Jeff Smith Recounts an Education in Irony
Will the Real "Teaching University" Please Stand Up!
Reviews: Opera, Christian Poetry, Film & Culture

A review of Literature, the Arts, and Public Affairs
April, 1989
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THE CRESSET is published monthly during the academic year, September through May, by the Valparaiso University Press as a forum for ideas and informed opinion. The views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the preponderance of opinion at Valparaiso University. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor and accompanied by return postage. Letters to the Editor for publication are subject to editing for brevity. The Book Review Index and the American Humanities Index list Cresset reviews. Second class postage paid at Valparaiso, Indiana.

Cover: Guy Chase, American contemporary. Miracles, mixed media/graphite, photocopy. Collection of Donald Forsythe. Miracles is included in the traveling exhibit, Christian Imagery in Contemporary Art at VU this spring.
Son of Daley

Editor's note: beginning with this issue, The Cresset will occasionally print editorials by members of the Advisory Board and other interested parties. Pieces not written by the editor will be signed with their author's initials.

In places like Europe, according to reliable reports, Chicago is still famous for what it was in the 1920s: the home of gangsters and gangland killings. But in North America Chicago is more famous for its politics. This April the political wheel of the Second City has taken another dramatic turn with the election as mayor of Richard M. Daley, son of the fabled Richard J. Daley who a generation ago ran the last of the old-style urban machines.

What gives the Daley election added significance is its apparent racial dimension. Daley's election follows on the death of Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington, shortly after the beginning of his second four-year term in 1987. Washington was succeeded by Acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer, a machine-oriented black alderman who was selected by largely anti-Washington white aldermen in the immediate aftermath of Washington's death. In February the younger Daley defeated Sawyer in the Democratic primary election to fill the remaining two years of Washington's term, and then defeated black alderman Timothy Evans, who ran in the general election as the "Harold Washington Party" candidate.

But how exactly does race figure in Daley's election? The East Coast media coverage—especially in The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal—has focused on continuing racial polarization in the city. Pointing out that voting still occurs largely along racial lines in the residentially segregated city (in the primary Daley got less than ten percent of the black vote and Sawyer less than ten percent of the white vote), the stories suggest that nothing much has really changed in the city's bitterly divided racial politics as a result of Washington's election and tenure in office.

Other political observers, especially in the Chicago media, have reacted against this view. They point out that the younger Daley took great care to campaign in black communities and black churches—even though he could not realistically expect to obtain very much of the black vote. The racial rhetoric of the campaign, both in public and on the streets, was also remarkably muted compared with the nasty racial confrontations that occurred during Washington's first successful primary and general election campaigns in 1983. In this view—promoted especially by the Chicago Tribune—Daley's election marks the racial maturing of the city and the beginning of a new brand of Daley politics quite different from the old machine version.

Neither of these perspectives is adequate to the case. Race is still the most important single factor in shaping Chicago politics, as it is in most big cities. But race no longer works in the simple ways that it once did to create easily comprehensible issues and political alignments. Rather, it intersects with complex forces of economics, social class, and moral values to create more subtle political dynamics of alliance and conflict, some of which cross racial lines. In Chicago, some of those factors are directly due to the Washington mayoralty; others are products of broader developments in urban society.

Washington's election was important not because his was a black face in the mayor's office, but because unlike such figures as Tom Bradley of Los Angeles he brought "black power" into city hall. While his "progressive coalition" included white and Hispanic elements, it operated most importantly as an instrument of the whole Chicago black community, uniting elements that have often been divided. Washington himself was so powerfully attractive to blacks because his style, language, and politics could appeal to both the aspiring middle class and to the hundreds of thousands of poor blacks who still suffer acutely the deprivations of ghetto life: unemployment, bad housing, bad education, and virtually nonexistent health care (Chicago's infant mortality rates are considerably higher than many places in Third World).

Like most big city mayors, Washington was unable to do much directly about the deepest problems of urban poverty, which require national solutions that the country as a whole has been unwilling to undertake. But by opening the highest levels of Chicago politics to previously excluded blacks, he demonstrated to the city's white business leaders and politicians—and to many white citizens outside the most narrowly racial enclaves—that the old racial exclusions in politics
could not be successfully maintained. Many of them recognized that if they were not willing to deal with black politicians, their own roles in the city would increasingly erode.

Their willingness to select Sawyer demonstrated that the old order had changed—but only by degrees. Sawyer was perceived as a "moderate" black politician, meaning one who would not frighten whites and would be willing to accommodate their interests in his administration. Among blacks, he appealed primarily to the more well-off or culturally conservative blacks, including the more conservative black clergy and churches. He enjoyed little support among the poorer and more racially conscious blacks, who turned to Evans as the inheritor of Washington's legacy.

The divisions among blacks cleared the way for Daley, and enabled him to win election without having to make overtly racial appeals. But plainly a substantial segment of his white supporters who had never accepted real black power in the first place are looking on with an attitude somewhere between amusement and scorn. This sense of superiority, born of perceived detachment, is undeserved. For it is a law of journalism that the moment one makes such a generalization, an outstanding instance to the contrary suddenly crops up. The Chicago Tribune reports (March 19) that state Rep. Bob Larson of Wisconsin has introduced a bill that "would require state-employed professors to teach 12 hours a week." According to Larson, "Some students have to stick around five years or more to complete what's supposed to be a four-year program. Meanwhile, their professors enjoy gobs of free time for research and consulting." Larson's statement is significant on several counts: his tacit equation between "research" and "consulting" (see Mark Schwehn's essay, in the symposium below), his assumption that "research" is irrelevant to teaching, and his implication ("gobs of free time") that professors lead a life of leisureed ease all suggest a kind of popular mythology which never disappears for long from American culture. On the other hand, if Larson articulates what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed, his statement may also mark a new turn in our educational debates. Problems at places like Wisconsin afford a mirror-image—which is to say an image in reverse—of the difficulties suffered by less eminent institutions, colleges and universities where the professors do teach 12 hours or more a semester. Perhaps the time has come when famous institutions of learning are going to be entangled with, even judged by, standards developed elsewhere: at humbler universities, at community colleges, at high schools.

I cannot say that I look forward to this development with any great enthusiasm. Some big state universities do a lousy job of educating their students: Wisconsin may well be one of them. Reforms are then in order. But the argument that faculties at these places should sharply reined in, be brought back to their proper duties, which of course can only be fulfilled by a single-minded devotion to the classroom, is curiously double-edged. One of the edges is visible: it has to do with (usually valid) concerns for undergraduates. The other edge, less conspicuously, is also worth attention, however. Beneath the complaints about education, about the professor's life of leisure, about unhealthy obsessions with "research" (in whatever form), about the need for a return to an older and better system, is a fundamental dissatisfaction with the life of the mind. The thought of people being paid to work out ideas, to investigate natural phenomena without any immediate practical value, or, at a particularly taxing extreme, to write poems and paint pictures, is outrageous to many Americans—which is one of the reasons why our universities appear, in their mass media incarnation, as little more than superbly-conditioned basketball teams.

The contretemps in Wisconsin may have a national significance. Complaints like Larson's (and they are becoming quite vociferous right now) raise a crucial question about universities and colleges. Is there any room within them—any room at all—for intellectuals?
GREAT BOOKS, GREAT IRONIES

Personal Reflections on the Perils of Incollegism

I

A few years ago the president of a major psychoanalytical training institute in Chicago gave a talk in which he analyzed the films of Charlie Chaplin. Typical of his points—and I'm not making this up—was that Chaplin wore baggy pants in his movies because as a child he had helped his family make ends meet by selling second-hand clothes. I'm not sure if there's any simple name for this particular fallacy, this reductionist psychologistic determinism, but if there isn't there ought to be, for two reasons. First, it's wrong; individual human acts can seldom be assigned in one-to-one fashion to single causes. Chaplin wore baggy pants because they're funny and because that's what clowns do. (How would our dime-store Freudian explain the scene in City Lights in which little Charlie mugs another bum for a half-smoked cigar? Dare we ask?)

And second, the fallacy is everywhere. It's a staple of criminal law, pop sociology, progressive politics and other endeavors that attempt to explain seemingly problematic or puzzling behavior, such as why people commit violent crimes or why politicians vote for bad policies.

It's also prominent these days in educational debates, which present us with the odd picture of two equally superficial views of human behavior contending against each other bitterly. On the “right,” Allan “Closing of the American Mind” Bloom and his ilk assume that teaching the received canon of Great Books makes students better people. On the “left,” those who waged the recent battle to change Stanford's core syllabus argue that that canon will make students worse people by inducing elitism or cultural myopia. I have recently written on one dimension of this debate (in the Modern Language Association's journal Profession '88), and at the same time, I have just finished a book—Unthinking the Unthinkable: Nuclear Weapons and Western Culture—whose purpose is to examine certain problems in much of our culture's political thinking. It occurs to me that these otherwise unrelated writings have something in common: both deal with ironies, with human outputs not matching inputs or intentions. Both, therefore, are attacks on the psychologistic fallacy, attacks with implications for pedagogy (which is what I currently do for a living). And both reflect the influence of my own Great Books education. In fact, both writings enact a certain irony by coming down in favor of views my education wouldn't seem to portend.

This article follows up and tries to tie together these works, but by means of personal reflections and anecdotes—for increasingly it seems clear to me this is the best way to proceed. Pedagogy is a field in which conflicting theories abound; it's hard to get a fixed point of departure. I have notes from my first new-faculty orientation at UCLA. My head was swimming from all the views. In the middle of the notes is the plaint, “complete confusion re. methods setting in.” I've come to think that pedagogy follows William Goldman's axiom about decision-making by movie moguls: “Nobody knows anything.” Theories abound that rationalize failure—that is, that try both to explain it and to set up a rational system for managing or minimizing it. There'd be less theory if there were more success. Success in education is serendipitous.
and hard to figure. All you can really do is recount what happened. To the extent my own education succeeded, it might be worth recounting what happened.

II

One of my best-remembered high school English teachers was a strict classicist. He even wore out-of-date ties and his old Da Nang haircut to identify himself as such. I'll call him the Master (as in both Arts and Drill). Of course, since I was eager to take in every word he said, I felt obliged to wear sloppy, worn-out denim clothes. There's nothing worse in high school than dressing to expectations. And it almost worked; the Master held me up once as proof against stereotyping (thus ironically proving that everyone had me correctly typed).

When I got to Valparaiso University I dressed a bit better; this, after all, was College. I was now in a condition I had long envisioned: "In College." ("I never liked beets until I was In College," I remembered my father once saying with more impact on me than he had intended.) Orwell, that genius of "Newspeak," might have run the words together: "incollege"—fittingly enough, as it did turn out in some ways to be an Orwellian experience.

Now, even that last sentence alludes to readings from the Christ College (CC) Freshman Program, the original and second most important of my incollege experiences. The Program was a year-long, tutorial-based, integrated Western Civ./Great Books course with dashes of some other stuff, like a theatrical production, thrown in. As I understood it, the Program had been developed from an old core model once used at the University of Chicago. This, in turn, had owed much to Great Books guru Mortimer Adler, who had been influenced by a course called "Introduction to Contemporary Civilization" at Columbia University in the 1920s. (So it makes sense that I at once took to Adler's How to Read a Book when I came across it as a freshman.)

Anyway, I had assumed that the point of incollegism was to learn the Big Ideas, and by luck I had happened into one of the best programs for this in the country. ("Welcome to one of the best programs for this in the country," said CC's dean—whom I'll call the Dean—on Day One, in one of the last accurate statements by any VU administrator in my hearing.) Here's how the Program worked. You simultaneously took two year-long courses, "Sources of Western Culture" and "Arts of Inquiry." Faculty slid about from one course to the other, and the two were so closely coordinated in your own schedule that you could easily forget to which course the tutorial, seminar or sectional you were sitting in at any given moment was attached. In these small groups you discussed the week's readings, which included some Great Book (for "Arts"), and a selection of historical documents (for "Sources") from an anthology called Great Issues in Western Civilization. You also had one Arts and two Sources lectures a week, the latter a straightforward narrative history of the Neolithic-Age-to-the-Cold-War variety. Each Friday there was a paper due: one week for Sources, the next week for Arts, and so forth, except for the year's final quarter, when Arts became a seven-week elective seminar on some twentieth-century problem, culminating in one big research paper. Each of these seminars reflected the sponsoring professor's discipline; our resident English professor did one on modern poetry, our philosopher did one on existentialism or some such thing, and the historian who was also my advisor—I'll call him my Tutor, since that Oxbridge term best captures his omnibus role—taught the one I took on totalitarianism (Orwell included).

I also took some German and calculus, but the Program, accounting for half my load, structured the year and, thereafter, pretty much my whole pedagogical outlook—to the point that at this moment I am using Great Issues and small-group tutorials as the bases for a freshman English course at UCLA. What the Program did for me, I try to do for my own students: in the words of Paul Goodman (whom the Tutor was responsible for first putting me onto), "to make them aware that they have a past in time and a place in the world." (There are difficulties. While CC was the exact size of Goodman's studium generale, or ideal college—faculty in the low two figures, students in the low three—UCLA is just a tad larger.)

But the Program's influence went well beyond pedagogy. I see it, and its upper-division successor courses, everywhere in my current thinking. One of the feelings I had while completing Unthinking the Unthinkable was that I had at last written my CC magnum opus. The book screams from every page of an author absorbed in Programmatic ideas to the point of quasi-discipleship. Essentially it says, "You want to solve the nuclear problem? Then do as we did in the Program: review the history of Western civilization while reading a few of the Great Books." (For those who'd like that little leap explained, I'm told that Indiana University Press is happily taking advance orders.)

No doubt it didn't hurt that I followed up CC with graduate training at the University of Chicago itself. But if my book is also Chicagoesque, that speaks less to my experiences in a graduate English department—most such departments being more or less the same these days—than to my experiences in the Chicago-inspired CC Program, which I have slowly come to
realize is far from modeling the national norm. Where I currently teach, for instance, students are allowed to select from a smorgasbord of uncoordinated courses, including some that are little more than eddies in the passing breeze. There’s a course, for example, on Iran-contra, in which undergraduates learn the doings of Manucher Ghorbanifar before they’ve ever heard of Machiavelli. Which tends to ensure, of course, that they never will hear of Machiavelli.

III

Now on paper it would seem that I got an education which, in the terms of the current controversies, was thoroughly right-wing. We even got a parting shot on Commencement Day in the form of a speech by the VU board chairman’s son, who took the occasion to unburden himself of some Bloom-like anti-feminist views. And why not? As Cyrus Veeser points out in a recent issue of Peace Review, the Columbia Contemporary Civilization course that modeled Chicago’s course that modeled the Program had had a hidden right-wing political agenda, for it had developed in turn out of a World War I-era, government-sponsored propaganda effort, a whiggish Western Civ. survey called “War Issues” designed to teach college men cum officer candidates what historic values our country was the pinnacle of and was fighting the vicious Huns to uphold. Moreover, University of Chicago cultural “theorists” had been instrumental in setting up and rationalizing the War Issues course. What culminated (for me) when I knocked on the door of their graduate school, CC credentials in hand, had started six decades earlier with guys at Chicago writing essays like “Germany’s Civilized Barbarism” and “The Repulsiveness of the German State.” (I’m not making these up, either.) Ironic as it is, given that the U. of C. started out as one of our country’s first German-style universities, there’s a long line of Chicago hysterics, Allan Bloom being merely the latest, who, to paraphrase Jeanne Kirkpatrick on the Democrats, always blame Prussia first.

But my point here is that education’s results are inherently unpredictable, even ironic. At least in the particular circumstances wherein it came my way, the very classicist, core-curricular Program had the effect that I, for one, think any serious encounter with Great Books has got to have: it radicalized me. Sorry, Mr. Bloom, your cherished canon of classics managed, in some sense, to swing me to the left. But since I am therefore a better person, we could also say you were ironically correct.

It didn’t hurt that I had shown up in college in the first place as a basically mainline suburban reform-minded Enlightenment rationalist liberal—the best of all possible worlds kind of thing, etc.—a kind of young Mike Dukakis in denims (and with about his level of political savvy). I had even planned to major in political science and journalism. Perhaps the first radicalizing thing the Program did was to disabuse me of that absurd notion. From the moment I entered CC on, I was doomed as a mainstream journalist—that is, as one who approaches current events from the standpoint of no recognizably serious ideas. (Though I did hold fast to my personal credo, the Gilded Age founding slogan of the first newspaper for which I worked: “To fear God, tell the truth, and make money.” Preferably in some cause-effect fashion.) Instead I was set on course toward a different ideal, that of the intellectual journalist: one who proceeds from the premise that one’s ideas about things... well, that one has ideas about things, for starters, and second that one construes journalism as using these ideas to achieve the goal for which modern inquiry was really founded: “the relief of man’s estate.”

Christ College—the author’s second most important educational experience

Actually it wasn’t CC in the abstract that changed me. There is no CC (by definition, I would say) in the abstract. What did it was an amazing and—I now see—rare succession of brilliant teachers: everything the Master could have wished for me and then some. I mean to stress both words, “brilliant” and “teachers.” Not only were the CC faculty and those adjuncted to it from other departments intellectually gifted, but they also had consciously dedicated their gifts to the remolding of callow youth like myself. For this, they sacrificed research productivity and with it the chance for fame. But recognized as such or not, they were world-rank. Drop in on any typical big-lecture undergraduate course at the “elite” institution of your choice.
and compare for yourself.

Clichéd as it is to say so, these teachers planted seeds. Like intellectual journalism. I clearly remember the day my Tutor first used that phrase, brandishing as an example Dwight Macdonald's Politics Past. I remember wondering what it could possibly mean. (As well I should have; I had been working in newsrooms already and knew an oxymoron when I heard one.) Today the very book the Tutor brandished is footnoted five times in my own. Two words from the Tutor, and a permanent rift had opened between me and my original career. In effect, the Program rooked the Just Foundation, which had helped fund my incollegism in the hope of producing one more scribbler for the daily press. (The foundation reversed a formula from the comics. They took one Superstudent per year, flew him into college, and figured he'd walk out as Clark Kent.)

Inspired, I set about in the Tutor's seven-week Arts seminar to solve the problems of the twentieth century, all in one handy, economy-size, 25-page paper. It was a first-draft magnum opus, the problem being that the topic needed a whole book. "To cover this topic," said the Tutor, "you'd need a whole book." I would also need something else: the intervention of another professor—I'll call him the Sage—and a conversation we had some five years later while sitting on barstools. (I don't remember if it was in a bar, but I'm sure there were barstools because that's where fateful chance remarks like this are supposed to be passed.) The Sage mentioned that he was thinking of devoting his academic labors to solving the nuclear problem. This remark had the same puzzling but vaguely magical feel that "intellectual journalism" had had earlier. The Sage left the U. of C. soon after and returned to CC, devoting his labors instead to solving the problem of the 18-year-old mind. So it fell to someone else to write a nuclear book, and I volunteered.

I would feel worse about CC faculty not getting more credit for all this but for the Croesus-like fortune I'm sure they're being paid. We all know that our society rewards effective teachers far better than mere Nobel laureates who do research only. Of course, VU also had some real faculty bozos, but one of the briliancies of my teachers was their ability to so arrange things as to keep these out of my hair, and vice-versa. Well, with a few slip-ups, which is how I know there were bozos. But for the most part the bozos to watch out for weren't faculty. They were administrators and students, who I had the privilege of watching perform a most amazing, four-year pas de deux. And with all deference to the Program, it was this spectacle that ended up providing my first most important educational experience.

The fact is that at VU, man's estate was in sorry shape. Disenchanted with the limited range of student housing options for men (i.e., one), and feeling that one year of prank fire drills and dead chickens hanging in doorways was enough, I applied for transfer to the U. of C. as a sophomore, and it was a difficult thing to settle on not going (potential loss of financial aid played a certain role in this). It was rapidly becoming clear that the truth of things at VU was much obscured by that charming diminutive, "Valpo," which one seems to hear more and more frequently the worse things get. Apparently the four syllables of the proper name are too much for some gusky—or defensive—alums and administrators to stammer out all at once.

In fact, to hear a lot of older alums talk you'd think "Valpo" was less a university than a four-year church youth campout. One alum has recently praised it, in a Hallmark card of an essay, as something he called a "holy huddle." It occurs to me that the upside of the less coherent education one gets at other schools is that the idiotic pieties at least fly a little less thick and fast. (Try convening a "holy huddle" in the middle of UCLA's Bruin Square.) VU alums are always telling you what it felt like to attend "Valpo" rather than anything they actually learned. By their own admission, they didn't learn much. Alumnus James Nuechterlein recently wrote something to the effect that VU of old provided a mediocre education but a great experience. In my time there it was the opposite. I learned a hell of a lot; and the first thing all this learning made clear was that overall, VU cried to be dragged kicking and screaming into the eighteenth century. For somehow it had missed the Enlightenment (even if the Program had given us that event to study). VU worked from the premise that you wouldn't take your education seriously or try to apply it; and if you did, you could expect to be screamed at from passing cars. To paraphrase Mark Twain, they gave you free speech but assumed you had the good sense never to use it.

What, in such conditions, does a committed Incollegist and would-have-been journalism major do? What else? He becomes editor of the student newspaper. Education, half-abandoned career plan, historical setting and personal temperament were now set for a collision, and I choose that word with care. Again, the public record is there for anyone to review. I won't repeat all our specific charges—"our" meaning those made by myself and a group of friends, I'll call them the Fellows, with whom I spent two years running the campus newspaper, the Torch, and the literary
magazine, the Lighter. The Fellows were by and large products of the Program too. (One of them, chum to this day, had been alphabetically seated next to me during the first-semester Sources final. The two of us were simultaneously stumped by question 37, “Who was Bodo?” and the first words of millions we were to exchange in life were an agreement that rather than some obscure figure from the Middle Ages, he was, most likely, a children’s TV clown.)

The conditions on which we commented, and the quality of VU student and community life, were reflected clearly enough in the way our work was answered. Now in assessing the “climate of the times,” I’m inclined to say of the campus of 1978 (when all this occurred) that there was no climate—as a Chicago reporter sent to cover the “mood” at a campaign headquarters once wired back that he could find no mood. Yet a climate there was. Fraternities, for starters, didn’t seem to like reading our stuff. In characteristic, although for them well-organized (hence especially inane) reply, one of these groups assembled outside the Torch office window of an evening to deliver this protest, rasped to the tune of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” even though it doesn’t quite scan:

_Je-eff Smith, we are pissing on your Torch_,

_Jeff Smith, we are piss-sing on your Torch:_

As you can see, they were long on imagination. I don’t remember that last line but, as I recall, it didn’t scan either.

Of course these kinds of incidents were minor compared to what VU fraternities have indulged or perpetrated on a few—the burned, battered, violated or dead—who made the mistake of showing up at their parties. That is, when they had recognizable parties, as opposed to street fights, screaming matches and joint public displays of urinating. (Give them credit: they wrote their song lyrics from experience.) But let us assess blame where it belongs: not on a bunch of hysterically repressed kids given too few positive models or options, but on those administrators—I’ll call them the Lackeys—who colluded with this abusive system, who ignored repeated warnings of its dangers and who sanctioned the predictable efforts to strangle our dissenting press in the purse strings of a Greek-controlled Student Senate. What, really, can one say when they sit there, in the classic censor’s gambit, and done an act of perjury aimed at depriving the newspaper of funds? What can one say when they turn around years later, as fraternity-linked rapes and the like are becoming a P.R. headache, and shamelessly embrace—as if they’d never believed otherwise—the
view hooted down earlier when advanced by campus editors: that Greeks bear some corporate responsibility for their climate of violence? What can one say, except to applaud the (slow) diffusion of ideas, while also wondering why corporate responsibility never applies to the Lackeys too?

At the newspaper, the Fellows and I formed, as Paul Goodman would have said, our own college. It was our vehicle for doing what Goodman thought students must do: make the texts they read “a tradition for themselves.” And it had almost the result Goodman had predicted: “If they would editorialize in order to have an effect [on campus], then the papers would be lively, and the editors would find themselves expelled.” Of course, VU was not going to expel its own national Danforth Fellowship nominees. But it made clear that it was willing to give aid and comfort to the community’s most puerile and anti-intellectual elements. It was willing to participate in reprisals against the outspoken few, and to help spread general discouragement among the many. VU didn’t attract the best students; that was a fact, but the Lackeys seemed determined to make it also a conscious policy. (Though I should say that every time the Torch or Lighter won another national college press award, I did get a nice little note of best administrative regards.

Now, the education all this provided might have struck the relentless Incollagist as bearing only on VU itself. But, as it happened, I commenced therefrom at the very moment when the larger society was anointing Ronald Reagan to its highest office of trust. You know, our “holy huddle” alumnus appears to contradict himself when he holds VU up as simultaneously a microcosm of the world and a precious haven of questioning and “risk.” And yet in some weird ways he’s right. First of all, if you spent time at VU questioning things, you sure did take a risk. And second, while VU was a haven, it also mirrored the world. In retrospect, it was a kind of test-tube re-creation of the recalcitrance of institutions generally—the seemingly inexplicable failure of presidents and vice presidents everywhere, along with their various sycophants, hang­ ers-on and (sometimes) well-meaning constituents, not only to uphold standards of common sense and common morality, but even to abide by their own profes­ sed standards. For a suburban liberal in denims, the university was a first conscious encounter with seemingly intractable illiberalism and systemic error. If they had wanted me to stay callow, if they had wanted me to regard my education in the detached, opportunistic and cynical fashion of most college students, then they shouldn’t have let things like housing and student life re-create in little what we were sitting there reading about in class. And if they hadn’t wanted me to notice and remark on these conditions, then they shouldn’t have let me be assigned Orwell, Erich Fromm, and Hannah Arendt at age 19. The two experiences together—education by book and seminar and education by action and reaction—were simply too combustible a mix.

I didn’t spend years writing Unthinking the Unthinkable simply because of barstool conversations, crucial though these were as catalysts. Rather, the book is the latest phase in a quest that began at VU (and that will presumably continue: education is lifelong) to understand why in college was so screwy, and by extension why the world at large is too. Writing it was my effort to educate myself in what Christopher Lasch has called the “underlying malignancy that deforms human enter­ prise and aspiration,” or, more simply, in evil and sin. There was something else I had brought to VU: a childhood upbringing in Lutheranism, a faith up to then given little more content than any other watery present-day suburban creed. But just as half the edu­ cation VU gave me was unwitting, so it taught me the contents of Lutheranism in the best but most unwit­ ting way: it enacted what Luther seemed to be talking about when he spoke of the world’s principalities as being in thrall to the devil. And this diligent disciple of his Lutheran teachers responded predictably—with something like Luther’s own combination (in little) of disbelief, self-questioning, immersion in the problem, and an urge to go around nailing up theses.

V

What of VU now? Reforms are said to be afoot, but it’s not clear that the ancien regime has been dispossessed. In any case, my point requires that I tell one more story.

It seems that a hapless student editor (guess who) once took umbrage at the widely tolerated verbal harassment of female VU students by fraternities acting as massed gangs. So he published what he was sure was too boring an analysis of this for anyone to actually read. It spoke of fraternities creating privileged zones for themselves and, within these, treating “the woman as nigger.” The editor had, of course, borrowed this phrase from protest literature, where it had routinely been used to draw scathing at­ tention to women’s, students’ and blacks’ own dispiriting oppression. Its point had always been to show how various kinds of victimization mirrored this historically prototypical kind. Yes, a routine, boring analysis in­ deed, but thus did the editor send it off to press.

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Exposed to the climate of the times, the article exploded. In vain did the editor try to explain: the term “nigger” in print cannot automatically be anti-black, else Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King were anti-black. In vain, I say, for all that the vocal African-Americans seemed to know was that “nigger” had at times been used against them, and that at some point in the far distant past (ten years earlier), their forebears had waged a heroic but only dimly remembered campaign to stop this abuse. The students’ air raid against injustice was flying on autopilot, their map of the targets turned upside-down. (For the record, the chairman of VU’s journalism department vigorously protested this weirdness to the university president, who, of course, did absolute nada.)

Thus did a left student activist, using terms from the Sixties movements and protesting a kind of intimidation which mimicked in little what the civil-rights movement had attacked, become himself a target of intimidation by presumptive heirs of that movement who, however, had only half-learned their left-activist history. The oppressed minority knew how it was supposed to act in form, but it had forgotten the content—and so its outburst became, in effect, right-wing, an act of oppression. It’s the irony of failed predictions, of outputs not watching cultural inputs. A failure of such scale, in fact, that it was almost funny. (But not quite.)

I think what my recent writings have in common is the assumption that, despite it all, education has the potential to turn this around, that irony can be mobilized for the good instead of the vexing. If there’s no guarantee that blacks (or women, students, workers or anyone else) will act in their own best interests, so there’s no guarantee that a suburban middle-class education will fail to stir one to protest. If radical oppositional culture follows the dictum of my book—“Ideas and movements take the forms of their predecessors but with the contents exactly reversed”—then pieces of the received high culture can just as ironically provide materials for remaking the world.

Augustine, Shakespeare, and Orwell are not only canonical authors but, by most reckonings, conservative ones too. Yet in my book I marshal these three old Program stalwarts to the cause of abolishing nuclear weapons. Properly read, in the light of present circumstance, they all allow for that; and improperly read, in blindness to actual conditions, Marx gives you countries run by bureaucrats in gray suits, and Malcolm X, I imagine, could be cited in support of reinstating slavery.

As a matter of personal preference, I’m for studying Machiavelli first, Ollie North later. The Program taught me to do it that way. But I would also have to conclude that the exact contents of the syllabus and the theory backing it aren’t what count. What counts is sustained incollegism, or what Goodman (in his own compound phrase) called “teaching-and-learning.” The texts become a tradition for oneself through lived experience; and when this happens, the syllabus focuses naturally and education (said Goodman) is “for keeps.” And I’ve got to believe there’s always some danger of this when small numbers of interesting teachers and students are locked together long enough in a semi-confined space.

The twists and turns of incollegism are supremely hard to figure. Here is one last irony. Recall the fact that modern Great-Bookishness started out as Hun-bashing. Then recall that VU is a Lutheran school. I myself, a descendent of Ostendorfs, had a list of incollegial peers and professors that read like a row of gravestones at Bitburg: Baepler, Friedrich, Kleinschmidt, Luebke, Pahl, Piehl, Riedel, Rubel, Schwehn, Siess, Stade, Wildgrube. What else can one conclude? There were no Huns at the gates while we read the Great Books.

The Huns were us.

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**Tattoo**

Only a blue, blue rose climbing sweetly
up your arm but
it keeps reminding me
of black waxed parlors,
a smarmy needle
buzzing
in the kitchen of hell.

Otherwise you’re
a deft kore—
shepherdess with staff,
your graceful fingers
tame as almond leaves.

Yet I keep wondering
how did you get it?
What shaman of blue violence
once possessed your life?
I dream demons I keep seeing
the moon’s stunned body
rise like a pagan sacrifice
beautiful and stained.

**Rita Signorelli-Pappas**

April, 1989
A New Symposium on an Old Conundrum

The terms of almost any academic debate are set by world-class institutions with significant graduate divisions. Meanwhile, education at other schools—most particularly liberal arts colleges and so-called “comprehensive” universities—is accompanied by its own distinct anxieties. It may be a triumph at Duke University (say) when a famous professor agrees to take enough time to teach an upper-division undergraduate class. Elsewhere it may be a triumph when a faculty member is allowed to teach such a class. Such disparities are common and commonly-recognized yet they are seldom allowed much visibility in public discussion. Perhaps the present symposium—a gathering of short essays on the eternal conundrum of teaching vs. research—can make at least a modest contribution towards remedying this lack.

A prefatory word: I posit a college or small university of the sort defined above. I will call it “Composite University,” CU for short. How is the faculty here to conceive of itself? Administrators frequently say things like, “CU is a teaching institution;” this coinage is meant to contrast with that familiar phrase, “research institution.” At the same time people around campus are increasingly uneasy concerning the question of just what a teaching institution might be. During the last few years, it has been frequently announced that research is a crucial part of a faculty member’s career. Since no one has much time to do research, the result is often confusing; faculty up for promotion have to be evaluated on the basis of “promise” rather than with reference to anything they have actually done. Meanwhile a twelve-hour teaching load whittles “promise” away.

CU suffers from a kind of cultural schizophrenia. The institution is endeavoring to encompass several apparently self-contradictory truths. On the one hand this is the sort of environment where people devote a great deal of energy to undergraduate education, something that doesn’t always happen at big state universities or ivy-league schools. On the other hand there is a painful, if erratic, realization, that “teaching” is not exactly a self-renewing vocation. There is almost—not quite—a consensus that faculty who don’t engage in a significant amount of intellectual inquiry on their own go dead: they become, in what seems to be a popular phrase, “deadwood;” they have to undergo “retooling,” for which purpose the university provides “workshops.” The vocabulary is rather disturbing, isn’t it? Sounds like the story of Pinocchio as re-written by Samuel Beckett.

It’s not altogether clear how CU can escape this bind. Distrust of research is deep-seated (despite official pronouncements): it typically takes the form of declarations that scholarship is a careerist and (by implication) a selfish activity. Teaching, by contrast, is depicted as a self-sacrificial endeavor, morally superior in its very nature to professional work that occurs outside the classroom. (See Jeff Smith’s essay, earlier in this issue of The Cresset, for an interesting variation on the latter theme.) Before CU can resolve its difficulties, the teaching-research bind, somewhat grim in its implications, will have to be reconceived.

Let me be Utopian for a moment. I can imagine a university where teaching was judged by substance—that is, as the fruit of serious intellectual inquiry, a.k.a. “research,” as well as on the basis of those marketing surveys known as student evaluations. Such a standard does not presently exist . . . not very widely, anyway. I can also imagine a university where we dropped the polite fiction that the recipient of a PhD. is somehow finished with school, that such a person need do little or nothing further to keep up a genuine feeling for a subject. Degrees are a useful formality. They are not magic spells: minds go. CU will actively encourage its faculty to learn and relearn its stuff—not so much by means of the dreaded “workshops” (useful through they are as a socializing device) as through even sustained thinking, writing, inquiry—serious projects carried on by individuals or groups steadily over the course of years, not just during frantic sabbaticals or summer vacations. These changes in themselves

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might have a transforming power which would be felt throughout the institution: by faculty, by students, by administrators.

Enough said, in the way of an introduction. Marty, Schoppers, DeVries, Flory, and Schwehn—some of them, to borrow a phrase from Casablanca, the "usual suspects," others new to these pages—have their own overlapping but distinct views on the topic of teaching and research.—RM

**Martin Marty**

An alumna tells me that she had a nightmare in which her old dissertation adviser kept bumping her, with his tray, in a cafeteria line and asking: "When are you going to publish a book?" A third conversation partner said that she once had a bet that within twenty minutes of an annual reunion with her adviser, he would ask what article she was working on. Since I was that pushy and probing adviser, I should perhaps disqualify myself as a contributor to this symposium.

Yet I intend to stay around for a moment for a number of reasons. I believe very strongly that there are good and great teachers who do little writing of articles and books. When my offspring were at college, I measured their education by the quality of the teaching, the integrity of the curriculum, and not so much by the quantity of print issuing from faculty offices. I agree with those who see much academic scholarship as self-centered, trivial, overproductive of the wrong things: in Simone Weil's concept, thus producing culture described as professors producing professors to produce professors. The blights of "productive publishing" are obvious.

All good things, however, are blighted. We can live with fallibilities. And one looks for significant production of essays, books, and research papers from substantial numbers of faculty for good reason. I begin with the magnificent notion that most of what we might come to know, should know, and might know, we do not yet know. There are metaphoric "black holes" of knowledge in the way of ideas and discoveries that can enhance human life, also life coram deo, in the sight of God. (Yes, to me, discovery and production are participations in creation, pursued in a world where God is incarnate, where the Spirit hovers).

Not all dispellings of the weight and darkness of black holes should come from sequestered researchers. Liberal arts college faculty are excellently poised to bring fresh questions, some of them derived from dealing with freshmen, and seasoned seniors, too.

How will they get incentive and time and energy to bring their inquiries to promising stages, their results to forums for public exposure?

Never easily. If it were easy, there would be no problem.

I never judge undergraduate teachers with their heavy teaching, grading, counseling, and participating assignments, by standards of production drawn from the world of graduate research professors whose vocation and profession call and license them to be free for much research and writing.

What interests me is that so many college faculty do come out with articles and books with which we must reckon. Observing them is a valuable way of addressing the issue.

Having a family or not is not the measure and the mark of differences within faculties. Some ascetics go through careers without writing an article and some

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*At left: St. Jerome, as imagined by Albrecht Dürer in a woodcut of 1511 (only a detail of the woodcut is shown). Note that Jerome looks superbly at ease: his books are conveniently within reach, his translation is going well, his lion is serene. The vita contemplativa offers (at this moment) no problems. Future scholars were to have greater difficulties.*
faculty with intergenerational obligations and joys accept and relish them—and still produce.

Some schools do more than others to make scholarship possible. Putting a premium on it is one way. I visit many schools where it does not occur to leadership to expect much from faculties. Zealous pursuits of faculty with intergenerational obligations and joys accept and relish them—and still produce.

The most focused proposal I have is this: in even the busiest liberal arts college, where curricula demands are heaviest, I think there can be ways for most professors to get out of lock step in precut courses. They should all get to sample honors courses, rich electives, seminars, any place where they get to develop whatever it was that lured them to scholarship and teaching. It is possible to set up curricula incentives and bring together student minds with faculty who are told to move beyond inherited knowledge, to be discontented to be always and only transmitters. Together they are likely to build morale, work together, and find ways to make the pursuit of new knowledge so vivid that the university, its personnel, and the larger culture can all benefit.

And it all still takes Sitzfleisch, sitting on one’s butt and staying with it; and ambition; and, how nice, the gift of graceful inspiration for sustenance. That’s available.

Keith Schoppa

When, after months of anticipation, my first book was published in April 1982, I suffered a considerable postpartum depression. Being able finally to hold my brainchild was satisfying, but the gratification seemed essentially hollow: “Is that all there is?” When the book appeared, it ceased to be an integral part of my life. The fiercely vital ideas with which I had wrestled for months and years had been bound, covered with a glossy jacket, and would now be sold, perhaps re-maindered, and definitely shelved amid countless other books in musty library stacks—dead, in fact, unless or until someone read it. The reality of the situation was such that I could not even determine whether the book would live through those ideas imparted now in print to others or whether this product of countless hours of study and analysis, of writing and sometimes tedious rewriting was only a stillbirth. Little wonder the dejection: years of work with little certain payback. What's the purpose? Why do it again? Why not, in my career as university professor, simply concentrate on the classroom experience and service to the university where I'm spending my career?

The answer, simply put, is that I believe that research, like teaching, is an absolutely integral part of the academic vocation. While there is a tendency on the part of some to counterpose teaching and research as discrete, often antagonistic, operations (Western thought seems to produce such polarities), I like to think of teaching and research in terms of the yin-yang circular symbol of Chinese cosmology. Teaching and research are indeed two parts of one whole, with each complementing the other. I want to make it clear that by research I mean more than simply the scholarship required to maintain one's knowledge of current works in the field so that course lectures and materials are up-to-date. Such scholarship should, I think, be rightfully subsumed under the general rubric “teaching” for it is a part of teaching (the preparation) just as lecturing, leading discussions, and grading are parts of teaching.

Research is more. It is pursuing a problem that for a certain period of one's life becomes, if not quite an idée fixe, then, one's own delimited quest to venture into areas never before explored or by methods and approaches never before used. It is this personal quest, informed by current scholarship and research, into unexplored worlds that makes research so valuable in the academic enterprise. Apart from any actual product which results from the research, it is, I think, the process itself which is crucial. During that process—finding, judging the validity of, and analyzing sources; making judgments; synthesizing large amounts of information; organizing one's findings into a coherent vision; and setting forth one's discoveries—the researcher's intellectual commitment and excitement remain acute. Part of this is the sheer joy of working toward discovery; part is the awareness of contributing to new visions, perhaps even of being on the "cutting edge" of one's discipline. Again, I would argue, it is the process not necessarily the publication, the activity not necessarily the productivity that make research so important in the professor's intellectual life and ultimately the life of the university.

Research obviously has the significant potential to expand human knowledge. I undertake research to increase my understanding of Chinese culture and society and then to transmit my new vision through publications and presentations. This is teaching in the truest sense—only to a larger, more differentiated audience than in the classroom. As I wrote my recently-
published book on Xiang Lake, I intended it for interested generalists as well as specialists: the necessity for literate Americans to understand East Asian culture and history grows more urgent each year. In this way I see the book as an important teaching tool. In the case of the extension of knowledge, then, it is generally the publication, the end product of one’s search, which is the essential element.

I have suggested, however, that the process, the quest itself is perhaps even more significant for the researcher and his or her own university community. Active research, first of all, expands the vision, the perspective of the researcher beyond the day-to-day duties and concerns of university professors—departmental or college politics, evaluating the S-U option, and contributing to seemingly ever-proliferating committee meetings. It is not that these concerns are unimportant, but they have a way of dominating and enveloping the mind until they appear almost the whole of reality. Any research project, even those perceived by others as “narrow,” can bring at least a glint of the outside to keep the researcher aware that the world is not coterminous with Valparaiso University. The researcher is not only lecturing students or debating with university colleagues but, to borrow a phrase from Dr. Phillip Gilbertson, is “in deep conversation with colleagues in the discipline.” Feeling a part of and participating in the intellectual world outside the university helps the researcher maintain some greater perspective on local issues, at the very least permitting a healthful release from parochial, often enervating, problems.

Most importantly, the researcher brings attitudes and attributes that should enhance his or her classroom teaching. A researcher grappling with significant issues in the field will bring the excitement and joy of the quest to the classroom. Even though the researcher may not necessarily convey the substance of his or her research to students, the excitement of the process carries over into presentations with a sense of immediacy and relevance. I am doubly charged in classes where I can share some of the intellectual issues that infuse my research, challenging students to see the relevance of these issues not only for understanding China but for seeing the world differently. Students see such a researcher as someone who is committed and devoted to involving himself completely in his or her subject. The researcher signifies through this commitment that the subject itself is important and vital enough for students to spend time studying. Further, the rigors, trials, and frustrations of active research can help make the researcher a more understanding teacher for students who are undertaking scholarship at their own level. Research, in sum, can enhance and even revitalize the teaching enterprise rather than detract or distract from it. That article or book at the end of the quest is simply not all there is—perhaps not even the most important part.

In the ideal world, every faculty member, most of whom hold degrees gained through research, and whom, therefore, we would expect to continue such activity, would excitedly pursue his or her own research quest. In the world of the small university like Valparaiso, those who want to undertake research run head-on into the reality of time. Time, not money, is the essential element in effective research. For each professor and in each subject area the time needs vary.

I, for example, looked forward to this spring break for a brief plunge back in time to early twentieth-century China to re-enter the world of Shen Dingyi, scholar, politician, poet, revolutionary—and subject of my projected book exploring various social and political arenas in China during the momentous 1920s. Though in infrequent silent moments during the now-completed first half of the semester my thoughts have flitted briefly to Shen and his world, my teaching assignments have completely focused my attention on the day-to-day routine of a university professor.

Though the two week break might seem delightfully long to an outsider, I am frustrated knowing that it is barely time to begin to return to where I left my research last August. As an historian of early twentieth-century China, I face two immediate problems in “picking up where I left off.” Most basic is re-entering the world of my sources, all written in Chinese. It is not simply that I am leaving the reality of the alphabet to enter that of the ideograph, but that there are several different kinds of Chinese to which I must always re-acustom myself. In the 1910s and 1920s Chinese intellectuals initiated a language revolution, dispensing with the old classical writing format (wenyan) and adopting the vernacular (baihua). My sources appear in the difficult classical, the idiomatic vernacular, and an often-puzzling style midway between. To shift from one to the other and to adapt to substantially different styles in each category depending on particular source (documents, essays, newspapers, local histories, genealogies) is a painstakingly slow enterprise.

In addition to the language difficulty, I have to re-enter the cultural world of China in the '20s, not simply “China,” but in this study three arenas in which Shen acted and which I hope to elucidate: metropolitan Shanghai, provincial capital Hangzhou, and rural village, Yaqian, the home area of Shen. Thoroughly comprehending the mentalités of these arenas is fundamental, for the sources speak from their cultural framework, and I can begin to make sense of things only by entering that cultural world.
Both of these problems cry out for time, and, more specifically, sufficient time to build some research momentum. With my nine-hour (three course preparation) teaching load and the department chairmanship (for which I receive a one-course reduction), there is no possibility of sustained research time during the teaching semester. I can count on the two week spring break, the post-mini-session summer, and perhaps a week or so during the Christmas break. The two months in the summer become the only time when research can progress and then only after several weeks of “getting back into it.” My research life always seems to be going two steps forward and one back in a continually spasmodic routine of getting started, stopping, and then haltingly re-entering the Chinese linguistic and cultural worlds so that I can begin to gain some momentum in my effort to understand the Chinese culture of the time.

If the university strives seriously to carry out its proper function of extending as well as transmitting knowledge; if research can help enliven faculty teaching and ultimately the university community in general; and if the university continues (as it should) to base tenure, promotion, and salary decisions in part on research activity, then the university must begin to foster research with more support and creativity. I have no specific creative agenda to propose, but it seems there are certain basics which must be continued or expanded. For example, funds for an endowment for a greater number of university grants to stimulate and support research should be actively sought. The university must continue to encourage and reward research activity and productivity both in recognition and salary increments.

In these brief thoughts on research, however, I have stressed time as the essential component of effective research. The university should encourage and facilitate research leaves beyond sabbaticals both for initiating and completing projects. Perhaps some permutation of the current university research professorship (a semester released from teaching duties but without a research professor’s stipend) could be added as a way to offer time to researchers desperately in need of it. The university must also adopt more flexibility in the assigning of course loads, recognizing the variability of talents, interests, and career situations. A reduction of course loads to, say, six three-hour courses per year should be a stated university goal both for better teaching and as an inducement to research; but in the short run, case by case consideration of periodic load reductions for active researchers is essential.

The administrative reaction will be that “time is money.” Yet time is also life itself: as academic year follows academic year, energies wane and once-planned visions of research projects are swallowed up by day-to-day routines and responsibilities. Research abilities of faculty are often under-encouraged, untapped, or underutilized. Such a situation is a waste of human resources; it is a failure to nurture the abundant research possibilities of this faculty, a failure indeed of stewardship. With the significant energizing advantages for the university of promoting active research quests, it seems to me incumbent on the university faculty and administration to co-operate in developing creative support for research activity. The university community will be the better for it.

Marleen Boudreau Flory

On college campuses today we regularly hear highly colored statements about scholarship that have achieved the status of Truth. “We are a teaching institution.” “Because we are a college, we want to hire excellent teachers.” “Today, publication should be increasingly important for tenure and promotion.” These ideas, or let me call them myths, seem to me to be positively dangerous, for underneath their superficial validity they set up standards of behavior for a small academic community and make assumptions about faculty careers that I do not accept.

Scholarship, so the first statement above implies, must be taking away time from teaching. A good teacher will be devoting all energies to the classroom. In such an atmosphere an active scholar may feel virtually apologetic for writing articles or reading papers. I remember both very poor and superb teachers in my college and graduate school classes. Productive scholars fell into both categories as did professors who were not actively involved in scholarship.

The second statement is rather unflattering to those who teach at universities, for it presumes that research, which we apparently associate with universities, and good teaching are somehow incompatible. This remark also reduces college teaching to an inferior position in the hierarchy of education and is demoralizing to those who love college teaching and chose it in preference to a university. Here at our school, the statement implies, we have one value: teaching. Colleges may scare away the bright, ambitious graduate students who, immersed in their graduate research, are eager both to continue that research but also very much want to teach. To suggest that a college wants “teachers” and not “scholars” is to ensure that many fine teachers will be lost in the recruitment process.
This myth also demoralizes those who are already scholars as well as teachers by suggesting that these two activities are unequal and that the college recognizes only one as really central to its goals.

The last of the statements above implies that scholarship is a measurable quantity like miles or ounces and a useful mathematic tool to make the ever tougher decisions about tenure, an expensive commitment. This reduces scholarship to an activity no different from logging hours for a law firm or selling more refrigerators a month than the other salespeople in your department. We imagine a drone bent over her books, interested only in the number of pages a particular subject may produce. We see those who make personnel decisions counting pages and reducing tenure or promotion to "five articles" or "a book and 2 articles." What a dreary view of scholarship. Moreover, what college faculty, already overwhelmed by classes, committees, advising, and paperwork, will feel any enthusiasm for scholarship, if scholarship offers only a standard of judgment for tenure and promotion. Institutional support for scholarship should not be based on the desire to create a new tool of evaluation.

All of us—I believe I can generalize—became professors because we fell in love with a subject and a discipline. Scholarship is a love of a subject, a passion that drives one on to discover more and more about that subject. Scholarship exists not to satisfy some arbitrary external standard of the worth of a professor to an institution but because most of us could not stop doing scholarship if we tried.

Of course, some scholarship is trivial and silly. In print a few years ago I made fun of publication by parodying the pretentious, jargon-filled "notes" that fill the journals. But the point of my joke was that these articles are not scholarship. The ever larger annual volumes of the standard bibliographical tool in my field speak to the lack of jobs, the pressures on graduate students to have publications to put on their vita, the need for publications to get a second job if the first one does not work out. The result is an almost out-of-control push to publish, publish, publish. Scholarly careers in my field could rest—until recently—on a few fine articles.

For me the benefits of scholarship are a greater knowledge of my field, and, just like my jogging, a feeling of self-renewal and mental excitement that carries me through the correcting of elementary Latin papers and grading of examinations. Participating in a field of study takes one beyond the walls of one's own college without ever having to move beyond the library or the computer terminal. Scholarship, which discourages parochialism and keeps a professor interested in a discipline, can prevent "burn-out."

I think one of the current deterrents to research and scholarship is a misperception of the basic nature of the business. Scholarship can have real results for the classroom—a change of emphasis, a new syllabus, new views of old topics. Scholarship can help the college by keeping a faculty alive and invigorated. What scholarship ought not to be is a weapon wielded by administration or departments or boards of trustees to make financial decisions. Moreover, a definition of scholarship is not a list of publications on a vita. We need to encourage scholarship for its positive, long term effect on a faculty and a college but not for its use after six years of probationary appointment. Basic to my point is that publication and research are neither tools of evaluation nor "private activity."

If we could get back to the idea of scholarship as active love of one's subject and get away from the list on one's vita, then I think both administration and faculty would be enthusiastic about the promotion of research. Inherent in the idea of scholarship is its variety—a new syllabus, publication of books and articles, recitals, art exhibits, the reading of papers at meetings, faculty seminars, in fact, any public demonstration of knowledge although, obviously, more individual and institutional prestige accrues to some of these activities than others.

Colleges may find it easier to invest in a new computer for a faculty member than the faculty member. The machine is tangible. What the faculty member learns and publishes is knowledge that goes with the faculty member if he or she leaves. The machine stays. Yet Themistocles said—"men not walls make a city." The worth of a college rests on its faculty. Sabbaticals and leaves are expensive for a college and probably more expensive in the long term than retooling those who have lost interest in their classes but still have many years at an institution. Yet the relationship between a college and a faculty member is not that of an employer and employee. The best faculty members contribute unstintingly of themselves to their institutions, for which they feel not merely loyalty but love. The college, in turn, must respond with a similar affection for its faculty by, at whatever cost, encouraging and nurturing the growth of the individual. Faculty who dismiss research and publication because they can't find time or are "teachers" or mistrust its use by an institution may ultimately find that teaching and committee work do not satisfy for the whole of an academic career.

Let us banish the current myths about scholarship and stop subscribing to the biggest myth of all: University teachers are great scholars because they neglect their teaching. College professors are great teachers because they neglect their scholarship.
Raymond DeVries

Kierkegaard said, "To be pure in heart is to will one thing." From the vantage point of the small college it certainly seems easier to "will one thing" at a large university. At bigger universities, administrators, faculty and staff can specialize, they are free to pursue their work singlemindedly, to "will one thing."

All institutions of higher education, regardless of size, suffer from the problem of overlapping and conflicting goals. While it is not unusual for an organization to have several different goals, colleges and universities face a peculiar dilemma: the goals they are expected to achieve conflict with each other. They are to provide basic education and to generate new ideas. As if that were not enough these institutions must function as businesses. Our administrators remind us that not much education or research would get done if no one was concerned with the ledgers. Church-related schools add one more goal: they are called on to serve religious ends. How can one organization do all these things effectively?

Larger schools respond by specializing. Administrators administrate. Most have specialized degrees and have spent little, if any, time in the classroom. Researchers do research. They too spend little time in the classroom. Time spent teaching is organized to maximize efficiency. This means large classes and liberal use of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants teach. Chaplains are hired to meet the spiritual needs of students.

The small college is caught in a time warp, recognizing the value of specialization but unable to afford it. Small schools are reluctant to give up the family feeling that comes with the old role of in loco parentis. If nothing else it provides them a niche in the market: "we offer an alternative to mass education." But these schools want the best trained faculty they can afford. This leads to the hiring of faculty whose training suits them to the specialized environment of the university, not the family atmosphere of the small college. Upon arriving on campus these specialists are asked to adopt multiple roles to meet the demands of students and administrative work. They must concern themselves with the business of the college (read: endless committee work), teaching, research, and perhaps the spiritual lives of students.

Those of us at these small schools join in one voice, "Too much! We can't do it all!" But perhaps we object too soon. For just a moment consider the benefits of working at a small college. First of all, the multiple missions of the small college provide places of retreat and protection. They allow a "vocabulary of escape."

My experience at three small colleges taught me that debates at small schools are characterized by a series of retreats into one or another sphere to make and defend a point. Someone comments, "Hey, Jack, not many publications or papers over the last few years." Jack responds, "Hey, this is not a research institution, we are here to teach! That is where I spend my time. I teach undergraduates." Meanwhile, in another part of the college: "Hey Sue, your teaching evaluations are slipping!" Sue responds, "Watch it! It is my research and the flow of grant money that keeps this place afloat! The national recognition I am gaining is important for the institution (by the way where do we stand on the U.S. News and World Report ranking?)." We argue with administrators, pleading with them for more money to help us accomplish our true goal of educating students, and then remind those students that we are unavailable after 5:00.

At church-related schools the concerns of the constituency or religious ideology can be used to explain some action or decision. A few months into my first job, I approached the dean explaining that my meager salary was not enough to feed my family. I appealed to him on the grounds of Christian charity. How could he allow this to happen at a college of the church? His reply was predictable: "We can't run a business that way. I would like to help you out, but I have to be concerned with the bottom line."

The multiple missions of the small college also allow some freedom of choice not available at larger universities. Because the demands for publication are not as intense at smaller colleges we can decide where to direct our energy: in the classroom, in original research, as a citizen of the college community or as a minister to students. For those choosing to do research, the small college offers more freedom in research agendas. While most schools require some published work for promotion and tenure, the emphasis is on quality not quantity. This allows scholars to carefully explore topics of genuine interest.

But are "vocabularies of escape" and these limited choices worth preserving? Vocabularies of escape are just rationalizations and the choices we have are severely constrained by time (hence the common complaint: I would like to do research but have no time). The small college makes it more difficult to "will one thing."

The choices we make at small colleges have consequences for the school and for ourselves. If we choose to focus on the classroom we have the privilege of connecting with students but often become separated from colleagues. Working on original research connects us with colleagues (most often at other schools) and gives us a niche in the discipline, but removes us from students and (often) from local colleagues.
Focusing on committee work makes a valuable contribution to the school but it too removes us from students and brings little recognition on or off campus.

How can the tensions created by the multiple missions of the small college be resolved? My brief analysis suggests we must begin by recognizing their structural sources. First, consider demographic factors. Many specialists found their way to small colleges as a result of the buyers’ market created by the baby boom glut of academicians. Small colleges were delighted to hire well trained faculty, giving little thought to the ways they would be frustrated or how their presence would change the school. Second, consider the rewards of scholarship. The public rewards of scholarship lie in research, not in teaching. The rewards of teaching are local and private; real rewards for scholars come from original research. Third, and perhaps most significant is the constraint professors at small colleges feel as a result of poor pay. Work others can afford to hire out (home repair, child care, housework) must be done. Many faculty members must moonlight to make ends meet. This certainly does not bode well for teaching or research.

Structural constraints suggest the need for structural change. Small colleges and their faculty members need to decide what it is they desire. Do they want to join the age of specialization? If they do, it is unlikely they will be able to afford to compete with their larger cousins. Traditionally, small colleges have “willed one thing”: the development of the character of their students. The decision to return to this tradition will require revised definitions of scholarship. The criteria of scholarship must not be drawn from specialist institutions. At a small school scholarship includes all written work (unpublished and published) and skill in teaching and administration.

The strength of a small college is that it does not make us compartmentalize. It encourages us to bring together our research and our teaching, to connect with colleagues in other disciplines. It allows us to be whole persons—people who balance teaching, research and citizenship in community, people whose view of the world extends beyond the narrow confines of one discipline. If we are to will one thing—the development of character—we must understand our calling and make our peace with the allocation of status in the profession. We are here to develop character, not to accumulate vita entries. Teaching, research and administrative work are all necessary to achieve that goal.

Mark Schwehn

The interminable discussion about teaching, research, and their relationship to one another is much more riddled with conceptual confusions than even Richard Maxwell realizes. These confusions arise in part from the extremely complex social, political, and economic conditions that largely determine the direction of a modern, comprehensive university such as Valparaiso. I want to call attention to only one feature of this complex context and to reflect upon the ways in which it has complicated matters of teaching and research. I refer to the increasingly dominant position of pre-professional and professional programs within the university.

A contemporary observer of American higher education once remarked that the only thing that unifies the modern university is the plumbing. In its currently fragmented condition, the university as a whole can no longer define, with either confidence or precision, those activities that were once deemed central to its mission—teaching and research. A professor of psychology has a private clinical practice. This clinical work is, from the psychology professor’s point of view, research, from the physics professor’s point of view, moonlighting, and from the provost’s point of view, another troubling feature of academic life (unless, of course, the provost happens to be a clinical psychologist). From no one’s point of view is the clinical work by itself scholarship, although many people use the terms scholarship and research interchangeably. So perhaps the clinical work becomes scholarship when its results are published. Almost, but not quite. For this depends, in part at least, upon where the results are published.

Nor is the case of the professor of clinical psychology exceptional. The professor of drama directs plays. Are the performances that result from these endeavors the fruits of research, instances of scholarship, theatrical versions of publication (careful here, the performances are, after all, public, though perishable), displays of professional competence, evidences of good (or bad) teaching, or mere entertainments? Who can say? Who should say?

My problematic examples have been taken thus far from within what has traditionally been called the College of Arts and Sciences. One consequence, perhaps the major consequence, of the proliferation of “professionalism,” has been a bewildering profusion of meanings for terms like teaching, research, scholarship, and even, perhaps especially, for the term “professionalism” itself. Confusion squared. Is there a difference between consulting work and research in the various professions? If so, what is it? Is on-the-job training a form of teaching? What about off-the-job training? A CPA brilliantly settles the accounts of Bethlehem Steel, saving the corporation millions of tax dollars in the process. Now this same CPA becomes a
professor of accounting in a College of Business, all the while retaining the Bethlehem account. What do we now call the professor's accounting work? Research? Continuing education? Community service? Moonlighting? A contribution to the profession? The university (better pluriversity) has decided not to answer questions like the ones I have posed above in any uniform manner. Instead, the university supports the political expression of intellectual pluralism—departmentalism. Departments decide what counts as adequate research, scholarship, teaching, etc., though there may be little or no agreement across departments, much less across colleges, about such matters. So a situation that seems impossibly confusing in theory is not so confusing at all in practice, unless one seeks consistency or coherence in something other than plumbing. What makes the good professor of nursing? It takes one to know one.

These political arrangements might well be understood as prudence in the face of multiplicity, except for two things. First, many members of the academic community have come mistakenly to identify departmental autonomy with academic freedom. Second, some units of the modern academy are more powerful than others as the result of agencies that are external to the university itself. I refer here to the accrediting agencies of the professional colleges. The university may well settle all of the following matters for the College of Arts and Sciences within a very broad range of latitude: student/faculty ratio, teaching load, salary levels, library space, percentage of faculty holding a terminal degree. But the university will not settle all such matters for the School of Law without having instantly to reckon with loss of accreditation if the settlements fail to meet much more exacting standards.

Everyone at the university agrees that, whatever research might mean, it requires time and resources to do it well. Thus, teaching load, leave policy, library and laboratory resources, and salary levels (low salaries often mean having to do extra non-research work over the summer months) all are directly related to research. Since this is so, the comparative advantages enjoyed by the professional colleges will doubtless come to shape the meaning of research in the following three ways. First, faculty members in the professional colleges will simply do more and better research than their colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences. Second, the power socially to construct the meaning of good teaching and good research for the whole university will come to reside more in these colleges and less in the College of Arts and Sciences. Third, faculty members in all colleges will be increasingly tempted to define a broad range of activities that earn income (editing, consulting, refereeing manuscripts, managing con-

http://www.cresset.com/story/2013/04/01/the-parsonage/
Apartheid
Without Tears

Gail Eifrig

Have you suspected that integration was not moving ahead as rapidly in the last eight years as it had in the preceding eight? That may be putting the question in terms that sound abstract. Let's think of it another way. Are there many young black tellers in the bank you patronize? Has your law firm got a new black partner? Is your child being taught by an award-winning young black teacher? Is the latest couple to buy into your condo a black couple? Probably not.

Somebody mentions that there seem to be more burned and boarded-up buildings than ever on the route she drives to work. Bigger groups of mean-looking kids hanging around outside mean-looking bars. And, on the nicer streets, more people straight out asking for money—not just playing saxophones beside an open instrument case, but coming up with hands out, "Gimme some dollars for food and coffee, man."

Funny, I thought I had noticed these things too, though I found them hard to reconcile with the figures from government offices about employment and gross national product and so forth. I notice that in spite of trying very hard, my own university has seen enrollment of minority students, specifically black students, drop from 141 in 1977 to 59 in 1987 to 45 in 1988. And we have just two people of African-American descent on our faculty in 1989. I still don't see the arrival of a minority middle class into Porter County, where African-Americans are still so unusual that those of us who discuss these matters can, when we get together, count them up on one hand.

But I thought, since there were those wonderful figures from the government offices, that maybe I was just seeing the anomalies, the odd bumps and glitches on a chart that otherwise was looking good. I hoped that, at any rate, until a week or so ago I heard a talk about a study conducted in a number of American cities to trace how integration has done in the 1980s. And all the figures were there to fill out my suspicions, the hints and guesses, the rumors and nudges and intimations that we hoped meant only that we weren't seeing the whole picture. No, the whole picture looks just as we feared. Black people are poorer, they are less educated, they are less well housed, they have less chance of moving out of ghettoized poverty and ignorance than in 1980. And this is true whether you look at cities that have remained prosperous, like L.A. and Atlanta, or have been rich and become poor, like Houston, or have been poor and gotten better, like Philadelphia, or have stayed relatively stable in the overall economic picture, like Chicago. Though Asians and Hispanics are moving with some steadiness out of poverty and into the neighborhoods and lifestyles of middle class America, African-Americans are less likely than ever before to change their status economically and educationally.

Today, the formal report of that study has been published in Social Science Quarterly, and our local paper in summarizing it notes that "an Asian or Hispanic who has completed the third grade is more likely to live in an integrated neighborhood than a black with a doctorate. . . . and an Asian or Hispanic who makes less than $2,500 has a higher chance of living in an integrated neighborhood than a black who earns more than $50,000."

As I said, I heard about this study just before it was published, at an informal talk. The audience was composed of students and faculty at a prestigious graduate school at a great American university. The speaker was a professor at that university, and both speaker and audience felt and expressed their sorrow—and even their shame—that the figures should look like this. We wished it were not so, and we responded heartily to the speaker's only ameliorating remarks; the current situation is a clear result of certain intentions in public policy. That is, the public will between 1967 and 1980 was for one direction, and the will was implemented. When that will changed, and public policy changed to implement it, then that will was implemented. In other words, there is a demonstrable correlation between what people in this country say they want, and what they get. Which means that if we want to do better at integration, we can do it. And so, the speaker said, it is up to us as citizens to keep working to influence the general will in the direction we feel is right. And we all took courage from this, and looked around the room, encouraging each other not to lose heart, to keep being active in doing the right thing.

And when we looked around, we noticed once again that we in the room, nearly all of us, were white. But not all. The secretaries were there, and four of them are black.

Gail Eifrig, on leave studying Hebrew this year, writes as the Cresset's Hyde Park correspondent.
The Claims of Words and Music

James Brokaw


In Osmin's Rage: Philosophical Reflections on Opera, Drama, and Text, Peter Kivy continues his investigation of philosophical questions attending music, and particularly questions arising from the relations between music and language. His earlier book, The Corded Shell, explored the phenomena of musical expression, and the uses of language in coming to terms with that expression. There, Kivy argued for the reinstatement of emotive description of musical experience, often to supplement or even to substitute for abstruse "technical" description. This was a most satisfying book, which explored systematically many issues that attend the central question.

Osmin's Rage also explores a central question having to do with the relation of language and music; here, however, the issue is more complicated. The concern is less with language as a critical mechanism than with language in active partnership with music. Kivy confronts the "problem" of opera. The book's title concerns a letter of Mozart's to his father, in which he explains the problem of writing music to represent the growing, towering rage of Osmin, the cantankerous harem-keeper in Die Entführung aus dem Serail. Mozart's concern is that the music represent Osmin's expression of rage, while remaining within the limits of purely musical parameters.

But this "problem" is not simply that of naturalistic representation; it has much more to do with the conflicting needs and characteristics of language and music, the very different claims they make on the attention of the listener. For that reason, Kivy begins his historical survey of philosophical thinking about language vis à vis musical expression in the realm of church music, about three quarters of a century before opera began: with the stipulations of the Council at Trent, that body of the Catholic counter-reformation for the conduct of music in official Catholic sacred music. This introduction, drawn from the alien realm of sacred music, serves to distinguish music as abstract ornament of language (Ockeghem) from music that is suited to language (Palestrina), which in Kivy's formulation represents the cadence of normal speech.

Kivy does not follow the obvious though treacherous path of a relativistic view: rather than attempt to describe how various historical epochs perceived the relation of language and music in conducting his survey, Kivy instead refers to the abstract "problem" of opera, to which the styles of various epochs are judged successful or unsuccessful "solutions." As usual, opera seria (that most rational of operatic genres, whose libretti were modeled after the neoclassical works of Voltaire and Racine) comes in for the heaviest censure although Kivy offers cogent evidence for regarding Handel's Italian operas as being the outstanding masterpieces of this (failed) genre.

The central argument hinges on the juxtaposition of the opere serie of Handel, and the synthesis of comic and serious genres in late Mozart. The most important contribution made by this book is its attempt to make lucid connections (or establish "palpable congruities") between modes of representation in these operatic styles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and contemporary texts in philosophy and psychology. Kivy shows quite compellingly how the Doctrine of Affections, an aesthetic concept of Baroque music that correlated musical gestures with rationalized emotional states, is largely based on Cartesian theories of physiology and emotion. Heretofore, scholars have seen the Doctrine as being principally derivative of classical Greek theories of rhetoric and oratory. Kivy finds the altogether different way of representing character and emotion in Mozart to be resonant with the theories of the association of ideas of Locke, Hobbes, and, above all, David Hartley. This school yielded not only a psychological principle but an aesthetic one, which sought to explain why different people can have entirely different responses to the same object.

Kivy establishes a kind of binary

James Brokaw has written extensively on the music of Bach and Mozart.
opposition between, on the one hand, the Cartesian view in which emotions are finite, innate responses that neither "shade" into one another nor vary with the individual and, on the other, the "associationist" view, in which emotions are acquired, are nearly unlimited in number and subjective hue, and are highly personal and idiosyncratic. Kivy then sets up a second dualism in the realm of musical form, between da-capo form (a three-part design, in which the concluding section is a literal repetition of the first) and the more flexible and complex sonata form. The da-capo design is one which preserves an overall unity of affect; on the other hand, sonata form—as it is traditionally understood—depends on the establishment and subtle coordination of conflicting affects.

This much is very helpful indeed. It must be stressed, though, that Kivy finds no reason to challenge any of the received wisdoms concerning Mozartian opera. Among the most vulnerable of these is the notion that the secret of Mozart's success as a composer and musical dramatist is his prowess as an architect of musical form. This is not to say that Mozart's operas do not have strong formal coherence on the abstract, musical level; indeed, Mozart clearly distinguishes himself from his contemporaries in this regard.

It is to say, rather, that describing, for instance, the second-act finale in Figaro in terms of sonata form is, in at least two respects, an act of potentially misleading reductionism. First, the very term "sonata form" itself has become suspect for many analysts of eighteenth-century music, since its implication of a regular design cannot possibly account for the extraordinary variety of forms in the instrumental music of Haydn and Mozart. (It is remarkable that the work of Leonard Ratner, the most prominent writer on the subject, receives no mention in Kivy's bibliography.) But most importantly, abstract musical form is only one among many aspects that the analyst of opera must consider closely. It is perhaps for this reason—that there is far more going on at any given moment than simply the abstract patterning of sound—that opera has proven so intractable to analysis and criticism. In the operas of Mozart, musical form may in fact be a keystone, but it has yet to be shown how it functions as such.

The recent surge of interest in relations between language and music has pushed librettology into the limelight.

In any case, abstract musical form is not a monolith. That some scholars seem to regard it as such may in part be due to the fact that our analytical apparatus for music was developed for instrumental music. (At least, this is the best way I can account for Siegmund Levarie's attempt to reduce the entire Marriage of Figaro to a four-chord progression.) Perhaps opera is too rich and complex a field to be left to musicians! Certainly the recent interest in text and music promises a wealth of new perspectives on opera.

"Librettology"—the study of opera libretti outside their musical context—has languished long as a subspecies of comparative literature. For more than a generation, the prevailing view of opera has privileged the composer as the chief architect of drama (Joseph Kerman); the libretto, as in W.H. Auden's formulation, is nothing more than a "private letter to the composer." But the recent surge of interest in relations between language and music, particularly with the catalyst of recent French thought, has pushed this once obscure discipline into the limelight; witness an excellent collection of essays entitled Reading Opera, edited by Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, who are professors of German and Music respectively at Cornell University. A glance at the table of contents reveals a wide variety of approaches to opera of the Nineteenth Century. There are studies of individual libretti (Arthur Groos, James Hepokoski, Christopher Ratner, the most prominent writer on the subject, receives no mention in Kivy's bibliography.) But most importantly, abstract musical form is only one among many aspects that the analyst of opera must consider closely. It is perhaps for this reason—that there is far more going on at any given moment than simply the abstract patterning of sound—that opera has proven so intractable to analysis and criticism. In the operas of Mozart, musical form may in fact be a keystone, but it has yet to be shown how it functions as such.

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(son of Victor Hugo); he apparently favored the criticism by August Wilhelm Schlegel. Hepokoski offers a detailed précis of the often conflicting writings of Hugo and Schlegel to reconstruct the interpretive context for the libretto; he then uses annotations in the La Scala copy of Hugo's translation to suggest the interpretive decisions made when creating the libretto.

Hepokoski argues that Boito was heavily influenced by Hugo's view of Iago—that the motivation for Iago's hatred must be sought in Iago's nature, not in the text of the play—and, in particular, that Hugo's view was the primary stimulus for the Credo, Iago's remarkable soliloquy celebrating all that is negative, which many have taken to be a parody of the Nicene Creed, the heart of the Roman Mass.

Partisans of deconstruction are likely to be intrigued by Katherine Bergeron's close reading of Iago's Credo. If, as Roland Barthes has it, one pleasure of reading arises not from the perception of coherence—a practice that reduces confusion, because one knows in advance what the text is supposed to mean—but from the contradictions that arise from the cohabitation of different languages, then opera offers fertile territory indeed, rich with the aporiae that result from the relations of music and language, each with their conflicting exigencies. Bergeron's analysis is one that celebrates the incongruities in the music and language of Iago's soliloquy. The piece is by no means simply a parody of the Nicene creed; Bergeron goes to great lengths to show how the parallels do not obtain. The text itself is oddly constructed—Julian Budden judged it to be "nonsense"—and the musical declamation further distorts the strangely fractured text. Bergeron isolates two textual/musical voices; which is the more truly subversive? she asks. By way of conclusion, she suggests that the traditional closure—a burst of mocking laughter that appears to confirm the view of the text as mockery—is in fact inappropriate. Iago's character is more equivocal, as the production book for Otello suggests, to play him as a human demon is to commit a vulgar error indeed. The stage direction at Iago's final words calls for him to shrug his shoulders, turn away and move upstage.

There is really only one disappointing contribution in this excellent volume. Regrettably, it is the final essay, which attempts to defend the traditional view: that opera is, in its essence, a musical and not a textual phenomenon. Surely there is something worthwhile to be said in behalf of this proposition, but we certainly should expect more than Paul Robinson's complaints that opera is in a foreign language; that it is sung, and operatic singing is by definition incomprehensible; that ensemble singing compounds that incomprehensibility; and that any surviving sense of the words is annihilated by the accompanying symphony orchestra playing at full blast. These amount to little more than an amplification of Richard Strauss' snide remark to his librettist Hofmannsthal that the best libretti are those that function as pantomime. The assumption seems to be that opera is received only by inquisitive boors who are unlikely to familiarize themselves with the text outside an actual performance. Does Robinson suppose that such listeners are any more receptive to the abstruse harmonic analysis that has dominated so much opera criticism? More to the point, why should the experience of those unwilling to probe beyond the surface of a work of art be allowed to set the phenomenological benchmark for the work's critical appraisal?

**The Great Unspoken**

**René Steinke**


A friend of mine said recently she was tired of religion being "the great unspoken." There is something of that statement in these books. For some time in mainstream contemporary poetry, it has been the "given" that Christianity is only worth writing about in ways that expose its limits and tyrannies. But Bruce Beasley, Elizabeth Spires, and Cole Swensen are all somehow interested in the imaginative possibilities of belief, instead of its limitations. Their poems are not traditionally devotional, and if one had to invent an image for the motion upwards in them, it would be less like the movement of a church steeple and more like that of a rocket or a kite—the spiritual impulses in these poems are not ones with which we're immediately familiar. What's striking is how the traditional religious themes, "unspoken" for this long, allow the poets to take surprising, sometimes risky,

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René Steinke was a Christ College Scholar at Valparaiso University, and graduated in 1986. She received her M.F.A. from the University of Virginia in 1988 and now lives in Chicago.
imagistic and rhythmical turns.

Beasley's book *Spirituals*, is brilliant with precise and luminous images, drawing much of its subject matter from Biblical stories and the Catholic tradition. Many of the poems have the narrative rhythms and weirdly wise images one finds in fairytales. In "Death of Lazarus," for instance, years after Lazarus is healed, he sits beside the river "scrubbing the pallor from his skin." And in a poem that retells the Adam and Eve story, after God punishes them for their sin, the stems of the fig trees are "like dark, uneven arrows." Later, after their children die and Adam and Eve sacrifice beasts, trying to remember how to pray, they decide God must have become "a strange old man."

Beasley delights in retelling the stories from Sunday school lessons with an emphasis on the sensual. In "From Grace," after Adam eats from the apple, he gives Eve "a long, close kiss." And in "The Cursing of the Fig Tree," the story is almost completely translated to the senses: "Christ leaned for awhile on a fig tree/And found himself strangely hungry,/touching it leaf by leaf/as if parting the lips of the dumb."

Beasley often combines the confessional and devotional modes in a way that allows him a range of intimate and slightly irreverent tones, even in the direct addresses to God. "Benediction," a poem which suggests the uneasy peace of faith in the mourning of a death, takes a somewhat traditional devotional form. But the canticle-like repetition is played against a force of impatience and irony:

> Let the impatient and morning glories always surround the hearses.
> Let the children go on wishing on the stars' borrowed light, even when it won't help.

He uses a similar technique in the poem "Miserere," almost liturgical in its refrain "be merciful." In both cases, the tension between the devotional form and the impatient tone makes the poem spark.

The prayers or meditations are addressed to a God fully imagined, not a concept. "Benediction" ends: "Let us/believe there is someone/when we mourn or pray/who will bend/who will listen/who will bend down." In "Elegy," Jesus has an image of Judas in the back of his mind, "a barren fig tree/Kept shaking its load, a dirty little blossom of a man." Perhaps this speculation on God's imagination, the hint that God is a poet, is what's most breathtaking in a poem like "Ascension Day":

> Somewhere in the sky you're speaking but you don't know what to say because already your memory is opening and closing slowly, like a flower, like a fist.

While Beasley's poems move within their religious context, Elizabeth Spires' poems in *Annunciation* find their religious contexts only after they have travelled a bit. Travel is a central metaphor for Spires. She was awarded the Amy Lowell Travelling Poetry Scholarship in 1986-87, when several of these dated and placed poems were apparently composed. Often set in a foreign city, the poems almost consistently move from the landscape into a meditation on some other spiritual world.

Underneath many of these poems is a restlessness that enables Spires to make the transitions almost violent. In "Sunday Afternoon at Fulham Palace," a vertigo crowd scene is created: goldfish, a fountain, a peacock, a brightly painted rubber castle, loud children, old couples "sunning themselves," a band, "spread blankets and tablecloths." First, the speaker says that it is easy to imagine the end of the world on a day like that:

> Easy to imagine the great gray plane hovering briefly overhead, the gray metal belly opening and the bomb dropping a flash, a light like a thousand suns; and then the long winter.

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**Beasley's *Spirituals* is brilliant with luminous images, drawing from Biblical stories. Spires' poems find their religious contexts after they have travelled a bit.**

Eventually, the crowd of tourists changes into a crowd of worshippers. The transformation is dream-like:

> the conductor oddly choosing something devotional, a coronet solo . . .
> . . . Mood Indigo. The white peacock,
> The walled garden and the low door.
> As if, if it did happen, we could bow our heads
> and ask once more, to enter that first, innocent world.

This movement from a bizarre, alien scene into an image of the apocalypse happens in several of Spires' poems. Often she stops linear time with an exceptionally close observation of an unfamiliar scene, somehow oddly familiar to the speaker—this is one way the sense of travel enters Spires' poems. In "Glass-Bottom Boat," the speaker's mind leaps from watching fish beneath
her to a vision of saints in a "world-without-end hour." Like Elizabeth Bishop, who also used the metaphor of travel, Spires moves from the physical to the atemporal, imagined scene, through intense description:

... schools of yellowtail
swam through the living coral,
bright as stained glass,
cast into underwater constellations
both strange and familiar:
a flower, a brain, a cathedral.

Abrupt transformations, like the ones in this last line, occur in several poems when the spiritual is called up from some "other world": the sea, fairy tale, the past, or some other country foreign to the speaker.

Usually Spires maintains an ironically hopeful tone, the source of which might be best explained by the prose poem, "Falling Away." An unfinished verse poem, "A Lesson in Eternity," is contained within. The poem begins in a Catholic grade school in Circleville, Ohio, in the middle of the sixth-grade catechism class, "the crucifix above the front blackboard in a face-off with the big round clock on the wall." The poem tells about the experience of indoctrination that will not let the poet finish the "real" poem. "That polarized world of good and evil, guilt and absolution" has prevented the poet from finishing the poem about the lesson that hell is an eternity. She cannot quite imagine it. Conversely, though, the speaker in many of Spires' other poems, travels to an eternity in heaven.

It is the mobile imagination that saves the speakers in these poems. The long, title poem "The annonciade," takes the voice of a patient in a sanatorium that overlooks a monastery. The original order is gone, but the speaker watches the "few caretakers left/to take care of the grounds and sell/ postcards of the view to the tourists" and the visitors who "cannot stay very long./ They speak in guilty whispers/and move through the church like intruders." The poem then raises questions about sickness and health, death and redemption, the sanatorium patients closest to death, also "closest to annunciation." The speaker describes a delirium that comes from lying bedridden in a room by the afternoon, imagining "that the omnipresent flies/travelling mad circuits are sent from heaven/to reassure us that heaven, too, is imperfect." She goes on to imagine her own death and redemption: "the deceived and deceiving/eye, as it falls asleep, feeling/strange intimations of happiness." The epiphanies in Spires' poems are visibly sought out by the imagination touring the landscape. They do not suddenly appear of their own accord. In "The Bells," the speaker discusses these "ghosts descending": "How shall we/put them to use, with what abandon?/ The signs are there if we would listen, see." The devotional aspect of these poems is their close attention to the places they visit.

The devotional side of Cole Swensen's New Math is more medieval, her poems geometric and lit, like sections of stained glass. There's a Piet Mondrian painting on the cover, and the implied comparison is apt. Swensen's poems are less grounded in scenes and narrative, relying more on the shapes in which language orders things into systems—mathematics, geometry, physics, religion. Michael Palmer, who chose the book for the National Poetry series, has called it "a calculus of light," and the energy of these poems lies in their explorations of the ways language orders the unseen.

Swensen's perspective looks at a world that is made, "aligned cell within cell." And oddly, the images seem most translucent and moving when they are less "real," as in "It's Early Morning All Winter":

Trees step backward, hands raised, they
too will escape

On a curving line
along a scratch in space
waiting for the light to change.

Swensen finds comfort in the orders of belief she sees mimicked in the human form itself. In "Cathedral," she meditates on the construction of devotional forms:

No, in the lines of the palm
are those of the temple, know the angles of a lover yawning
let in light which for all its speed may never land.

This suspension of chaos that is calculated in the lines of the cathedral (or in the lines of thought) allows worship: "This is the hush that dissolves the service, the forgetful air to the congregation."

The urge to order occurs within Swensen's language itself, when she uses a Wallace Stevens-like circulation of words; "And the one man rose/and the other man ran." Or, "If we win the world/can come back/to the world, speechless." Swensen's interest in patterns illustrates language's tendency to define even the indefinite or the unseen, and suggests that this is part of the move towards belief: "God is a color, gray and green mixed/with equal parts water." It is the way language tends to shape "weather patterns unseen by the naked eye" that balances Swensen's short lines and fragmented images, like the man who builds the cathedral, chiseling order in the midst of disorder. Swensen's poems are written as if they were glimpsed through a stained glass of some ethereal pattern. "Perhaps you believe even less/in the physical world," the poet says to herself.
That life is worth living is the most necessary of assumptions, and, were it not assumed, the most impossible of conclusions.

—George Santayana

There is an interesting moment in the film *Manhattan* (1979) in which Woody Allen's central character, a writer named Isaac, is lying on a couch in his apartment, brainstorming, recording ideas on his microcassette tape recorder as preparation for composition of a short story. In an uncharacteristic twist of direction for a Woody Allen protagonist, Isaac decides to examine an optimistic approach to life and living. This is unexpected since throughout his movies most of Woody Allen's characters' attitudes can be summed up by the following pessimistic observation offered in *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986) by another of Allen's alter egos, Mickey: "There are only two types of people in the world, the unhappy and the truly miserable;" thus, we have to be thankful when we're only unhappy.

Nevertheless, Isaac begins to search for an optimistic evaluation of life by asking the question "Why is life worth living?" He then records his list of responses: "Groucho Marx, Willie Mays, the second movement of the Jupiter Symphony, Louis Armstrong's recording of "Potatohead Blues," Swedish movies (of course), *Sentimental Education* by Flaubert, Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra, those incredible apples and pears by Cezanne. . . .' It is a list which includes individuals and works that contributed to experiences found fitting, harmonious, beautiful, or rewarding in his life—pleasurable memories that gathered together, to some extent, sketch a formal statement, a descriptive analysis of the formative influences which fashioned his character.

In *Save the Tiger* (1973), a film directed by John Avildsen, Jack Lemmon portrays a character who is a somewhat successful businessman living in Beverly Hills, but undergoing a midlife crisis. Much of what he sees in his current life offers little or no enjoyment, so, in an effort to recapture his former, more youthful, enthusiasm for life, he plays a name game and thinks back to those who once made life worth living for him. His list includes the following: Glenn Miller, Fred Allen, Jimmy Durante, Carl Hubbell, Eddie Arcaro, Laurel and Hardy, Sugar Ray Robinson, Hank Greenberg, Babe Ruth, Red Grange, Fatha' Hines, Fats Waller, George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Popeye, LuLu, W.C. Fields, Charlie Chaplin. The names in this personal inventory read like an excerpt from a generational popular arts and entertainment program.

The element that causes these two sets of answers to the question "What makes life worth living?" to be most interesting is not merely the insight they give into the individual tastes of the separate film characters, although in the eyes of each of the two directors that is certainly present as a main purpose for the pair of catalogs; instead, more importantly, the answers demonstrate the prominent position of art, particularly that vague category of popular art, in our society and reveal the priorities in certain sectors of our contemporary culture. One might conclude that these lists reveal a male-dominated, sexist society; just as simply, one might decide that contemporary men, as represented by these two characters, still tend to feel more comfortable in choosing those of their own gender as role models, life-guides, cultural heroes, and spokespersons for their concerns and feelings. In any case, the answer to the question "What makes life worth living?" often seems to result in a list which consists of the revered individuals and objects of our art and culture.

The answer to the question "What makes life worth living?" often results in a list of revered individuals and objects of our art and culture.

If one defines the word "art" more broadly than many academics might have in the past, as "the quality, production, expression, or realm of what is beautiful, or of more than ordinary significance," and one characterizes "culture" in a way that includes popular arts, perhaps as "the sum of arts, in-
terests, and endeavors which embody the attitudes, aspirations, or ideals of a society,” then one will discover that the preceding lists offer wide-ranging implications not only about the lives of the characters who speak those lines, but also about what all of us might consider valuable in our own lives.

It is taken for granted that when determining those responsible for the aspects of our lives which have nurtured us and contributed greatly to whatever sense of contentment we may have experienced, most of us would initially indicate our family members and friends—grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, boyfriends or girlfriends, husband or wife, sons and daughters, best friend or college roommate. Many might also include teachers, clergy, neighbors, local leaders, or co-workers. However, no matter how many figures we draw from these diverse relationships, the resulting lists of important, inspirational, or mutually shared with those members of society outside our own communities.

It is the revelation of common cultural heroes or collectively recognized works of art in our society that marks the two film monologues previously cited as significant to others outside the closed circle of family, friends, or acquaintances in the personal lives of their speakers. In these twin instances, it is particularly essential that the references travel beyond the enclosed worlds of the speakers, of course, since both speakers are characters in a film and their worthwhile experiences must seem relevant to audience members in order to ensure empathy.

In fact, one might suggest that it is the very nature of such lists (honor rolls which include human icons of contemporary culture, the “intimate strangers” of our society mixed like ingredients in a recipe), and the total composition of the montage one envisions when faced with such a combination that form a single, reflexive portrait of ourselves and our society. One might go on to infer that such lists also may be used as clues to the current cultural index of priorities for enjoyable and desirable lives, both private and public, in contemporary society.

Like a gallery of Andy Warhol portraits, the popular personalities we choose to place in our aggregate allow for instantaneous identification with the thoughts, feelings, or attitudes expressed by others, especially ourselves. As Louis Simpson has written: “Time after time, the artist who is true to his own view of experience turns out to be speaking for others.” The artists’ creations, the “objective correlatives” of our society, like Warhol’s Campbell’s soup cans or the American flags and Savarin coffee cans of Jasper Johns, also permit our imaginations to ascribe to objects of art emotions or moods we find present in ourselves and feel a need to represent through physical symbols. Therefore, our own menu of selections might serve as an indicator of the ways we see the world in which we live, as well as an instrument that projects for closer scrutiny our images of self.

In addition, the various fields from which we choose the people who will inhabit our lists signify the ever-altering procession of art forms to prominence or away from dominance as decades change. Our selections confirm the sudden emergence of newer art forms, the eventual acceptance of some older art forms and the gradual decline of other older art forms. Cultural criteria which determine why life is worth living today differ substantially from the critical principles which tested the same question for our parents, our grandparents or, especially, our great-grandparents. Current answers to the question which asks why life is worth living will vary enormously from nineteenth century responses—and they should. As Benjamin (Dustin Hoffman) states in The Graduate (1967), members of each generation want their lives to be “different” from the lives of their parents.

One way this difference is shown is through the manner in which members of a generation reach for happiness. Also, the reflection of those characteristic manners in art may differ in the medium used to express them or, more importantly, through the form and content choices—styles, themes, or morals—made, considering what options are available in that medium. For example, the arrival of technological art forms in the twentieth century, such as film, television, radio, and re-
corded music, would certainly account today for a greater portion of almost anyone's register of reasons life is made more enjoyable in our society. As well, the more liberal and, many would argue, liberating cross-cultural influences these media have exerted in recent decades have transformed the styles, themes, and morals emphasized in a majority of lives today.

The rise of the athlete, real or fictional, as contemporary folk hero and cultural icon has been rendered in many movies, from romantic fables such as Rocky (1976) or The Natural (1984) to more realistic portrayals such as Downhill Racer (1969) or Raging Bull (1980). The long series of films which depict athletes as cultural models, whether heroic or anti-heroic, can be seen from Knute Rockne—All-American (1940) and Pride of the Yankees (1942) to Bull Durham (1988) and Eight Men Out (1988). As a sidebar to acceptance of technological progress, the increased availability of actual athletic competition, first to listeners across the radio airwaves and then to viewers through television coverage, has had even more influence than film and has also added to the advancement of sports as more than secondary recreational activities for amateurs.

Today, as one views Michael Jordan's maneuvers toward a slam dunk on slow-motion videotape, one may be hard-pressed to separate with surety the difficulty and beauty of his moves from those wonderful, balletic leaps of Mikhail Baryshnikov. Technology has transformed certain levels of a number of sophisticated spectator sports into popular art forms, or at least cultural endeavors which, to some extent, embody the aspirations of our society: football stadiums, baseball fields, and basketball arenas have come closer to being contemporary equivalents of the Greek amphitheatres providing artistic and dramatic fare than to the Roman amphitheatres which supplied the mere mindless amusements of brutal gladiatorial contests.

Also, the rise of a new electronic art form has dictated in recent generations the novel's loss of ground in popularity and influence to film (more prominently emphasized by the accessibility of a multitude of films on the book-sized, boxed videocassette), just as poetry in earlier generations had given way to the novel. To a certain degree, for many, television has supplanted live theatre as a source of comedy, drama, and musical productions. In fact, radio, television, and home stereo equipment have solidified the popularity of recorded music and sharpened the standards of judgment for electronic or fusion music as an art form.

Still, in order to accept and to appreciate fully the rewards offered by all forms of cultural and artistic endeavors, new or old, in order to realize comprehensibly their temporal or enduring value to society, in order to evaluate fairly their lasting contributions to our overall attitudes towards ourselves and the world around us, and in order to add completely their cumulative lessons to our collective knowledge, one challenge must continue to be pursued until that elusive goal is met: to produce a society of educated minds. Although at times it may seem that contemporary culture has removed many of the previously prescribed intellectual demands from its citizens, nothing could be farther from the truth.

On the contrary, the deceptive simplicity and assumed passivity often associated with spectators of such forms of art as film and television, or listeners of recorded music, belie the facts. The truth is that now is not a time to become lazy about learning. Certainly, one can easily be passively entertained and accept the various forms of popular culture or contemporary art without filtering or challenging what is absorbed; however, as with all other arts of the past, knowledge and effort are required for active patrons of these new additions to arts and cultural activities to become participants in the experience, to surpass the surface realm of entertainment and enter the deeper region of enrichment.

A Monet painting may hang on a museum wall, may be viewed and, with good reason, may be agreeably received for its apparent beauty by any initiate to the world of art, yet an individual with an expertise in art technique and art history may be more likely to be truly enriched by the same experience. A sonnet by Shakespeare may sound smooth to someone's ear and, if he's fortunate, create a few lush images in his mind's eye; however, without an educated sense of the history of the sonnet form, sixteenth century language, and Elizabethan manners, a major portion of the poem's meaning may be lost on the reader.

Similarly, an appreciation of the grace displayed by Michael Jordan or Wayne Gretzky is only enhanced by an awareness of their achievements, of the history of their sports, and of the limitations of the average human's body—perhaps by an ability to make an intelligent association of these athletes' motions with those demonstrated by dancers and figure skaters, or even represented in classical sketches of artists' models; the amusement offered by a Charlie Chaplin short or a television episode of M*A*S*H provides only a minimum of enjoyment without an understanding of the classical uses of comedy as critical commentary or a proper comprehension of the social conditions and political history at the appropriate time of the works' appearance; and the enjoyment provided by Miles Davis or Charlie Parker.
recordings is readily transformed to awe when one discerns the imaginative intricacy and technical innovation of their musical movements and compares their artistic accomplishments with other classical forms. Indeed, to apprehend fully the art of film as practiced by a director with the critical stature of Woody Allen, one must have enough background information to distinguish effects created by the proper uses of design, architecture, painting, and music, or recognize allusions to movements, moments, and figures in history, drama, comedy, and fiction (in Allen's case, particularly French and Russian literature).

Therefore, a true respect for film as well as for all other current art and culture demands that we all obtain not only a higher level of knowledge about the many facets of our contemporary world, but also at least a working knowledge of those cultures and art forms which preceded the popular ones today. The recent call across the nation for cultural literacy is necessary and timely, not just to help individuals identify items of interest and importance from the past, but also to assist in the probabilities that we might be entertained and enriched by those items which interest and influence us in the present. After all, as T.S. Eliot pointed out in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" more than sixty years ago, one must acquire a historical sense which "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence."

If as a society our answers to the question "Why is life worth living?" continue to consist of lists filled with various figures and objects from the worlds of art and culture, and a number of our hopes for happiness and contentment are somehow tied to an extraction of the most entertainment and enrichment from these worlds during our lifetime, then the only roadblock we might confront would appear to be a dark lack of learning, a need for more knowledge. This ignorance is an obstacle all can and should endeavor to overcome not only as temporary scholars in the university community, but also as life-long students of the world community always actively in search of a liberal, and liberating, education.

It seems fitting to close with one more moment from a popular film. In a scene from The Way We Were (1973), Robert Redford, as the well-off WASP writer Hubbell Gardiner, is drifting in a sailboat on a calm bay with his best friend. Whenever together the two continually play another form of name game as they attempt to list the best of everything in life. Perhaps everyone ought to test himself or herself by playing this game every once in a while: try to name the best modern novel, the best jazz album, the best Impressionist painting, the best ballet, the best American playwright, the best Hitchcock film, the best fielding second-baseman, and so on.

All will soon discover that there are only two problems with this game. First, it is impossible to know the best of anything unless, as well, one has studied all the rest. Second, as every response is subjective, inevitably there will never be a definitive correct answer. Therefore, the game never stops: it is a lifetime adventure, and that is exactly its charm. You see, it's not supposed to end; instead, it is supposed to provide a life-long source of entertainment and enrichment—just as the ever-constant pursuit for a liberal education, the investigation of art and culture, should be a lifetime adventure, a life-long source of entertainment and enrichment guaranteeing a life worth living.

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**A Sense of Grace**

Our back yard no longer quieted by snow,
Birds begin to scour the earth in morning haze;
And Father, who's kept to the window
In his odd kind of wake for you,
Says this year he'll need to trim the peach—
Your favorite because it sprang from seeds
The boys and I as children left lying.  
Of course, he's scarcely touched a green thing
Since your gathering of fruit was stopped,
Only now and then rapping the window pane at wrens.
"She knew all their names,"
Thinks aloud that he should buy a book to learn them.
I can't believe he'll find your patience
For matching bony heads with beaks and claws,
But by an unnamed wonder
He's brushing the feeder clean and crumbling bread—
This man who lately tempered his watch
Just to harry birds away—
With something of your startling grace.

**Lucy Shawgo**
Relativities

Dot Nuechterlein

It was about the longest train I had ever watched pass by as I waited at the crossing. Yet, just as the gates lifted, my dashboard clock showed a mere three minutes had expired. In every other part of my life, I thought, three minutes is barely an eye blink; but three minutes at a railroad crossing—or thirty seconds at a stoplight—seems eternal.

You’ve noticed this, too, haven’t you, how differently identical experiences are perceived, depending on the circumstances. It’s called the principle of relativity: the fact that the value or quality or definition of one entity is determined by another. (Please don’t confuse this with the Theory of Relativity, which is so far beyond me I can’t tell if it’s related or not, even though my dictionary lists them together.)

The relativity of time can be a function of age. Remember childhood, when the weeks before Christmas, or summer vacation, or your birthday took forever? Today the month from Thanksgiving to Christmas is gone before I’ve adjusted to summer being over, and birthdays flash by like lightning.

The value of money is certainly relative. Children think a nickel is worth more than a dime because it is larger; callow youth may go through spending money with abandon until they have the responsibility for budgeting what they earn themselves; as times change and prices rise, adults talk about the good old days, when the same piece of green paper purchased twice as much.

Then there’s the matter of taste. Some children’s food dislikes may be related to “immaturity of the taste buds,” as one parenting book puts it; but mothers know that many dining table hassles are simply power struggles. A kid who devours peanut butter one week and turns purple at the sight of it the next has figured out how to test the relativity of authority and independence.

Taste is also sociocultural. Many a sweet young thing, who never could stand the taste of beer offered by Daddy at the supper table, decides when she encounters her first frat party that maybe the stuff isn’t so bad, after all. The tourist who’s heard lurid tales of the ingredients in some ethnic dishes might suddenly not feel hungry when there’s nothing recognizable on the menu—especially if his nose notices cooking odors different from those in Mom’s kitchen.

There is also the other sort of “taste,” that prefaced with words like “good” or “bad.” What could be more relative—to heritage, upbringing, economic situation, peer pressure—than our preferences in music, art, literature, manners, and so on. In American culture such choices are not universally shared, or admired.

When my children were young and impressionable I made sure they were exposed to what I considered some of the finer things in life. From an early age they were dragged—and I use that word literally—to concerts, museums, and ceremonial events. They hated every minute of it and freely offered their opinions on the sadism of any mother who would make her children suffer so. The operative word was “boring.”

Today, to my astonishment and delight, all three choose to visit galleries and attend recitals, speaking knowledgeably about what they see and hear. I offer this example only to give encouragement to other parents who might despair over their own similar attempts: sometimes kids really do grow up to enjoy Bach and broccoli.

One of the greatest relativities on campuses is the value placed on the letter “C.” I keep running into students who claim they’ve never seen one academically in all their born days, and who are sure they will expire forthwith if one shows up on anything bearing their name. I understand in some schools the “Gentleman’s C” is considered honorable and in good taste, but hereabouts, unfortunately, people can’t imagine what they could possibly have done to deserve such a thing. When asked what grade they think they should have gotten, the answer is invariably “A-”; they will admit their assignment might not be perfect, but “I worked so hard, and . . .” (and then this phrase is thrown in to impress the teacher no end) “. . . and I learned so much from it.”

Finally, there is moral relativism, the idea that what we consider to be true, ethical, or important depends on our training, our culture, or our point of view. I happen to believe there are very few eternal verities. “Thou shalt not kill” is put aside if we believe a war to be just, or a punishment to be necessary; “You look wonderful” can be the truth or a lie, depending on what our eyes see and our hearts feel.

I could use another three minutes at a train crossing to think about this some more.
Leadership
And Consensus

Alan F. Harre

Ralph Waldo Emerson has been quoted as having written "The institution is the lengthened shadow of one person." Many institutions of higher education exist today because of the leadership provided by presidents during crucial times in the histories of those institutions. Therefore, at least at the anecdotal level of investigation, Emerson's observation appears to have some validity in the sagas of specific colleges and universities.

Emerson's observation is instructive as individuals attempt to evaluate one of the themes James L. Fisher identifies in his book, *Power of the Presidency*, published in 1984. According to Fisher, a significant cause for what ails higher education in the 1980s is that college and university presidents are frequently counseled, "that students, faculty, trustees, politicians and the public will no longer support strong leadership." The thesis which Fisher argues is that strong presidents are exactly the type of leaders needed if the current malaise in higher education is going to be overcome.

According to Fisher, strong presidents are able to use effectively "coercive," "reward," "legitimate," "expert" and "charismatic" power. Although there is much of value in Fisher's presentation, I understand "strong leadership" in a different way than does Fisher.

It seems to me that truly excellent leaders of institutions of higher education must be gifted teachers themselves. One of the critiques of the modern higher education enterprise is that current leaders in higher education do not consciously and deliberately prepare younger individuals to assume leadership positions within the academia. The most effective leaders in higher education are individuals who have within themselves the abilities to mentor others to enable them to assume leadership roles and responsibilities.

Effective leaders are individuals who can confront and live with ambiguity. Most issues in the day-to-day operations of a college or university cannot be resolved by saying one available option is right and all other proposed solutions are wrong. Complexity, varying nuances of relative importance, imprecise paradigms, inadequate data and the mixed motives and messages of a host of players are all factors which contribute to that ambiguity. Good leaders recognize all these conditions as givens, refuse to be paralyzed by the imprecision involved, and lead their institutions to ever greater excellence in spite of the milieu in which they find themselves.

Effective leaders are able to manage ambiguity because they are good listeners. Good listeners are people whose behavior shows they have become convinced that they learn more by listening than by talking. They know that there are two or more stories or vantage points concerning almost every subject of importance in the life of a university. The ability to listen helps to make certain that as much information as possible surfaces to inform the decisions which need to be made.

Because of the diversity among the academic disciplines, varying philosophies of education, numerous pedagogical styles and the highly individualized values and life experiences of faculty, staff and students, effective leaders of academic institutions must be able to develop consensus concerning significant issues in the lives of the institutions they lead. By consensus I do not mean uniformity or unanimity. Neither of these conditions would be helpful or even possible to attain. But consistency must be developed which enables the majority of campus constituencies to agree about the core values of the constitution in question. Consensus formation is a demonstration of leadership skills. Consensus formation is not an abdication of leadership responsibilities nor is consensus simply "flowing with the stream." Rather as Dwight Eisenhower once said, "Leadership is an act of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

Consensus building is assisted by leaders possessing all the qualities highlighted earlier, but consensus building is maximized when leaders are able to form and direct that consensus to address long-term concerns and issues. Most authors call this quality of leadership "vision." True visionaries see beyond what most others have already perceived. They are creative in that they are able to observe the same trends, analyze the same data, read the same journals and professional magazines; in addition, they are able, in a highly intuitive manner, to identify trends in these resources; to "catch glimpses" of potential or alternative futures not seen by others.

Being the president of an academic institution is an awesome responsibility, for the ramifications of the effectiveness of an academic leader impact upon thousands and thousands of people. Academic leadership is a responsibility to be assumed humbly, exercised responsibly and prized for the opportunities it provides to serve God and one's fellow human beings.