

# The St. John's Review

Volume XXXVIII, number one (1988 - 1)

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The *St. John's Review* is published thrice yearly by the Office of the Dean, St. John's College, Annapolis; William Dyal, President; Thomas Slakey, Dean. For those not on the distribution list, subscriptions are \$12.00 yearly. Unsolicited essays, stories, poems, and reasoned letters are welcome. Address correspondence to the *Review*, St. John's College, Annapolis, MD 21404. Back issues are available, at \$4.00 per issue, from the St. John's College Bookstore.

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ISSN 0277-4720

Composition

*Best Impressions*

Printing

*The St. John's College Print Shop*

***A Notice about Volume Numbering and Dating***

The two preceding issues of the *Review* were Volume 37, number one, which contained the writings of William O'Grady, and Volume 37, numbers two and three, the double issue that included essays in honor of Mr. O'Grady. They bore the dates Winter, 1986, and Spring, 1986. The *Review* now continues with Volume 38, of which there will be three issues, labelled one, two, and three, and bearing the date 1988, without the specification of seasons. No issues of the *Review* bore the date 1987.

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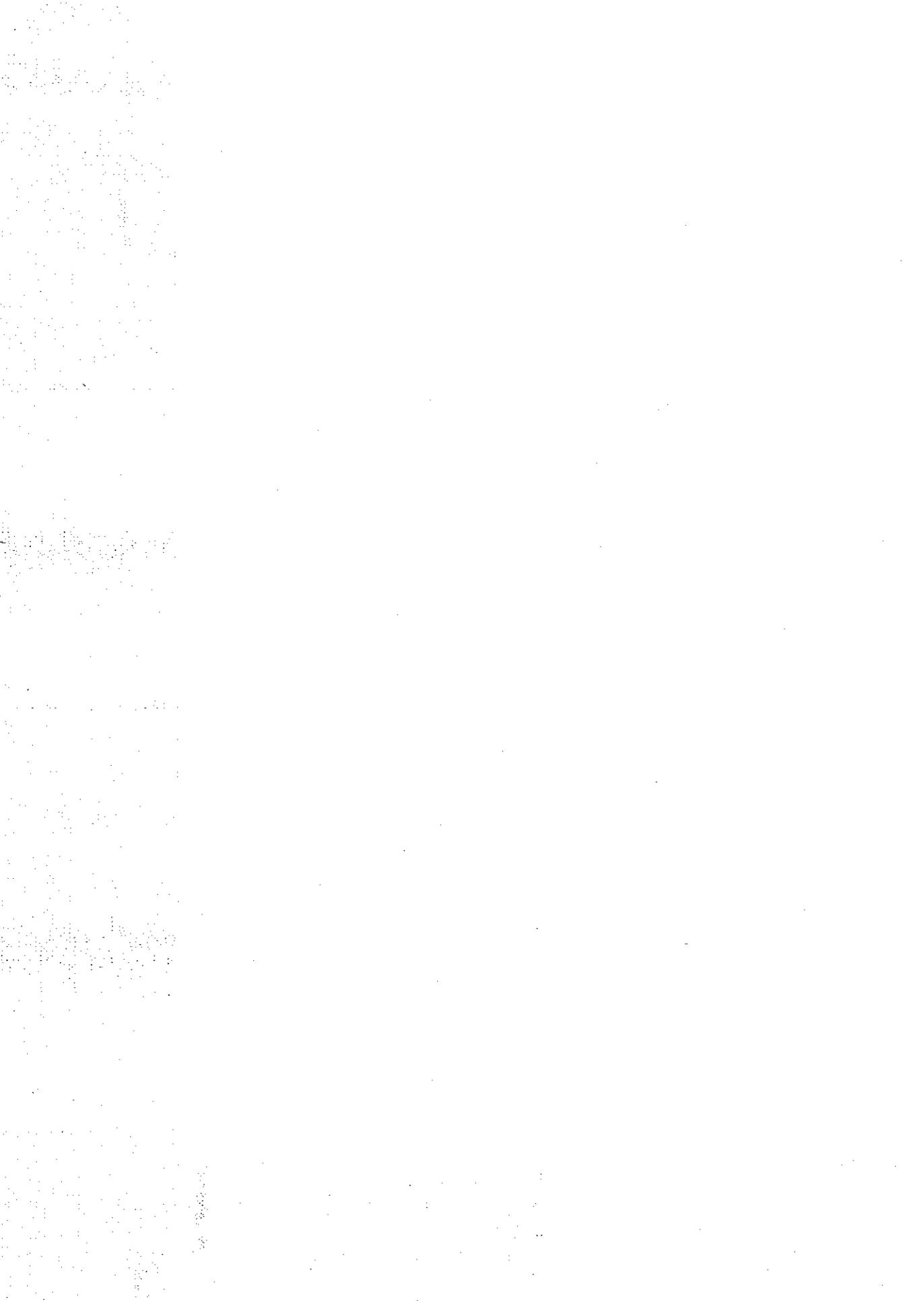
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# 'Ear-Tickling Nonsense': A New Context for Musical Expression in Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets

Wye J. Allanbrook

My talk today is a "likely story"—an attempt to present a coherent aesthetic context in which to place some familiar music, in the light of several questions that have occupied me recently. The music is some string quartets of Mozart. The questions are threefold: first, the problem referred to by the teaser in my title: why did late-eighteenth-century theorists and critics think so little of music without a text, that "ear-tickling nonsense," as one described it?<sup>1</sup> Second, why is there so little recognition today of the importance of the *topos*, or characteristic musical style, to the rhetoric of Classic music? And finally, perhaps most perplexingly, what does instrumental music express? Can we say that it is *about* something? I think the three questions are related, and the following is my attempt to tell a convincing story about this music that takes them into account.

It is strange that a repertoire we place high in the canon of serious music—the Classic instrumental repertoire—developed without

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A shorter version of the lecture was delivered at the October, 1987, conference of the Midwest Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and was awarded the prize for the best paper.

spokesmen for its new and compelling ways; no one seemed to be watching. Or the few who were watching clung to a tradition that devalued instrumental music as at best unnatural and uninstructional, and at worst "nothing but mere noise."<sup>2</sup> We think of the last decades of the eighteenth century as the time when instrumental music had at last attained its majority: Haydn "fathered" the string quartet and symphony, so the story goes, and J.S. Bach had already contributed masterworks for various instrumental ensembles. Nevertheless, as one observer points out, in Bach's *oeuvre* vocal works predominate; he did not grant pride of place to these autonomous instrumental marvels.<sup>3</sup> And, as the quotations suggest, writers on music in the latter half of the century seem strangely to overlook the untexted works of instrumental genius that were being composed under their noses. We expect such "mainstream" music to have been as central to its own time as it is to ours, and not, as is more the truth, somewhat condescended to. Did late-eighteenth-century writers on music simply ignore a considerable body of eloquent and popular music? Is this another occasion to chide music theory for being myopic about actual musical practice? My "likely story" lays less blame at the feet of the theorists and critics of the period, although it does not pretend to return them to full authority. The very aesthetic theories that devalued instrumental music—the body of mimetic doctrine—nevertheless provide a surer foundation for understanding its late-eighteenth-century flowering than any theory that followed. But our peculiar modern unease with aesthetic theories that characterize art as referential, not to say imitative, has blinded us to this relationship, leaving us to construct after our own lights a picture of Classic instrumental music that has stubbornly prevailed.

Although it is fairly well accepted that Baroque music operated under the old-fashioned Aristotelian dogma that art is imitation, most students of what we call "Classic" music abandon this kind of talk with relief, even though these two repertoires have in fact much in common. Talk that suggests pictorialism or a program is avoided by the sophisticated. Of course it is difficult to ignore the obvious: no one would think of discussing Beethoven's Sixth Symphony without mentioning the pastoral, or Mozart's so-called "Hunt" Quartet without a reference to the type of music that gave it its nickname. But these are considered exceptional, and the ubiquity of such allusions is ignored: no standard analysis of the first movement of Mozart's String Quartet in D minor, K. 421, mentions the flavor of the antique lament it takes on by using that old-fashioned organizing device, the chaconne bass; or that his Sonata in B-flat major, K. 333, opens with the piano imitating a music box playing a tune in the so-called *Empfindsamer*, or "sen-

sitive" style. Although sophisticated techniques exist for structural analysis on the deepest levels, the level that is in fact most palpable, and moves us most directly—the level on which the expressive gestures that enliven the work are operating—is generally treated as though it didn't exist.

One reason for this silence is the powerful legacy left by writers on music aesthetics in the nineteenth century. The intellectual traditions of the previous age have been rendered opaque to us by the radical change in attitudes toward expression in music that took place over a period of one hundred years. Two oft-quoted remarks provide the extremes for this enormous traversal of aesthetic distance. "Sonata, what do you want of me?" asked Fontenelle, or at least, more importantly, in 1768 Rousseau says he did.<sup>4</sup> A little over one hundred years later Walter Pater turned matters on their head in a remark that has become an aphorism: "All art aspires constantly to the condition of music."<sup>5</sup> My gloss of this hypothetical exchange between epochs: the eighteenth century asks a rhetorical question: "Instrumental music, whatever can you imagine you offer me?" The nineteenth century's reply is, resoundingly, "Everything."

Clearly, the type of music each era embraced as the appropriate paradigm for the art was closely linked to the prevalent attitude toward musical expression. Eighteenth-century theorists and composers consistently gave primacy to vocal music, to music "completed" by a text. Rousseau quotes Fontenelle approvingly on instrumental music's inscrutability because of his own strong preference for song. His article on *unité de mélodie* in the *Dictionnaire* (1768) clearly articulates this prejudice:

Now the pleasure in harmony is a pleasure of the senses pure and simple, and the pleasure of the senses is always brief; saturation and boredom follow it quickly. But the pleasure in melody and song is a pleasure of interest and feeling *which speaks to the heart* . . .

Music, therefore, must necessarily sing in order to move, to please, to sustain interest and attention . . . Any music that does not sing is boring. [italics mine]

Rousseau's judgment was echoed by most respectable writers through the century. H.C. Koch, an important thinker about music to whose work I will return, could still write in his *Musikalisches Lexikon* of 1802, in the article *Instrumentalmusik*, "It remains an absolute fact that song maintains a most obvious and undeniable superiority over instrumental music."<sup>6</sup>

It is true that Koch has some positive things to say about the possibilities for imitation in the instrumental works of certain composers:

The possibility of injecting . . . a particular [*bestimmt*] character into the sonata, as a pure piece of instrumental music, has long since been demonstrated by the sonatas of C. Ph. E. Bach, and in *Haydn's* and *Mozart's* works of this type one finds more recent evidence for this assertion. (article *Sonate*)

But he still finds it necessary in the last analysis to make the same judgement about the relative merits of instrumental and vocal music that his predecessors had been making throughout the century. The sonata presents a blank and impenetrable facade to these writers because, in their opinion, without language it can imitate no objects, and thereby offers the listener mere sensual pleasure instead of moral articulacy. Music left to itself, they argued, can paint feelings only in a vague and generic way, since its means of painting are necessarily "indeterminate" (*unbestimmt*). Koch concedes that textless music can "work directly on our hearts and . . . arouse in us pleasant or unpleasant feelings." "If, however," he continues,

it should undertake to stimulate in us feelings for which the situation in which we find ourselves offers no occasion, feelings to which our hearts are not open, . . . it lacks the means to make these feelings interesting to our hearts. It cannot make intelligible to us in these circumstances why it wants to transport us into gentle or sad, exalted or happy, feelings; it cannot awaken in us either the images of that good whose enjoyment is to delight us, or the images of that evil that is to cause fear or distress. . . . In vocal music, on the other hand, the text prepares the spectator, helps him to the intended frame of mind, and gives interest to the feelings to be expressed. (article *Instrumentalmusik*)

Only a text can provide a context, can supply for the music the determinacy necessary if the listener's cognitive and moral faculties are to be brought into play. Because pure instrumental music moves the feelings directly, without reference to an external correlative or final cause, it must always remain incomplete.

But confidence in the expression in music of such moral universals, and in the existence of the universals themselves, was on the wane. Thus, as the nineteenth century began, this apparent deficiency began to take on the look of a virtue. As they came to place a high value on originality and individual expression, writers delighted in the very muteness and lack of prescription in instrumental music that had so disturbed the eighteenth-century rationalists. As Joseph Kerman points out, it was not "hymns or waltzes or cantatas" that Pater idealized, but "pure" symphonic music,<sup>7</sup> which, precisely because of this freedom from con-

nection with extra-musical things, epitomized to the Romantics what is most “musical” about music. “Pure music” had the potential to be the truest poetry, “which is all the purer,” said one early nineteenth-century critic, “the less it is dragged down into the region of vulgar meaning by words (which are always laden with connotations).”<sup>8</sup> In short, the doctrine of music as a mimetic art yielded to that of music as an autonomous one, and there was little looking back. We today have inherited this aesthetic with its elevation of instrumental music as the dominant mode, and consequently we resist a perspective that asserts the natural primacy of song as a first principle. So firmly are we in the grip of this particular notion of musical priorities, however dimly we perceive it, that the high position the eighteenth century accorded to melody seems touchingly primitive, and not worthy of much attention.

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If Classic instrumental music is not the ideal and autonomous music the Romantics imagined, how can we bend *mimetic* doctrine to describe it? A brief look at the long history of the doctrine is in order: in one form or another it influenced thinking about art from classical antiquity until the end of the eighteenth century, when it seems to disappear. Although the nature of object and imitator has varied with different aesthetic practices, one central assumption unifies them all: that of a world held in common among human beings, which it is the artist’s role to copy in some fashion in his art—to “catch in his mirror,” in M. H. Abrams’ well-known metaphor.<sup>9</sup> This world is external to the individual soul, and the composer must look to it to give form to his musical materials. Of course the constituency of this external world—the nature of nature—has varied from time to time. Most mimetic doctrines are in some way didactic or corrective: in the Renaissance music was essentially a Pythagorean art, imitating the numbers that inform God’s cosmos; human music, by vibrating in time with universal harmony, would bring human souls into a proper attunement. But over the years after the publication of works like Descartes’ *Les passions de l’âme* in 1649, attention turned to humankind in a more rational, mechanistic cosmos, and the enterprise was to represent human nature by codifying our *passions* and *thus* speaking to our souls. Descartes legitimized the passions, acquitting them of mere excess, and proposing them as an instrument whereby the body could be brought under some measure of control. “Even those who have the weakest souls,” he stated, “could acquire absolute mastery over all their passions if we employed sufficient ingenuity in training and guiding them.”<sup>10</sup> Thus,

although the moral intent was somewhat mooted in the eighteenth century, still to "paint the passions" amounted to a moral imperative to the composer. "The expression of the passions in their different modifications," says Koch in his article on expression, "is the proper aim of music, and . . . the principal requirement of every composition."

"Expression" became the word of choice in the later eighteenth century, supplanting "imitation" in accounts of music's natural task, and this use of the all-important word has misled many modern scholars. But too frequently in eighteenth-century texts the term has been read as meaning "self-expression"—the venting, or "pressing out," of the artist's original and idiosyncratic feelings in an uncalculated, spontaneous manner. As a result, recent writers have tended to discover this predominant doctrine of nineteenth-century aesthetics in texts earlier and earlier in the eighteenth century, assuming that the word "expression" directs the composer to turn inward to his private passions.<sup>11</sup> Yet in most cases the adoption of the word "expression" in eighteenth-century texts does not represent a substantive rejection of mimetic doctrines, for the question does not actually turn on the use of the verb to "express" over the verb to "imitate." The crux is whether or not there exists a confidence that human feelings have models, which we can construct because of our shared knowledge of what the passions are like. If such a confidence exists, then the composer is involved in the act of expressing feelings, of "painting the passions," *not* when he looks to the unique inner authority of his own emotions to give shape to his musical materials, but when he consults these universal authoritative models.

Where this confidence in a shared human nature is absent, as it was in the nineteenth century, feelings are judged not to be susceptible of codification; they are fluid, mysterious, part of the dark self. Clearly, however, Koch still trusts in the *consensus gentium*; he sees the composer in possession of a "science"—a psych-ology—for portraying the passions, which he defines as "movements of the soul" (*Gemüthsbewegungen*). Because music is a sequential art, he argues, it is "fully suited to portray all these kinds of movements of the soul, so to make them perceptible to the ear, if they are only sufficiently familiar to the composer and he is sufficiently in possession of the science to imitate each movement through harmony and melody." (article *Ausdruck*<sup>12</sup>)

On occasion Koch seems to hint that the source of the feelings is to be found within the composer himself, in passages that have been interpreted as a nod toward the doctrine of self-expression: "Only that," he says, "which [the composer] feels vividly will he express success-

fully.” (article *Ausdruck*) This sentiment would seem to echo the dictum of C. P. E. Bach—“the extreme expressionist of the eighteenth century,” as Dahlhaus calls him<sup>13</sup>—that a musician cannot move others unless he himself is moved. But the rest of Koch’s discussion leaves no reason for doubt that for him the subject matter of music is not the personal and interior, but the enduring and universal passions of men as they are recognized by persons of reason and taste. Success comes to the composer from his familiarity with the structure of these shared passions, and from a careful study of the means music has at its disposal to imitate them. To “feel vividly” is to put oneself in the mode that the model codifies, to see what it feels like to experience a particular passion; study—not self-expression—makes the artist.

Koch was not alone in styling passions as “movements of the soul.” It was the consensus in the eighteenth century that the link that binds music and the passions is motion—that music imitates the passions by means of musical movement. One could quote as an exemplary passage Daniel Webb’s argument from his *Observations on the Correspondence Between Poetry and Music* (1769):

I shall suppose, that it is in the nature of music to excite similar vibrations, to communicate similar movements to nerves and spirits. For, if music owes its being to motion, and, if passion cannot well be conceived to exist without it, we have a right to conclude, that the agreement of music with passion can have no other origin than a coincidence of movements.<sup>14</sup>

Johann Jakob Engel, in his *Ueber die musikalische Malerey (On Painting in Music; 1780)*, a treatise that Koch quotes extensively, elaborates a theory of the reciprocal transmission of these vibrations from soul to body and from body to soul that is typical of popular attempts at scientific explanations of music’s effects:

Since all representations of the passions of the soul are bound inseparably with certain corresponding movements in the nervous system, they are maintained and strengthened by the observation of these movements. Yet not only do these corresponding natural vibrations arise in the body when previously in the souls the representations of the passions have been aroused; but also these representations of the passions arise in the soul when previously in the body the related vibrations have been produced. The influence is mutual: the same path that travels from the soul into the body travels back from the body into the soul. By nothing, however, are these vibrations so certainly, so powerfully, so variously produced, as through pitches.<sup>15</sup>

In this resonance theory of affects, if the soul can be the sending oscillator, Engel reasons, why can’t the process be reversed?

There are obvious problems with this "theory," none of which should worry us unduly; they do not seem to have troubled its advocates, and our concern is with what satisfies them. The principal difficulty is precisely what does occur in the soul of the listener: is he transported by the effects of pitches to experience the passion in its fullness on the spot, or does he merely *recognize* the feeling pricked out by the tones? Somehow the motions of the tones, imitating the recognizable motions of our passions, steal upon us as listeners and have this effect; we recognize what we already knew, and in the directness of this sensing lies the enigma that often causes heavy weather in modern struggles with the question of expression in music. Engel's position on the question is somewhat ambiguous. When he is advancing the theory of sympathetic vibrations, he does use the verb "awakens" (*erweckt*), as if the listener were roused to experience the same emotion as the subject. But he follows by comparing the effect on the soul of the listener to the "compassion," or "feeling with" (*Mitleid, Mitfreude*), that arises in the soul when one hears the howls of a suffering beast (p. 143). This comparison gives a certain distance to the feeling in the listener's soul; compassion is not the same as passion. In speaking of imitation in more narrowly musical terms, he neatly sidesteps the problem by calling the effect of the oscillations an "impression" (*Eindruck*) made on the soul. When the actual act of composition is in question, the feeling is not so much aroused in the soul as it is *impressed* therein, perceived, not awakened: "the impression of a gentle color has something similar to the impression of a gentle pitch on the soul" (p. 140).

Peter Kivy, in his influential book on musical expression, *The Corded Shell*, in which he elaborates a modern theory of expression that takes its inspiration from eighteenth-century writings, is critical of what he terms the "arousal" theory, arguing, for example, that no listener could or would willingly endure the range of emotions and the deep anguish depicted in a five-hour performance of *Tristan*.<sup>16</sup> His studied readings of the texts seek an exactitude in these writers that they do not possess. They are interested in the exercise of their craft, and somewhat loose in determining the precise way in which the listener is affected. Is the listener aroused? Does he recognize? Both accounts have some plausibility. At times the notion of being "transported irresistibly" (p. 144) to joy or sadness does find a place in the prose, but the specter of an audience now moved to martial wrath, now dulled to melancholy, does not seem to weigh on the minds of these writers. Surely they would find the picture of an audience collectively weeping in the concert hall as absurd as does Kivy, and are using the verb "to arouse" in a metaphorical sense. Perhaps the happiest resolution of the

question is to take “arouse” as “arouse to sympathetic cognition of,” in accord with the ambiguities eighteenth-century proponents of the theory seemed to have comfortably accepted.

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Both Engel and Koch assert that music has sufficient means to imitate the motions of the passions, and they inventory these resources in various passages. Here late-eighteenth-century mimetic theories grow vague. Recent scholarship has rectified the false impression that writers in the tradition of the Baroque doctrine of the affections—Mattheson et al.—not only retained the confidence that the passions could be codified, but had codified them thoroughly.<sup>17</sup> Such attempts were, in fact, rare, and often idiosyncratic; the confidence didn’t produce the cookbook. Later eighteenth-century notions are even less specific; the notion of the imitation of movements is left to a large extent to the taste and science of the composer. Koch, for example, lists as the devices at music’s disposal:

1)Harmony, . . . which in gentle and pleasant affects must progress lightly and naturally, without great complexities and heavy delays; in unpleasant, especially vigorous affects, however, [it is] interrupted, with frequent modulations, . . . with greater complexities, many and uncommon dissonances . . . 2)Meter, by means of which just by itself we can imitate the general quality of every kind of movement. 3) Melody and rhythm, which . . . are also already capable by themselves of picturing the speech of all passions. 4) The alterations in strength and weakness of tones, which also contribute much to expression. 5) The accompaniment, and especially the choice and variety of accompanying instruments; and finally 6) Modulations and delays in other keys. (article *Ausdruck*)

Elsewhere, in the article *Leidenschaft* (“passion”), Koch quotes a long excerpt from Engel that categorizes the passions themselves, following it up with a lengthy but again only general discussion of particular musical devices for representing them.

The concern seems to be that too profuse a system of categories will lead to gimmickry in music. We can better understand this concern if we look at the kind of composition these writers disapproved of. The change in terminology from “imitation” and “mimesis” to “expression,” far from stemming from a disaffection from the aesthetic position that art is properly a reflector of a common nature, seems to have come about on account of a growing distaste for the *narrowly* mimetic effect, for the habit of “madrigalism” or “word-painting.” Much of the word-painting in Baroque vocal texts seemed all too *bes-*

timmt, too “determinate,” for this galant age. Engel makes clear this distinction between the mimetic expression of feelings (*Empfindungen*) and the mere representation of an object—“word-painting” in the strictest sense of the word:

The composer should always paint feelings rather than objects of feeling; always the state into which the soul and with it the body are removed through contemplation of a certain circumstance and occasion, and not this circumstance and occasion itself. . . . One should . . . paint the inner movements of the soul in a storm rather than the actual storm that arouses these movements. (p. 146)

Often, as both Koch and Engel point out, the internal and the external will coincide. A musical figure, for example, which paints the restless bobbing of a skiff on the sea is really catching the motion of the soul torn between fear and hope; Koch uses this example in his own article on “painting,” “*Malerey*.” In other cases, seizing on a single word and giving it an individual expression—“painting” it—will either trivialize the feeling of the whole or divert it in an inappropriate direction. The advice to paint feelings rather than objects was hardly new, having been given as early as 1719 by the Abbé Dubos, in his treatise on a comparative system of the arts,<sup>18</sup> and it was echoed with increasing frequency as writers looked back with scorn on what they took as the madrigalizing habits of their Baroque predecessors. By the end of the century it had become canonical. The inscription placed by Beethoven at the head of the Pastoral Symphony, “Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerey” (“Not painting, but the expression of feeling”) has been connected with Engel’s formulation quoted above, “The composer should always paint feelings rather than objects of feelings.” Beethoven’s characterization of the expressive matter of his famous programme symphony manifests the thorough distaste of the times for too literal a connection between tone and text. In this context Koch quotes an image from Sulzer’s article *Ausdruck*:

The kind of work that merely fills our imaginations with a row of harmonious tones without *engaging our hearts*, resembles a heaven beautifully painted by the setting sun. The lovely mixture of various colors amuses us; but in the figures of the clouds we see nothing that can *engage the heart*. (article *Ausdruck*; italics mine)

Again there is the echo of that phrase of Rousseau’s: “to engage the heart.” The desideratum is a music that, neither abstract nor filled with fussy pictorialisms, speaks directly to the soul. And the operative metaphor is still captured in the word “speaks.”

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Clearly, from this account, the aim of this music is the same as that of the art of rhetoric—to persuade. That is, to arouse the listener to sympathetic cognition of common human conditions. To learn just how Classic instrumental music is to “speak to the heart,” we can again turn to Koch. In his article on instrumental music, he invents a pseudo-history for its development, hypothesizing that instruments first performed separately from voices at the time of the Pythian games in honor of Apollo. This could take place because the victory songs with their texts were already familiar to the spectators.

The entire substance of such a piece . . . was not only a well-known theme, but also an engaging one. The feelings it was supposed to express were nearly aroused in the spectators already; their hearts were . . . opened up just for these feelings. It is thus understandable that music in these circumstances could have a very specific effect on the hearts of the spectators even without song, that is, without being united with poetry, through its inarticulate but passionate tones, which in their sequence and movement had certain similarities with the natural utterances of these feelings. These were the circumstances in which at this time the remarkable separation of song from instrumental music took place, which in later times had such a great influence on music. On the one hand it gave rise to the high degree of development instrumental music has now attained, but on the other hand it assured that [instrumental music] would be used on those occasions and circumstances in which it must necessarily work a specific effect on our heart.

If instrumental music . . . is meant to awaken and maintain specific feelings, then it must be involved in such political, religious, or domestic circumstances and actions as are of pronounced interest for us, and in which our heart is predisposed to the expression of the feelings [the music] is supposed to awaken and maintain. (article *Instrumentalmusik*)

Koch’s account is revealing because it connects successfully expressive instrumental music closely with occasions; instrumental music is properly “occasional music,” because the occasion provides the particularity the medium lacks by itself. He thus identifies the source of the efficacy of the *topoi* or characteristic styles: the “political, religious, or domestic” associations they bring with them supply the context that complements the indeterminate feelings aroused naturally by the textless music itself; the minuet was the favorite dance of the *ancien régime*, fugues were popularly used in church music. The step Koch fails to take is to realize that these occasional styles can be imported from their religious or social rituals into art music to provide that music with the particularity—the referentiality—mimesis requires. For this reason he must always assert that the high instrumental forms are poorer than their vocal correlates.

At the same time these characteristic styles begin to be woven together in a new way. Where a Baroque work would imitate one temperament, one stance, in each movement, a Classic movement admits of several, in a play of light and shadow. The result is that each movement is not monolithic, but an entire universe of discourse, functioning as a cosmic mirror, a micro-world reflecting the protean activities on the stage of the *theatrum mundi*. Having a serene confidence in the pre-existing hierarchy of kinds and classes, Classic instrumental music approvingly images them in their variousness and order. The characteristic styles, the "commonplaces" of musical discourse, are a ready-to-hand vocabulary of musical expression gathered from the simpler music written to accompany daily activities: court life, worship, the hunt. From their connections to the noble, middle-class, and humble, the pious and impious, whatever is proud or abased, tranquil or restless, antique or modern, in these occasions, they draw their referential power and their affect.

There is a second way in which this music imitates the word: the *topoi*, the content, as it were, have to be woven together "grammatically" into a convincing musical "text." Here the developing teaching about the "syntax" of a musical period is important. Whereas in earlier music its resemblance to speech was most often remarked in the most obvious imitations of speech rhythms—recitative, and its descendant, declamation—in Classic music the relation of speech to music becomes thoroughly internalized, extending to all articulations of musical lengths. Koch begins his treatise on the composition of melody, a volume entitled "The Mechanical Rules for Melody," by comparing melody to oratory:

Certain . . . resting-points for the soul are generally necessary in speech, and thus also in the products of those fine arts that attain their goal through speech, namely poetry and rhetoric, if the subject they present is to be comprehensible. Such resting-points for the soul are just as necessary in melody if it is to affect our feelings.<sup>19</sup>

Although Koch never doubts that vocal music is music's paradigm, his treatise is clearly about instrumental melody; it provides a sure training in the musical period—the 4-, 8-, or 16-measure phrase—and the techniques like extension and elision that help to make "instrumental speech" extensive, persuasive, and engaging. The point is not that vocal music ceases to be a model for Koch, but that the new instrumental music also maintains a connection with Rousseau's notion that passionate speech is the origin of the art of music. The solidifying of the ways of the musical period in imitation of rhetorical principles is connected with the new habit of admitting contrasting affects into a movement,

thus allowing variety and structural counterstatement. This combination results in works that do indeed “engage the heart” by their persuasive powers like a convincing oration—a “discourse of the passions.” The formal principles of this music are borrowed from rhetoric, with the *topoi*—lively imitations of the way we are—embedded in its matrix and shaping the surface. This interweaving produces the image of moral suasion without a specific moral content; the principles of rhetoric and mimesis come together in a passionate speech-without-words—the overt theater of topic against the background of grammar and rhetoric as structural process.

The range of *topoi* available to Classic composers reflects the homely and the elegant in their quotidian world—music that accompanies daily activities or has a resonance from concert life, the church, even musical pedagogy:

- the courtly—marches, fanfares;
- the hunt;
- the pastoral, as represented in the slow 6/8, the Siciliano, the more sophisticated gavotte, and the drone or musette;
- the exotic—for example, Turkish music;
- the *Empfindsamer* or ‘sensitive’ style with its intimacy and unpredictability;
- the declamatory, to break an even stride or make a regular rhythm more thorny;
- the musical dialogue;
- the brilliant, soloistic, *concertante* style;
- the passionate *Sturm und Drang*;
- the singing allegro, with its trommel bass and vocal melody;
- the music box, the mechanical clock;
- the contrapuntal, otherwise known as the learned, or bound style (*stile legato*), because of its strict old-fashioned control of dissonance, often found in the solemn “church” meter of *alla breve* or 2/2;
- its extension, the ecclesiastical, and, ultimately, the sublime, often represented by a *topos* I have called the “exalted march”<sup>20</sup>;
- social dances such as the Ländler, the bourrée, the minuet and contredanse;
- types of basses like the descending-tetrachord or chaconne, associated with lament and the antique;
- the minor mode, which is a special affect for Classic composers, not a mode of expression parallel to the major;
- the wind serenade sound, so prevalent in Mozart’s piano sonatas (he took great delight in having the salon-bound *pianoforte* imitate out-of-doors music);

the “tune,” which so often sprouts out of seemingly neutral material to reveal a new rhythmic stratum and a newly articulate voice, and is an effective stabilizing force.

Clearly, *topoi*, types, styles, tend to shade into structural devices—opening and closing gestures, for example, or styles that normally create or undermine stability: the march is a typical opening gesture, while the drone and the tune provide broad areas of arrival, adding besides the flavor of folk and the country. Fugato is an obvious undermining gesture. *Topoi* even become, as it were, “movement-specific.” While the minuet and contredanse reveal Classic instrumental works as latter-day dance suites, they also have sound compositional and affective reasons for appearing there. The minuet provides a laboratory for Classic composers’ experiments with meter and topic, because the paradigmatic regularity of the minuet’s period structure, combined with the built-in ambiguity of its evenly accented triple measures, offers an open field for experiment; often the first step away from naiveté results in the greatest complexity. The contredanse finale offers a civilized wit that is an appealing closing gesture for a work; the notion of the sublime instrumental finale, so familiar to us from the symphonies of Beethoven, does not appear in Mozart’s music except in the last movement of the “Jupiter” Symphony.

Parts of the catalogue above suggest that *topoi* not only serve a structural function, but often are *topoi* by virtue only of the structural function they serve, and this is true: conventional opening and closing gestures sometimes cannot be categorized as other than that. Indeed, some movements offer more of a topical formedness than others, in which the rhetorical play with periodicity, meter, harmony, and other less referential musical devices presents itself as the surface of the work. In other words, not all movements have as obvious a topical “conceit.” It begins to seem that structure itself is expression; the two weave in and out in the Classic composer’s effort to “engage the heart by a discourse of the passions.”

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Having stunned you with this catalogue of *topoi* Leporello-style, let me end with a few examples to illustrate the rich fund of devices I’ve mentioned; they are drawn from Mozart’s String Quartets dedicated to Haydn. I’ll start with a favorite movement, the finale of the Quartet in G major, K. 387, which brilliantly counterstates a motet-like *alla breve* fugue with a breakneck contredanse (ex. 1):

*Molto allegro*

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Cello/Double Bass

*p*

5 10 15 20

Aside from the wit of decomposing a sober fugue into a country fiddler's tune, this opening illustrates the enormous power that the possibility of counterstatement gives to a work, assisted by the incisive profiles of the *topoi*, and why the ultimate effect of this music is that of clear-sighted comedy: the monoaffective style conduces to the survival of the serious and magniloquent, but in music that *plays* with affect the high-minded will always give way to the undermining commentary of the comic.

Mozart uses fugal techniques more overtly in this movement than in other sallies on the learned *topos*: he sets up a second subject cleverly fashioned to fit in the interstices of the first: the two together build up tension for the move away from home base to a new harmonic place, the key of the fifth degree, the dominant. Final arrival there is confirmed by that most stabilizing of *topoi*, the "tune," which grows out over the accompaniment figure in the first violin. Working on a third

rhythmic level to provide a mean between the longbreathed phrases of the fugue and the headlong fiddling of the contredanse, it specially “engages the heart” with the exuberance of its articulate singing voice while providing closure for a major section of the movement. In the coda the learned and the galant have a final tangle and resolution: a little imitative dialogue on the transition figure leads to a tight stretto of the opening subject—four entries of it in the space of six measures— which relaxes into the *reductio ad absurdum* of a galant cadence crafted out of that same sober motif. Again the frame of comedy indicates that nothing is immune to change in this gloriously many-faceted world.

The minuet of this same quartet shows us Mozart setting the mechanical in motion, throwing off the rhythm both of the phrase and of the measure. He creates two ten-measure phrases by offbeat punctuation in the accompaniment followed by a four-measure *piano-forte* alternation in *duple* rhythm, a playful “tick-tock” that momentarily suspends the minuet’s regular triple beat (ex. 2):

*Allegro*

The musical score is for a minuet in G major, 3/4 time, marked *Allegro*. It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with dynamics *p*, *p f p*, *f p f*, *p f p*, and *f p f*. The second system shows a four-measure piano-forte alternation with dynamics *f*, *f*, *f*, and *f*.

The imbalance created by this mechanical tick-tock is set right in measure 21 by a series of waltz-like four-measure phrases: again the “tune” is a force for stability, and the more eccentric Minuets in the chamber works all tend to end with one.

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The first movement of the A-major Quartet, K. 464, has period structure itself as a subject matter. One can clearly see the joins where a 32-measure song reprise has been pulled apart and new, more mobile and forceful material interleaved, to turn these 32 measures into a full-fledged quartet exposition. (At this point the reader will find the discussion easier to follow if he has a copy of the score at hand.) This imaginary reprise would have a remarkable consistency in itself, and could stand alone as the first section of a briefer, less imposing movement. It opens with a typical 16-measure period in a simple sentimental singing style, properly symmetrical and with all its parts. The triple meter also emphasizes the unassuming nature of the theme (ex. 3):

*Allegro*

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for Violin I, the second for Violin II, the third for Viola, and the fourth for Cello/Double Bass. The key signature is A major (three sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' and the dynamics are 'p' (piano). The music is characterized by a simple, sentimental style with a clear period structure.

At arrival on the new harmonic plateau, the dominant, four more measures of this Ur-Reprise stabilize the new key. Next, four measures provide a final cadence in E, the dominant, consisting of the opening material made closing by a re-harmonization. And finally four more measures provide a brief valedictory coda.

But the exposition is swollen from 32 to 87 measures by the much more dramatic and labile material that forces itself in at the joins in

this Ur-Reprise; it is almost a textbook illustration of Koch's methods of melodic extension. An inflection of the minor mode and a brief fugato in the pathetic style on the opening theme provide the departure from A major, home base, but only reach C, an intermediary between A and E, where an entirely new "tune"—a Ländler with hurdy-gurdy drone bass—provides four measures of a *false stabilization*, in the *wrong key* (ex. 4):

The musical score for Example 4 consists of four measures. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The middle staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4, featuring a hurdy-gurdy drone pattern of quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and C5. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4, featuring a bass line of quarter notes G3, F#3, E3, and D3. The score is marked with a piano (p) dynamic.

A passage in concerto style pushes away from the C major and arrives in E for the second part of the Ur-Form. The four measures of this so-called "second theme" look to be repeated, but a passage in dialogue style opens out into an ascending passage of parallel chords in the "bound style," answered by a similar passage descending, but in a more sentimental vein. More concerto style brings the exposition to the embedded four-measure closing theme, which is separated from the codetta by yet more measures in imitative style. The bound style in the exposition is pure churning of the waters, but grows substantive in the development, where harmonies and rhythms turn dense and clotted. Most interesting is the Coda, where a rhythmic retardation in bound style gives one serious pause before the opening motive is made three times cadential—a final summary of the embedded Ur-Reprise.

I'll close with a discussion of the D-minor Quartet, K. 421, because it strikes me as a rare example of topical unity over four movements rather than the affective counterstatement that is usually the rule from part to part. The first movement opens with a chaconne or descending-tetrachord bass—a slow-motion descent through flat 7̂ to 5̂, and after a pause on 5̂, the tonic (ex. 5):



This is an ambiguous opening for the first movement of a quartet, with its suggestion of the antique and the pathetic, rather than the usual brisk annunciatory march. Its unusual pathos caused one nineteenth-century French theorist, Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, to put it to words as a tragic duet between Dido and Aeneas.<sup>21</sup> The first violin ornaments the pathetic bass with galant-style figures, but in bits and pieces (ex. 6):

*Allegro*

Vln. I  
*sotto voce*

Vln. II  
vln.  
vln.

Vc.

The four measures are repeated in a more expansive register, and it is this slightly varied repetition that articulates the first period's cadence, rather than a through-composed unit as is more conventional in these beginnings. This opening ambiguity is in keeping with a movement in the minor mode, where often the key attained in the motion away from home base provides *not* the usual counterstatement or challenge to the home key, but a consolidation and stabilization in the major after the weaker minor. Here the F major arrives as a singing allegro, with ornamental *cantabile* figures over repeated sixteenths, each measure arranged iambically to provide arrival (unlike the open-ended trochees of the chaconne). The development begins with a startling play on the linearity of the chaconne, at first mimicking the opening period but in the surprising key of E-flat *major*; the bass, however, fails to stop at the appropriate tone, extending the vertiginous scalar motion *ad absurdum*—or four more steps to F, and a sleight-of-hand modulation to the key of A minor. Thus the most distant key attained in the movement—the E-flat—is abandoned in a matter of measures by this cool dissolve down the scale to a key surprisingly close to home base.

While the development proceeds to a further anatomizing of the figures of the opening period, in part in fugal style with close entries, it takes place in thoroughly familiar keys; the harmonic crisis is over before it began, and it is the drama of the chaconne that has given form and affect to the movement. Little that is new takes place in the recapitulation. But hearing the *cantabile* tune—earlier an affirmation of arrival in upright F major—recast in the minor leaves an imbalance that, if one accepts the premise that the minor is a weaker reflection of the major mode, the rest of the quartet must put right.

I will pass more quickly over the other three movements, because my primary interest is in that unusual topical unity that seems to prevail over the whole, and in how the D-minor uncertainty is worked out. The second movement is a simple and grave Siciliano in F major. Its single eccentricity is that the figuration in the opening phrase is rearranged: the normal fifth measure that we expect is inserted between measures 2 and 3, causing a new and passionate accent to intrude in the trim rhetoric of the eight-measure period. That we recognize this displacement is further proof of the syntactical clarity that informs this music (ex. 7):

The musical score for Example 7 is presented in four staves (treble and bass clefs for two parts). The tempo is marked 'Andante' and the key signature has one flat (F major). The score is divided into four measures, labeled 1, 2, 5, and 3. Measure 1 is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 2 is marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a trill (*tr*) on the first note. Measure 5 is also marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measure 3 is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. A bracket above measures 2 and 5 is labeled 'misplaced', indicating the rearranged phrasing. The score shows various rhythmic values including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a trill.

Strikingly, Mozart ends the *movement* with measure 5—the triadic up-beat figure that was misplaced; he is clearly aware of his original permutation. In fact, I am increasingly struck by Mozart's habit of summarizing in some neat and economical way at the end of a movement his primary intent with the whole.

The third movement, the Minuet, is based on another chaconne-type bass; it is a dense, gnarled, motet-like ten-measure period with polyrhythms throughout, and no half-cadence—again the minuet as ground for rhythmic and textural experiment.

The fourth movement, a theme and variations, echoes the topic of the second, just as the Minuet did that of the first. The theme is a bittersweet, *Empfindsamer* Siciliano—a nostalgic pastoral song—in D minor, with gypsy violin figuration perhaps borrowed from a tarantella—a high repeated-note figure (ex. 8):

*Allegro ma non troppo*

The first reprise stays in D minor throughout, and the move to a major key in the second reprise is damped by its brevity. So the movement seems at first to provide no resolution to the grip of the minor. Since even Mozart's great G-minor Quintet ends with an affirmative movement in G major, this dwelling in the minor seems uncharacteristic. Yet at the very end a quicker, gigue-like variation, with the wayward tarentella figure tossed obsessively from voice to voice and growing into substantive material, ends in a surprising and otherworldly major cadence in which the tarentella receives its apotheosis (ex. 9):

The allusive brevity of the resolution—perhaps the Pythagorean perfection of the major third has an ecclesiastical resonance here—is fully in keeping with this terse and idiosyncratic work.

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What then is the end of Classic instrumental music? To engage the heart, to persuade. To persuade of what? That a complete and winning whole has been presented, a convincing mirror of the cosmos in its variety and its order; styles, types, ways of being are stated and counterstated, developed and transformed, tangled and resolved. Always there is the narrative attitude, though never a story; always the shape of moral oratory, but never the moral. The imitative and referential are rarely absent from this great instrumental repertoire, which quietly blossomed while everyone was praising song.

If at the end of my "likely story" I may diffidently offer what may seem a fanciful comparison—I hope it won't seem utterly so in

your second thoughts—I would summon up the comedic vision of Dante's *Divine Comedy* with the panoramic nature of its embrace, nothing less than all human affairs, and its tranquil confidence in the mode and order of God's creation, and its commitment to a comic equilibrium, adjusting imbalances and asserting a "happy ending." It is a view of the world in which even the tragic mode must take its proper and limited place (remember the special treatment of the minor mode in Classic music as a dependent of the essential major). In service of this vision, both men use the vernacular to "engage the heart." Dante develops the vulgar tongue into his powerful *dolce stile nuovo*, that most appropriate language for speaking to common humanity about sin and redemption, while Mozart develops the charming simplicities of the galant style—artless dance melodies and popular tunes—into a complex musical language that nevertheless remains true to its origin in the musical vulgate. Both had as predecessors an elevated and weighty language—Dante the high Latin tongue and Mozart the grand and pathetic style of the Baroque. Encompassing both hell and paradise, and the purgatorial ground in between, the *Comedy* sets them in order, culminating in the great final vision of the deity who holds them properly in place. In the same way, the Classic repertoire, a *secular* divine comedy, taking the best of the notion of passionate speech, and the best of the powers of instrumental music and the dance, with them mirrors all categories of human experience in a mode of profound urbanity; it is a moral entertainment in the deepest sense.

#### Footnotes

1. Christian Gottfried Krause, quoted by J. F. Reichardt, *Schreiben über die berlinische Musik*, Hamburg, 1775. For a fuller discussion of eighteenth-century opinions of the new instrumental music, see Bellamy Hosler, *Changing Aesthetic Views of Instrumental Music in 18th-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1981), pp. 1-30.
2. Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1786-87), s.v. *Instrumentalmusik*.
3. James Winn, *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981), p. 217.
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris, 1768), s.v. "Sonate." The translations in this essay are the work of the author.
5. Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," in *The Renaissance*, following the text of *The Works of Walter Pater*, vol. I, p. 135. Quoted in Winn, p. 289.
6. Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon* (Frankfurt am Main: August Hermann, 1802), s.v. *Instrumentalmusik*.

7. Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 65.
8. Remark in an article in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1801) quoted by Carl Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, trans. William Austin (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 27.
9. M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, London: Oxford University Press, 1953.
10. René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch; 2 vols. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), I, 348.
11. See, for example, John Hollander's distinction between "imitation" and "expression" in *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 172-76; Alan Lessem, "Imitation and Expression: Opposing French and British Views in the 18th Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27 (1974), 325-30; Winn, pp. 232-38. For a dissenting view, see John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in 18th-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 149-67.
12. Here Koch is quoting from Sulzer (s.v. *Instrumentalmusik*), from whose work he adopted many opinions.
13. Dahlhaus, p. 22.
14. Daniel Webb, *Observations on the Correspondence between Poetry and Music* (London, 1769), p. 7.
15. Johann Jakob Engel, *Ueber die musikalische Malerey* (1780), in *J. J. Engel's Schriften, Vol. IV: Reden und ästhetische Versuche* (Berlin, 1844), pp. 142-43.
16. Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 23.
17. See, for example, George Buelow, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London, 1980), s.v. "Rhetoric."
18. Dubos, Jean Baptiste. *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*. 1719. Paris, 1770. Facs. rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1967.
19. Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1782-1793), II. S. 77.
20. Allanbrook, Wye J., *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 18-22.
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## Some Interpretations of *The Magic Flute*: The Auden Translation and the Bergman Film

Beate Ruhm von Oppen

The interpretations I want to discuss are not those of the theoreticians but those of practitioners: producers, directors, translators. All translation is bound to have an element of interpretation. I do not know whether producers and directors are so bound; they could simply be faithful to plot, text, music, and stage directions—unless there are compelling reasons to depart from them. And here I do not speak of “inner” compulsions, but of political taboos. To take just two: the masonic anti-feminism of Mozart’s masonic opera and the wicked blackamoor Monostatos. His one aria makes it quite clear that he is more lecherous than wicked. It is very quick in tempo and to be sung pianissimo. Will he have to become colorless in our enlightened age? Bergman, in his film of 1975, had him somewhat swarthy, perhaps a swarthy redneck, but took care to introduce representatives of all humanity, a cunning racial mix, in the audience he shows us, people who are unlikely to represent the audience of a Scandinavian opera house, but whom it

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pleased the master of obtrusive symbolism to put there, so that we should know that Mozart's *Magic Flute* is a work for everybody, every man, woman, and child, and has a universal message.

In the second half of the twentieth century the Metropolitan Opera in New York found this eighteenth-century fairy-tale blackamoor an embarrassment. So the old Met had a production with a white Monostatos and a black Pamina. The new Met, in a new production in the mid-sixties, with a gorgeous setting by Chagall, tampered with the German text (they were singing the work in the original language and were afraid that New Yorkers might understand it) so that in this aria of complaint Monostatos is made to sing of his frustration not "weil ein Schwarzer hässlich ist" (because a black man is ugly) but "weil ein Wilder hässlich ist" (because a savage is ugly). I do now know how many liberal consciences were saved by that change. Mozart's music here is so light, so unvengeful, in fact the music of a darker Papageno and not, say, a raging Ferrando after Dorabella's betrayal of him in *Così fan tutte*, that the editorial precautions seem superfluous.

When W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman were commissioned to produce an English version of *The Magic Flute* with which NBC was going to celebrate the bicentenary of Mozart's birth on television in 1956, they too deleted all reference to the color of Monostatos (and the performance had the black beauty Leontyne Price as Pamina). But then they also deleted all elements of Freemasonry, deleted Pamina's dead father and made her illegitimate, changed the order of scenes, and took a lot of other liberties. They produced an interesting and readable—even singable—libretto and one that I want to discuss later in some detail. Convinced, as they said in their preface, that the original libretto needed not just translating but improving, they set to work to produce something that would sound as though the music had really been composed for *it*—not the usual translation into a non-language they call "operese" (we all know examples of that, I'm sure) but a poetic recreation, so to speak, which reads so well that they had it printed with especially emphatic warnings against infractions of copyright.

Their work raises two or three questions. *Did* the original libretto need improving? *Is* their version an improvement? How *singable* is it and how faithful to the *music*? In other words, would Mozart, if he knew enough English, have approved of it? We know that he took the work very seriously—despite the tricks he played on one occasion, with unexpected glockenspiel, on his fellow-mason, librettist and first Papageno, Emanuel Schikaneder. But then Schikaneder should have been the first to understand, as an experienced Shakespearian actor who knew the importance of light relief in certain circumstances. He just didn't like to be upstaged from the wings.

Despite the playfulness Mozart was very serious about the work, as he told his wife, as he told those around him in his last illness, when he was struggling—unsuccessfully—to finish his *Requiem*. When he knew there was a performance of the *Magic Flute* at the Theater an der Wieden, he took part in it in imagination, followed its progress, saying: now they've got to this bit or to that, singing, and probably wondering whether he would ever see it again. There is another reason to think that Mozart took the work seriously: a contrapuntal study on the *cantus firmus* of the Men in Armor in the second finale may have been the first thing he wrote down of the entire opera, or at any rate of the second act. It is an ancient hymn with text by Martin Luther based on the twelfth Psalm, "Ach Gott vom Himmel sieh' darein." At the most solemn moment of the *Magic Flute* it is the tune of this hymn which is sung by the guardians of the dreadful gates of the final tests, but with a text about purification by fire, water, air, and earth.

The Auden/Kallman translation has great felicities—one of them the setting of this chorale, and no wonder, for Auden was a fervent hymn-singer and came into his own with the language of hymnology even in its Masonic-Egyptian variant: "Now shall the pilgrim tread a valley dark and dire. . ." ("Dire" is treated disyllabically, as a spondee.) But there are infelicities too and, what is worse, infidelities not just to the original libretto but to that libretto as composed, interpreted in the music. The composer, after all, was the *first* interpreter. Mozart once wrote to his father, in connection with an earlier opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, that the text has to be an altogether obedient handmaiden to the music. That means for us that, since the music is there, *it* must govern translations. The translator is bound by the interpretation of the composer. When the composer makes something clear, he has to reproduce that clarity as best he can; where the composer is deliberately ambiguous, he has to try to preserve the ambiguity. Just one example: In Tamino's long and crucial dialogue with the Speaker, where the Speaker patiently and forcefully and step by step disabuses Tamino of the illusions he arrived with, having believed the tale of woe, vengeance, and promise of the Queen of the Night, this impetuous if noble young man reaches the point where he exclaims: "So ist denn *alles* Heuchelei!"—meaning "So then *everything* is hypocrisy!" The text in the score at that point has an exclamation mark, but the music introduces doubt, indeed a question into this sentence. The Speaker was in E-flat major. Tamino exclaims:

Tamino

So ist denn al - - les Heu-che-lei!

(will gehen)

The D flat on which he lands is a hovering  $\hat{3}$ , of B-flat minor, as shown by the accompaniment: the exclamation is not just some accusation of hypocrisy he casts in the Speaker's teeth, but an expression of agonized doubt. And a translator must keep the ambivalence of that phrase and not write, like Auden/Kallman: "Then it is all a painted lie" or, like Dent: "Your wisdom's naught but vile deceit!" He should keep the phrase open-ended, express some doubt about who is doing the deceiving, say something like "Then all is naught but vile deceit!"—which can apply either to what he has just been told here or what the Queen told him before. When the Speaker is about to leave and when he has left, the hypocrisy phrase has a counterpart in Tamino's questions "When will this veil of dark be lifted?" and "When, endless night, wilt thou be riven?" (I follow the translation by Ruth and Thomas Martin). And he gets the mysterious but reassuring answers first from the Speaker, then from the Speaker's phrase played by the orchestra, while the unseen chorus shrouds itself in frightful ambiguity by singing that Tamino will see the light "Soon, soon—or never." It is the orchestra that tells Tamino and the audience that all will be well.

Perhaps the time has come to give you a synopsis of the plot of this two-act opera. Tamino, a prince, dressed in a Japanese hunting outfit, runs on the stage, in C minor, pursued by a monstrous serpent. He calls on the gods to help him and falls in a swoon. He still has his bow, but no arrows left. Three Ladies come in on his last syllable and downbeat and rescue him with javelins and a sudden switch, a deceptive cadence, to the chord of A flat which instantly moves on to the dominant-seventh chord of E flat when they refer to their might making the monster die.

1. u. 2. Dame

Stirb, Un - ge - heur! durch uns - re Macht!

3. Dame

Stirb, Un - ge - heur! durch uns - re Macht!

schüt - - zet mich. (he falls, fainting)

*f* *sf* *G. Orch.*

The musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the vocal parts of the first and second ladies, and the third staff is for the third lady. The bottom two staves are for the piano and orchestra. The key signature is B-flat major. The tempo is not explicitly marked, but the music is in a moderate, steady pace. The lyrics are in German, and the music is in a dramatic, expressive style. The piano part features a prominent bass line with a strong rhythmic pattern, and the orchestra provides a rich harmonic background.

They indulge in some triumphalism, then fall in love with the recumbent young man, then fall out with each other as they realize they must tell their mistress (the Queen of the Night) about this incident and none of them can trust the others not to take unfair advantage while she is away. The only solution is to depart together.

Enter a man looking like a bird and singing a cheerful ditty about his trade as bird-catcher and his desire to catch lots of birds from among whom he could choose *one*. Tamino comes out of his swoon and in the ensuing spoken dialogue tries to find out where he is and who this Papageno is. Papageno does not know much—he does not even know who his parents were—he only knows that he earns his keep by catching birds for the Star-Flaming Queen and her Ladies. Tamino remembers that his father often told him about her. But how did he stray into her realm and who saved him from the serpent? Once assured that the beast is quite dead, Papageno claims that he killed it, with his bare hands. This is the signal for the Three Ladies to return, put the record straight, put a lock on Papageno's mouth to teach him a lesson about lying, and give a small portrait of the daughter of the Queen to Tamino, with promises of happiness, honor, and renown if he does not remain indifferent to it. He does not. He sings a beautiful aria about it. It is love at first sight.

This brings on the Queen who, in a first plangent, then acrobatic, and always imperious recitative and aria instantly addresses and appropriates Tamino as "My dear son," telling him not to tremble; he is, after all, guiltless, wise and pious, just the young man to console her deeply injured maternal heart. Suffering has been her lot since her daughter was abducted by a villain, despite all her cries for help. The mother's help was too weak. But now, in *Allegro moderato*: Tamino will go to liberate her, will be her rescuer and her husband. After the Queen has left, with as much *eclat* as prepared her arrival, Tamino wonders whether he is hallucinating and calls on the gods not to deceive him, but to protect and strengthen him. In the quintet that follows, the Three Ladies relieve Papageno of the lock on his mouth, give Tamino a magic flute from their Queen, which has the power to protect its player, give Papageno a set of bells with similar properties, and tell the men to proceed to the evil Sarastro's realm. They say farewell and turn to go but are asked *how* that destination is to be found. They take a deep breath and tell the men, in an *Andante* that is free from their previous assertiveness, that "Three Boys, young, fair, and wise" will accompany them on their journey and will give counsel that should be followed. The men repeat this most important piece of instruction and another round of farewells concludes the scene.

Next we see a sumptuous Egyptian room and hear three slaves complain of the black Monostatos, their overseer and tormentor, who, they hope, will at last get his just deserts because he allowed Pamina to escape. But they seem to be wrong: Monostatos drags her in, tells them to chain and fetter her, and to leave him alone with her. In the trio that follows, she pleads with him: though death cannot make her tremble, it is her mother who will die of grief. She falls in a swoon; but before Monostatos can do a thing, Papageno wanders in and he and Monostatos scare each other into exits in opposite directions. Papageno rallies and returns with the sensible argument that since there are black birds, why should there not be black men too—both he and Monostatos had previously thought that the other was the devil. He finds Pamina and they have quite a conversation. Pamina is very pleased that the young Prince her mother is sending to her rescue is in love with her already, and she assures Papageno that heaven will provide him too with a friend of the opposite sex sooner than he thinks. Then follows their duet about love, by which alone we live and have our being and, indeed, touch on divinity. The whole opera does not have a love duet for the hero and heroine. So this duet for Pamina and the Child of Nature is not only beautiful but important in the context of the whole.

The first Finale begins, as does the second, with the Three Boys. It is their first appearance, Ingmar Bergman notwithstanding; we have

only *heard* about them before; but here they are, telling Tamino that this path will lead to his goal, but that to prevail he must conduct himself like a man. He must be steadfast, tolerant, and taciturn. When he asks them about Pamina, they reply that it is not for them to tell him about her and they just repeat their admonition to steadfastness, tolerance, and taciturnity; in brief, the Boys sing, be a Man and you will win a Man's victory. They go off, leaving Tamino to mull over their wise teachings and to explore the place they have led him to. Is it the seat of the gods? The architecture is evidence of wisdom, work, and arts, and where these dwell, vice is unlikely to maintain its dominion. He sees a door, goes up to it, with threats against the cowardly villain Sarastro, and is rebuffed by a voice from within. He sees and tries another door, with the same result. But when he knocks on the third door, an awe-inspiring Old Man appears and in a marvelous recitativic dialogue of 52 bars gets him, in modulation after modulation, from A-flat major to A minor, and from naive and erroneous certainty to serious, painfully serious questioning. In other words—and in music quite unlike any other in Mozart—he starts him on his quest in earnest. What went before was just youthful impetuosity and heroics. The Old Man calls the Queen's claims in doubt, says that Sarastro had good reasons for his actions, but that he, the Speaker, is not free to divulge them. After he has gone, Tamino is told by unseen voices that Pamina is still alive and he starts to give thanks to the gods on his flute. But he breaks off when he remembers that, though alive, Pamina is not *there* and goes off in search of her.

She whom he seeks enters from another side, with Papageno and a hurried little duet about the need for fast feet and quick courage against the rage and ruses of the enemy. If only they could find Tamino before they are caught! Pamina calls his name, Papageno tells her he has a better signal and plays the five notes on his Pan pipe, to which Tamino responds offstage on his flute. But before they have finished exclaiming about this happy turn of events, this establishment of communication, here is Monostatos, who has caught up with them and calls his slaves to bind them. Papageno makes them dance instead, enchanted, to a spell-binding tune from his bells. But then, with a sudden change of key, we hear Sarastro's retinue from the distance: the Lord of the Realm himself is approaching. Papageno would like to flee or hide, or at least escape by verbal subterfuge; but Pamina tells him that the truth must be told, whatever the consequences.

She kneels before Sarastro, confesses her guilt of trying to escape, but pleads the wicked moor's lecherous demands in mitigation. Sarastro knows all and understands all. He knows whom she loves, he will not force her to love—him?—but, but (lowest note) he will not give

her her freedom. And all her pleas about her mother who will die of grief are unavailing: Sarastro knows her to be a proud woman who would make Pamina unhappy. A *man* is needed to guide the hearts of women, for without *him* all women exceed their proper sphere.

Enter the officious and triumphant Monostatos with the captive Tamino. The lovers see each other for the first time but are restrained from instant embrace by popular murmuring and the interference of Monostatos. Then *he* prostrates himself before Sarastro, asks for due punishment for the bold malefactor, Tamino, this daring would-be abductor, foiled only by the vigilant Monostatos, who anticipates a rich reward and instead gets taken away for a beating. The people's acclaim for the wise Sarastro ends the act. By now, of course, we have a prima facie case for a complaint not only from the Civil Liberties Union but also from the Women's Liberation Movement.

But the show must go on. I am still telling you the true story, not what Auden and Bergman did with it.

The second Act opens with a solemn march of the Sarastrian priests and a conference with Sarastro in which he informs them of Tamino's arrival and his Quest. He seems to have all the qualities needed—virtue, discretion, benevolence—and, Sarastro thinks, deserves their help. When one of the priests asks whether, as a *prince*, he will be up to what awaits him, Sarastro replies: he is more, he is a *man*. The tests he is to undergo are not without risk and may, in fact, cost him his life: but should he die, he will be given to Isis and Osiris and taste the joys of the gods before those assembled. They signify their assent at various stages of this proceeding with three lots of masonic chords on wind instruments (without clarinets, though, since they would, presumably, make the sound too soft). Sarastro and the priests then sing a prayer to Isis and Osiris, not just for Tamino, but for the new *pair*.

There follow the tests for Tamino, with Papageno tagging along and not trying very hard. The first test is silence, especially toward women. The Three Ladies come to tempt the men and tell them of dire things in store for them. Tamino speaks (or sings, it is a quintet) only to shut up Papageno. The Ladies depart in dismay. The scene changes and Monostatos sings his very light little aria of sexual frustration based on racial injustice. The Queen of the Night enters, gives Pamina a dagger, and tells her to kill Sarastro, since Tamino had not done the job she sent him to do. Pamina tries to plead with her, but her mother launches herself into a furious aria about hell's vengeance boiling in her bosom. If Pamina does not kill Sarastro, her mother will disown her and sever all the bonds of nature. In the spoken dialogue after her disappearance Monostatos tries to blackmail Pamina into entrusting herself to him, to love him or *die*. But Sarastro intervenes, simply dis-

misses Monostatos and tells Pamina he will take no revenge on her mother. He then sings his famous aria about the better ways of these sacred precincts: if someone has fallen, love will bring about reform. Guided by the hand of a friend he will walk into a better land. In these sacred walls (*Mauern*: the German for Freemason is *Freimaurer*) no traitor can lurk, because the enemy is forgiven. The last couplet is beautiful and hard to translate:

Wen solche Lehren nicht erfreu'n,  
Verdienet nicht ein Mensch zu sein.

Literally it means: whoever does not rejoice in such teachings does not deserve to be a human being. With its music it is a very powerful conclusion, because, as in the first stanza, where Sarastro sang about the journey into a better land at the hand of a friend, the singer's vocal ascent is continued by the strings when his voice turns down again. What can a translator do with a memorable phrase like that? The Martins have: "Who by this law is led aright/will ever share the gods' delight"; Dent has: "Those whom this bond can not unite/are all unworthy of the light." Auden and Kallman go wild: "The tyrant on a golden throne/Lives in the desert all alone." It is a message that seems to me excessively far removed from Sarastro's, though, I admit, it scans right—but so do the two others.

The Three Boys appear for a second time and in a trio tell Tamino and Papageno that they have come to restore their instruments to them and that at the third meeting joy will be the reward of virtue. But first there are more tests and troubles, the worst of them just about to happen. Pamina enters, does not know of Tamino's vow of silence, thinks he no longer loves her and sings what is probably Mozart's saddest and most beautiful aria, in G minor: all the happiness of love is gone, and if Tamino will not look at her tears and feels no more longing, she must find rest in death. She walks out to a brief four-bar postlude. But she does not—yet—attempt suicide. She is brought into the presence of the Priests and Sarastro. Sarastro tells her to take her last farewell of Tamino, who may now speak again and is about to undergo his final testing. The farewell trio for her, Tamino, and Sarastro combines pathos with solace. Sarastro is clearly sympathetic to their plight and, in fact, promises that they will all meet again. This trio, in this place, does cause some confusion in the plot. But we are musically too much captivated by it to worry about that. Still, Auden and Kallman have a case for a reshuffle here.

Meanwhile Papageno, fond though he is of food and drink, does want a wife too and has a nice strophic song about it all. Who turns up? An old crone who says she is eighteen years old and that he must

swear that he will marry her or forever live on bread and water. Papageno as usual takes the line of least resistance and swears. She is transformed into a young woman, feathery just like Papageno, and her name is Papagena. But once more those priestly busybodies intervene and send her packing because Papageno is not yet worthy of her.

Which brings us to the second Finale. The Three Boys start it, with a song about the imminence of sunrise, the disappearance of superstition, and the victory of the wise man. Then there is an invocation for the return of peace—when they see the distraught Pamina entering with her dagger and suicidal intentions. They stop her just in time and restore her to life by telling her that Tamino loves her, whereupon they all go off in search of him. (I am giving a very bare account, throughout this Finale, of the plot that is full of the most beautiful dramatic changes and music.) A change of scene brings us to two big mountains, of fire and of water. Two Men in Armor and with flaming helmets guard the gates, and after the contrapuntal introduction mentioned before, they sing the solemn hymn about purification by the four elements: whoever can overcome the fear of death will rise to heaven and, illumined, will then be in a state to devote himself entirely to the mysteries of Isis. Tamino presents himself and asks them to unlock the gates. Pamina's voice is heard, calling to him that she must see him before he goes. He is now allowed to speak to her and to enter the temple with her. Once more a last couplet, sung by Tamino and the Two Men in Armor, sums up a new message: A woman who fears neither night nor death is worthy to be initiated.

Pamina enters on a simple but radiant musical transformation. The bit about the woman worthy of initiation was in A-flat major, the strings work up, touching on the relative F minor, to an emphatic half-cadence on the dominant of F, followed by a long rest, and Pamina comes in on a rising *major* sixth, C - A, that is, in the unexpected parallel major of the relative minor. It is one of Mozart's miraculous economies.



*Andante*  
 Pamina (*Tamino umarmend*)

Ta - mi - no — mein! O welch ein Glück!

The musical notation is a single staff in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. A slur covers the next three notes: a quarter note C5, an eighth note B4, and an eighth note A4. This is followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. The piece ends with a quarter rest.

Tamino shows Pamina the dreadful gates which threaten death and destruction. Pamina simply replies that she will be at his side, she will lead him, herself guided by love. Tamino is to play the flute which will protect them. Then she tells him the brief history of the flute. In a magic hour her father carved it from the depths of a millennial oak, mid thunder and lightning and a roaring storm. But now it is to be played and lead them on their dreadful journey. They pass safely and serenely through the fire, accompanied only by flute, timpani, and some subdued brass chords; after the fire they go through the water. On emerging from that they see a door opening on a brightly illuminated temple and are hailed and invited by the choir within.

The next transformation brings us back to Papageno and his troubles. He is still wifeless and threatens to hang himself if no-one will take pity on him. He seems about to do it when the Three Boys once more intervene to save him, too, and tell him to play his magic bells. When he does it, Papagena enters and they sing of married bliss and numerous progeny.

All that remains to be tied up is the matter of Monostatos, the Queen of the Night, and her Three Ladies. They have a conspiratorial quintet in which they propose to enter the temple and destroy it. Monostatos reminds the Queen that she has promised *him* the hand of her daughter for his services. She reaffirms the promise. But before they can mount their attack on the temple, they are discovered and plunged into eternal night. The loudest chord reveals the whole stage transformed into a sun, Tamino and Pamina are dressed in priestly robes, flanked by Egyptian priests on both sides. The Three Boys hold flowers. Sarastro celebrates the rays of the sun, which dispel the night and destroy the ill-gotten power of the hypocrites. There is acclaim for the new initiates, and the gods Isis and Osiris are given thanks before the final chorus, a chorus about the victory of strength and the endowment of beauty and wisdom with an eternal crown.

So much, then, for the plot. It is not quite what you get in Bergman. Auden and Kallman, too, eliminated the masonic element, tampered with Pamina's parentage and switched the sequence of some scenes around, perhaps to their advantage. But what strikes me as somewhat wilful is a change in the general style of the text, at least at times; there were no nymphs and shepherds in the original—there are in A & K. There was good reason for their absence in the original; the serious aspiration of the masonic enterprise and its serious antagonists, balanced by the feathery children of nature, Papageno and Papagena. Nymphs and shepherds conjure up the wrong imagery, something like Dresden china. Auden and Kallman bring them into Sarastro's aria about forgiveness, at the point where they also depart from the mini-homily about the importance of these teachings of the Brotherhood. Where Sarastro just sings that "whoever does not rejoice in these teachings does not deserve to be a human being," Auden and Kallman have, not just "The tyrant on his golden throne/lives in the desert all alone" but two extra lines before these two (they often introduce extra lines where Mozart just repeats):

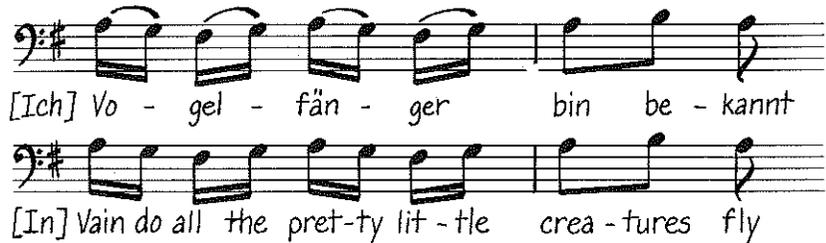
The homely shepherds when they love  
A green and homely pasture rove,  
The tyrant on his golden throne...etc.

In fact that whole number is made, by A & K, into a new song, good in itself, but rather remote from the—well-known—original. They say in their preface that that is what an operatic translator may have to do sometimes: get the gist of a number, then step back and write something really coherent and shapely of his own. That may be a tenable point of view, though I still think it makes for better reading than singing.

Auden and Kallman must have relied on having an audience which did not know too much about the original, not even famous highlights like Sarastro's aria. They may also have thought there was no harm in approximating Mozart to Sullivan by rendering his text, in places, more in the manner of Gilbert. They had few qualms or none about introducing extra syllables where there were available notes in the score, even if in the original setting those notes were tied together. In the case of Papageno it does not matter much. When he first introduces himself as "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja," they have

The lark, the ruddock *and the* willow-wren  
And the jolly nightingale I ken;  
In vain do all the pretty little creatures fly  
When they the tall birdcatcher spy.

The German replaced by the pattering “In vain do all the pretty little creatures fly” was “ich Vogelfänger bin bekannt . . .” All right, give patter song to Papageno:



[Ich] Vo - gel - fän - ger bin be - kannt  
 [In] Vain do all the pret-ty lit - tle crea - tures fly

In their Notes, Auden and Kallman grant that the effect is different but take their stand on the belief “that *The Magic Flute* should sound more staccato than *Die Zauberflöte*.”

In another case, that of the duet about love sung by Pamina and Papageno, the translators get slightly cold feet about this and their stand begins to wobble, and quite rightly too. Still, pride forbids them to put the “pedantic” alternative version, with its proper scansion, in the text itself. They relegate it to the Notes at the back, where they inform us that “The German lyric is written in iambic rhythm, i.e., in 4/4 time” (I merely quote, though I must interpolate that every sophomore knows that iambs can be written in *any* time signature). They continue: “This Mozart has set to a tune in 6/8, so that certain syllables *have to be* (my italics) spread over two notes, linked by a slur.” Naughty Mozart! If only he’d had the sense to stick to the iambic 4/4, there would have been no need to spread syllables over two notes. But now that the notes are there, the translators are jolly well going to use them, and in their main text give us this:

When love in his bosom desire has implanted  
 The heart of the hero grows gentle and tame;  
 And soon from his passion enkindled, enchanted,  
 The nymph receives the impetuous flame . . .

for the German

Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen,  
 Fehlt auch ein gutes Herz nicht.  
 Die süßen Triebe mitzufühlen,  
 Ist dann der Weiber erste Pflicht . . .

In the comments at the back of the book they say they “found that the English language cried out for an anapestic rhythm [?] similar to that of the notes.” And they continue: “If the original relation of syllables to notes is not an accident of the German prosody, but a profound musical idea, then, of course, we are wrong, so he who is pedantic, let him be pedantic still and sing instead:

When Love his dart has deep implanted,  
The hero's heart grows kind and tame,  
And by his passion soon enchanted,  
The nymph receives his impetuous flame. . . .”

There's that nymph again, who, as I said, is absent not only from that number in the original, but from the entire opera, which is simply not written in the nymphs and shepherds and cupid *style* and in which love, or *Liebe*, has the proper German feminine gender.

The posing of the phoney alternative between “accidental prosody” or “profound musical idea” is hardly worthy of the librettist of *The Rake's Progress*. Simple respect for the gentle, not to say tender, character of the combination of the two successive notes in one syllable, or the music of the music-and-words together, should have made the translators put the version they call “pedantic” in the main text. In a later essay on “Translating Opera Libretti” they argue a bit more cautiously, go into the interesting difference of quantitative and accentual prosody, and call on singers to sing both the iambic and the anapestic versions (as they call them) several times without prejudice and ask themselves which, in English, sounds the more Mozartian. I am no singer, but I have tried both, quite often, and have no doubt that a version with Mozart's syllabification sounds more Mozartian. Perhaps they chose the wrong *idiom* in their “When Love his dart has deep implanted”?

They also state that “in English, on account of its vowels and its many monosyllabic words, there are fewer syllables which sing well, and are intelligible when spread over several notes, than there are in either Italian or German—English being, intrinsically, a more staccato tongue.” They also say that feminine rhymes are more uncommon and more often comic in English than in German. I wonder about both those statements. Looking, for instance, at *Dido and Aeneas*, I found many unfunny feminine rhymes and Purcell doing beautifully with more than one note per syllable from the very outset and throughout the work. I underline the syllables that are given more than one note:

Shake the cloud from off your brow. Fate your wi-shes does allow.  
 Empire growing, pleasures flow-ing, Fortune smiles and so should  
 you.  
 Banish sorrow, banish care, / Grief should ne'er approach the fair;  
 Banish sorrow, ba-nish care, Grief etc.;

Then Dido herself: "Peace and I are strangers grown . . . [and later] Yet would not, yet would not, would not have it guessed." It was, incidentally, on that monosyllabic two-note "it" that the *German* translators found themselves forced (or free?) to introduce an extra syllable. And so on, throughout *Dido*, one comes up with quite a lot, from the beginning right through to the end: "With drooping wings ye Cu-pids come . . . and scat-ter roses on her tomb. Soft, soft and gentle . . . as her heart, . . . keep here your watch."

Remember, the Auden/Kallman translation was made for television. Its authors actually say that on the *stage* operas should be, they think, performed in the original languages and audiences should get a translation to read, so that they know what it is all about.

Along comes Ingmar Bergman and does a *film* on the *Magic Flute* which is sung in Swedish and has captions, or translations, in the languages of the country it is shown in. I was amazed at the syllabic fidelity both of the sung Swedish *and* of the English translation. It was faithful in other respects too: to the *meaning* of the text and, I think, usually to the rhyme scheme. The only serious departure from the original that I detected in the Swedish and English was the excessive punishment given to Monostatos. In German he gets a bastinado of 77 strokes, in Swedish 555 (and Bergman's English translator follows that). I thought it might be for the sake of syllables. Not so, I am told by a friend who knows Swedish: it is simply that the number 7 is quite unsingable in that language. But 555 seems rather a lot.

I have left myself with very little time to discuss that film. Opinions were violently divided, ranging from blissful enjoyment to outrage. Let me simply mention some major distractions and distortions—leaving aside the fillings in Tamino's teeth. The business, especially the sensuous business of pawing, is obtrusive and out of place. The fire and water ordeals do *not* take place in Dante's Hell or Wagner's Venusberg and we should be spared the writhing nude figures. If Bergman decided to cut out the Freemasons, why did he have to make Sarastro and his Priests into Keepers of some Nordic Grail? How did he have the nerve to bring on those cute three boys prematurely to sing music Mozart gave to the Three Ladies? Why must the quintet of conspirators near the end be represented as a heaving army on the move? Above all: he

makes Sarastro Pamina's father and not just in the spiritual sense, but as her begetter, with clearly incestuous leanings. This is too much! Mozart's opera is *quite* explicit about Pamina's deceased father and his legacy of the flute and the Sevenfold Shield of the Sun, which he bequeathed to Sarastro, whom he considered a worthy successor. He very particularly did not want his wife to inherit it. Why the change? To foist some Freud on us?

Heaven forfend *any* importation of twentieth-century psychology into this work. But Jung would be more suitable than Freud if something of the kind were done. But if it were done, it were better done honestly, in a new, twentieth-century opera. Michael Tippett has done it and called it *The Midsummer Marriage*. It is clearly akin to the *Magic Flute*, and equally clearly Tippett's own. Using Mozart for self-expression, as Bergman does, strikes me as impermissible, despite all the various beauties of the film and the many people it introduces to the music. Seductive, verging on the corrupting.

## The Program Old and New

Douglas Allanbrook

Fifty years ago Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan founded a program of studies at St. John's College in Annapolis. We are here tonight to celebrate that program, a program dedicated to the proposition that men are educable, a program grand in its aspirations and full of good sense in the ways in which it lays out its specific course of studies. Though it is difficult to imagine its having been instituted anywhere except the United States, the allegiance to the program may be found in the minds and hearts of thoughtful men anywhere. Two men are particularly linked with both the aspirations and the matter of the program, Mr. Buchanan and Jacob Klein. Mr. Buchanan was a quintessential Yankee, Mr. Klein a Russian Jew. Without the imprint of these two extraordinary men we would have no program. For all of us—alumni, faculty, and students—who have studied the program with some care there is no tension in this heritage other than that implicit in the nature of discourse and study.

Fifty years is a long span of time in the ordinary train of human events. Many students and many teachers have come and gone since those waning years of the great Depression, years already shadowed by the imminence of the second great war of the century. Technical changes both beneficent and terrifying have multiplied at a geometric rate these fifty years. Money and bombs can be mutually exchanged

Douglas Allanbrook, the composer, is a Tutor Emeritus at St. John's College, Annapolis. This speech was delivered to the alumni of the college in September, 1987, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the New Program.

anywhere in no time at all. There has been a certain progress in the medical lengthening of our lives. Politics remains the same, though more expensive—a change in quantity that affects the quality. We are all tempted on many occasions to say as we grow older: *tutto declina*—everything is going to pot. The phrase belongs most properly in the mouth of Falstaff, in Verdi's opera. Verdi himself was of course at a remarkably advanced age to have been writing such an ebullient marvel. Falstaff is something of a fool, though a self-conscious one. He is also shrewd, no dumbbell. He contemplates his youth, his salad days when he was young and thin, a fetching page for the Duke of Norfolk. The comedy for him and for us who are getting older consists in confusing our own waning powers with whatever there is out there that is perennial and young: love, romance, energy, glory, intellect, and sharp vision.

It takes a certain distance to realize how perennially fresh this program remains as generations of students pursue its disciplines and goals. The senior classes it has been my pleasure to teach in recent years thrust in front of me the fact that this is not an experimental program but a program that works, and works for an amazing range of people. A class which discusses Valéry and Wallace Stevens with acumen and passion consisted a mere four years ago of high-school students, some of whom knew no grammar, and whose cherished books, depending on the generation, were *Catcher in the Rye*, and *Lord of the Rings*. Only too often these would be accompanied by that ever-present virago, Ayn Rand. One of our duties as tutors is to realize what can happen, to be aware of all that does happen in these four years. I would hope that the program would retain its luster for those of us who have spent our adult lives in it. The reasons for the efficacy of the program should now be stated. But before we talk of its grand aspirations, which keep it pointed where it should be pointed, let us examine its good sense. Its entrancing folly we will look at last.

The daily round of its tutorials and laboratories is a slogging through elementary things slowly and methodically. There has never been any reasonable doubt as to what these elements are and where they lie. They are found underneath the common skills of daily life: the grammar, rhetoric, and logic of language, the reasoning and structures of mathematics, the daily experience of nature, the rhythm and tones of music. From the very beginning fifty years ago it was deemed essential that modern science be dealt with, both as theory and as a world of objects to be sensed and measured. Many who are not acquainted with our regular classes find what I have just said vague and just a bit pious. The very term "liberal arts" is such a casual catch-all for almost any curriculum. There has also always been the vulgar and catchy phrase which would describe the program as the "great books course." Peo-

ple then quite naturally are apt to be either aghast or delighted to find that elementary does mean elementary. Sentences are to be parsed, congruence of triangles to be proven, nitrates to be distinguished from nitrites, the lack of a urinary bladder in a bird to be noted, Yankee Doodle to be played on a musical scale constructed on a monochord.

Tutorials are classes with stubborn simple things to learn. What is studied in them is not arbitrary. The program has never subscribed to the kind of looseness which finds that it makes little difference what is studied as long as it is done with conviction and provides a "learning opportunity." What is studied in these classes at the college is not cultural, not intended to be a substitute for experience of the world. For fifty years neither history nor the fine arts have had a place on the program. Elementary education has neither the intention nor the time to expose students to the vast panoply of splendors which the world exhibits, though a certain necessary nostalgia is present because we don't look at Chinese painting or the French and Russian Revolutions, or, in general, learn to appreciate what a sophisticated man appreciates. There has been no faltering these fifty years that there be tutorials in language and mathematics, that there be laboratories, and (for thirty-four years) that there be music tutorials. As for modernity, we study its roots in Baudelaire, Hegel, Marx, Freud, and Einstein more thoroughly than any other undergraduate college in the country. The program does not change in any essential ways. This is not because of stultification; the program stays as it is because it has its roots in reasonable judgments as to what is elementary. The tutorials and the laboratories often employ manuals and similarly uninspired materials. This again makes good sense if the learning of elements requires help, which it so often does. The program has always had the obligation to exercise a student in matters that in certain countries were traditionally dealt with in high-schools, gymnasia, or lycées.

Tutorials are, however, fixed on splendors. The grandest books are read: Baudelaire, the inventor of modern sensibility, Einstein and Dedekind, Sophocles and Lavoisier, and, in the freshman language tutorial, Plato's *Meno*, which deals with the crux of how men learn things and how they deal with what they learn. These texts are read slowly and at length. They are chosen as exemplifying the highest expressions of the liberal arts, whether they be by Shakespeare, Euclid, Pascal, Newton, or Homer.

We are nearing the entrancing folly of the program. Sancho Panza plods through the fields of elementary grammar, logic, rhetoric, mathematics, and laboratory while simultaneously Don Quixote canters on, reading Plato in Greek after three months of grammar, and Einstein after only the slightest acquaintance with Maxwell's equations.

If we leave the tutorials the quest becomes more quixotic. The freshmen read Homer straight off on their entrance to the school, and the nearly unreadable text of Hegel's *Phenomenology* is the roadblock which the seniors encounter as they begin their last year. The good sense of the plodding part of the program and the enormous difficulties in dealing with the true elements cannot be coped with without the ever-receding goal of encompassing the very best that has been set down in writing. Sancho Panza and Don Quixote belong together. The death of the knight leaves Sancho bereft. Without Sancho the world is only half there, even though his shrewd horse-sense is well up to ruling his "island."

For fifty years a proposition has been voiced that the books are the teachers. A certain inference follows from this: Everyone in a class is a learner, including the teacher. This inference is not quixotic. It is founded not only on the importance of the books that are read but also on an understanding of how things are learned—on an understanding of the soul. Learning is not necessarily play, as some would have it, but it certainly involves activity on the part of the learner. Opportunities for learning must be placed in front of the student, his opinions tested and challenged. It is for this reason that Plato's *Meno* is not only the core of the freshman language tutorial but also provides the clue to how learning is thought to come about in this old program of ours. Let us list certain things that this implies: No answers given but every opportunity for any possible answer is provided, if there be an answer. Willingness to live with the skepticism that may follow upon this. Wit, irony, and shrewd observations as to what any particular person is capable of answering, given that person's make-up. Seriousness deeper than faith concerning this natural life-giving endeavor of the intellect and the heart. Living with and putting up with the open-ended and never-ending quest that lies behind conversation and argument. It is all these habits that lie behind our program, not any set doctrine of Platonic "ideas" or Platonic "politics."

A certain role is then envisaged for a teacher or a tutor in this program. He may or may not be an expert in some field of knowledge. In class, with the help of books, materials, and instruments, he provides opportunities for learning, and he himself learns as the perennial conversation flows. This is the life of the program and hence of the college. It could all be done just as well if we hired a bunch of two-family houses and furnished them with chairs, tables, and blackboards.

These past several years or so when I was on the search committee for our new presidents, traveling around the country and talking to a great variety of people, it has been illuminating to me to note that the program is known and widely known and respected for what it is, and not for what it is not. I have had the same experience in talking

to many artists, writers, and composers whom I know as a director of an Artists' Colony. What we are commands respect. Every college from here to Peoria exposes its students to a mixed menu of liberal arts, fine arts, history, and, in general, appreciation of what is appreciable. It would be foolish of this college to attempt any such thing. It would also be impractical, since most colleges and junior colleges are better qualified than we are to offer cultural education. The more serious objection would be that the program would be diluted. It should be clear that without this program we are nothing in particular, though Annapolis and Santa Fe are charming towns and the local cultures of some interest.

I was delighted when I arrived here thirty-five years ago, one hot afternoon after riding the bus down from Baltimore, fresh from four years as a professional musician, to walk into a remarkably messy office and to begin talking with someone who did not consider music to be the most important thing in the world. This was one of the principal reasons for my coming to St. John's. The program is and always must be dedicated to the excellences of the reason. That there are other splendors is too obvious, one would think, to be argued. These various splendors do not negate each other, but the program rightly insists that there is a hierarchy of them. We may not need Aristotle to rank them for us, but he is a great help. There is also implicit in the program another perennial question having to do with the highest excellences. It takes the form of a kind of debate, or better still a conversation, as to the ends of the intellectual excellences: are they aimed at the theoretical or the practical?

This may be stated more formally as enquiring about the relations between the moral and the intellectual virtues. Are we preparing for citizenship or for something higher, more open-ended, more beguiling, and entrancingly more dangerous? Such a tension arises from the nature of the intellectual excellences. It is a philosophic question.

The college, if one can speak of it apart from the program, must always be chary of making claims for its graduates. The program is no panacea for success or necessary preparation for good citizenship. It also cannot teach anyone to think.

These fifty years have shown the freshness, the good sense, and the grandeur of the program. There is no history of the program, apart from all of us, old and young, who have passed through it. If we are ashamed of this program, or bored with it, or unhappy that it does not encompass a greater range of cultural splendors, we have been poor students indeed. Its aspirations and humble good sense are meant as a guide to all who would pay attention to their better selves. It is often an aid for those who have not noticed what they came equipped with, who have need to recollect from what race they are sprung. We need

not be abashed at being different, nor should we boast too fervently of our successes. We are a small place and the program will never swamp the world. What it does is too normal, too extraordinary, and too little interested in success. Let's hope it will never lose its great-souledness.

## Truth Given and Truth Sought: Two Colleges

J. Winfree Smith

Bishop Ziemann, President McArthur, members of the Board of Governors of Thomas Aquinas College, members of the faculty, students of the College, parents and guests of the graduating seniors, and especially graduating seniors, members of the Class of 1987:

First of all, let me say that I was deeply moved by the invitation to give this address. I regard it as a sign of the affection that exists between me and this class and between me and the members of this community, and also as a sign of the growth in mutual understanding and Christian charity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion of which the American Episcopal Church to which I belong is a part. This could indeed be an occasion for you to assure me of what Pope Paul VI assured the Protestant theologian Karl Barth sometime during an hour-long conversation in 1966. He lovingly assured him of his prayers that certain deeper insights might still be given him in his old age. That, at least, is Barth's account. We do not have the Holy Father's account of that conversation.

When I began thinking about what should be the subject of this address, many reminiscences of my earliest experiences of the Catholic Church came to me. I shall mention a few that take me back more

The Reverend Mr. Smith is a Tutor Emeritus at St. John's College, Annapolis. This speech was the commencement address, delivered in June, 1987, at Thomas Aquinas College, Santa Paula, California, where he had been a visiting tutor for two years.

than fifty years. Sometime in the spring of 1935 I was called to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church and was headed for seminary that fall. I was then a graduate student in history at the University of Virginia. Having been a Presbyterian, I had acquired a bit of theology in my early youth by memorizing the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. But one of my teachers at Virginia, Scott Buchanan, who more than any other single person was later on the founder of the St. John's program and hence one to whom Thomas Aquinas College is also indebted, got me interested in the theology of St. Thomas, especially his theology of the Eucharist. I thought I ought to find out how the Eucharist as understood by St. Thomas was celebrated in the Church which held his doctrine. Every week day during Lent of 1935, I attended Mass at the Catholic Church in Charlottesville and so became familiar with the Latin Mass as it was celebrated in the United States fifty and more years ago. I still have the missal edited by the Benedictine Abbot Cabrol which I acquired in 1934 and took with me to Mass. During all the time that I was in the Episcopal seminary, when I was not doing my assigned work and maybe sometimes when I should have been, I was studying the theology of St. Thomas, having acquired the twenty-one volume translation of the *Summa Theologiae* made early in this century by English Dominicans. One day, a classmate of mine came in my room, looked over my books and said, "You don't have books that anybody else has." "I suppose that's right," I said. "Well," he exclaimed as he left, "it doesn't seem to bother you."

I have always been grateful for this study and at this moment am especially grateful because it means that what I have in common with you and what we both hold precious entered my life a long while ago.

Let me now cease reminiscing and come to the real subject of my talk. Often when I was a visiting member of the faculty here, people asked me, and now often in Annapolis people ask me about the difference between Thomas Aquinas College and St. John's College. One can consider this question about the difference only if one is aware of how alike these colleges are. Both have in common the view that one can best learn by reading books of the greatest excellence and that within limits and always with the possibility of making changes one can identify these books and make a list. The lists for the two colleges are very much the same, though not identical. The two colleges are in agreement that no student can learn as much from a book through reading it by himself or through listening to a supposed "expert" explain it as he can by conversing about it with his fellow-students under the guidance of one or two fellow-learners called teachers. One can learn through reading and conversing only if one has a good understanding

of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Both colleges, therefore, have stressed those traditional liberal disciplines, the arts of the trivium as well as the quadrivial arts of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music that provide readily accessible examples not only of ways of learning but of learnable things.

What, then, is the difference between these colleges? A simple answer to that question is that Thomas Aquinas College is a Christian college, whereas St. John's has no commitment to Christianity. That, however, does not tell one very much. Many colleges are nominally Christian. At this college, the center of the curriculum, and hence the center of intellectual life, is the Christian religion itself. The study of sacred theology is the intellectual enterprise that gives direction to all others. A sign of the centrality here of the Christian religion and of sacred theology is the presence of a theology tutorial. At St. John's there is no theology tutorial, although the Bible and several theological works are read and seriously discussed by all the students. Thomas Aquinas College, as a Christian college, assumes that there are truths revealed by God and known by faith. St. John's does not make that assumption but considers it a possibility to be earnestly investigated.

I have deliberately called this college a Christian college, and so far I have not used the word "Catholic" of it. For I can imagine that there might be an Eastern Orthodox college or an Anglican college or a Protestant college that might take this college as a model, and so might have as the center of its curriculum sacred theology based on what has been revealed by God in Holy Scripture and articulated through the tradition of the Church. I am thinking of revealed truths held in common with the Catholic Church by many Christian communions: that God is the omnipotent, and consequently the omniscient, creator and sustainer of the heavens and the earth, that He is three persons or hypostases in one essence, that man's nature is corrupted by sin and in need of grace, that grace is mediated through Jesus Christ who as the second person of the triune God is truly God and who also is one with us in being completely human, that those who put their trust in Christ rejoice in the hope of the blessedness of the coming kingdom of God. I am aware, to be sure, that the statement I have just given of revealed truths held as such by many Christian communions is from a Catholic point of view incomplete. It may indeed be incomplete from the point of view of other communions, for as Pope John Paul II, anticipating the beginning of the Marian year, says in his March 25th encyclical on the Mother of the Redeemer, "It is a hopeful sign that these churches and ecclesial communities [he is referring to churches and ecclesial communities other than the Catholic Church] are finding agreement with the Catholic Church on fundamental points of Chris-

tian belief, including matters relating to the Virgin Mary. For they recognize her as Mother of the Lord and hold that this forms part of our faith in Christ, true God and true man."

Thomas Aquinas College is definitely a Catholic college in its adherence to the whole of what in the Catholic Church is to be taken as matter of faith. It is its great merit that it stands so firmly and clearly for God's saving truth as the foundation of theology, and for theology as the supreme intellectual enterprise.

Sacred theology is, then, a quest that starts with faith. St. Anselm's phrase "faith seeking understanding" is a good way of describing it. It is not simply a body of demonstrations deduced from a minimum of principles as Euclid's geometry or Newton's mathematical science of nature is. The Bible itself does not, in the main, prove things about God. It is a story to be read as a story—a true story of God in relation to man, beginning in Genesis with the creation of man as the highest earthly creature and ending with the new heaven and the new earth in the Apocalypse. Sacred theology, whether as Biblical theology or as based on articles of faith found in the Bible or in ecclesiastical tradition, offers a vast realm for the intellect and the intellectual imagination to explore. Sometimes in this exploration there occur demonstrative reasonings. Sometimes, as St. Thomas indicates when he refers to the various meanings the same text of Scripture may have, theology employs allegory and anagogical reasoning. Anagogical reasoning, in his view, has to do with eternal glory and matters relating to the ultimate object of hope; because of the origin of the word "anagogical," such reasoning can also be thought of as reasoning that leads up to. There is in theology reasoning that leads up to as well as reasoning that leads down from. Theology is, in either case, faith seeking understanding. The outcome in this life is not the replacement of faith by understanding. It is only in another life, the life of the age to come, that faith is to be replaced by the intellect's vision of God. As long as those in the pilgrim Church are *wayfarers*, to use a favorite name of St. Thomas for Christians, they walk by faith and not by sight.

St. John's College, I have said, has no commitment to Christianity. That does not mean that it is hostile to Christianity. It is a philosophical college in a very large sense of the word "philosophical." Philosophy, like sacred theology, is a quest, a quest for wisdom moved by the love of wisdom. But it is a quest that does not presuppose revealed truth. What does it presuppose? It presupposes what Socrates calls "the things around us" and what Genesis calls "the heavens and the earth," the sky above, the earth on which we dwell, plants and animals and human life on the earth. It presupposes also the meaningfulness of human speech. For it is only in speech that we can

put before us the questions that arise as we behold with wonder the things around us. It is worthy of note that Aristotle's names for particular categories are in the form of questions: the "what?", the "how great?", the "where?", the "when?", and so on. The questions philosophy raises are the questions that are most important for human beings, such as the question of what the best life for man is, or the question of the relation of the human to the non-human, or the question that Aristotle says was asked long ago and is always being asked and occasions difficulties: the question of what being is. Philosophy seeks wisdom or knowledge about being as a whole and in its parts.

One might well wonder whether with such an ambitious aim and without the help of divine revelation the quest and the questioning ever attain what is being sought. That wonder becomes all the greater when one has to consider that over the centuries there have been many answers, often conflicting answers, to these questions and that the love of truth requires that one not prejudge the answers but honestly and humbly examine the reasons behind them. Of answers that really conflict with one another, some must be only opinions. Some opinions get knocked out in the course of philosophizing. The true answer may be something that is still to be sought with the benefit of whatever opinion has stood the testing. Scott Buchanan used to give as one criterion for a great book that it raises unanswerable questions. I would agree with those who, on the other hand, say that a question, if it is meaningful, is asking for a true answer. The true answer may not be easily accessible to the philosopher. There may be some answers never actually reached. The undertaking is indeed a tremendously ambitious one. Some Christian thinkers have regarded it as too ambitious and have spoken of the pride of philosophers even to engage in such an undertaking.

However ambitious the undertaking is in itself, St. John's is defined by it. The faculty and students there may not be philosophers. But they perceive philosophizing in the background of what they do and they perceive the fundamental questions it raises. Among these is the question of revelation. The very attempt to philosophize brings one face to face with the question whether the most important truths are not truths which cannot be seen as truths by the unaided human intellect and so have to be accepted on authority. For us who are Christians, that question is answered even if there are differences among Christians as to the relation between the authority of Scripture and the authority of the Church.

Revelation contains all the truth we need to know for our salvation. It does not provide answers to all the questions inquiring minds might legitimately ask. Sometimes we can test by revelation answers not contained in revelation. Sometimes we are left wondering and, if

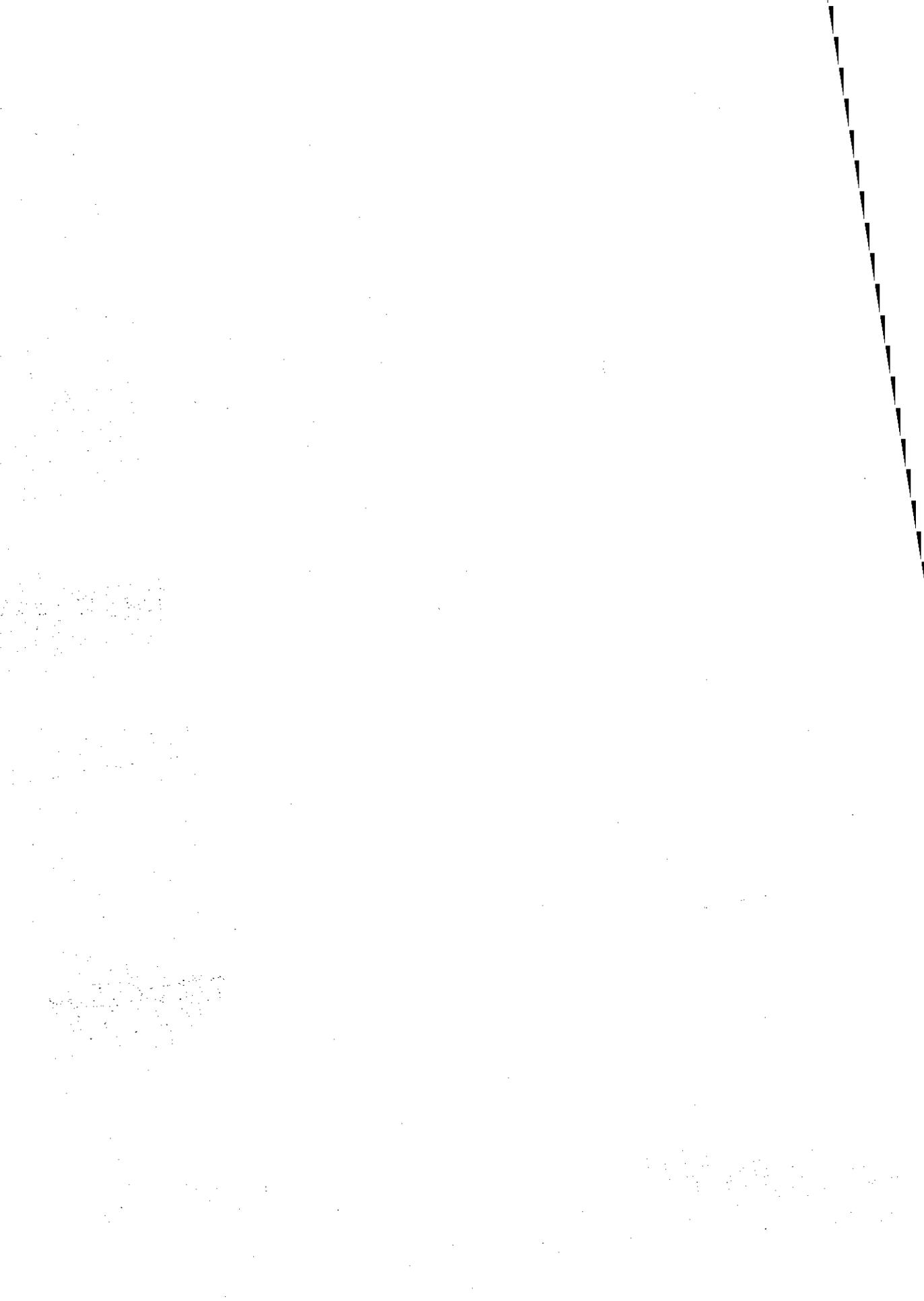
no Socrates is present, or no one like Socrates, we have to remind ourselves of our ignorance of many things.

I believe that Christians must reject much of modern thought which does not stand the test when examined in the light of revealed truth. Of course, that it does not stand the test is something that has to be shown. Is modernity, then, to be rejected wholesale? It is impossible to deny that modern science has led to the discovery of many truths and that it has made possible an enormous increase in man's power over the world at the same time that it has come to place all of human life in jeopardy. One cannot say that it has led to wisdom. Respect for the truth requires that we make distinctions. Never forgetting the ancient and Biblical emphasis on duty and obedience to law as primary, we must acknowledge the rightness of one modern idea that has been voiced by several popes and that underlies the Constitution of the United States with its amendments, and that is the idea that human beings just by being human have certain rights, for instance the right to liberty. In my opinion, it is a good thing that the Constitution forbids any religious test for public office under the United States and that the first amendment forbids Congress to make any law prohibiting the free exercise of religion. It was a shameful thing that in England between 1673 and 1828 no one could hold civil or military offices without taking an oath in denial of transubstantiation. One might be compelled with one's lips to profess or deny this or that religious doctrine. But the heart cannot be compelled. As the Second Vatican Council declared, "No one is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith."

Aristotle in the *Ethics* presents two kinds of life as good kinds: the philosophic life and the political life, and of these two the philosophic life is immensely superior. According to Christianity, the life of faith is the best kind of life and it need not require very much in the way of philosophy or even of theology. I do not have to exhort you to live the life of faith. It is given you to do so. Nor do I expect most of you to devote your lives to theology or the philosophizing that accompanies theology. But I would hope that your life in Christ would be a life in which you continue, in a way made available to you by this college, to be concerned with the profound theological questions and the profound answers, and the questions raised by those answers. Political life you can hardly avoid. At the present moment, one wonders whether the noble attempt of the founders of our republic to solve the problems of government by the institutions of government will come to grief. The founders well knew that the problems of government cannot be solved merely by the institutions of government. Government of the people and by the people will be government for the people only if the people are educated in the way in which this college has sought to edu-

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cate you, the way of righteousness and truth. We do not expect America or the nations together to become by human means the kingdom of God. But that does not relieve us of our duty to order our own lives and to do what we can, however small, to make human life for all men on this planet not only possible but worthwhile. Our political hope, whether for America or for the nations of the earth, may be—as maybe political hope always is—a hope against hope. We have a sure and certain hope expressed in the prayer given us by Christ our Lord when He bids us to pray to God our Father that *His* kingdom come.



## How Liberty Won the Sweet Sixteen

From *The Tales of the Liberty Renaissance*

Ken Colston

### To The Not Overcareful Reader of These Tales

There are those who maintain that the entire story was a country-bred New Journalist's confabulation, that Clyde Trample, by profession editor-and-typesetter-in-chief of the tiny Northern Kentucky *Chronicle*, quirky amateur historian and acerbic wit by disposition, made it up out of whole cloth, sending the boxed results to a half-dozen renegade presses simultaneously, his area weekly having recently come into a workhouse Macintosh word-processor and two letter-quality printers. Skeptics point out that there's no such town in northern Kentucky as Liberty, that the Interstate 64 doesn't even have an extension, that no governor in Kentucky ever wore hair even with the tops of his ears, never did, never will, and that Louisville high-school basketball teams don't compete in the Twelfth or Thirteenth Regions, neither one.

Clyde will reply with eye-rolling smugness that of course in order to protect his newspaper from unseemly and costly litigation he had

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to change the names of certain key personages and of all the critical locales, but that everything in the book happened as written, give or take a few colorizing details, and that he can prove it or kick your ass over it, your choice.

Then some ill-read nitpicking yokel will ask why if the names is changed does Clyde keep his just as his mother—haw! haw!—give it to him on the day he was born.

Whereupon Clyde will grip his Mont Blanc Diplomat like a Barlow knife and retort, “Hasn’t any of you narrow-eyed incest-begot stump-hilljacks ever heard of playful self-reference?”

## How Liberty Won the Sweet Sixteen

It all started with the men who cooked up the United States Supreme Court, but it is better to pursue a shorter thread.

The Kentucky part of it started long enough ago for memory to be slightly imperfect when the Fabulous 89th Congress voted money to the Commonwealth Department of Highways to connect Interstates 64, 71, and 75. The new extension would run right past Liberty, render the buzzard-dropped burg equidistant from Louisville, Covington, and Lexington, and pull it into the enlightened lap of the Great Society. They were even going to build two rest areas, one north and one south of town.

So excited were some Libertines that you would have thought that Ford and General Motors had broken ground for assembly plants. Jacob Range Taylor had to hire three pretty chain-smoking saleswomen to handle all the calls in his real-estate office, a move that galled the Backwards-Dunking Baptists. When the news broke in the *Liberal*, readers accused Editor Clyde Trample of being in cahoots with Jacob Range. The feed-capped bench jockeys who sat and spat under the catalpa trees by the courthouse in July humidity or in their pickup trucks during January rain had their suspicions:

“Clyde’s made the whole thang up.”

“Jacob Range has put his place up for sale. Wants a million dollars. Hit’s got to be a lie.”

“Better not be. Ape Collins has bought a piece of land off Taylor for a truck stop.”

“I know one thang: if the road comes, a bunch of dern niggers’ll come with it. This town ain’t never amounted to nothing.”

*That* was a lie, for Liberty had had its day in the sun—in fact, had had several. Almost two centuries before, Erasmus Lee Jefferson, a second cousin of our beloved Thomas, had nourished high hopes for

his Utopian settlement along Quick Creek, a branch off the Kentucky River. Erasmus had hit the Territory Trail with a wagonload of curious odds-and-ends: nineteen children by his first four wives, Diderot's and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, a swivel chair badly in need of an oiling, a telescope with a cracked lens, a rabid fifth wife, two long-rifle boxes of sugar-cane stems packed in mud, and a map of Caintuckee that was off by nearly ten degrees of latitude. Erasmus was determined first to cultivate *Saccharum officinarum* and then he'd think up some perfect society worthy of his dreamed Caribbean wealth. In the beginning, he was lucky. The February of his arrival was April-like, and his wife's rabies cleared up and left her wickedly ambitious. She planted right away. The growing season was hot and muggy, and the first frost wasn't until December. The harvest was beyond all hopes. Then a fleet of Cincinnati keelboats took a wrong turn off the Ohio River and ran aground in Erasmus's back yard just as his wife was wondering what to do with the bumper crop. The captain believed that he'd never steer back on course without unloading some of the scrawny and useless passengers, and Erasmus's wife, Gladys Ruth, believed that the crop would rot on the banks like washed-up cattails unless white slave labor turned the presses. So the two *entrepreneurs* made a swap, a barrel of raw syrup in exchange for each man, a half-barrel for each woman. That is how most of the clans arrived—the Armstrongs, Robinsons, Henrys, Colstons, Cobs, and Taylors. The captain was so impressed with Gladys Ruth that he dubbed the still unnamed landing Little New Orleans and sold nonnotarized stocks on it in Louisville, St. Louis, and Natchez. By Christmas the town boasted a trading post, a hardware store, a bank that issued its own currency, a schoolhouse with alphabet horns in Attic Greek, but no church.

That Easter, after putting away a pint of young rum, Erasmus screwed up his courage and took on Gladys Ruth. He gathered together the family's newly acquired white slaves, carved them off twenty acres apiece of his huge claim, and set them free. "We couldn't have kept them anyways," he shrugged to Gladys Ruth. "For this knobby terrain, like that of ancient Attica, will not admit of bondage. The future is Liberty." Gladys Ruth posted three of her stepsons around the sugar presses.

Thus, the new town had a name, but Erasmus wouldn't register it with the Post Office until he decided upon the kind of society he wanted. He took his time because he didn't want to blow it. Our age of mere perpetuation forgets too easily the enormous responsibility borne by the founders, who knew that one false step and destiny might never recover. If they read the rivers wrong, prosperity would harbor elsewhere; if they made no place for the arts, their garden crofts would

soon be pig sties; if they didn't strike the right balance between freedom and control, their descendants would live in chaos or in chains. It was quite a burden, and it gave old Erasmus pause. There was so much choice; Liberty could be anything he wanted: a theocracy, as in Massachusetts; a corporation, as at Jamestown; a haven of religious tolerance, as in Pennsylvania; a republic of small farmers, as cousin Thomas dreamed about; even a communistic conglomeration of phalanxes, as some of Tom Paine's friends advocated. The kinds of societies were as numerous in those heady days as the brands of soda in these humble times. Erasmus put off his decision, and the Kentucky Postmaster in the young state capital refused to deliver the mail without a toponym in the books. Petty-minded bureaucrats, too, can trace their ancestry.

Erasmus brought up the matter with his hard young wife. "I fear lest Government retard the People, Gladys Ruth," he told her that May, when, owing to the mild winter, the mosquitoes were already as big as hummingbirds and so full with blood that they lay on the grass like foundered cows.

"So the hell with gov'ment," Gladys Ruth exclaimed. "Just sign that 'air form from Frankfort so's we can get the 'skeeter netting Momma's sent us."

"Hot damn!" Erasmus cried. "That's enough to make Robespierre look like a Tory. *Fiat sic.*"

And sick it was. Word soon went around that the gobblers and knobs north of Lexington and south of Cincinnati were a lawless territory, and those sawed-off hills and scrub clearings and swampy valleys filled up fast with Klinkenbeards and Harrisons. In those days, if justice wasn't local, it didn't exist: no higher authority gave a damn about some crackpot settlement on the edge of the Shawnees' stomping ground. Before long, the town was so dark and bloody that the Indians shied away. One night, the corpulent head of the Klinkenbeards disappeared, and a few days later a rummed-up Harrison bragged that his brothers had diced him and tossed him into a spicy burgoo. A feud was on. They gut shot each other's women and children, beheaded each other's old men, and spoke disrespectfully to each other's coon dogs. Under pressure from his Baptist constituency, who were embarrassed by the bad name Liberty was giving the whole state, the Governor dispatched up the militia. They got scared and mutinied just above Quick Creek, beyond which they had heard that even Georgians feared to go without a Klinkenbeard or Harrison escort.

Human decency went by the boards. The Henrys and Boyds walked around naked. The McGoffins staffed a whorehouse with midgets, livestock, and the hearing-impaired. Apparently getting wind

of this pleasure dome, some dubious *émigrés* who claimed to have shamed the licentious court of Louis Fifteenth showed up with their Jesuit confessors in a rickety *carrosse*. They introduced love aids made of precious metals and ostrich feathers and offered the patent rights to anyone—man, woman, or animal—who could show the *ennuyé* Dauphin something new. This supposed royal heir was so obese that he couldn't close his right eye and had to have an effeminate attendant moisten it every five minutes with salt water. The contest was on, and after three days a big Floyd woman and her jack mule won. In no time at all, gobblers-and-knobs smiths were selling their erotic wares to hucksters bound for the Louisiana Purchase. To this day, one of these contraptions shows up every now and then at a Liberty garage sale. One rare find is called a cat tweezers, from *chatouilleuse*, and it still grips like a professional bowler and cuddles like a collie puppy. Those old boys were craftsmen.

Young Liberty was as experimental as a freshman dormitory at a prestigious university, and custom was razed like a country church by a tornado. The Taylors ate breakfast at sunset; the Jeffersons used Bible paper as fire tinder; the McDarmint girls refused to give in to their daddies. Nothing passed on authority. One forward-looking Jefferson boy decided that cooking was a superfluity. He began eating his pork raw and wound up trading ten acres of prime bottomland to an Armstrong witch for a worm charm. Another concluded that, Newton notwithstanding, a wheel and an inclined plane created rather than saved work. His warehouse went bankrupt, and late in life he found a negative sign in the wrong place. In those revolutionary years, if they thought of it, they tried it. Some daring Robinson women taught a dozen black bears to dance. This was a huge success until one night a wild-eyed high-stepper went into heat and mauled a strongly cologned stringer from a Louisville tabloid. These *folies ursines* went out of business, and the furry chorus girls were ground up into meat patties. Erasmus Jefferson proclaimed his desire to teach every boy and girl in the gobblers and knobs to do percentages and the brightest to read Greek, and he was the only laughing-stock.

So it is when the world is new but the people in it have been around: no traditions, no obstacles. Liberty's first promoters found that they could bill the town anything they wanted. The keelboat captain called it Little New Orleans, and Erasmus came up with Kentucky Athens. An Austrian Egyptologist of the first water, enticed by Erasmus's spurious find of Shawnee pictographs bearing striking resemblances to those recently discovered hieroglyphics, proclaimed this sugar-cane town the Luxor of the West, never minding that Liberty's would-be namesake was plunked smack in the middle of the desert. The

French Jesuits who rode with the obese Dauphin sent back word to Rome that they had come upon the Sodom and Gomorrha of the New World. In rushed a tough Spanish *compañía de Jesús* recently reinstated by Pius IV and ready to prove their mettle in spiritual reform. They hitched a ride with a one-armed Harrison teamster, who talked ethics with them: "Personally, I don't care what kind of fucking a man does so long's he keeps it in the family." He drove his mule up a steep knob, where his relatives were butchering for a burgoo. The Black Robes took one look at the ceremony and turned north to work with the Shawnees; where Satan had not gotten such a foothold. The Jesuitical allusion held, however, and old men and women high up on Quick Creek still can be heard saying that they were born in "Solomon and Gonorrhoea."

Erasmus surveyed his anarchic Utopia and wondered where he had gone wrong. He didn't like what he saw, but he asked himself where one should draw the line. Cannibalism was not his cup of tea, but *de gustibus non disputandum est*. The Dionysian carrying on broke his heart. His dream of writing the definitive rebuttal to the *Federalist Papers* dried up; Gladys Ruth infected him with the pox; he walked bald and shivering through the muddy streets, talking in Greek to the hogs and hounds. When a vision rots, the dreamer's mind goes bad with it.

The next fall, the weather's pendulum swung back like a swing seat pumped by a hyperactive kid. A heavy snow piled in on All Saints' Day, a foot dropping in four hours. Erasmus looked at his map and ran out into the snow in his long underwear.

"Those pox-spreading land speculators!" he shouted.

Gladys Ruth went tromping through the drifts barefoot, wielding a cane sickle. "There ain't enough survived the cold," she declared, "to soak a sugar tit." That night she left town with the banker, blizzard or no blizzard, and everybody with any sense or ambition followed them, which explains why Liberty would remain poor and overcrowded for more than a century.

From boom to bust in three years: this foreshortened frontier story was a miniature of the land of sudden sweeping change. As soon as the snow melted, the remaining Libertines got religion. It was called the Quick Creek Great Awakening of 1813. Abraham P.S. Cob, a harelipped charismatic who had a way with the damned and dispossessed, picked on Erasmus Lee Jefferson in a sermon that lasted for the entire week-long slow thaw. That babbling beanpole, P.S. whined, was an atheist, a heliocentric, a Jacobin, a polyglot, and a Bachelor of Arts. He burned the Bible, worked on the Sabbath, and advocated vaccination. Moreover, like other Godless men such as Voltaire and Franklin, he himself suffered from the pox. No wonder the Almighty went so far as to blow in on a Catholic holiday.

P.S. played to an outdoor crowd warmed by bonfires of burning sugar barrels on the banks of Quick Creek. On the seventh day of P.S.'s homily, his shivering congregation took fever. They shaked and quaked, quook and shook, and then they headed for Quick Creek with Erasmus, dunking him backwards, nine-hundred-and-sixty-nine times—a backwoods allusion to long-lived Methusaleh—and a Revolutionary War sawbones said that his heart probably stopped on the hundredth immersion. After this ritualistic purification, they jumped in themselves, all but the Klinkenbeards and Harrisons, which must have disappointed the crawdads. Then they stormed over to the schoolhouse with flaming oak boards, burned that last and best hope for mankind to the ground, and urinated on the ashes.

They raised a log church on that very spot. It collapsed three times that winter and killed six people, but was raised anew each time with increased faith. After the first collapse, the Harrisons and Klinkenbeards headed for the briars and overhangs. P.S. joined forces with some Robinson and Armstrong elders, and together they made Liberty's first laws: against cannibalism, bestiality, bundling, hatless women, Sabbath-breaking, public defecation, atheism, polygamy, snuff, chin whiskers, earrings, whist, spirits, and the French language. The Gallic influence got the blame for the late iniquity. Night rides against homesteaders with names such as Le Jeune and Bomarshay were not uncommon. Despite the heroic efforts of three Jefferson first-born males, Liberty would not get another school until the twentieth century, and that one would not have been built without a mysterious order from Frankfort and a squadron of Army military police.

The obscure little village oscillated between boom and bust throughout its 150-plus years. On the eve of Fort Sumter, a Cob discovered a rich saltpeter vein near Quick Creek. Within a month, three gunpowder plants went up. After the Battle of Manassas, however, where four kegs mysteriously blew up as if sparked by spontaneous combustion, Abraham Lincoln banned the purchase of all supplies from unreliable Gobblers-and-Knobs Explosives. In the 1880's, the Southern Railroad put through a section of track connecting with the Covington-Lexington line in hopes of stimulating regional logging. The project turned out to be only so much worthless steel and labor, for timber companies soon learned that the local white oak and scrub pine was full of termite holes even when green and became dry and splintery when seasoned. The last bringer of hope was Liberty Pike, started in the New Deal and intended to be an alternative route for U.S. 25. Then mercurial Mars (to mix mythology) dealt Liberty another cruel blow on the day that lives in infamy. With the country's resources devoted to the national interest, all work on Liberty Pike was immediately stopped,

and it wasn't resumed until after Potsdam, when less generous Fair Dealers saw fit merely to connect the Freedom Highway, as it was known, to U.S. 25 via winding back roads maintained by poor counties. For the last thirty years, the county seat of Cob County had been at least two hours away from the three great cities of the Commonwealth Golden Triangle.

Cut off for so long from the world, Liberty was unto itself. Even in the mid-1960's, Bill Ed Tuck, the barber, used hand clippers. Pap Henry, the druggist, sold two gallons of enema refills a week; Ape Collins, owner of the Pure Oil gas station and a six-footer with a seven-foot arm span, packed standard transmissions with sawdust; Rudy Smoot, the grocer, operated a milk truck; Doc Puckett, the chiropractor, wrote prescriptions without having a medical degree; most of the Harrisons and Klinkenbeards owned stills. For beer, the best bet was bootleg, since Cob County was dry, or Wilma Harrison's First/Last Chance on the edge of wet contiguous Crackenham County. But this new expressway promised to bring Liberty up-to-date, and fast.

That was how the story of the founding was told in an obscure historical journal by the ambitious wife of an archaeologist whom the Commonwealth sent down to dig around before the extension construction began. With the reluctant help of the Backwards Dunking Local Missionaries, she interviewed the courthouse bench jockeys, the patients at the old folks' home in Ararat, and the regulars at the First/Last Chance. The journal was eager to increase its circulation and jazzed up the wife's prose and invented a few corroborating facts without substantially changing the thesis. When the article was published, Brenda Mane Armstrong, aspiring School Board member and head of the Local Missionaries, was livid. She seized the tapes she was storing for the wife in the church basement and spearheaded an angry but unsuccessful protest on ecological grounds against the archaeologist's digs out where the wife was told had been the Territory Trail.

"You're tearing up nature and everythang," Brenda Mane said.

The archaeologist looked for weeks and never found a sign of the Trail, although he did delve into an Eastern Woodland midden, from which he scraped out a buffalo pelvis. Determined to fish out some pioneer remains, he explored along Quick Creek, but found nothing more interesting than two ordinary fossils, as common as dirt, and they were borderline at that.

"I can't understand it," he told his wife. "I haven't come across anything more than seventy-five years old—not a square-head nail, a threadless bolt, or a piece of cast iron. This town has nothing beneath the surface."

“Are you calling me a liar?” His wife got huffy. “I’ve seen copies of the newspaper from the Civil War.”

The issue was never resolved, and it destroyed their marriage. The bench jockeys got a big kick out of it.

The wife may have been referring to yellowed issues of the *Liberal*, for Clyde Trample still used antique type, spelled “public” with a final *k*, spurned headlines and photographs, and wrote column-length paragraphs. He ran excerpts from her article on the back page to get Brenda Mane’s goat and did a profile on the new governor, who sported a Paul McCartney haircut and drove a Jaguar.

So even before the first bulldozers were heard, Liberty made ready for the extension. The Cob County Commissioners took bids on a sewer system. C. Williamson Robinson, known as the Incest Defender, began reading up on personal injury law. The Dairy Queen put in a whole new line of ice-ball flavors. Morgana Tuck, Billy Ed’s wife, made him buy a neck vacuum. She had blamed the unfulfilled promise of Liberty Pike on her husband’s failure to go electric.

“This time,” she said, “we’re not going to let a major highway connecting us to the throb and beat of the nation get away from us.” She herself built up a beehive hair-do on her head just as she had seen on a short woman in Cincinnati. Unfortunately it collapsed on her one day when she was buying Rainbow Bread at Rudy Smoot’s. Delph Henry, Pap’s smart-mouthed boy, saw it cave in on one side and said, “Quick, Ma, let’s git out of here before they’s a swarm!”

And even before the first dust clouds billowed, the local churches—queer little sects that had been cut off from low Protestantism for better than a century—voiced their opinions. The Unlimited Adventists hailed it as yet another Coming. The Grape Juice Christians said it was the beginning of the end to regional temperance. The Squawking Methodists railed that it was going to be a freeway for the Antichrist. But the Backwards Dunking Baptists, who proudly claimed to be the first Baptists to practice immersion in the revealed manner before all the others climbed on the bandwagon, were the biggest church in Cob County and their attitude counted most.

“We withhold all judgment,” Reverend Isa Dale said, “for a later date in the future down the road ’cause there is some good thangs to be said for progriss.”

It was Frank Collins, Ape’s trouble-maker of a son, who saw the first signs of the highway. He was on the truck-stop site, standing on the cab of an asphalt truck looking through binoculars.

“Here they come, Daddy,” Frank shouted. “Bulldozers and cement trucks and a Negro road crew.”

Ape threw down his asphalt rake and cussed Frank down from the cab. "Don't let me ever hear you call them Negroes again, boy," he said, snatching away the binoculars so violently that Frank's head snapped back. He mounted the cab and took a look for himself. "Them's niggers, sure enough."

Yes, it was true: the government was actually paying them money to stand around with spades over their shoulders. A few operated the big bulldozers, and one was even a foreman, giving orders to a white crew. It was hard to take, sort of like watching old athletes sit the bench while young bloods gained applause. The bench jockeys jabbered about it:

"I ain't never going to drive on no road built by niggers."

"You reckon *they'll* be driving on it?"

"Shore. It don't go nowheres but to nigger cities."

"Can niggers drive?"

"I seen one driving a Mercury the other day. It was a automatic."

But that they vowed never to drive on the extension didn't keep them from watching it being built. During the day, they walked from the courthouse down to sit among the honey locusts for a close look at the devastation. It had the magnitude of a disaster movie: dynamite exploded hills from the ground up, like earthquakes; bulldozers razed bushes and woods, like floods. Trees lay stretched out and helpless like bombed soldiers. Deer and rabbits ran recklessly about as if fleeing a forest fire.

Pretty soon, dairy farmers who had long since let their cows go dry got two hundred dollars an acre and free barbed wire for their wild-onioned and yellow-cloved pastures, through which the blazed area ran, glinting and straight like a zipper. Taking a detour only around the horse farms near Lexington, it swerved otherwise for nothing, relentless, wide, and cold-eyed, like a convoy of tanks through a forest. "Kiss my ass," exclaimed one bench jockey sitting on a lawn chair, "if that ain't going to be a *road!*"

Day by day, the Negro highway workers inched closer and closer to Liberty. They drove to the job site six to an Oldsmobile; they fished and hunted crawdads on their lunch hours; they got within two miles of the white women. Boss Dunn said he saw a whole gang of them coming out of the woods behind his trailer, each carrying a possum by the tail. Any day now he expected to see them talking to somebody he knew.

Finally, it happened, one day when the temperature reached a hundred and the road crew was within walking distance of Market Street. The Negro foreman tightened his belt a notch and headed straight for town. By the time he passed the bench jockeys, he had drawn a following of nine boys who thought he was either a space man or a profes-

sional boxer. If he didn't change direction, he would run smack into Pap Henry's drug store and soda fountain. It was scandalous enough to make the bench jockeys stand up.

The foreman was brilliant with sweat, and most of the gathered crowd had never seen a Negro. In fact, they didn't know you weren't supposed to use that word anymore. Of course, neither Pap Henry's nor anything else in Liberty had ever been segregated, and, since the last black in town was a telephone lineman who set foot on earth only for lunch and coffee breaks, they weren't real sure about unwritten laws concerning the mingling of the races. Nevertheless, they had the feeling that this young fellow who shone like Sidney Poitier was going to attempt something reckless and forbidden.

He did. He bought the boys some candy. "Give me a bag of suckers for these childerns," the foreman said inside Pap's.

The boys defied their daddies by accepting, plunking the suckers into jaws packed with chewing tobacco.

Then the foreman walked over to the fountain, and the cashier, Lilian Waters, forgot to push in on her drawer. She had rung up ten thousand dollars. Delph Henry got scared and ran into the back room to fetch Pap. The customers stood close by so as to see which stool they would have to avoid sitting on forevermore.

Well, he pissed off everybody by *not* sitting down. "I's hot and dripping everwhar," he explained.

Lilian forced a denture smile for a few seconds and then huffed, "Well, *we* get by with the fan."

While the foreman eyed the menu above the ceramic-and-steel milkshake mixers, the customers were taking their time looking over the Epsom Salts and enemas. Finally, Pap Henry emerged from the back room, twitching his neck as if to scare off flies.

"Root-beer float," the foreman said. Sheriff Boone was standing in the doorway by then, and he distinctly noticed that the foreman forgot to say please. The Sheriff was ready to go to work, for there must have been a dozen voters in there.

Pap's neck twitched some more, and then he picked up the ice cream scoop with a flourish. "Hit's on the house," he announced. "I was just fixing to send out some flyers. Until that 'air road is finished, everthang on the menu's ten per-cent off for you and the rest of your crew." Pap was a horse trader, and that was a smart move, for the Dairy Whip was a quarter-mile closer to the extension, and he had been looking for a chance to run it out of business for a long time.





## Two Translations of La Fontaine

### La Cigale et la fourmi

La Cigale, ayant chanté  
    Tout l'Été,  
Se trouva fort dépourvue  
Quand la bise fut venue.  
Pas un seul petit morceau  
De mouche ou de vermisseau.  
Elle alla crier famine  
Chez la Fourmi sa voisine,  
La priant de lui prêter  
Quelque grain pour subsister  
Jusqu'à la saison nouvelle.  
Je vous paierai, lui dit-elle,  
Avant l'Ôut, foi d'animal,  
Intéret et principal.  
La Fourmi n'est pas prêteuse;  
C'est là son moindre défaut.  
'Que faisiez-vous au temps chaud?  
Dit-elle à cette emprunteuse.  
—Nuit et jour à tout venant  
Je chantais, ne vous déplaie.  
—Vous chantiez? j'en suis fort aise.  
Eh bien! dansez maintenant.'

La Fontaine, *Fables*, I, 1.

## The Cicada and the Ant

The cicada, having sung her song  
All summer long,  
Was left deprived  
When the north wind arrived:  
Not a bit of worm laid by,  
Nor bite of fly.  
To her neighbor the ant  
She went to chant  
Her complaint of starvation  
And borrow a ration  
Of grain  
Till summer came round again.  
'I'll pay you back with interest before  
Next fall,' she swore  
Upon her  
Insect's honor.  
The ant was not a lender  
(Heaven defend her  
From such an accusation!)  
She asked the beggar 'What did you do  
When the days were warm and the sky was blue?'  
'Night and day throughout the summer  
I sang my song to every comer.'  
The ant: 'I'm sure your singing was entrancing:  
Now try dancing.'

E.Z.

## Le Corbeau et le renard

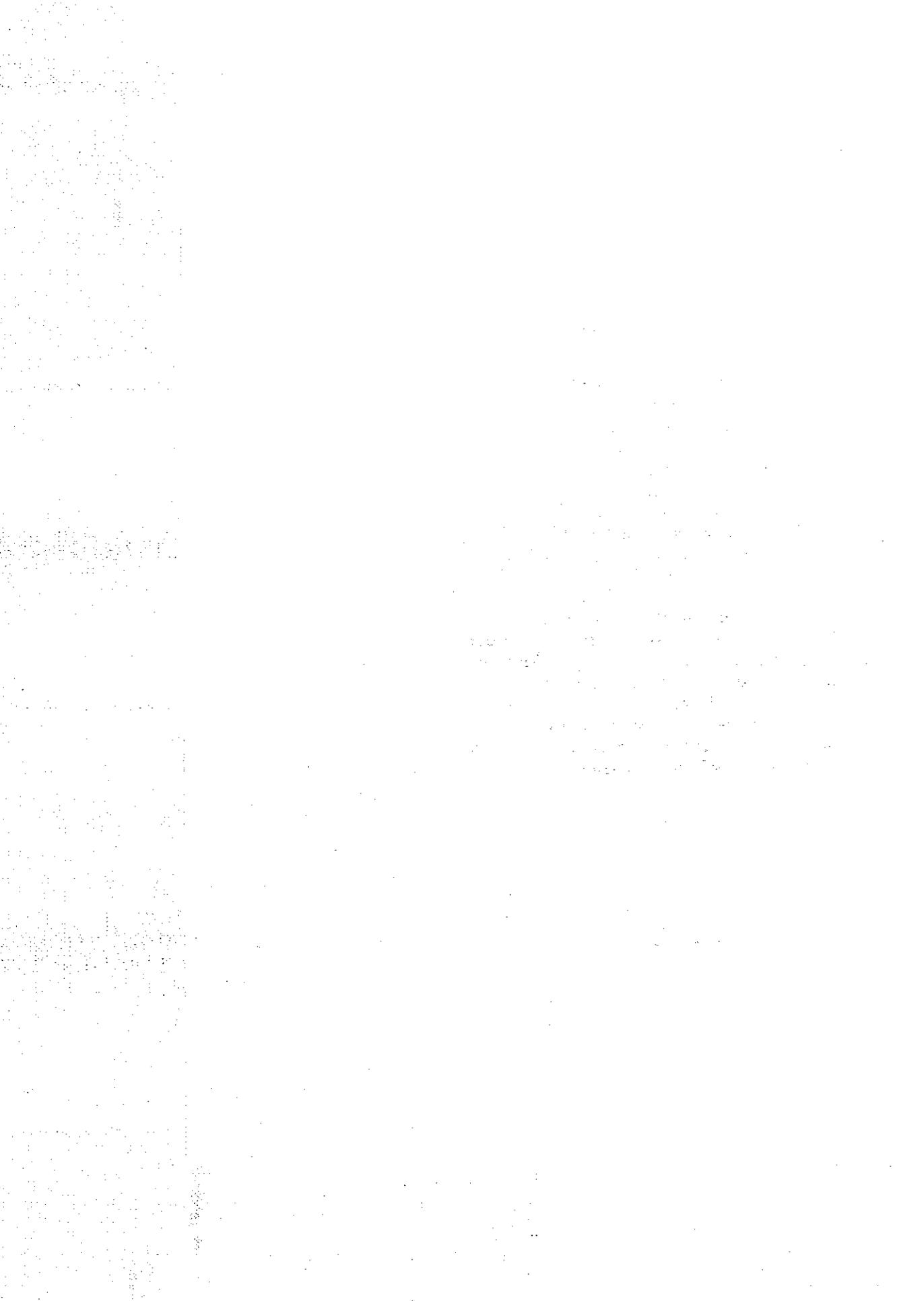
Maître Corbeau, sur un arbre perché,  
Tenait en son bec un fromage.  
Maître Renard, par l'odeur alléché,  
Lui tint à peu près ce langage:  
Et bonjour, Monsieur du Corbeau.  
Que vous êtes joli! que vous me semblez beau!  
Sans mentir, si votre ramage  
Se rapporte à votre plumage,  
Vous êtes le Phénix des hôtes de ces bois.  
A ces mots, le Corbeau ne se sent pas de joie;  
Et pour montrer sa belle voix,  
Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proie.  
Le Renard s'en saisit, et dit: Mon bon Monsieur,  
Apprenez que tout flatteur  
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute.  
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage, sans doute.  
Le Corbeau honteux et confus  
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.

I,II.

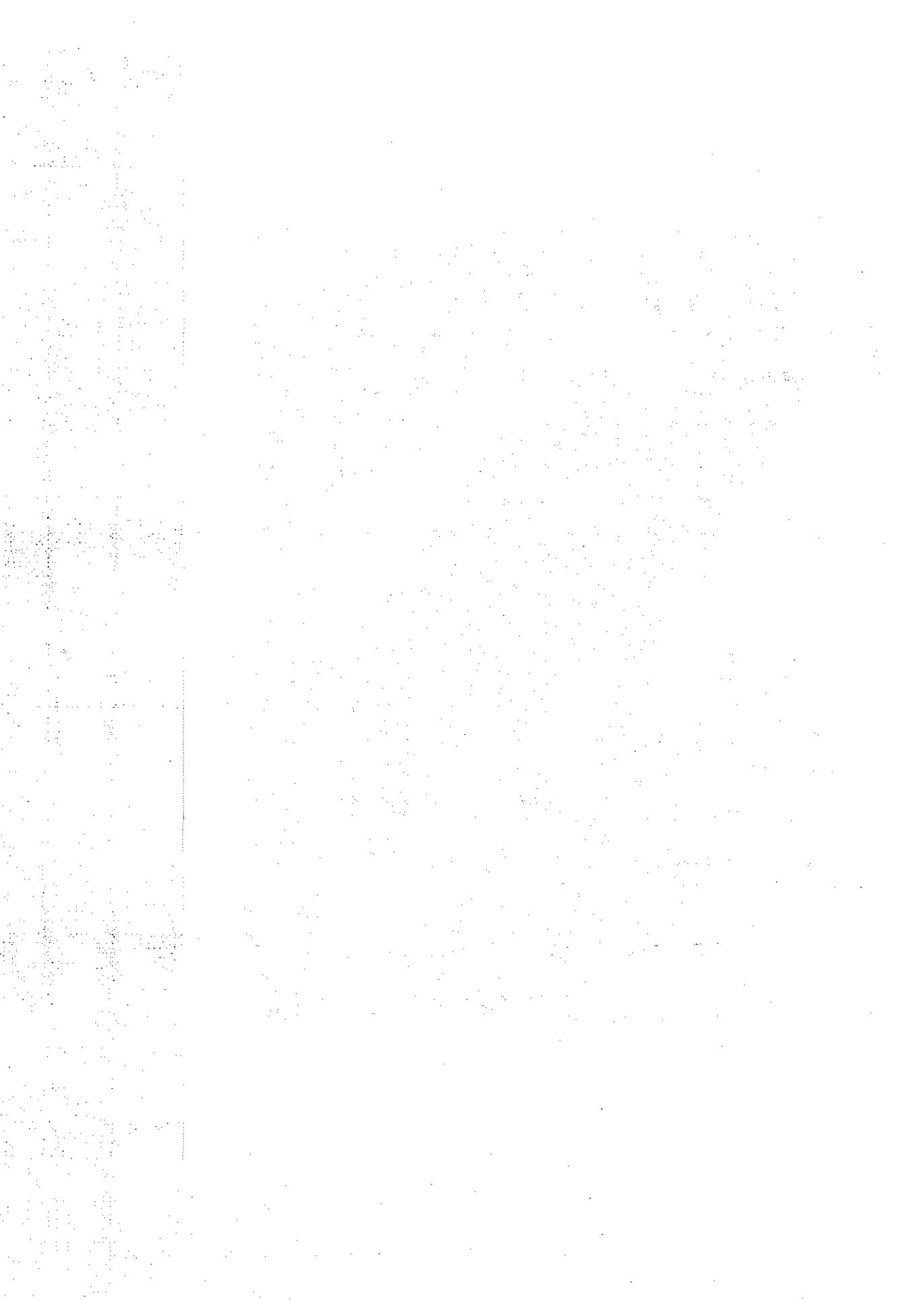
## The Crow and the Fox

Sir Crow was perching in a tree  
Holding in his beak a brie.  
Sir Fox, attracted by the cheese,  
Spoke words like these:  
'Such handsome plumage! Such a sleek veneer!  
If your trilling  
Is half so thrilling  
How sweetly you must sing! Please do so:  
Of all the woodland warblers, let me hear  
The Caruso.'  
The victim has no choice:  
He must show off his voice.  
He opens his great beak and drops the cheese.  
Seizing the prize, the fox observes: 'Mon cher,  
Here is a lesson worth a camembert:  
Every flatterer  
Lives on the income of his flatteries.'  
The crow, ashamed and shaken, swore that he  
Never again would be a flatteree.

E.Z.







## Book Review

### Allan Bloom: *The Closing of the American Mind*\*

Eva Brann

#### I

Here is a book which compels the question whether we should be glad of its existence. My answer is that we should be thrice glad, glad once that it was written, and glad that, having been produced, it found such favor with the public. The bulk of this review will address itself to the reservations which prompt the question in the first instance. Of the two reasons for rejoicing in its success—it is at the date of this writing in first place on the best-seller list—one is somewhat sly and the other quite straightforward. First, Mr. Bloom's book is the jeremiad of liberal education; but a Jeremiah eagerly heard, a prophet honored in his own land, is a prophet more than half refuted. As for the plain pleasure, it is simply that the book will do some concrete good.

*Some* good, evidenced in small incremental improvements: the ear of a foundation here, a modest program there. Mr. Bloom himself has no illusions about a great systemic reprise of liberal education (380). An indication of the practical impossibility that the requisite cohesion should ever come back, is in the concurrent success of E. D. Hirsch's book, *Cultural Literacy*, in which is advocated a return to what used to be called "general information" (now defined descriptively as acquaintance with a list of some 3800 terms), while the one solution Mr.

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\*New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987

Bloom finally offers—to be sure, with many cautionary contortions—namely the reading of Great Books (344), is disavowed in Hirsch's preface. In truth, the thought of our whole vast establishment suddenly converted to liberal learning is somehow appalling, like the image of a continent-sized wheel of fine, ripe cheese. The factor of scale seems to me serious and of the essence. Communities of liberal learning require small size and spontaneous beginnings; the unanimity which ensouls and maintains them becomes oppressive and mechanical when hugely magnified and centrally mandated.

In fact, it is strange to me that Mr. Bloom fixed on the universities as the possible loci for the learning whose loss he mourns, when surely our three thousand or so small colleges are its more likely home. The glory of the modern university has properly been not in contemplative reflection and aporetic conversation but in cumulative research and brilliant breakthroughs. And I will pit my experience in a score of more or less obscure little schools against his among a thousand university students: In these places student souls are still capable of grand longings, books are read with receptive naiveté, and religion is not debased to the frisson of "the sacred." Small places are our internal educational frontier, and the spirit lives in the sticks.

With respect to the effective influence the book might exert (as opposed to the passing waves it superimposes on the roiled ocean of opinion), there is something to be regretted in Mr. Bloom's policy of presenting himself as a voice crying in a wilderness; for in fact the wilderness has quite a few cultivated clearings. He speaks namelessly of his teachers and not at all of the institutional foci of resistance to the rot he exposes. His likely motives are most reasonable: not to be set aside because of sectarian associations, and, by suppressing the names of his allies and predecessors, to win the right of keeping the targets of his contempt anonymous. Consequently this irate tract manages to preserve a certain American civility. Nonetheless, the price is that general readers will have to discover for themselves the addresses of the contemporary sources and places where effective resistance is carried on, such as St. John's College itself.\*

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\*Some of these fellow-fighters in the battle against the soul-unstaying piffle-terms, those relaxants of shape and significance, which are the real, or at least the most interesting, butt of the book, such as *creativity*, *self*, *culture*, *life-style*, and *communication*, are hearteningly easy to find. For example, there are Judith Martin's vastly popular "Miss Manners" books, which, under the guise of pronouncing on etiquette, often ironicize our linguistic mores; thus Miss Manners bids us to "make a special effort to learn to stop communicating with one another, so that we can have some conversation." Here is no inconsiderable ally!

One word more on the reception of the book. Quite a few people are obscurely enraged by it and express that aversion—just as Mr. Bloom indeed predicts—by means of certain schematic terms, such as racism, elitism, and nostalgia-mongering, that are currently used to impute as sin unpopular though perfectly defensible opinions. It should not be considered a sin for Mr. Bloom to observe regretfully the more than occasional self-segregation of black students in the universities.

Again, if one really wished to show him wrong, one would not angrily call him an elitist—silly term—but, by refraining, prove that democracies can indeed contain even their contraries. On “Firing Line” in May of this year Mr. Bloom respectfully but skeptically characterized the views of Midge Decter (who is, incidentally, one of his predecessors in worrying about America’s young) as “serious populism.” For my part, I subscribe to this sort of populism, which precisely disavows the entity called “the People” because of the conviction that people one by one have in them, besides sound sense, the roots of reflection; thus they occupy places in a continuum with the deepest philosophers and are capable of participating to some degree in a common liberal education.

This proposition is what Mr. Bloom evidently disbelieves. He thinks that philosophy, the highest pursuit, is not for everybody. I think he is wrong, democratic or undemocratic aside. (I do not want to concede either to him or to his opponents that his own opinions are truly any more incompatible with strong democratic sentiments than many other things one needs to believe along with one’s civic creed. There is an argument which in its amplitude would have brought even Mr. Bloom into the democratic fold had he cared to use it: pluralism.)

To begin with, his view of aristocracy has a stylized, unreal air. He seems to think that the honor-seeking aristocratic type, the magnanimous lover of the beautiful and the useless, is dominant in real-life aristocracies, just as he must think the vain, sycophantic, utilitarian, democratic type is pervasive in democracies (250). From what I read and hear, “the beautiful” for aristocrats has usually meant—and still means—mostly horseflesh, and if Mr. Bloom were not first run through by his aristocrat’s sword for impugning his stud as useless, he would soon find himself dying of boredom from the nobleman’s conversation. To be sure, Squire Western is more lovable than the aesthetic snob Mr. Bloom unwittingly delineates. These aristocrats, who, Mr. Bloom himself is careful to state, are far from being philosophers, are said by him to be likely to admire philosophers for their uselessness (250). To my knowledge they used to require them to work for their places at the bottom of the table as pedagogues and secretaries. But the main point is that a careless opposition has confused the issue here. The non-

utilitarian is *not* the useless but it is that which is beyond *both* the useful and the useless, and in particular it is what makes all usefulness possible. Talk of the uselessness of philosophy obscures its *universal needfulness*.

As for the actual citizens of a democracy, Mr. Bloom writes as though in this country no businessman had ever written sophisticated yet beautiful poetry or had ever composed advanced yet lovingly American music, no backwoodsman had ever achieved incomparable yet popular grandeur, no sailor had ever told an enormous moral myth which was also an account of the whaling industry. Mr. Bloom draws from his anti-populist views one simple rule for the university: It should not concern itself with providing its students with the democratic experiences they cannot escape in democratic society, but it must provide those they cannot have there (256). It should be a safe-house for aristocracy. This injunction seems to politicize and turn into paradox a true pedagogical precept, namely that colleges and universities should provide no "life-experiences" at all but should attend to book-learning and the other theoretical pursuits which are their proper business. Whatever is done in an American school cannot help but come out as a democratic experience, not least the free and direct discussion of Great Books. For it involves the democratic presumption that a cat may look at a king. Europeans tend to find this typically American and somewhat comical.

I have heard the charge of nostalgia-mongering with respect to what seems to me Mr. Bloom's very restrained rehabilitation of the fifties. To be sure, I don't quite believe his claim that these were the great days of the American universities. As I recall it, they were the very years when professors anticipated Mr. Bloom in bemoaning the apathy and lack of public commitment on the part of their students, the years whose prosperous philistinism retarded my Americanization by a decade. But his praise of the fifties is in any case only the prelude to the damning of the sixties, the anathema of the book, which Mr. Bloom hates with verve enough to energize every chapter. This autobiographical impulse is patent to everyone. Not that one would blame him. What happened at Cornell, what the faculty seems to have permitted itself by way of moral indeterminacy, might well inflict a trauma never to be forgotten. The only saving grace of the episode, which so blessedly distinguishes it from the case of the German universities under the Nazis, is that the people of this democracy never made common cause with the professors.

This is the moment to say a word about Mr. Bloom's writing. As *The Closing* is, of necessity, something of a magpie book intellectually, so in style it has a sort of mongrel eloquence: literately turned phrases suddenly develop colloquial cadences, the prose is inspissated

with metaphor, and the exposition is torrential. It aroused in me a sense of sympathetic recognition. This is a style formed under the pressure of the most pervasive sort of anxiety there is. For most human misfortunes, from physical pain to miscarried love, there is local relief and the prospect of recovery, but the fear for the spirit of one's country is an incessant taint upon the enjoyment of life. Mr. Bloom's country is the America of the Universities, and the anxious patriotism which steals the serenity from his style does his sentiments honor.

## II

To pass from the circumstantial to the substantive: Is this a good book?

People regularly refer to it as brilliant. So it is, but brilliance belongs to the demi-monde of intellectual virtues. It would be silly to regret the flamboyance which is winning it its audience; at the same time it would be wrong not to register, for the record, certain substantial doubts.

Let me begin this way: I would not recommend the book to students, not because it will offend their sensibilities—it can do them nothing but good to be forced to defend themselves articulately—but because it is a book not only of generational pulse-taking but also of intellectual history. I would not wish our students to get their intellectual history from this book (I shall shortly argue that it is a little too coarse-grained even of its kind)—or indeed from *any* book. To my mind, the notion that the intellect might have a history, that thought might develop a direction over the generations, should come to students as a late and suspect insight, long after each individual work of thought has been given its a-historical due.

*The Closing of the American Mind* is, I am implying, a *historicist* enterprise or, more fairly, next cousin to it. Since historicism, the notion that the temporal place of a text determines its significance more than does the author's conscious intention and that history through its movements is a real agent, is Mr. Bloom's *bête noir*, this is no small charge. But there is no getting around the fact that the book continually places and positions great names evaluatively from the outside in—of internal philosophical substance it contains very little. Similarly it persistently sums the spirit of the times and seeks its genealogy in intellectual movements. For example, he says that the university as we know it is the product of the Enlightenment (250), a typical historicist summation in which the tree vanishes into the forest. Indeed, some of his judgments are simply distance effects (as are most historicist conclusions), which dissolve under a close inspection. A crucial example is

the claim that nowadays "all the students are egalitarian meritocrats" (90). If that were true, and a group held a belief without exception, one would indeed be driven, willy-nilly to the thought of a domination by a supra-individual spirit, that is, a congenital psychic infection by history. In fact it is probably false. In my experience there are always some students who are acutely if reticently proud of the advantages accruing from the right sex, religion, and social status, while those who do believe that "each individual should be allowed to develop his special and unequal talents" without reference to those factors might, I put it to Mr. Bloom, not just generationally *believe* it but also individually *think* it; it is certainly what *I* think.

The title itself is revealing. It is, to be sure, not Mr. Bloom's choice. He wanted the euphonious and accurate title "Souls Without Longing" (the French title is "*L'Ame désarmée*"). But he condoned "The Closing of the American Mind." The "Closing" part is fine: one of the most convincing chapters is the early one in which he shows how openness corrupted, which becomes the lazily tolerant path of least resistance, forecloses passionate doubting, and how the springboard of learning is vigorous prejudice. But "the American Mind" is debased Hegelianism, and a scandal. Americans do, happily, still have certain areas of consensus; nonetheless, they have more than one mind among them.

It is utterly clear to me that Mr. Bloom does not mean what his words say, but it is odd that he is willing himself to supply the example of that soul-slackening disconnection of thought from utterance that he so spiritedly attacks. In fact this permissiveness exacts its price at the end, when he makes the judgment without which the book would be pointless: "Philosophy is still possible" (307), even, presumably, in America. His philosophy of history (and the project of the book really requires one) is simply too diffuse to support this optimism after all the gloom: he has obscured the only basis upon which the possible can, according to Aristotle, ever become actual, namely prior actuality. In short, "still" is the stumbling block here.

Perhaps what is missing rather than a philosophy of intellectual history is its antithesis, a theory of *opinion-holding*, particularly an explanation of how and with what effect people say non-thoughts and become attached to terms of low thought-content. I hold to the axiom, which must seem culpably cheerful to Mr. Bloom, that shallow opinions are mostly shallowly rooted. Therefore I cannot share his passionate sadness at the deficient eros, the spiritual detumescence (136), of the American student soul. Though somewhat masked by the gormless language of the "sensitive, caring and non-possessive relationship," lustful, hurtful, exclusive love goes gloriously on.

But whether it does or no, there is something not quite consistent in this mourning over the de-compression of the soul. Mr. Bloom describes with wicked verve the fatal invasion of the limpid American mind by the dark knowledge of the German refugees. He must know what a crucial role adolescent intensity played in shaping both these Europeans and their persecutors. I think that when Americans trivialize the continental depth (157) they so eagerly absorb, they are often very sensibly—and not altogether unwittingly—counteracting their own intellectual prurience. And so, when the young cluelessly acclimatize Heideggerian *Gelassenheit* as “staying loose” (or so Mr. Bloom pretends to believe), it may not be such a tragedy: at least from staying loose there is a possible road to reason.

My doubts so far have really concerned the *nature* of generalization as practiced in this book, but my final set of complaints concerns its *quality*. The text seems to be stuffed with truth that is not the whole truth and not nothing but the truth. Of course it is very hard to hit all the small nails squarely on the head with so large a mallet, yet there are fine and there are coarse ways of epitomizing spheres of thought and trends of opinion. Mr. Bloom's often anonymous and torrential mode of presentation makes it hard to tell whether the trouble is with his accuracy or his perspective. Moreover, he sometimes seems to present an anonymous modern opinion as though it had but to come in contact with the air to self-destruct, while his great moderns, Rousseau and Nietzsche, seem somehow to merit awed admiration for setting us on the road we are condemned for following. Mr. Bloom's relation especially to Rousseau is the mystery of mysteries to me. One of the excellences of his exposition is the continual pointing to Rousseau not just as the uncannily accurate analyst but as the brilliantly effective originator of the corruption-prone side of modernity. (The book neglects to its detriment the complementary side, the reverence-producing splendor of modern science and mathematics). But then why is Mr. Bloom not on record as being at least as repelled as he is fascinated by this “inverse Socrates” (298)?

For Socrates is the pervasive hero of the book—Socrates the anomalous man, that is, not Socrates the conductor of fairly comprehensible conversations, or the contemplator of communicable truth. This curtailed Socrates comes before the American public brusquely defining the task of philosophy as learning how to die; from this picture it takes but a few steps to reach the conclusion that there is an impossible quarrel between the philosophers and most of mankind (277-8). Mr. Bloom manages to turn Socratic philosophizing into an utter *arcanum* simply through by-passing its substance. I think that when Socrates is brought on the scene he should appear as practicing the life he thought

worth living.

Indeed, the fact that actual philosophy is kept at one remove in this book, that it is a tract on the love of the love of wisdom, is responsible for a certain skewing in the analysis of contemporary ills. Let me give one of many examples I could cite.

That "the self is the modern substitute for the soul" (173) is an indispensable insight in the analysis of modernity. But in the section devoted to it Mr. Bloom simply suppresses reference to "subjectivity," the philosophical term through which are to be reached the deep and not ignoble motives for the substitution: to be utterly unfooled, to confront nature as its knower, to be freely good. Consequently contemporary talk of the self and its discovery is deprived of the respectable strain that, it seems to me, still somehow resonates in the most debased chatter. Our "three-hundred-year-long identity crisis" is, for all its latter-day indignities, the unavoidable working out of a brave and compelling choice: We are essentially neither ensouled instantiations of an eternal species, nor creatures whose souls are made by God, but ungrounded spontaneous individual subjects. The function of philosophy should be not to shame us for it, but to re-dignify our dilemmas.

I want to end with the chapter on music, a chapter that is close to Mr. Bloom's heart, and that he mistakenly thinks is unregarded. In fact, young readers turn to it first and rage at it, thereby confirming his observation that rock is their love. It is, to be sure, in a book that insists that the best is for the few, somewhat inconsistent to discount the lovers of classical music because they are fewer than one in ten, but the main point, so truly observed, is that the adherence to rock is universal. (I have never heard anyone young speak against it.) I do not quite believe that rock "has one appeal only, a barbaric appeal, to sexual desire" (73). I am a sporadic watcher of MTV and know that what the visualizations pick up in the music is its weirdness, whininess, bizzarerie, meanness, and scariness—in sum, a whole vocabulary of extra-sexual excruciation, which is often ironically and even wittily exploited. The appeal is not so hard to understand; it is its universality and depth that remains a mystery.

For Mr. Bloom's explanation does not quite reach the love aroused by this, or any, music. For him, following, as he claims, Plato and Nietzsche, music is the "barbarous expression of the soul," the soul's primitive, pre-rational speech, pure passion. I take it as read that he knows his *Republic*, but where in it did he find this theory? His own translation corrects the impression given by earlier versions that the musical modes *express* the passions (*Rep.* 398 e 1). According to Socrates they rather *shape* them. Moreover, the music must *follow* the words, which it couldn't do if it had no close relation to reason. (Indeed it was

Socrates' Pythagorean friends who propagated the great tradition of music as qualitative mathematics.) Some musical modes are more soul-relaxing than others, but these latter, the bracing ones, are the most potent instruments that the community possesses for forming the soul into grace amenable to reason. It follows that there is nothing truly primitive or pre-rational even about the most orgiastic music, and that when a sect succumbs to Wagner or a generation to rock, the explanation cannot start from raw passion, but must begin with corrupt reason. Mr. Bloom has succumbed to the prime error of those dark Germans, which is to think that the soul of a rational animal somewhere harbors a nature-preserve of pure primitive passions.

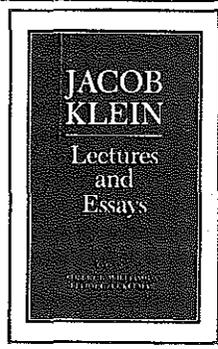
### III

To conclude. *The Closing of the American Mind* is not only an opportune summation of decades of critique, but it is also among the early lappings of a turning tide. For the tide is turning, though not to float a happy and harmonious new liberal learning, but to ground us in a sad new abstinence. It has very suddenly come home to us that the world is full of dangers just where we sought our pleasures: spending, sex, substances, sound, even sunshine. We will be drawn in upon ourselves, we will have to take new thought, and in these straits liberal literacy, the attentive reading of good books, may eventually play a modest role as something of a saving grace.

Because of Mr. Bloom this thought may come a little sooner to a somewhat larger number of people. Moreover, since it comes embedded in a critique of our current condition that is wholly passionate and largely true, there will be a more immediate effect: Some readers of the *Closing of the American Mind* are bound to experience a re-opening of their minds to the all-but-foreclosed understandings behind our present. That will be its success beyond celebrity.

# JACOB KLEIN

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