons,
Remportait les saveurs de sa peau dans sa chambre.

POETS AT SEVEN

And the Mother, closing the lesson book,
Went, satisfied, very proud, didn't look,
In his blue eyes and under the forehead crammed with
bulges,

At her child's soul given over to revulsions.

All day long he would sweat obedience; *Très*
Intelligent; and yet black twitches, certain traits
Seemed proof of deep-down sour hypocrisies.
In the gloom of the mildew-papered passages,
Sliding by, he'd put out his tongue, keep knotted at his
Groin his two fists, and in his shut eyes he'd see dots.
A door opened on evening: the lit lamp
Would show, upstairs, him on the bannisters, champing
Below a gulf of light hung from the roof. Most
Of all in summer, crushed, stupefied, he'd insist
On bolting himself into the john's cool:
There he'd think in peace, giving his nostrils their fill.

When, in winter, the back garden, cleaned
Of the smells of the day, became illuned,
He—bedded out in marl at the foot of a wall
And, to get visions, squeezing a dauzy eyeball—
Listened to the spreadeagled mangy trees' swarm noise.
Pity! his only real friends were those
Children who—stunted, barehead, eye over cheek leaking,
Hiding thin yellow fingers, muddied black, in
Antiquated clothes stinking of ordure—
Would gossip with the gentleness of idiots.
And if his mother took fright when she found him
Out at unclean pities, the child's profound
Tendernesses would rush to that surprise.
It was good. She had the blue gaze,—which lies!

At seven he spun novels about life in the great
Desert where ravished Liberty shines bright,
Forests, seas, shores, savannahs.—He used as aid
Illustrated journals where, red, he stared
At Spanish girls smiling; also Italianesses.
When there came, brown-eyed, crazy, in printed calico
dresses
—She was eight—the child of the workpeople next door,
A small she-devil and, catching him in a corner,
She had jumped on his back and shaken her long hair
Down, and he was under her, he'd bite hard
At her buttocks (she was never wearing drawers);
—And, punished by her with her fists and claws,
He brought the savours of her skin back to his room.

The College

Il craignait les blafards dimanches de décembre,
Où, pommadé, sur un guéridon d'acajou,
Il lisait une Bible à la tranche vert-chou;
Des rêves l'oppressaient chaque nuit dans l'alcôve.
Il n'aimait pas Dieu; mais les hommes, qu'au soir fauve,
Noirs, en blouse, il voyait rentrer dans le faubourg
Où les crieurs, en trois roulements de tambour,
Font autour des édits rire et gronder les foules.
—Il rêvait la prairie amoureuse, où des houles
Lumineuses, parfums sains, pubescences d'or,
Font leur remuement calme et prennent leur essor!

Et comme il savourait surtout les sombres choses,
Quand, dans la chambre nue aux persiennes closes,
Haute et bleue, âcrement prise d'humidité,
Il lisait son roman sans cesse médité,
Plein de lourds ciels ocreux et de forêts noyées,
De fleurs de chair aux bois sidéraux déployées,
Vertige, écroulements, déroutes et pitié!
—Tandis que se faisait la rumeur du quartier,
En bas,—seul, et couché sur des pièces de toile
Ecrue, et pressentant violemment la voile!

He dreaded the pallid Sundays made of December
When at a mahogany table, in a cloud of brilliantine,
He read a Bible edged with cabbage-green;
Every night, in the alcove, there'd be dreams oppressing him.
He didn't love God; but the men he saw come home
At savage evening, black, in working kit,
To the outskirts where with three drum-rolls the criers got
The crowds laughing and growling around the proclamations.
—He would dream of the fields in love, where ocean
Swells of glow, wholesome scents, downinesses of gold
Perform their calm swirling and into flight unfold.

And how he savoured the sombre things most,
As, in the bare room with the shutters closed,
The high blue room which damp had gripped and soured,
He read his novel, ceaselessly considered,
Dense with grave ochre skies, with forests that had drowned
With flesh flowers unfurled over sidereal woodland,
Vertigo, avalanches, routs and pity!
—While the neighbourhood went on with its talk and clatter
Below,—alone, and stretched out upon lengths of whole
Holland, and forefeeling violently the sail!

LES PAUVRES A L'ÉGLISE

Parqués entre des bancs de chêne, aux coins d'église
Qu'attédié puamment leur souffle, tours leurs yeux
Vers le choeur ruisselant d'orrie et la maîtrise
Aux vingt gueules gueulant les cantiques pieux;

Comme un parfum de pain humant l'odeur de cire,
Heureux, humiliés comme des chiens battus,
Les Pauvres au bon Dieu, le patron et le sire,
Tendent leurs oremus risibles et têtus.

Aux femmes, c'est bien bon de faire des bancs lisses,
Après les six jours noirs où Dieu les fait souffrir!
Elles bercent, tordus dans d'étranges pelisses,
Des espèces d'enfants qui pleurent à mourir.

Leurs seins crasseux dehors, ces mangeuses de soupe,
Une prière aux yeux et ne priant jamais,
Regardent parader mauvairement un groupe
De gamines avec leurs chapeaux déformés.

Dehors, le froid, la faim, [et puis] l'homme en ribote.
C'est bon. Encore une heure; après, les maux sans nom!
—Cependant, alentour, geint, nasille, chuchote
Une collection de vieilles à fanons:

Ces effarés y sont et ces épileptiques
Dont on se détournait hier aux carrefours;
Et, fringalant du nez dans des missels antiques,
Ces aveugles qu'un chien introduit dans les cours.

Et tous, bavant la foi mendicante et stupide,
Récitent la complainte infinie à Jésus
Qui rêve en haut, jauni par le vitrail livide,
Loin des maigres mauvais et des méchants pansus,

Loin des senteurs de viande et d'étoffes moisies,
Farce prostrée et sombre aux gestes repoussants;
—Et l'oraison fleurit d'expressions choisies,
Et les mysticités prennent des tons pressants,

Quand, des nefs où périt le soleil, plis de soie
Banals, sourires verts, les Dames des quartiers
Distingués,—ô Jésus!—les malades du foie
Font baiser leurs longs doigts jaunes aux bénitiers.

THE POOR AT CHURCH

Between oak benches in church corners, penned in
Where their breath putridly warms the air, their eyes all
Seeking the chancel's wash of gilding and its twenty
Chorister craws crowing the pious canticles;

Inhaling like a bakery fragrance the wax stink,
And happy like whipped dogs in their humiliation,
The Poor are offering, to God the boss and king,
Their laughable persistent supplication.

The women find it good to be wearing benches smooth
After the six black days that God tortures them with!
They rock, screwed up in strange garments, and try to soothe
Creatures like human babies crying to death.

Their grimed bosoms showing, these feeders upon soup
—A prayer in their eyes although they never pray—
Are watching now the sinfulness of a group
Of girls in hats pulled shapeless, posturing away.

Outside, the cold, hunger, —and one's man on the booze.
Right. There's an hour, still; then the evils beyond naming!
—Meanwhile, there's round them, whimpering, snuffling,
whispering news,
A miscellany of ancient, dewlapped women.

Among them are the obsessed and the epileptics, those
From whom one turned away, yesterday, at the crossroads;
Also, poking at weathered missals with their noses,
The blind ones who come led by a dog into the courtyards.

And they all, drooling that crass mendicant faith, say
Over again the endless plaint to Jesus, who
Dreams on high, yellowed by the deathly stained glass, way
Off from skinny sinners, from fatted bad lots too,

Way off from the odours of meat and well-mouldered cloth,
That grovelling dark farce whose gestures are repulsive;
—And now the orison puts choice blooms of phrase forth,
The mysteries take on tones that become compulsive

As, leaving a nave where the sun withers, their silk
Folds hackneyed, smiles green, the Ladies of the better
Districts—O Jesus! it's their livers that went sick—
Get their long yellow fingers kissed by the holy water.

The College

LES SŒURS DE CHARITÉ

Le jeune homme dont l'œil est brillant, la peau brune,
Le beau corps de vingt ans qui devrait aller nu,
Et qu'eût, le front cerclé de cuivre, sous la lune
Adoré, dans la Perse, un Génie inconnu,

Impétueux avec des douceurs virginales
Et noires, fier de ses premiers entêtements,
Pareil aux jeunes mers, pleurs de nuits estivales,
Qui se retournent sur des lits de diamants;

Le jeune homme, devant les laideurs de ce monde,
Tressaille dans son cœur largement irrité,
Et, plein de la blessure éternelle et profonde,
Se prend à désirer sa sœur de charité.

Mais, ô Femme, monceau d'entrailles, pitié douce,
Tu n'es jamais la Sœur de charité, jamais,
Ni regard noir, ni ventre où dort une ombre rousse,
Ni doigts légers, ni seins splendidement formés.

Aveugle irréveillée aux immenses prunelles,
Tout notre embrassement n'est qu'une question:
C'est toi qui pends à nous, porteuse de mamelles,
Nous te berçons, charmante et grave Passion.

Tes haines, tes torpeurs fixés, tes défaillances,
Et tes brutalités souffertes autrefois,
Tu nous rends tout, ô Nuit pourtant sans malveillances,
Comme un excès de sang épanché tous les mois.

—Quand la femme, portée un instant, l'épouvante,
Amour, appel de vie et chanson d'action,
Viennent la Muse verte et la Justice ardente
Le déchirer de leur auguste obsession.

Ah! sans cesse altéré des splendeurs et des calmes,
Délaissé des deux Sœurs implacables, geignant
Avec tendresse après la science aux bras almes,
Il porte à la nature en fleur son front saignant.

Mais la noire alchimie et les saintes études
Répugnent au blessé, sombre savant d'orgueil;
Il sent marcher sur lui d'atroces solitudes.
Alors, et toujours beau, sans dégoût du cercueil,

Qu'il croie aux vastes fins, Rêves ou Promenades
Immenses, à travers les nuits de Vérité,
Et t'appelle en son âme et ses membres malades,
O Mort mystérieuse, ô sœur de charité!

SISTERS OF CHARITY

The young man with the shining eye, brown skin,
Handsome twenty-year body (should go nude),
Who might have been—moonlit, brow copperbound—
Adored in Persia by an unknown Jinn,

Impetuous with virginal dark moods
Of sweetness, flaunting his first self-will fights,
Like the young seas, the tears of summer nights,
That twist and turn on beds of diamonds;

The young man, seeing this world's deformities,
Shudders in his generously stung heart
And, full of the eternal deep wound's smart,
Longs now for his sister of charity.

But, O Woman, heap of guts, sweet compassion,
You never are charity's Sister, never, —
Your dark glance, belly where a russet shadow slumbers,
Deft fingers, no, nor those breasts, splendidly fashioned.

Unwakened blind thing with huge irises,
All our embracing is merely a question:
Breasts-carrier, it's you who hang on us,
We dandle you, bewitching and grave Passion.

Your hatreds, your set lethargies, your faints,
And the brutalities you suffered once—
You pay us it all back, O Night and yet no fiends,
As an excess of blood spilled every month.

As he quails at the woman he carries for an instant,
At Love, the call to life and song of action,
Here come the green Muse and Justice ardent—
Tear him to bits with their august obsession.

Ah! without cease thirsty for splendours and for calms,
Deserted by the two implacable Sisters,
For motherly-armed science tenderly he whimpers,
Carries his bloodstreaked brow to nature's bloom.

Yet he, wounded, pride's sombre scholar, flinches
At dark alchemy and the holy studies;
He can feel, marching at him, cruel solitudes.
Then, and still handsome, not disgusted by the coffin,

Let him trust the vast ends, Dreams or Immense
Rangeings, across the nights of Verity,
And call you into his soul and his sick members,
Mysterious Death, sister of charity.

LES PREMIÈRES COMMUNIONS

I

Vraiment, c'est bête, ces églises des villages
Où quinze laids marmots encrassant les piliers
Écoutent, grasseyant les divins babillages,
Un noir grotesque dont fermentent les souliers:
Mais le soleil éveille, à travers des feuillages,
Les vieilles couleurs des vitraux irréguliers.

La pierre sent toujours la terre maternelle.
Vous verrez des monceaux de ces cailloux terreux
Dans la campagne en rut qui frémit solennelle,
Portant près des blés lourds, dans les sentiers ocreux,
Ces arbrisseaux brûlés où bleuit la prune,
Des nœuds de mûriers noirs et de rosiers fureux.

Tous les cent ans, on rend ces granges respectables
Par un badigeon d'eau bleue et de lait caillé:
Si des mysticités grotesques sont notables
Près de la Notre-Dame ou du Saint empaillé,
Des mouches sentant bon l'auberge et les étables
Se gorgent de cire au plancher ensoleillé.

L'enfant se doit surtout à la maison, famille
Des soins naïfs, des bons travaux abrutissants;
Ils sortent, oubliant que la peau leur fourmille
Où le Prêtre du Christ plaqua ses doigts puissants.
On paie au Prêtre un toit ombré d'une charmille
Pour qu'il laisse au soleil tous ces fronts brunissants.

Le premier habit noir, le plus beau jour de tartes,
Sous le Napoléon ou le petit Tambour
Quelque enluminure où les Josephs et les Marthes
Tirent la langue avec un excessif amour
Et que joindront, au jour de science, deux cartes,
Ces seuls doux souvenirs lui restent du grand Jour.

Les filles vont toujours à l'église, contentes
De s'entendre appeler garces par les garçons
Qui font du genre après Messe ou vêpres chantantes.
Eux qui sont destinés au chic des garnisons,
Ils narguent au café les maisons importantes,
Blousés neuf, et gueulant d'effroyables chansons.

Cependant le Curé choisit pour les enfances
Des dessins; dans son clos, les vêpres dites, quand
L'air s'emplit du lointain nasillement des danses,
Il se sent, en dépit des célestes défenses,
Les doigts de pied ravis et le mollet marquant;
—La Nuit vient, noir pirate aux cieux d'or débarquant.

THE FIRST COMMUNIONS

I

Really it's ridiculous, these village
Churches—fifteen plain brats who leave marks on the pillars
And listen, gargling the r's of the divine verbiage,
To a grotesque black figure in fermenting slippers.
But the sun rouses up with gleams through foliage
The bumpy stained-glass windows' ancient colours.

The stone still has the smell of mother earth.
You'll see heaps of those earthy boulders where
The rutting countryside solemnly quivers,
Bearing, near heavy wheat, by the ochre bridle-paths,
Those scorched brakes with the sloes bluing, with
Tangles of blackberries, of rose briars shifted.

Each hundred years these barns are rendered nice once more
By a coat of whitewash—junket and blue water:
If grotesque rituals put up a show before
Our Lady or the stuffed Saint's altar,
Flies that give out a wholesome inn-and-cowsheds odour
Gorge themselves with wax on the sunned floor.

A child belongs first to home, family,
The simple cares, the good labours that stun;
They go out, forgetting the way their flesh goes crawly
Where Christ's Priest pressed his potent fingers down.
Priest gets a hornbeam-shaded house to make sure he'll
Leave all those browning foreheads to the sun.

One's first black coat, the heyday of jam tarts,
Napoleon or the Drummer Boy skied on the wall above
One of those colour-prints where the Josephs or Marthas
Hang their tongues in a leer of drooling love,
Flanked (it's the day of science) by a couple of charts,—
Of the great Day just these sweet memories are saved.

The girls keep up going to church, their pleasure's
To hear themselves called trollops by the mashers
Who strut about after sung mass or vespers.
Lads destined for the high life of the garrisons
Crowd the café, run down the established in stage whispers
And bawl, in new tunics, atrocious songs.

The Curé's still choosing, for the small boys and girls,
Pious pictures—vespers said—in his garden, while
Distant dancing's begun, with its twanging the air fills;
In spite of the celestial bans he feels
His calves beating time and his toes beguiled;
—Night comes, black buccaneer landing on skies of gold.

The College

II

Le Prêtre a distingué parmi les catéchistes,
Congrégés des Faubourgs ou des Riches Quartiers,
Cette petite fille inconnue, aux yeux tristes,
Front jaune. Les parents semblent de doux portiers.
« Au grand Jour, le marquant parmi les Catéchistes,
Dieu fera sur ce front neiger ses bénitiers. »

III

La veille du grand Jour, l'enfant se fait malade.
Mieux qu'à l'Eglise haute aux funèbres rumeurs,
D'abord le frisson vient, —le lit n'étant pas fade—
Un frisson surhumain qui retourne: « Je meurs... »

Et, comme un vol d'amour fait à ses sœurs stupides,
Elle compte, abattue et les mains sur son cœur,
Les Anges, les Jésus et ses Vierges nitides
Et, calmement, son âme a bu tout son vainqueur.

Adonäi!...—Dans les terminaisons latines,
Des cieus moirés de vert baignent les Fronts vermeils,
Et, tachés du sang pur des célestes poitrines,
De grands linges neigeux tombent sur les soleils!

—Pour ses virginités présentes et futures
Elle mord aux fraîcheurs de ta Rémission,
Mais plus que les lys d'eau, plus que les confitures,
Tes pardons sont glacés, ô Reine de Sion!

IV

Puis la Vierge n'est plus que la vierge du livre.
Les mystiques élans se cassent quelquefois...
Et vient la pauvreté des images, que cuivre
L'ennui, l'enluminure atroce et les vieux bois;

Des curiosités vaguement impudiques
Epouvantent le rêve aux chastes bleuïtés
Qui s'est surpris autour des célestes tuniques,
Du linge dont Jésus voile ses nudités.

Elle veut, elle veut, pourtant, l'âme en détresse,
Le front dans l'oreiller creusé par les cris sourds,
Prolonger les éclairs suprêmes de tendresse,
Et bave...—L'ombre emplît les maisons et les cours.

Et l'enfant ne peut plus. Elle s'agite, cambre
Les reins et d'une main ouvre le rideau bleu

II

The Priest noticed among the catechists
Congregated from the Suburbs or the Rich Quarters
This unknown little girl with her eyes sad,
Forehead yellow. (Her people seem to be humble janitors).
"Singling her, on the great Day, from the Catechists,
God will snow on that brow, from His stoups, holy water."

III

The eve of the great Day, the child falls ill.
Better than in the tall Church with its eerie flying
Murmurs, there first comes—bed not dull—the thrill,
A superhuman thrill that echoes back: "I'm dying..."

And like a love theft from her stupid sisters,
She counts—limp and with both hands to her heart—
Angels, Jesus on Jesus, His Virgins who all glisten:
Serenely her soul has drunk its conqueror at one draught.

Adonäi! . . . In the Latin endings, shot-with-green
Heavens are bathing the vermilion Brows
And, spotted with pure blood from the celestial breasts,
Great snowy linens fall across the suns.

—For her virginities now and to be she bites
Into the cools of your Remission of sin,
But more than waterlilies, more than any sweets,
Your pardons are of ice, O Queen of Zion!

IV

Soon the Virgin's no more than the book's little maid.
Mystical impulses sometimes break . . . And there comes
The poverty of the images, brassily overlaid
With boredom, hideous colour plates, fusty woodcuts;

Stirrings of vaguely indecent curiosity
Alarm the dream that has, in its chaste bluenesses,
Caught itself prying round the heavenly tunics, the
Linens where Jesus veils His nudities.

She wants, she wants still—soul in distress,
Forehead and muffled cries digging the pillow hard—
To prolong the supreme flashes of tenderness,
And she dribbles . . . Dusk fills the houses and each yard.

And the child can't go on. She starts up, bends
Forward, with one hand draws the blue curtain, —desires

Pour amener un peu la fraîcheur de la chambre
Sous le drap, vers son ventre et sa poitrine en feu...

V

A son réveil,—minuit,—la fenêtre était blanche.
Devant le sommeil bleu des rideaux illunés,
La vision la prit des candeurs du dimanche;
Elle avait rêvé rouge. Elle saigna du nez,

Et, se sentant bien chaste et pleine de faiblesse,
Pour savourer en Dieu son amour revenant
Elle eut soif de la nuit où s'exalte et s'abaisse
Le cœur, sous l'œil des cieus doux, en les devinant;

De la nuit, Vierge-Mère impalpable, qui baigne
Tous les jeunes émois de ses silences gris;
Elle eut soif de la nuit forte où le cœur qui saigne
Ecoule sans témoin sa révolte sans cris.

Et faisant la Victime et la petite épouse,
Son étoile la vit, une chandelle aux doigts,
Descendre dans la cour où séchait une blouse,
Spectre blanc, et lever les spectres noirs des toits.

VI

Elle passa sa nuit sainte dans des latrines.
Vers la chandelle, aux trous du toit coulait l'air blanc,
Et quelque vigne folle aux noirceurs purpurines,
En deçà d'une cour voisine s'écroulant.

La lucarne faisait un cœur de lueur vive
Dans la cour où les cieus bas plaquaient d'ors vermeils
Les vitres; les pavés puant l'eau de lessive
Soufraient l'ombre des murs bondés de noirs sommeils.

VII

Qui dira ces langueurs et ces pitiés immondes,
Et ce qu'il lui viendra de haine, ô sales fous
Dont le travail divin déforme encor les mondes,
Quand la lèpre à la fin mangera ce corps doux?

To bring, a little, the cool of the room in under
The sheet, towards her belly and breasts on fire . . .

V

When—midnight—she woke, the window was white.
In front of the illuned curtains at their blue
Slumbers, the vision took her—of the whites
Of Sunday; she had dreamed red. Her noise bled,

And feeling all chaste and full of weakness, in haste to
Savour in God her love walking again,
She thirsted for night, where a heart lifts, is abased
Under the eye of mild heavens, and divines their reign.

For night, impalpable Virgin Mother who washes
All young passions in her grey silences:
She thirsted for strong night where the gored heart releases
To flow without witness its revolts with no cries.

And her star saw her—candle in fingers, playing
The part of the victim and of the child wife—
Slip down to the yard where a blouse was drying,
A white ghost, and raise up the black ghosts of the roofs.

VI

She spent her holy night in some latrines.
Towards her candle, through holes in the roof, flowed
The white air—and some sort of rioting vine, laden
With purplish blacks, crumbling across from a neighbour
yard.

The attic window made a living lustre heart in
The yard where the low heavens plated the panes with
vermeil
Golds; the cobbles stinking of launderwater
Were sulphuring the shade of walls crammed with black
slumbers.

VII

Who will tell of those languors and those soiled
Sympathies, and what hate will come on her, you bawdy
Idiots whose divine work still warps the worlds,
When leprosy in the end eats that sweet body?

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VIII

Et quand, ayant rentré tous ses noeuds d'hystéries,
Elle verra, sous les tristesses du bonheur,
L'amant rêver au blanc million des Maries,
Au matin de la nuit d'amour, avec douleur:

« Sais-tu que je t'ai fait mourir? J'ai pris ta bouche,
Ton cœur, tout ce qu'on a, tout ce que vous avez;
Et moi, je suis malade: Oh! je veux qu'on me couche
Parmi les Morts des eaux nocturnes abreuvés!

« J'étais bien jeune, et Christ a souillé mes haleines.
Il me bonda jusqu'à la gorge de dégoûts!
Tu baisais mes cheveux profonds comme les laines,
Et je me laissais faire... Ah! va, c'est bon pour vous,

« Hommes! qui songez peu que la plus amoureuse
Est, sous sa conscience aux ignobles terreurs,
La plus prostituée et la plus douloureuse,
Et que tous nos élans vers Vous sont des erreurs!

« Car ma Communion première est bien passée.
Tes baisers, je ne puis jamais les avoir sus:
Et mon cœur et ma chair par ta chair embrassée
Fourmillent du baiser putride de Jésus! »

IX

Alors l'âme pourrie et l'âme désolée
Sentiront ruisseler tes malédictions.
— Ils auront couché sur ta Haine inviolée,
Echappés, pour la mort, des justes passions,

Christ! ô Christ, éternel voleur des énergies,
Dieu qui pour deux mille ans vouas à ta pâleur,
Cloués au sol, de honte et de céphalalgies,
Ou renversés, les fronts des femmes de douleur.

VIII

And when, having swallowed all her knots of hysterias,
She sees under the sadnesses of joy
Her lover dreaming of the white million Maries,
At the love night's morning, hear her grief say:

"Do you know I have killed you? I took your mouth,
Your heart, all anyone has, all you have;
And I—I'm ill: O someone lay me with
The Dead whom night's waters have slaked and lave!

"I was young, truly, and Christ has fouled my breath.
He stuffed me with disgust up to my throat!
You kept kissing my hair in its wool depth
And I would let you ... ah!, there, it's all right

"For you, Men! little you dream the most loving
Woman, under her conscience's base terrors
Is the most prostituted and most grieving,
And all our impulses toward you are errors.

"For look, my first Communion is past
And done. I never can have known your kisses:
And my heart and my flesh your flesh embraced
Are crawling with the putrid kiss of Jesus."

IX

Then the rotted soul and the desolate
Soul will feel, pouring out, Your maledictions.
— They'll have lain down on Your inviolate Hate,
Escaped, and all for death's sake, rightful passions.

Christ! O Christ, eternal energy-thief,
God Who, two thousand years, pledged to Your pallor
— By shame and head-aches nailed to the soil, or
Thrown back—the foreheads of women of grief.

LE BATEAU IVRE

Comme je descendais des Fleuves impassibles,
Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les haleurs:
Des Peaux-Rouges criards les avaient pris pour cibles,
Les ayant cloués nus aux poteaux de couleurs.

J'étais insoucieux de tous les équipages,
Porteur de blés flamands ou de cotons anglais.
Quand avec mes haleurs ont fini ces tapages,
Les Fleuves m'ont laissé descendre où je voulais.

Dans les clapotements furieux des marées,
Moi, l'autre hiver, plus sourd que les cerveaux d'enfants,
Je courus! Et les Péninsules démarrées
N'ont pas subi tohu-bohus plus triomphants.

La tempête a béni mes éveils maritimes.
Plus léger qu'un bouchon j'ai dansé sur les flots
Qu'on appelle rouleurs éternels de victimes,
Dix nuits, sans regretter l'œil niais des falots!

Plus douce qu'aux enfants la chair des pommes sûres,
L'eau verte pénétra ma coque de sapin
Et des taches de vins bleus et des vomissures
Me lava, dispersant gouvernail et grappin.

Et dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le Poème
De la Mer, infusé d'astres, et lactescent,
Dévorant les azurs verts; où, flottaison blême
Et ravie, un noyé pensif parfois descend;

Où, teignant tout à coup les bleuïtés, délires
Et rythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour,
Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que nos lyres,
Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l'amour!

Je sais les cieus crevant en éclairs, et les trombes
Et les ressacs et les courants: je sais le soir,
L'Aube exaltée ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes,
Et j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir!

J'ai vu le soleil bas, taché d'horreurs mystiques,
Illuminant de longs figements violets,
Pareils à des acteurs de drames très-antiques
Les flots roulant au loin leurs frissons de volets!

J'ai rêvé la nuit verte aux neiges éblouies,
Baiser montant aux yeux des mers avec lenteurs,
La circulation des sèves inouïes,
Et l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs!

THE HIGH BOAT

Down the stolid Rivers I navigated,
Sensed myself no longer steered by the haulers:
Screeching Redskins had taken them as targets
After nailing them nude to posts of colours.

I had no use for any crew at all,
Stuffed hold, English cottons or Flemish wheat.
When that cry had made short work of my haulers
The rivers let me float down where I would.

The other winter, into the tide-rip
Tumult I, deafer than the brains of children,
Ran! and Peninsulas with their moorings slipped
Never have been through more triumphal shindies.

The storm gave blessing to my ocean-goer
Awakenings. I danced, no cork so lightly,
On waves men call eternal victim-rollers,
Ten nights, not yearning for the goof eye of the lights!

More sweet than to a child the flesh of a sharp apple,
The green water entered my hull of pine
And, as it washed away rudder and grapple,
Cleaned me of stains of vomits and blue wines.

And, since then, I've bathed in the poem of
The sea—the infused with stars and milky-wayed—,
Devouring the green azures; where at times, ravished mauve
Flotsam, a pensive drowned man downward sways;

Where, suddenly dyeing the bluenesses, deliria
And slow rhythms below day's renewed flush,
Stronger than alcohol, vaster than your lyres,
Ferment the bitter rednesses of love!

I know skies splitting to lightnings, waterspout-hovers,
Undertows, currents; I know evenfall awe,
Dawn exalted like a people of doves,
And I have seen sometimes what man has thought he saw!

I've seen the low sun spotted with mystic horrors
Illumining long forms, violet clotted,
Like actors posed in very ancient dramas,
The waves rolling afar shudders of shutters!

I've dreamed the green night with the dazzled snows,
Kisses rising to the eyes of the seas slowly,
The circulation of saps no-one knows,
Singing phosphors—their waking, yellow and blue.

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J'ai suivi, des mois pleins, pareille aux vacheries
Hystériques, la houle à l'assaut des récifs,
Sans songer que les pieds lumineux des Maries
Pussent forcer le mufler aux Océans poussifs!

J'ai heurté, savez-vous, d'incroyables Florides
Mêlant aux fleurs des yeux de panthères à peaux
D'hommes! Des arcs-en-ciel tendus comme des brides
Sous l'horizon des mers, à de glauques troupeaux!

J'ai vu fermenter les marais énormes, nasses
Où pourrit dans les joncs tout un Léviathan!
Des écroulements d'eaux au milieu des bonaces,
Et les lointains vers les gouffres cataractant!

Glaciers, soleils d'argent, flots nacreux, cieus de braises!
Echouages hideux au fond des golfes bruns
Où les serpents géants dévorés des punaises
Choient, des arbres tordus, avec de noirs parfums!

J'aurais voulu montrer aux enfants ces dorades
Du flot bleu, ces poissons d'or, ces poissons chantants.
—Des écumes de fleurs ont bercé mes dérades
Et d'ineffables vents m'ont ailé par instants.

Parfois, martyr lassé des pôles et des zones,
La mer dont le sanglot faisait mon roulis doux
Montait vers moi ses fleurs d'ombre aux ventouses jaunes
Et je restais, ainsi qu'une femme à genoux...

Presque île, ballottant sur mes bords les querelles
Et les fientes d'oiseaux clabaudes aux yeux blonds.
Et je voguais, lorsqu'à travers mes liens frêles
Des noyés descendaient dormir, à reculons!...

Or moi, bateau perdu sous les cheveux des anses,
Jeté par l'ouragan dans l'éther sans oiseau,
Moi dont les Monitors et les voiliers des Hanses
N'auraient pas repêché la carcasse ivre d'eau;

Libre, fumant, monté de brumes violettes,
Moi qui trouais le ciel rougeoyant comme un mur
Qui porte, confiture exquise aux bons poètes,
Des lichens de soleil et des morves d'azur;

Qui courais, taché de lunules électriques,
Planche folle, escorté des hippocampes noirs,
Quand les juillets faisaient couler à coups de triques
Les cieus ultramarins aux ardents entonnoirs;

I've followed, months on end, the ground-swell, like
Byres of crazed cows charging the reefs, crashing,
Not dreaming the Three Maries' feet of light
Could force the muzzle of each lumbering Ocean.

I've struck, d'you know? Floridas unbelievable
Mingling with flowers eyes of panthers—their hides
Human! Rainbows bent like bridles to receive
Below the seas' horizon glaucous herds!

I've seen the swamps fermenting, enormous traps in
Whose rush-meshes a Leviathan addles whole,
In the middle of the calms waters collapsing,
Distances cataracting toward hells!

Glaciers, silver suns, mother-of-pearl waves, ember
Heavens, —and ghastly wreck-snares sunken in the brown
Creeks where the giant snakes devoured by vermin
From twisted trees with black musks drop down!

I would have liked to show children those dolphins
Of the blue wave, those fish of gold, those fish that sing.
Spumes of flowers have blessed my high sea driftings,
Ineffable winds at moments gave me wing.

At times, when the poles and the zones had me martyred,
The sea, whose sobbing then made sweet my rolling,
Would lift toward me her yellowcup blooms of shadow,
And I remained there like a woman kneeling,

An almost island with my rim that bandied
The feuds and shit of blond-eyed slanderous birds,
And floated further while through my frail ribbands
Drowned men were going down to sleep, backwards...

Now I, a boat lost under tousled halyards,
Cast by the hurricane up to air with no bird,
I, whose drunk-on-water carcass no Hansard
Sail, no Monitor, would have fished aboard,

Free, smoking, a mount for violet mists,
I, who would pierce the reddening sky, that wall
Which bears (a jam good poets find exquisite)
Sun lichens, azure mucuses and galls,

Who would run spotted with electric lunules,
A mad plank the black sea-horses escorted,
When the Julies crumbled, so hard they clouted,
The ultramarine skies with the burning funnels,

Moi qui tremblais, sentant geindre à cinquante lieues
Le rut des Béhémots et les Maelstroms épais,
Filleur éternel des immobilités bleues,
Je regrette l'Europe aux anciens parapets!

J'ai vu des archipels sidéraux! et des îles
Dont les cieux délirants sont ouverts au vogueur:
—Est-ce en ces nuits sans fonds que tu dors et t'exiles,
Million d'oiseaux d'or, ô future Vigueur?—

Mais, vrai, j'ai trop pleuré! Les Aubes sont navrantes.
Toute lune est atroce et tout soleil amer:
L'âcre amour m'a gonflé de torpeurs enivrantes.
O que ma quille éclate! O que j'aille à la mer!

Si je désire une eau d'Europe, c'est la flache
Noire et froide où vers le crépuscule embaumé
Un enfant accroupi plein de tristesses, lâche
Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai.

Je ne puis plus, baigné de vos langueurs, ô lames,
Enlever leur sillage aux porteurs de cotons,
Ni traverser l'orgueil des drapeaux et des flammes,
Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons.

I, who would tremble, sensing from fifty leagues
Groaning the thick Maelstroms and the Behemoths' heat,
Ceaseless spinner of the blue immobilities,
I yearn for Europe, the ancient parapets.

I've seen sidereal archipelagos! isles
Whose madding skies are open to the drifter:
Those fathomless nights—in them d'you sleep your exile
Sleep, you million gold birds, O future Vigour?

But, true, I've wept too much. The dawns are anguish.
Every moon tortures, every sun is sour.
Acrid love has swollen me with strong languors.
Oh! let my keel explode! Oh! let me join the sea!

If a water of Europe fetches me at all, it's
The black cold puddle on which, t'wards balmy twilight,
A child, crouching, full of sadness, launches
A boat frail May butterfly.

I can't any longer, bathed by your swoons, waves,
Filch from the cotton carriers their wakes,
Or pass right through the pride of flags and flames,
Or row on under those awful eyes of the hulks.

The Power of the Word in *Oedipus at Colonus*

by William O'Grady

Shortly before his disappearance from the human world, Oedipus speaks these words to his daughters: "All the things that are mine have perished, and no longer will you have the toilsome tendance of me. It was hard, I know, daughters. But one word by itself cancels all these agonies: *to philein*, the action of loving. . . ."

But we ask: even if love itself could be thought to prevail over great suffering, could be thought somehow to count for more than suffering within a life shared between persons, why should the power of the word be so exalted? How can a mere word dissolve actual sufferings? The strangeness of the matter is accentuated by the Greek word order, which by postponing the word *epos* (which means "word") first pits one thing against many, *hen monon* against *ta panta tauta*, and then, as starkly as may be, finishes the line by placing *epos* immediately and tensely next to *mochthemata* (agonies, sufferings).

To understand a little the meaning of the power of *to epos* in this drama of Sophocles' old age will be the attempt of this lecture.

But first a number of other matters must be discussed. I shall organize my thoughts under these headings: the terrible darkness acknowledged by the play; the significance of the Athens of Theseus as worthy receptacle for Oedipus; Oedipus himself—how he thinks of himself and what he hopes for and demands; what happens at the end of the play, or at any rate how this happening can be distantly characterized; and finally how the utterly mysterious ending of the play throws us back upon the saying, just as mysterious in its own way, about the power of *to philein*, with its strange dependence upon the power of *to epos*.

I.

The most terrible words uttered in any play of Sophocles are uttered in the play he wrote when he was ninety years old.

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The chorus says: "Not to be born (*Me phunai*) prevails over all meaning uttered in words. By far the second best, when one has come to light, is to go to that very place from which one came as swiftly as may be."

We must try to understand what moves the chorus to speak as it does. Let us listen to a translation of the strophe which immediately precedes the words just quoted: "Whoever craves the greater portion in living, having disdained the moderate, will be manifest in my judgment as cherishing perversity. For the long days pile up many things closer to pain; as for the things which give delight, you would not see them anywhere, whenever one falls into more than is fitting." So far we seem to be hearing a lament upon old age: life is without delight and full of pain for the old. As we learn later (to our surprise, until we reflect a little on how such things are likely to be), the chorus is thinking not so much of the ancient Oedipus as of itself: the second strophe begins: "In such a condition is this wretched one, not I alone." We must remember that the chorus of old men have recently been humiliated, have had their impotence unmistakably demonstrated as Creon's forces have carried off Antigone and Ismene in their presence despite their pledge of protection to Oedipus.

But as the chorus hears itself uttering this lamentation, a more universal lamentation is kindled: "The Ally brings equal fulfilment to all when the doom of Hades has blazed up, without wedding-song, without lyre, without festive dance—death in the end." That death comes to men as an ally or deliverer (the Greek word, *epikouros*, even suggests that there is something youthful about death), that it comes equally to all and somehow fulfills, might seem to make death not at all inimical to men. But in describing its coming the chorus hears itself stringing together privatives whose very sounds seem mournful—*anumenaios*, *aluros*, *achoros*. Wedding-song and the lyre and festive dance are things which give genuine delight; to be deprived of them is a cruel pain. What if, as sometimes seems true, the delights are simply in the service of the pain, for the sake of the pain, are made briefly available only so that the great pain of losing them may sweep over men? Then might one not be impelled to say: Not to be

born is ineffably the best. Second best is to leave, as swiftly as may be, this world of torture, of grievous pains and of delights which mock by their transience?

But do we not object: that might be true if there were only one generation of humankind, but in fact men and women leave sons and daughters behind them—there is always delight in the lyre, not indeed for me but for some human being, and even for some human being whose life would not have come to be without my life. But can the chorus do justice to this fact, the fact of generation following generation so that delight in the lyre never dies, without doing a terrible injustice to the spectacle which has just been present before its eyes? We recall: Oedipus has just been told that his son wishes to speak with him. He says: "My son, King, hateful to me, whose words I would endure hearing most painfully of any man's." It has come to this in the life of Oedipus—exactly how the blame is to be apportioned seems of secondary importance—that his son's voice is the most painful thing in the world for him to hear. And, the chorus knows, he must nevertheless endure hearing it: he will not be spared even this final agony. Of all the terrors and grievous spectacles in the tragedies of the Greeks, there is perhaps none more excruciating than this, that a father has come, irreconcilably, to hate his son. It is under the impact of this spectacle most of all, I think, that the chorus says that it would be better never to have been born.

But is this not, after all, an unwarranted generalization from an insufficient number of cases? In some lives things turn out very painfully indeed, but surely most lives are not so full of agony as the life of Oedipus. Would not a broader, more balanced view be more just? I do not think so. For the chorus is not really engaging in "generalization", in such a way that it is appropriate to adduce counter-examples, to survey in detachment, having stepped back from the immediate event, the full range of human experience and to find therein the proper place, alongside other happenings, of such a happening. The chorus is constitutionally incapable of such a stepping-back. And for that very "limitation" we must be grateful to it. For as the chorus allows the intensely painful spectacle before its eyes to fill up the whole world for a moment—the intensive finding expression in the unlimitedly extensive—a sort of justice is accomplished: the moment receives its due, finds truthful voice in the human world. I do not mean merely that the chorus is (psychologically) *incapable* of stepping back and placing this moment alongside other moments in some sort of "balanced" way or even merely that (morally) it would be somehow *indecent* for the chorus to try to do that. I mean fully that *truthfulness* about such momentary spectacles requires that they be allowed, for a moment, to occupy the whole world and all time. There is indeed—and it is to be cherished—a kind of truthfulness which tries to do justice to human experience in its wholeness, but that presupposes truthfulness about particular experiences, and this truthfulness, it seems to me, is greatly jeopardized by objections against the "exaggerated," "one-sided," "insufficiently detached and comprehensive" mode in which certain terrible spectacles are originally spoken of, given voice to, and hence

not only allowed to enter the human world, but in a manner secured there against annihilation by the human propensity to ignore and forget and scale down to manageable dimensions, a propensity understandable enough as flowing from the soul's desire—with which, however, others of its desires and needs may conflict—to shelter itself against what cannot be somehow mastered in thought, allocated and defined, against what Antigone later calls *ta alogista*. But the needs of our psychic economy—even if it could be established that those needs include distortion of what is—is not the only legitimate consideration; there is also the requirement *in justice* that what has happened, what has appeared, be given its due, be given a place in the human world in and through human speech, however "irrational" that speech may be. For Athens to be a proper place for the appearing of the disappearing of Oedipus, not only the detachment, balance and capacity to generalize of Theseus is required—of Theseus who says, upon encountering Oedipus for the first time: "I know that I too am a man, and that tomorrow my share of the day is no greater than yours"—but also the capacity of the chorus to lend its voice unreservedly to certain terrible moments, maintaining no "broader horizon," and thereby allowing those moments to appear as what they are.

II.

But if Theseus without the chorus does not constitute an Athens which is a proper receptacle for Oedipus, neither does the chorus without Theseus constitute such an Athens. What is the Athens of Theseus? Theseus himself declares its aspiration in these beautiful words: "Not by speeches but by great deeds done are we zealous to make life radiant for ourselves (*ton bion lampron poieisthai*). To make life radiant, to create and sustain a realm in which deeds of shining brightness may be done, may appear without distortion or obfuscation, may be seen and spoken of and remembered, may inspire and measure—all of this (it is, of course, object of hope and energy rather than secured fact) takes on its full meaning only against the background of the identification throughout the play—by no means only in the chorus which we have considered—of *phunai* and *phanein*, of being born and of appearing, coming to light. For the Athens of Theseus' aspiration the right response to the miracle of appearance—I appear in a world which appears to me—is not the longing for disappearance, but the transfiguration of appearance into radiant appearance, of coming into the light of day into coming into the light of glory—this transfiguration understood, however, not as a violent alteration but as a sort of continuation and culmination.

That Athens longs to shine, to make life radiant for herself, is somehow understood by Oedipus even prior to Theseus' declaration. In charging the chorus not to repel him, not to make the gods to be nothing for themselves by failing to honor them in the only form in which they can be immediately encountered, namely in the presence of such bearers of divine dooms as Oedipus himself, he enjoins them: "Do not, by giving service to unholy deeds, obscure happy Athens (*eudaimonas Athēnas kaluptein*). Eudaimonia must

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be understood as something essentially visible—earlier a stranger says to Oedipus: “You are noble, to one who sees you, except for your *daimōn*”—and to obscure it, to darken and conceal it, is the worst injury Athens could suffer. For *eudaimonia* is not happiness in our sense, something which may or may not show from the outside—even if it usually does, we regard it primarily as a quality of consciousness, which must then be expressed in order to become visible—but is essentially and originally a mode of appearance within the world: to make it less manifest is to make it less.

Connected with Theseus’ serious eagerness for a radiant space of appearances is his abstention from intimacy with Oedipus, from the compassionate closeness which the presence of great suffering seems to urge. His first address to Oedipus is truly wonderful in this way, in the way of preserving the distance which respect requires between persons who do not know each other well. For Theseus not to preserve this distance would be for him to see nothing in Oedipus except what calls forth compassion; it would not only annihilate that in Oedipus which transcends fitness for compassion, but it would make it impossible for Theseus and Oedipus to appear to each other at all. For such appearing seems to require not only separateness, but even some measure of distance; it is likely that lovers only seldom appear to each other, and then as disconcertingly alien.

At any rate, Theseus’ attitude is clear from the wording of his fundamental promise to Oedipus. Twice he uses in the first person singular verbs which one expects to take a personal object, namely Oedipus. But in both instances Theseus avoids so direct a relation between himself and Oedipus. First, he says, “Something terrible would be the action you might happen to mention to be of the sort from which I would stand aloof (*exaphistaimēn*).” And then—my translation here follows the Greek word order as closely as possible—“so that no one who is a stranger, just as you are now, would I turn away from (*hupēktrapoimēn*)”—it looks as if Theseus is promising not to turn away from Oedipus himself; but then he completes the sentence—“helping to save.” He would not turn away from the action of helping to save Oedipus: an action, not a person, is directly intended by his pledge. The “impersonal” character of Theseus’ discourse, this preserving of distance out of respect, seems to me a marvel of Athenian civility, when it is joined, as of course it is here, with a willingness to act and to incur risk on behalf of the suppliant.

III.

But who is this Oedipus, what does he think of himself, what does he hope for and demand? Perhaps his crucial statement is that who he is, who he is in his very nature (*phusin*) or taken by himself (*kathauton*) as he variously puts it, *has not yet been revealed*. His story, known to all,—the story of the murder of his father and marriage with his mother—does not reveal who he is: such is his claim. At first he tries desperately to keep the chorus from learning his name, not because he thinks that name designates a monstrous self, but because it has come to designate the pro-

tagonist of a monstrous story, and he knows from experience that the chorus is unlikely to make this distinction: “You drive me away, having feared my name alone,” he says to the chorus. Men encounter his name in such a way that an encounter with the man himself seems impossible. This seeming impossibility drives Oedipus to a breathtakingly radical defense. Not only does he claim that in respect of his infamous deeds he himself was more acted upon than acting—“My deeds are things which have suffered rather than acted”—but he indicates an apparently inhumanly severe criterion by which acting must be distinguished from suffering. He asks: “And yet how was I evil in my nature (*phusin*), who having been acted upon was acting in return (*antidran*)?” The immediate referent of this question—the whole passage is cast in extraordinarily unspecific, one is tempted to say distilled and metaphysical, language—must be the provoked slaying of his father at the crossroads. But ultimately he is thinking of his whole life, which in his twenty years of trying to understand—he calls himself the wanderer Oedipus (in Greek, “the planet Oedipus”), but his wanderings have had a hidden center—has formed itself into a sort of standing now, removed from sequential time in which one moment follows another. For Oedipus as he thinks back upon his life every moment is present in each moment. That is how we must understand what he says next: “As it was, knowing nothing, I came where I came (we understand: to the crossroads where he slew his father). I was being acted upon by others, I was being destroyed by those who did know (we understand: what they were doing when they exposed me as an infant).” The earlier moment is not only effective in the later moment; somehow in Oedipus’ thinking it has come to be indistinguishable from it. Time as non-sequential, every moment fully present in each moment—perhaps this experience of time is what Oedipus names when he speaks of “vast time which is with me” (*makros chronos sunōn*). Vast time is *with* him, not *behind* him as if he were *within* time in such a way that his very existence creates a difference between future and past, between what lies ahead and what lies behind, with reference to which all moments can be sequentially ordered.

But what we must primarily try to understand is the meaning and bearing of Oedipus’ claim that only those actions reveal who one is, reveal one’s own nature and one’s self taken by itself, which originate wholly within the self, which are truly doings, not sufferings, whereby—and this is the radical part of the claim—acting-in-return is merely suffering in disguise. Only in and through radically spontaneous action do I reveal who I am. But who ever heard of such a thing? Are not all of our actions in one way or another actions-in-return, not indeed mere conditioned reflexes, but actions considerably shaped by the fact that we are not absolute beginnings, but merely newcomers upon a scene in which many things have happened before our appearance? Does there exist anywhere in the world the sort of absolute freedom, the possibility of wholly unconditioned action which Oedipus not merely dreams of but insists upon if there is ever to be any action which can fairly be taken to be revelatory of my very self, of who I am in my own nature?

But on the other hand does Oedipus not have good reason for this insistence? Should he unprotestingly accept as truly and adequately revelatory of who he is, the story of which he has become the protagonist, in such a way that the very name Oedipus has come to mean the protagonist of that story and now stands in the way of any genuine encounter with the man himself? Cannot that very self ever come to light, not merely so that others may know it as Oedipus already knows it, but so that Oedipus himself may come to know it, in the measure that men can know themselves? Oedipus' most far-reaching claim at the beginning of the action of *Oedipus at Colonus*, whose premises are that a man's true self is revealed by his doings rather than by his sufferings, and that doings-in-return are merely sufferings in disguise, is that Oedipus himself has been revealed *not at all* through all that has happened. We shall have to consider later whether the wondrous happenings at the end of play—or, perhaps, which of the wondrous happenings—affect this situation.

But although Oedipus does not know who he is in his innermost self—except that he is sure that “the man who murdered his father and married his mother” does not even begin to answer the question—he does know that he has come to be the bearer of certain characteristics, and these he declares unequivocally. The only perplexity is that the characteristics which he bears contradict each other. He expresses to Theseus the contrast between the unseemliness of his presence and the benefits which will flow from it: “I have come to give my wretched body to you as a gift, not lovely to look upon, but the benefits from it are greater than a beautiful form.” And more intimate than the contrast between his looks and the consequences of his presence, though still not touching his very self, still a matter of properties of which one happens to be the bearer, is the contradiction between these two utterances of Oedipus: first, to the chorus: “I come here sacred and pious” and then, in an access of gratitude to Theseus after the recovery of his daughters: “And now, lord, stretch out your right hand to me so that I may touch it and, if it is permitted, may kiss your head. And yet, what do I utter? How could I, having become wretched, wish you to touch a man in whom there dwells every stain of evils?” Sacred and pious, yet so stained by evils that having invited contact with an unstained man fills him with horror. And we must notice that his feelings are actually even more complex than this opposition, since it is clear from the context that Oedipus' piety consists largely in the recognition of his own sacredness, that is, in the recognition that in such bearers of divine doom as he himself is the city encounters the divine more authentically—and in a manner more subject to divine judgment—than it does in ritual worship; and in this recognition there is surely as much of bitterness as of pride for Oedipus, who knows from within, through unprovably, how little being the bearer of this or that divine doom has to do with who one really is. And as there is bitterness in his claim to be sacred and pious, so there is pride in his avoiding contact with those who are not polluted: certain sharings, he tells Theseus, are available only to the “experienced” (*empeiros*) among mortals.

IV.

But what does happen to Oedipus at the end? This question, though inevitable, must not be treated as a problem to be solved or as a riddle to be guessed. Theseus, after all, is not entrusted with a secret which might or might not be kept depending upon the fidelity of the trustee, but rather he witnesses a happening that is essentially beyond words. Let us try to gather such indications as the play offers.

First, it appears that Oedipus cannot be said to die, if by dying we mean coming to the end of a lifetime which can be represented as a straight line whose beginning is a point representing the moment of birth and whose end is a point representing the moment of death (all questions of the continued separate existence of the soul in another place being left in abeyance). Rather, the drama induces us to imagine a curve which returns to its place of origin, and which is the course for a motion of reversal, not a mere retracing in opposite order of what has already been traversed, but a reversing motion which cancels and undoes.

This strange notion is hinted at in Oedipus' early prayer to the Eumenides, in which he recounts an oracle given to him from Apollo, according to which he would find at the sanctuary of the Eumenides a *termia chōra*, a final place, where he would *kamptein ton bion*, end his life, bringing benefits to his friends and ruin to his enemies. This at any rate is the most ordinary way of understanding these expressions. But immediately before uttering his prayer Oedipus has said: “However much I may say, all that I say will sec.” Oedipus does not claim that he himself sees, even metaphorically, but he says emphatically that his words are knowing; his words, early in the action, know more than he himself does. In view of this, it seems important to observe the original and most concrete meanings of *terma* and *kamptein*. For *terma* means originally not the end or final point but rather the post or mark *around which* runners or chariots turned to complete the race by returning to the place from which they began; similarly, *kamptein* means originally not to end or conclude, but in general to bend, and in particular to guide one's horses around the turning point as one enters the home stretch. Has Oedipus come to Colonus, more particularly to the sanctuary of the Eumenides, simply in order to end his life or rather so that he might undergo a motion somehow opposite to the motion which has brought him there, and which is to issue in a reversal of the effects—and perhaps more than the effects—of the original motion?

The same strange image is suggested by the chorus which we considered earlier. Second best in relation to *mē phunai*, not to be born, is not *thanein*, to die (swiftly) but rather “to go back to that very place from which one came.” Here again human life is not understood as following a rectilinear course.

But if there is somehow in the life of Oedipus at Colonus a motion which reverses the original motion, how are its effects visible within the play? Without pretending to be exhaustive, I shall give three examples. First, Oedipus, who throughout his life, and even before he was born, has been the *object* of prophecy, now becomes the author of manifestly authoritative prophecy. Early in the play, when Ismene comes reporting

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that there are new oracles respecting Oedipus, he asks "Of what sort? What has been prophesied, child?" Ismene answers, tellingly: "You have been prophesied as about to become a thing sought." Not merely events involving Oedipus but Oedipus himself is the object of prophesy. But by the end of the play Oedipus himself is accepted both by Antigone and Theseus as the one who *issues* authoritative prophecies. Theseus says: "I see you prophesying many things, and none falsely." And Antigone says something similar about Oedipus' prophecies (in all three instances the precise term *thespizein* is used) in trying to dissuade her brother from his intended action.

Again, the word *mēnis*, meaning "wrath," a word generally reserved for the anger of gods (the exception being the anger of Achilles) also undergoes a striking reversal in respect to Oedipus. He says to Creon regarding his own infamous deeds: "For so it was pleasing to the gods, who were perhaps wroth with our family from of old." But in the interview between Polyneices and Oedipus, the son speaks of his father's "heavy wrath" toward him and asks to hear fully the reasons why he is so wroth.

But the most striking turnabout—we remember that Oedipus had prayed to the Eumenides for *tis katastrophe*, some catastrophe, which seems to mean, rather indefinitely, "some turnabout"—which the play presents as visual (or imaginative) rather than verbal: from having been, from his first appearance before our eyes, pathetically in need of a guide and leader, Oedipus becomes, in the closing moments of the action, himself the leader: "Children, follow along this way. For I, new and strange (*kainos*), have been made manifest as leader to you in turn, just as you were to me."

But the play's indications of a sort of reversal and return—the replacement of the image of the straight line by the image of a curve which returns, and the several verbal and visual specifications of *katastrophe*, turning-about—are only one aspect of the matter. Just as fundamentally the play seems to insist that life and death must be understood essentially in terms of appearance and disappearance, of being present and being absent. The identification of *phunai* with *phanein*, of being born with appearing, seems to require as well the identification of dying with disappearing. And the simplest answer to the question, "what happens to Oedipus at the end of the play?" is—he disappears, he is no longer present. Moreover, as the messenger reports, he is *seen* no longer being present: "When we had gone away, after a short while we turned around, and we saw the man, *him*, I mean, nowhere still being present (*ton andra oudamou paronta eti*). His absence itself is present in the world. From this moment, the name of Oedipus is not pronounced. Repeatedly he is called *keinos*, that one. He is no longer *houtos*, this one, the one right here, but rather that one, the one over there. In the closing lines of the play the word *keinos* veritably clangs in our ear—we hear it, emphatically placed, three times within nine lines. It happens that *keinos*, as well as being a demonstrative pronoun, is sometimes used for *kenos*, poets finding the lengthened syllable useful. *Kenos* means "empty." We are tempted to hear his new name as meaning that Oedipus has now become, within

the human world, a shapely void, a definite nothingness—he has left a place in the world which cannot be occupied by another.

But if we must say that Oedipus undergoes a sort of reversal and return, and that in the end he becomes a sort of well-formed nothingness, we must also say that he becomes in some manner a god. This takes place both indistinctly and distinctly (though not on that account comprehensibly). Indistinctly there is a sort of merging of Oedipus with and into the Eumenides, the "fierce-eyed mistresses" (*potniai deinōpes*) who can be at the same time "sweet daughters of ancient darkness" (*glukeiai paides archaiou skotou*) because they are not exactly persons but rather powers. This merging, as it is adumbrated within the play, emerges as these words uttered by the chorus in prayer: "As we call them the *Eumenides* (those of kindly temper), may they receive with hearts kindly in temper (*eumenēs*) the suppliant unto salvation" are echoed by these words of Theseus in reference to Oedipus: "Who would cast out the being kindly in temper (*eumeneia*) of this sort of man?"

There is also a more distinct way in which Oedipus, in a manner, achieves divinity: he is, audibly to the city of Athens, admitted into the company of the god—there is no article in the Greek—who speaks of himself and Oedipus as "we." The messenger reports: "And god calls him many times and in many ways. 'You there, you there, Oedipus, why do we delay to go? For a long time there has been delay from your side.' " And Oedipus hearkens to the call.

However difficult it may be to understand the merging of a human person with the somehow impersonal—individually nameless, for example—powers which are the Eumenides, or the divinization through admittance into the company of a god who addresses human beings audibly to all in human—even homely—speech, the difficulty is enormously compounded when we put together—as we seem to be required to do—these indications of divinization with the indications already considered of annihilation or de-creation, a sort of creation *into* nothingness. How can Oedipus both *become a god*, and *be undone* (not merely have this or that feature of his condition reversed, not even in some more intimate way become other, become a "changed man", but proceed from being into nothingness in a way comparable in its radicalness to the bringing forth of something from nothing)? Is Oedipus more than a man as the play ends, or less than a man, less even than a stone? Or can there somehow be a unity of such opposites?

Let us withdraw from this question for a moment to consider another opposition. At the play's end, Theseus tells Antigone that it is not right to mourn since grace (*charis*) has been made available to Oedipus in the form of chthonian night-and-darkness (*nux*). Disappearance from the human world, no longer standing in the light, is equated with night and darkness. And yet the vision itself of Oedipus disappearing leaves Theseus "holding his hand in front of his face shading (*episkion*) his eyes" against what appeared. In the face of the brilliant radiance of Oedipus' disappearance, Theseus seeks shade (*skia*), seeks darkness—one is as little able to see

in superabundantly brilliant light as in utter darkness.

Divinization against de-creation, radiant light against darkness—have these opposites perhaps some hidden unity? Perhaps, without uncovering that unity itself, we shall have gained something if we can come to see the unity of these opposites as having its ultimate source in the unity of another pair of opposites, the most primordial unity of all. I think the play guides us in this direction. Could it be that these oppositions are experienced as mere stumbling-blocks, scandals, objectionable contradictions which do violence to human thinking, only by those for whom the earth on which men walk and the Olympos of the gods are ultimately two, not one? The messenger reports that shortly after Theseus is seen shading his eyes, he is seen “reverencing the earth and the Olympos of the gods together in the same speech (*ho autos logos*).” Theseus for a moment must somehow understand that the two *are* one—“the same *logos*” surely does not indicate merely a prodigious synthesizing feat of human intellect. And if we are to understand Sophocles at all—I do not pretend to understand him very well—we must try to understand this oneness in such a way that no reduction is performed: neither are the Olympian gods—or anyhow the Olympos of the gods—merely a noble lie in the service of decent human life on earth, nor is human life on earth a mere field for divine operations—men are not *in that sense* the playthings of the gods—in such a way that it is foolish for human beings to take their own lives—their joys and their sorrows—seriously. But it is very difficult to understand the oneness of the earth and the Olympos of the gods.

Let me add one remark. If I am right in thinking that something like the de-creation of Oedipus—his creation *into* nothingness—takes place in the play—not merely the exalting of someone who has been cast down, or the rewarding of one who has passed a test, or the recompensing of someone whose sufferings were, after all, not merited (or at any rate out of all proportion to merit)—if, that is, I am right in thinking that we witness, however obscurely, not merely the undoing of the *effects* of what has happened, of what has been, but the very undoing of *what has happened itself*, the creation of what has been into what is not—then I think we are not very far from the belief and hope in Him who takes away the sins of the world, who takes away not merely their “natural” consequences, but who takes away the very sins themselves, so that they are no more; or very far from the need that there be a second Adam (*deuteros* and *eschatos* as Paul says), not merely forgiveness of the sins of the first Adam. Perhaps ultimately there can be no forgiveness without annihilation. But this takes us far beyond the human realm, since surely no human being has the power to undo what has been done, although the experience that nothing less than this would be sufficient does seem to be a human experience, though perhaps not a common one.

V.

But, we must ask, does the wonderful ending of his mortal life, whatever its “content” be, satisfy Oedipus’ hope and demand that who he himself is be made manifest? We must

answer unequivocally that it does not. We are glad, to be sure, for the mildness of his passing, for the “kindly intent” (*eunoun*) displayed by the gods’ final visible action upon him. But we have heard Oedipus insist fiercely and implacably that he himself must be separated from the story of what has befallen him (which includes even what seem to be his own actions). The incomparably privileged passing is part of his story, but it is not, any more than his earlier monstrous deeds, part of himself. And yet the inclination to ascribe to Oedipus himself what properly belongs to the final action upon him, is very difficult to resist. We hear the messenger succumb to it: “For the man, not mourning nor pained with disease, was being led forth, if ever anyone among mortals, wonderful (*thaumastos*).” The properly adverbial has been made adjectival; what properly characterizes the “how” of the being led forth is made part of the “what” of the man himself. And does it not indeed seem impossible that this marvelous happening should have nothing at all to do with who Oedipus is in himself, in his very own nature? Yet is it not true that he is now led into glory as earlier he was led into ruin, that once more he is simply an object of divine action? The chorus prays: “May a just divinity augment him back again.” He was acted upon before; he is acted upon again in a way which, if it is not simply capriciously related to who Oedipus is, at most manages to vindicate without revealing, to deprive the earlier divine action of its appearance of having authoritatively revealed who Oedipus is.

Vindication without revelation, the nullification of a previous pseudo-revelation—does this not leave Oedipus still longing for the making manifest of who he is? Or has this manifestation already occurred, without immediate divine involvement? Perhaps the very opaqueness of the ending of the story of Oedipus throws us back upon an earlier moment, the moment when Oedipus says to his daughters: “It was hard, I know, daughters. But one word by itself cancels all these agonies: *to philein*, the action of loving.” In this utterance we find one alone pitted against many, and not even the action of love pitted against many sufferings, but the *word*, the mere word. What can this possibly mean?

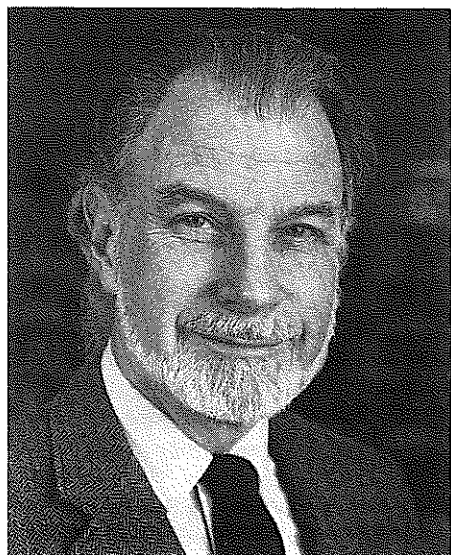
First we must understand: it is clearly the *saying* of the word that counts, the human action of declaring it. And the ultimate reason why this is so is that the declaring of such a word is, in Oedipus’ sense, the only truly free, hence genuinely revelatory, human action. For consider: how does one *know* that love cancels suffering, or fails to cancel it? Surely not as one knows that in a given instance water quenches or fails to quench fire. There is in the contest between love and suffering no process *there* to be observed—not even an interior one from which outside observers are of course excluded but which the self can observe. There is no process which is there to be observed so that its outcome—love quenching or failing to quench suffering—can be accurately reported as the word conforms itself to what is there. Nothing is there, in that sense; there is no accomplished fact for the word to conform itself to. But that means that the saying of such a word is a radically free act, not a being-acted-upon, not an acting-in-return; and as radically free it is,

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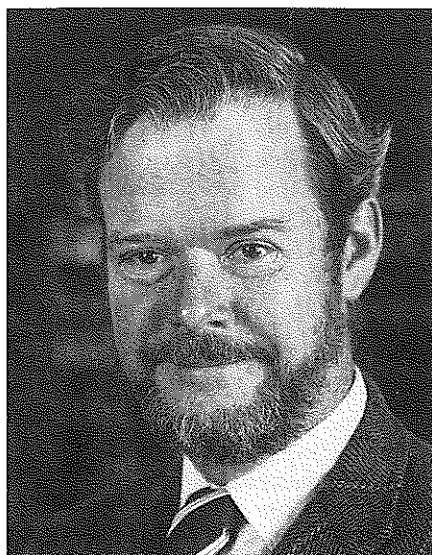
according to Oedipus' radical requirement—to which he has been driven in his resistance to the reduction of himself to the protagonist of a dreadful story—*genuinely revelatory*. Now we know who Oedipus is in his own nature, taken by himself, not as the bearer of this or that divine doom, not even as the one who nobly endures such a doom or who comes to be the conduit of certain effects or the bearer of certain properties as the result of such a doom, but as he himself is: Oedipus is the

man who pronounces the word *philein*, who says and means that the love in his life is more important than the suffering, who says that not as a result of observing an antecedently existing state of affairs, as if the power of love in his life had triumphed whether he affirmed it to triumph or not, but out of the mysterious depths of human freedom in unconstrained and unconformed affirmation, which creates the self even as it reveals it.

CAMPUS—ALUMNI NEWS



Robert S. Bart



Edward G. Sparrow, Jr.

New Deans Appointed

The appointment of new deans for St. John's eastern and western campuses was announced recently by President Richard D. Weigle.

Named for five-year terms beginning July 1st are Edward G. Sparrow, Jr., who will be dean in Annapolis, and Robert S. Bart, who will assume that post on the Santa Fe campus. Both are now members of the Annapolis faculty. They will succeed, respectively, Curtis Wilson and Robert Neidorf.

Born in Paris, France, Mr. Sparrow was educated at St. Mark's School, at Harvard College, where he obtained a

bachelor's degree of arts in 1951, and at Harvard Law School, where he was awarded a bachelor of law degree in 1954. In 1957 he earned a master's degree from Columbia University's Teachers College. He has been associated with St. John's since then.

Mr. Sparrow has served on a number of important faculty committees. He was chairman of the committee which led to the opening of the Santa Fe campus in 1964 and has served as chairman of the Polity Committee, which periodically revises the College's constitution. He is currently a member of the Instruction Committee, which acts on all academic matters at the College.

Mr. Bart received his early education at the Phillips Exeter Academy and obtained his bachelor of arts degree from Harvard College in 1940. He was a Sheldon Traveling Fellow at Harvard from 1940 to 1941. In 1957 he was granted a master's degree by St. John's.

Mr. Bart has been a tutor at St. John's since 1946, teaching in most parts of its program. A former member of the Campus Development Committee, he is a current member of the Instruction Committee. He has also served on the faculty committee which helped plan the new western campus, as well as on the Polity Committee.

The author of manuals and commentaries used in connection with St. John's language and mathematics programs, Mr. Bart was associated with Santa Fe during the past academic year, teaching there under an exchange arrangement financed by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

February Birthday Party

Because we had been concentrating on an appropriate celebration in conjunction with Homecoming (see back cover), the actual 150th anniversary of the Alumni Association founding almost went uncelebrated. To their credit, the students kept this unfortunate oversight from occurring.

The Association, or the Society of the Alumni of St. John's College, as it was originally called, was founded on February 22, 1827 (which was Commencement Day in those times), by a group of

alumni, faculty, and Visitors and Governors. The committee which drafted the first constitution was composed of A. Contee Magruder 1794, F. S. Key 1796, and James Murray 1802. The result of their efforts was read at a meeting held in the then-City Hall in Annapolis, convened at 7:00 p.m. on the 22nd.

One hundred and fifty years later, to the hour, a few students and alumni met in Great Hall on the Annapolis campus to mark the occasion. Sophomore Phil Leatherwood arranged the meeting, and his remarks opened the ceremony. His theme was "renewal of pride," a restoring of the feeling of honor and pride which was so obvious in alumni of older days, but which today seems largely to have been lost.

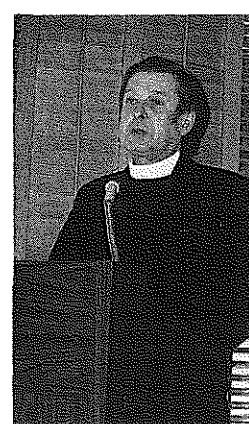
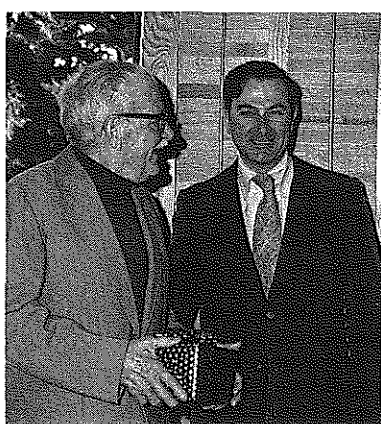
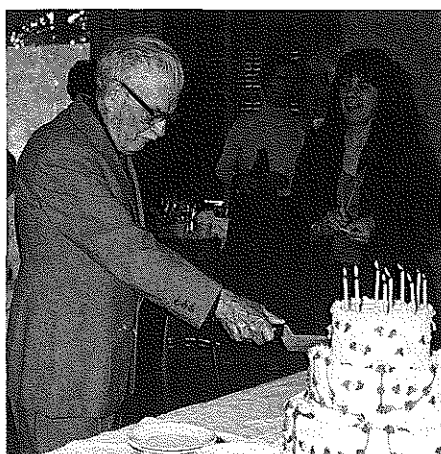
Alumni Director Tom Parran '42 then traced the life of the Association from its origin to the present, and mentioned briefly some of the men who were responsible for that "Society of Alumni."

Arthur Kungle '67 first spoke for those alumni who could not attend that evening, especially Julius Rosenberg '38 and "Bunny" Gessner '27, both past presidents of the Association. In so doing he recounted some of the highlights of the life of the College and its illustrious alumni. He then spoke for himself, asking why there was so little spirit and interest among "new program" alumni, and hazarding a guess that perhaps too much reliance has been placed on the intellectual virtues, on the intellectual life being a sufficient end unto itself.

Senior Christopher Rote, president of the Delegate Council, then expressed the hope that the meeting would mark a new awareness of unity between students and alumni. This was of particular interest to him, as he hoped very soon to cross over from one group to the other!

President Weigle, honorary alumnus in the class of 1949, spoke of the need to find better ways to reach the alumni. He talked about, and read pertinent extracts from, F.S. Key's "A Discourse on Education," first delivered at the 1827 commencement.

The brief celebration ended with punch and cookie refreshments on the back veranda of McDowell Hall, it being an unusually fine spring evening in Annapolis.



The February, 1977, issue of *The Reporter*, published for alumni, parents, and friends of the Annapolis campus, covered in some detail the 80th birthday party for former St. John's president Stringfellow Barr, so we will undertake only a summary here. Held in Princeton, N.J., the event provided alumni, their families, and others of Winkie's friends with a chance to honor his four-score years. Those "new program" classes which were in college while Winkie was president—1941 through 1950—were invited to the party, and representatives from all ten were present. Your managing editor was among the joyous celebrants, and caught the above on film; clockwise, from the upper left: Mr. Barr and his birthday cake; Francis Mason '43 presents the guest of honor with two volumes of testimonial letters from alumni and friends; The Reverend J. Winfree Smith recalls his days as a student of Winkie in Charlottesville; Peter Weiss '46 tells of his long association with Winkie, during and after St. John's; Winkie and a "classmate", Allan Hoffman '49. Hoffman, Mason, and Smith, together with Douglas Buchanan '43, Paul Comegys '41, and William Darkey '42, were co-planners of the celebration.

Transcript Requests

Mrs. Lee Rinder, the Registrar in Annapolis, reminds all alumni of the following concerning requests for transcripts: Such requests should be sent to the Registrar's Office. Federal regulations require that the request be in writ-

ing; when time is a factor, however, transcripts may be requested by telephone, with a signed request sent promptly thereafter. Mrs. Rinder also states that each alumnus is entitled to two free transcripts after leaving the College. After that, a fee of \$2.00 per copy is charged.

The College

Nancy Coiner, Cool, Collects Rhodes Scholarship

Shortly after her selection as a Rhodes scholar, Nancy Lee Coiner of the class of 1977 was seated in the Coffee Shop of McDowell Hall, being interviewed by a Baltimore television news crew. To even the casual bystander, it was immediately obvious that this charming young woman was a winner. Poised, confident, completely at ease, she considered all questions seriously and answered them clearly, responding thoughtfully even to the banal and trite queries which inevitably creep into such an exchange. Here, clearly, was a St. Johnnie who could handle herself in almost any situation.

And this seems an appropriate characteristic for a person who is one of the first 13 women ever selected for the prestigious scholarships to Oxford University. Not surprisingly, Miss Coiner has had a rather broad background of experience somewhat different from that of the average 23-year-old college senior. Among other activities she has: acted extensively both in high school and college; managed a banana field during the Israeli

War in 1973, the only Christian in her kibbutz; lived in Scotland on an organic farm operated by a woman theologian and her husband; worked the midnight shift at a wheel press in a roller skate factory; and worked as a junior clerk for the Tulsa, Okla., telephone company.

Miss Coiner came to St. John's after graduation from Nathan Hale Senior High School in Tulsa, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Henry Coiner of that city. She once considered the priesthood (she teaches Sunday school at nearby St. Anne's Church in Annapolis), and went to Israel after her sophomore year at St. John's. Among other things she learned Hebrew there, adding to her reading knowledge of Greek, Latin, French, and Italian.

Miss Coiner is the first Rhodes recipient from St. John's since Stephen W. Terry, Jr., was selected in 1945. Mr. Terry is now state chairman for the Rhodes selection committee in Indiana.

Modestly, the new Rhodes selectee suggests that any St. John's student who makes it to the interviews should make it all the way through. "This is partly because at other colleges people generally



Nancy Lee Coiner

don't talk in class, and when they do talk outside class, they tend to discuss things which really aren't important."

While at Oxford Miss Coiner wants to study early church theology and theological literature. Present plans call for all United States scholars to meet in New York in September, and to go to Britain together on the *Queen Elizabeth II*. *Bon voyage*, and good luck, Nancy Coiner.

Alumni Address Changes

From the Alumni Office comes the following: The official Alumni Mailing List for the entire College is kept in the Alumni Office in Annapolis, and labels for mailing *The College* are printed from that list. Please notify the Alumni Office of all alumni address changes; as changes are made for Santa Fe alumni, copies of the changes will be sent to the western campus.

As a matter of information, a person is considered to be an alumnus of the campus from which he graduated or last disenrolled. The class year assigned is that of the class with which the person started, no matter on which campus.

CLASS NOTES

1929

Would you believe: a man who started his first organized physical exercise at the age of 66, and at 74 covered 26 miles and 385 yards in an official

time of five hours and 46 minutes? Yes, there is such a man, our own *Everett R. Amos* of Knox, Indiana, practicing dentist and former professor of diagnosis at Indiana University School of Dentistry, who spends his winters in Guadalajara, Mexico. The marathon was run last May, and for those of you who keep up with your own readings, three hours after that race Dr. Amos's blood pressure was 110 over 70, his pulse 66! And whether at his Indiana or his Mexico home, he jogs-walks about five miles a day. (Our thanks to Dave Crowley '28 for this item.)

1934

The Reverend *Robert Lewis Jones*, retired rector of St. Andrew's (Episcopal) Church, Hanover, Mass., and his wife, the former *Adaline Moss*, moved to Annapolis in 1974. For Mrs. Jones this was a homecoming, since she is a native Annapolitan. Bob is serving as a part-time parish visitor, helping the rector of St. Anne's Church with hospital calls and other visits. In early January he filled in for the rector of Christ Church, Stevensville, Md., during the latter's illness.

1935

Dr. *Phillip J. Russillo*, another native Annapolitan, was honored in December by the St. Francis Community Health Center, Jersey City, N.J., for his "long and distinguished service to the health care facility." A room at the Center has been dedi-

cated to Dr. Russillo.

1939

From the pages of *Yachting* magazine we picked up information on two members of this class (quite a nautical group while in college, as we recall): *C. Thomas Clagett* is a co-sponsor of a new 12-meter America's Cup challenger, while *James R. McQueen*, former head man at Trojan Boat, is now president of Chris-Craft.

1950

Our thanks to *Peter Whipple* for this bit of news: *Jerome Lansner*, Assistant Director of the Code Authority, National Association of Broadcasters, will become Director of the Code, it was announced in January. Jerry has been with the NAB since 1963.

1954

On January 1st, *Bernard E. Jacob* and *Phyllis Rosner Gangel* were married in New York City. Our congratulations and best wishes to the Jacobs.

1955

Barbara (Brunner) Oosterhout, now in her third year at the University of Maryland Law School, is making a specialty of architecture barrier legislation, laws affecting the handicapped, and will have an article on the subject appearing in the summer issue of the *Maryland Law Journal*. Currently she is serving as a law intern with the Development

Disabilities Law Project of the University of Maryland Law School, a project financed by HEW.

1956

Leo L. Simms has been named personnel director at Avco Everett Research Laboratory, Inc., Everett, Mass. Leo was formerly director of personnel at Children's Hospital Medical Center in Boston, and is the holder of an M.B.A. degree from the Boston College Graduate School of Business Administration. He lives with his wife and four children in Chelmsford, Mass.

1960

The February 16th edition of the Annapolis *Evening Capital* featured as "Cook of the Week" Katherine (Hsu) Haas. Kathy, a third- and fourth-grade teacher at nearby Key School, has been teaching Chinese cooking at the Annapolis YWCA for many years. Her husband, Raymond '58, also teaches at Key. The Haases have three daughters, the eldest a freshman at Oberlin College.

At 2:18 a.m., December 27, 1976, at the Wilmington (Del.) Medical Center, Master Frank Grahame Murray increased the size of the Frank Murray (Fiona Paul) family by 50%. In a most cleverly composed announcement, Fiona and Frank reported the arrival of their first-born. ("He was particularly pleased that his father, an occasional professor of child development at the University of Delaware, was now taking his discipline more seriously, and he began quickly to educate the professor on a number of theoretical points in the field.") Young Grahame is, at least for the while, making his home with his parents in Newark, Del.

1965

Grace (Logerfo) Dawson, a research assistant at the Urban Institute's Land Use Center in Washington, D.C., is the author of an article on the development of Fairfax County, Va., which appeared in the December 11, 1976, edition of *The Washington Post*.

C. Grant Luckhardt was recently promoted, with tenure, in the philosophy department at Georgia State University. He will have some released time this spring, with a monetary grant, to visit England to finish a translation of Wittgenstein. Next winter the Cornell University Press will publish *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*, an anthology of invited essays which Grant will edit. He and his wife, Arabelle (Davies) '67, make their home in Atlanta.

1968—Santa Fe

By way of the Santa Fe campus comes a report from Frederick L. Wicks on his activities this past year. Rick and a colleague have established the Butterfly Children's Center, a day-care center, using the facilities of the Turnagain United Methodist Church in Anchorage, Alaska. His story is one of frustrations and gratifications, as the project got underway last June, financed largely by a personal loan he and his colleague obtained. As of December, the time of Rick's report, they were successfully underway, and had applied for a financial grant from the city of Anchorage; we join Rick's many friends in hoping that the application was successful, and that his plans for improvement

of program and expansion of facilities can soon be realized. For anyone who would like to write to Rick, his address is 3521 Knik Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99503.

1969

Mark Mandel and his wife, the former Rene Szafr, are the proud parents of Susannah Rachel Mandel, their first "joint publication", with a "release date" of December 15th. Mark also writes that he received a small grant from the University of California at Berkeley, Graduate Division, to run a pilot program to test the connection between iconicity in signs of American Sign Language and the ease of learning them for hearing people who know no sign. Mark is, as this should indicate, a graduate student in linguistics.

1970

From far-off Tehran comes a postal card report from a "postcard Herodotus," Edward M. Macierowski. Ed finds the Iranians "amazingly polite," and is realizing how much he, as the foreigner, is the eccentric there. Ed also says he has met David Riggs '69, who, our records indicate, works for a computer firm in Iran.

1971

Just as these notes were being put together, there came a fine letter from Douglas Bennett, to report on his doings since graduation. He reminds us that during his time at St. John's he was more interested in writing music than words (in the spring of 1970 he did a short dance piece for the Modern Dance Class of Georgia Cushman '57) and since then there have been several shorter dances for New York choreographer Marcia Plevin. His most recent piece is a "disco" ballet, to be performed at the University of California at Santa Barbara April 6-9. Doug's more regular work for the past fourteen months has been as a "disco jockey" in his own discotheques. These are part of two restaurants, each named "The Monster," in which he has been involved as business manager, partner, and maitre d' for nearly six years. They are located in Cherry Grove, Fire Island, N.Y., and in Key West, Fla. Doug's letter closes with the following: "I send this letter from a feeling of comradeship, in thought at least, for those who like me have kept a love of having learned well at a school which teaches how to learn at all."

Lelia Straw (Cookie) writes that she has lived in San Francisco for the past four years, working for a small pharmaceutical firm (Alza) as an administrator and sometime chemist. "That makes me living proof that a liberal artist can do anything." She says she cooks a lot, and takes ballet lessons. In the letter was information on other alumni: Jeff and Karen Crabtree (see 1972) are parents, George Elias is working toward an engineering degree at the University of California at Berkeley, Frank Freeze threatens to go back to live in France again, and Michael Victoroff is a very tired doctor in Rochester, N.Y.

1972

Karen (Shavin) and T. Jefferson Crabtree report the birth on December 9th of Lauren Alisa Crabtree. The Crabtrees have bought an old house in Baltimore and are busy restoring it. Jeff is a part-

time architecture student at the University of Maryland, while Karen is completing an M.Ed. degree at Johns Hopkins University in early child education, and is working full-time in the library there.

The December, 1976, issue of *Independent School* contains an article by Grant Wiggins entitled "Philosophy? In High School?" Grant teaches at the Loomis-Chaffee School in Windsor, Conn.

1972—Santa Fe

Stephen DeLuca and Elizabeth Bell were married on August 21, 1976, in Nepton, Ontario. He is scheduled to begin graduate school in film production in Austin, Tex. The DeLucas live at 1110-C, Lake Austin Boulevard, in Austin.

1973

A usually reliable source informs us that Debora Gilliland is a third-year medical student in Philadelphia, but said source didn't know which school. Sorry, Debbie.

1974

Tom Dolan is now a child-care worker at Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, Mass., working with deaf-blind children.

Edmund F. Raspa III and Sallie Ann Dobrer '75 were married on what must have been the last rainy day in the Los Angeles area last August. Sallie is a legal secretary for a Beverly Hills law firm, and plans to work for a para-legal certificate sometime this year. Ed has been working on the administrative staff of Price Waterhouse, and hopes to resume architectural training soon.

1974—Santa Fe

Thomas Jelliffe is in Germany studying philosophy at Tübingen on a projected two-year ground work for a Ph.D. degree.

David and Christy (Pierce) MacLaine are in Chicago, where David is writing and Christy is working as a legal secretary at Baker and McKenzie.

Donald Merriell is working for Mortimer Adler in Chicago.

And the Windy City has claimed another of this class: Celia Yerger (Cici) reports completion of her first semester of classes at Northwestern University School of Law.

1975—Santa Fe

Giselle Minoli lives in San Francisco and works in the advertising end of CBS Records. She studies
(Continued on back cover)

In Memoriam

1915—Robert S. Ennis, Annapolis, Md., February 23, 1977.

1922—Frederick G. Madara, Orlando, Fla., January 7, 1977.

1924—Sydney S. Handy, Jr., Baltimore, Md., November 27, 1976.

1926—William Davidson, Sr., Baltimore, Md., January 28, 1977.

1926—David S. Matthews, Chestertown, Md., January 12, 1977.

1931—Joseph M. Warfield, Owings Mills, Md., October 25, 1976.

Library Needs

From Miss Charlotte Fletcher, the Librarian in Annapolis, comes a new "shopping list" of out-of-print or very costly books which are needed by the Library. If anyone could contribute any of these, or would like to give the purchase price, the College community would be most grateful:

Adams, J.T. *New England in the Republic*, (Scholarly, \$27.00)

Bowers, Claude, *The Tragic Era*, (out-of-print)

Cushing, F.H. *Zuni Folk Tales*, (AMS, \$35.00)

Hart, Albert B., *Formation of the Union*, (out-of-print)

Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs*, (out-of-print)

Means, Gaston B., *The Strange Death of President Harding*, (out-of-print)

Marshall, Alfred, *Principles of Economy*, (Folcroft, \$45.00)

Nevins, Allan, *Grover Cleveland*, (Books for Libraries, \$39.50).

HOMECOMING BIRTHDAY PARTY

This year Homecoming will be held on September 30th—October 1st. The "theme" is ready-made: the sesquicentennial celebration of the founding of the Alumni Association. Yes, it was indeed one hundred and fifty years ago last February 22nd that a group of alumni, faculty, and Visitors and Governors, including a sometime poet named Key, met to form a Society of the Alumni of St. John's College. And while the origins of other alumni associations are somewhat vague, we see no reason to doubt that we are least the third oldest.

We hope to include as part of the celebration those classes which will be marking special reunions this year. In order to do so, the Homecoming Committee must know by mid-summer which classes can be counted on. We already know that the Class of 1927, under the leadership of "Bunny" Gessner, has started its planning. And for the Class of 1937, members as widely separated as Alan Pike in Hawaii and Merrill Mitchell in Virginia have been in touch with the Alumni Office. Other classes, especially the 25-year class, 1952, should be getting things together soon. Successful reunions require long lead-times and much communication. The Alumni Office can help with address lists, mailings, and other administrative activities, but someone in each class must take the initiative to get things started. In short, the Alumni Office and the Association do not plan reunions, classes do.

And in a most practical vein: hotel and motel rooms in Annapolis on any weekend are difficult to find; in the early fall they are especially hard to locate on short notice. Our best advice would be to make your reservations now, even if circumstance forces you to cancel later. The Alumni Office cannot work any magic with local lodging places, so please do not rely on us for last minute help.

So make your plans now to join in the Association birthday party—and watch for more detailed plans and program announcements in the July issue.

dance every night after work, with an eye perhaps to an eventual career in musical theater. Giselle has seen Elliott Marseille S74, Judith Sharlin S74, Derk Loeks S73, Gary Moody S73, and India Williams S73 in the Bay area.

1976

Kimberly Beaton and Joseph L. Quintero of Austin, Tex., were married last year. Kimberly finished her tour of duty with the Army, and she and her husband moved to Springville, Utah, where he is a sales manager for Heathman Chevrolet-Buick. Joe and Kimberly became the parents of Rachel Aurelia Quintero on January 11th.

1976—Santa Fe

From the Santa Fe campus comes word that Bridget Houston is living with her family in Oklahoma City and working as a draftsman for Cities Service Oil Company. She wrote that "... it's been nice to just let down and take it easy for a while."

Katya Shirokow is working in Munich, Germany, in journalism and the news media, and wants to continue her studies in economics and international affairs. She writes: "I hope that things are going well for St. John's; the education I have

received I have occasion nearly every day to be thankful for: for one thing I can read, and I can talk about nearly anything. But now I am ready to be involved in the business community and look forward to acquiring the necessary tools. Incidentally, by the purest chance some weeks ago, I was in a large crowd in the center of town (Munich) on Marienplatz, and looked up to find Matt Krane S75 standing in front of me. He is also living here for some months and we have had the occasion to get together a few times already. The world is a very big place but St. Johnnies always find one another I suppose."

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