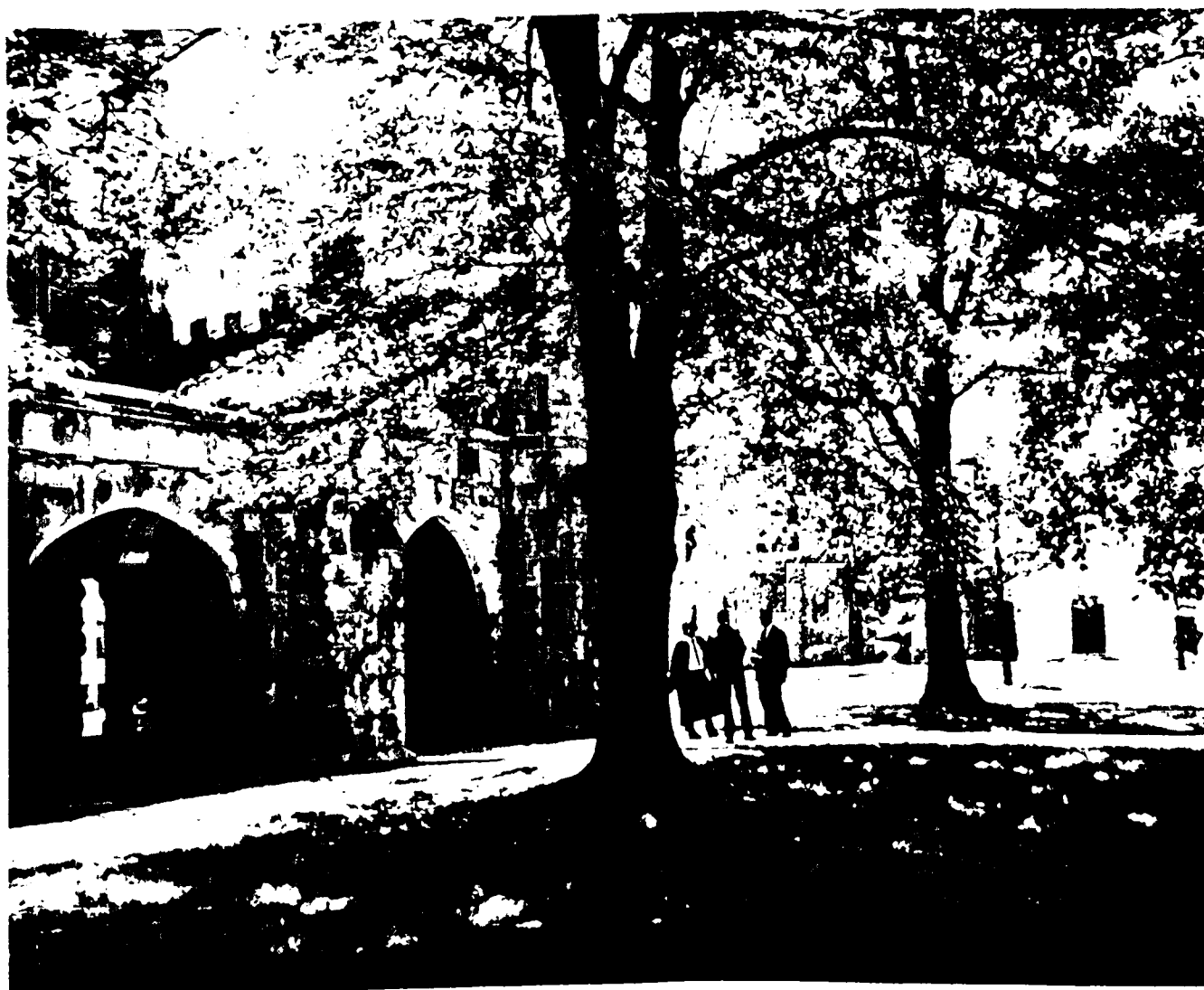


THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

Journal of Arts and Sciences

Vol. 1 No. 1

Spring 1984



With this issue we introduce The University of the South Journal of Arts and Sciences. This journal was conceived to provide an outlet and an audience for serious written work from the whole college. There seemed to be a need for an instrument to propagate and inspire work of an academic nature.

We hope that this journal and this first issue will prompt deliberation of topics from various viewpoints. The College's diversity of disciplines is a valuable resource in this respect; and although there is diversity here, we agree on the fundamental unity of the liberal arts education. It thus seems appropriate that the first issue be devoted to the liberal arts.

We hope that consideration of opinions from differing backgrounds might provide a release from individuality. After all, that is what a liberal arts education is all about. "Liberal" means free; and the purpose of a liberal education, which might otherwise seem disjointed and amateurish, is to free individuals from their narrow self-centered perspectives by exposing them to numerous disciplines. A liberal education frees men from the worst slavery, the slavery of the self. This journal hopes to contribute to this process in some small way.

THE EDITORS



EDITORS

Clanton C. Shipp - Managing Editor
Polly B. Law - Assistant Editor
J. Carlton Sims - Production Manager
John Sims Baker
Liza Field
Richard W. Westling

CONTENTS

ESSAYS

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and the Pursuit of Secular Learning W. Brown Patterson..... 2
A Sign of the Times Liza Field..... 5
Ecce Quam Bonum: Viewing Student Goals Janice Jaffe..... 6
The Educational Experience Robert Crewdson..... 8
Undergraduate Research at Sewanee Trey Shipp..... 9
The Grand Vision: The University of the South in the Ante-bellum Period Richard W. Westling..... 10
Big Mouth Alan Cheuse..... 12

MANUSCRIPTS

THE JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES publishes papers, essays, book reviews, and artwork from anyone of The University of the South community. Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced throughout. Footnotes should be limited in number and incorporated into the text when possible. The author's name should appear only on an attached cover-sheet to guarantee anonymity of the author while reviewing.

Receipt of manuscripts is acknowledged by a post card. We will try to reach a decision on each article within one month, probably sooner.

Prospective contributors are encouraged to ask the editors for more details about the preparation of manuscripts.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Publication of THE JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES depends on tax-deductable contributions from sponsors. Sponsors who donate \$10 or more in money or equipment will receive a year long subscription. Sponsors who donate \$100 or more will receive a life-time subscription.

Manuscripts and correspondence should be sent to:

The Journal of Arts and Sciences
SPO
The University of the South
Sewanee, Tennessee 37375

BOOK REVIEWS

Allen Wier, Things About to Disappear Review by Tom McConnel..... 16
Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting Review by Thomas Lakeman..... 16

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and the Pursuit of Secular Learning

By W. Brown Patterson

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, the earliest of the great Elizabethan tragedies, was in many ways a revolutionary play, though the materials Marlowe used were traditional. His major source, The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus (1592), was a translation of a German account of a certain Johann Faust who lived in Germany in the early sixteenth century. Faust was already, by Marlowe's time, a legendary figure whose impressive learning had earned him a reputation for magical powers. Around his memory there clustered the exploits of magicians in the Renaissance, the Middle Ages, and even antiquity. The sixteenth century, a theological age if there ever was one, saw in his career a struggle between the forces of good and evil, light and darkness. (1)

Marlowe no doubt saw in the legend a reflection of tensions within the culture of his time and within himself. Though less is known of Marlowe's life than one would like, we know that he had received an excellent education as a scholar both at King's School, Canterbury, and at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he received his B.A. in 1584 and his M.A. in 1587. He probably wrote Doctor Faustus five or six years after graduation. Well-versed in Renaissance learning, he had a reputation as a free-thinker in matters of religion and was a tempestuous youth. As early as 1587 he was employed by the government in a mission abroad, possibly on an intelligence matter. In 1589 he was imprisoned for a brief time after a street fight in London in the course of which a man was killed. In 1593 he was accused before the Queen's Privy Council of speaking blasphemously and atheistically. Not long after these charges were levied, Marlowe was stabbed to death during an argument in a tavern on the outskirts of London. He was twenty-nine. (2) The epilogue of Doctor Faustus could have been his epitaph:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight, / And burhed is Apollo's laurel bough... (Epilogue, lines 1-2)

The problem that was of deep concern to Faustus in Marlowe's play, as it must have been to Marlowe and to many of his contemporaries, was that of secular knowledge. What is the right use of knowledge of the saeculum, the age or world, as distinct from knowledge of a religious kind? The problem is very much that of the modern world and is probably more acute in the twentieth century than ever before. By Marlowe's time, the problem of secular knowledge had already been considered by some of the most significant thinkers of the Renaissance era. The range of these approaches may be illustrated with three examples.

Francesco Petrarch, who lived in fourteenth century Italy just when the so-called "revival of learning" was beginning, was himself a collector of manuscripts, including a copy of a Platonic dialogue in Greek, a language which he regretted not be able to read. He revered Plato, nevertheless. He was also instrumental in focusing attention on Cicero as a model for Latin style and as an exponent of moral philosophy. In addition he was a keen observer of nature, as his account of his Ascent of Mount Ventoux, a mountain in southern France, indicates. Petrarch was a devout Christian and much of his career can be seen as an attempt to enrich the Christian culture of his time with ideas and literary forms from antiquity. Yet he was never quite able, as E. Harris Harbison has pointed out, to "bring his scholarly activity and his Christian faith into any organic relationship with each other." (3) He was acutely aware that ancient writers whom he revered were in fact pagans -- a problem which he discussed in his imagination with St. Augustine in a book called the Secretum. When Petrarch had reached the summit of Mount Ventoux, according to his account in 1336, he opened the copy of Augustine's

Confessions which he customarily carried with him, and immediately saw this passage: "And men go to admire the high mountains, the vast floods of the sea, the huge streams of the rivers, the circumference of the ocean, and the revolutions of the stars -- and desert themselves." At once, he said, he closed the book angry with himself that he "still admired earthly things." (4)

Erasmus of Rotterdam lived in the early part of the sixteenth century, by which time progress in the recovery of classical culture had been spectacular. Erasmus himself knew Greek, having struggled mightily without teachers in northern Europe and then having joined a group of scholars in Italy from whom he received the help he needed. Perhaps his greatest single achievement was the Greek edition of the New Testament with his own Latin translation, which was published in 1516. But Erasmus was also one of the most important purveyors of secular learning to the Europe of his day through such books as the Adages, which contained classical quotations and his own extended comments. His attitude towards the great classical writers is well expressed in a colloquy entitled The Godly Feast, which purports to be a conversation during and after a dinner attended by educated and serious-minded Christian laymen. One of them expresses the view that perhaps the ancients were divinely inspired: "I sometimes run across ancient sayings or pagan writings -- even the poets' -- so purely and reverently expressed, and so inspired, that I can't help believing their authors' hearts were moved by some divine power. And perhaps the spirit of Christ is more widespread than we understand, and the company of saints includes many not in our calendar." (5) Another speaker, following up on this suggestion, says, after hearing a passage from Plato's Phaedo: "When I read such things of such men, I can hardly help exclaiming, Saint Socrates, pray for us!" (6) Still another says, "There are many times when I do not hesitate to hope confidently that the souls of Vergil and Horace are sanctified." (7)

If Petrarch hesitated to accept the secular learning he was helping to foster, and Erasmus embraced it by declaring it to be at least quasi-Christian, a distinctly different position was developed in the middle of the sixteenth century

(1) Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, ed. John D. Jump (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. xxiv-xxvi, xl-xlvii. Quotations in this paper are from this ("The Revels Plays") edition. For a selection of critical essays dealing with the play from the perspective of the present century, see Willard Farnham, Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Doctor Faustus (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

(2) J.B. Steane, Marlowe: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 3-26; Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, ed. Jump, pp. xix-xxvi.

(3) E. Harris Harbison, The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 43.

(4) The Renaissance Philosophy of Man, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 44.

(5) The Colloquies of Erasmus, ed. Craig E. Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 65.

(6) Erasmus, Colloquies, p. 68.

(7) Erasmus, Colloquies, p. 68.

pleasant prospect! If hell is, as Mephostophilis describes it, a state of being apart from "the eternal joys of heaven," then it seems something one could endure. Faustus has the temerity to counsel Mephostophilis:

Learn thou of Faustus
manly fortitude/ And scorn
those joys thou never
shalt possess. (III,
87-88)

The body of the play is something of a let-down after the opening provided by the first three scenes. It is not that the scenes in the middle lack dramatic interest and significance. (13) They are rich in comedy, serious discussion, and poetry. Faustus lives voluptuously, plays pranks on the Pope, learns many of the secrets of astronomy, and even succeeds in kissing that Helen — or a reasonable facsimile — whose face had

...launch'd a thousand
ships/ And burnt the topless
towers of Ilium. (XVIII,
99-100)

But the feats which he performs never seem quite up to his own forecast after he had come to an agreement with Mephostophilis:

By him I'll be great
emperor of the world,/ And make
a bridge thorough the moving
air/ To pass the ocean with a
band of men;/ I'll join the
hills that bind the Afric
shore/ And make that country
continent to Spain,/ And both
contributory to my crown. (III,
106-111)

Scenes VI and VII do reveal, however, that amidst a growing feeling of doubt over the course he has chosen and despair over the possibility of his ever being able to repent or find salvation— an inner state of mind expressed by the admonitions of the Good and Bad angels (14)—Faustus's zest for learning remains strong.

Come Mephostophilis, let
us dispute again,/ And reason
of divine astrology./ Speak,
are there many spheres above
the moon?/ Are all celestial
bodies but one globe/ As is the
substance of the centric
earth?/ ... have they all/ One
motion, but situ et tempore?/

(13) For a defense of the play as having "a sufficient middle," see Cleanth Brooks, "The Unity of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," in his *A Shaping Joy: Studies in the Writer's Craft* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1971), pp. 367-380.

(14) The conflicts within Faustus's heart and mind over the question of salvation are skillfully treated in Lily B. Campbell, "Doctor Faustus: A Case of Conscience," *PMLA*, LXXVI, 2 (March 1952), 219-239.

... is there not coelum igneum?
et crystallinum? (VI, 33-37,
44-45, 62)

Despite his insistent questions, Faustus does not find out much he had not known before, though he has a rare opportunity for observation:

Where, sitting in a
chariot burning bright/
Drawn by the strength of
yoked dragons' necks,/ He
views the clouds, the
planets, and the stars,/ The
tropics, zones, and
quarters of the sky,/ From
the bright circle of
the horned moon/ Even to
the height of primum
mobile. (VII, 5-10)

The closing scene of the play takes place on the night in which Lucifer is to claim Faustus's soul. It begins with an exchange between Faustus and several of his scholarly friends. As their conversation reveals, Faustus's fear of damnation is intense, yet he cannot bring himself to ask for God's pardon or even to weep. All he can manage is to ask for his friends' prayers. At this extreme hour, he regrets that he had ever embarked upon a career as a scholar: "O, would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book!" (XIX, 45-46) From the mouth of Faustus, this is an utterly convincing expression of despair. In the scene which follows, gripping in its intensity as the clock strikes half past eleven and then twelve, Faustus faces the inevitability of his capture by the forces of hell. His last words are:

I'll burn my books! - Ah,
Mephostophilis! (XIX,
190)

The emphasis falls heavily on the word burn. The line is, of course ironic. If he had burned his books early in his career at Wittenberg, he would not have to suffer fiery torments now. The time has passed for giving up the search for knowledge. All that can be done is to give himself up to eternal fire. Marlowe's audience, I suspect could feel those flames. Even today, when the play is performed, they seem perilously close. What makes this last line doubly ironic is that in a metaphorical sense Faustus had long before burned all his books except for those in necromancy. In discarding the traditional subjects of the curriculum and in launching out upon this investigation, he had abandoned those studies which could have helped him frame a world-view, a philosophy, a religion in which knowledge of the natural world could have found an appropriate place. Instead he sought knowledge for personal fulfillment alone; he sought power without responsibility; he looked for control over a world which was not ultimately his. He parted company with the God who was the source of all, that is and

through whom Faustus's own divided self could be restored. The uses to which Faustus had put the knowledge he had given everything to obtain were not only unworthy of him but faintly ludicrous. (15)

Doctor Faustus has recently been described as "the last avowedly religious drama in Renaissance England." (16) The play owes a great deal to the moral interludes of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It is perhaps strange that such a form was chosen by a playwright of apparently heterodox religious views. What seems clear is that Marlowe, who knew the powerful attractions of material success, learning, and new ideas, also knew something of the dark night of the soul and the human need for divine love and acceptance. The protagonist of the play is one who, perhaps like Marlowe, willfully, foolishly, and tragically sought knowledge and power without limitations. The ending of the play is religiously orthodox within the conventions of the sixteenth century and provocative within the conventions of this century. As modern human beings we are apt to believe that the pursuit of knowledge needs no justification. But we are now coming to see that all knowledge carries responsibilities. The use we make of it can be sinful in the fullest theological sense and can have tragic, even catastrophic, consequences. Faustus's admonition to himself might well be made to us:

Settle thy studies, Faustus,
and begin/ To sound the depth
of that thou wilt profess. (I,
1-2)

We must pick up those books Faustus proceeded to discard, draw together the threads of knowledge, and relate the moral insights of poets, philosophers, lawyers, physicians, theologians, and scientists to the uses to be made of secular learning. The "Faustian" age, as Oswald Spengler called it, is, perhaps fortunately, not yet over. (17)

(15) As Robert Ornstein points out in his "Marlowe and God: The Tragic Theology of *Dr. Faustus*," *PMLA*, LXXVIII, 5 (October 1963), 1378-1375, the pathos of the play results in part from the stature of the central character. Marlowe's Faustus, he argues, is guilty of a monumental pride which leads him to play the role of an antichrist and ultimately to seek self-annihilation. Susan Snyder also sees heroic but demonic qualities in Faustus, whom she treats as a kind of anti-saint, in her "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* as an Inverted Saint's Life," *Studies in Philology*, LXXIII, 4 (July 1966), 365-377.

(16) John W. King, *English Reformation Literature: the Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 273.

(17) Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1947), Vol. I, p. 428; Vol. II, p. 109.

A Sign of the Times

By Liza Field

Two Sewanee students recently tried to burn down a billboard advertising their school to the passing highway motorists. The rather odd act of vandalism stirred up great commotion within the university since both students were volunteer firemen and leaders in the student government. Yet the burning act caused far less stir than the new awareness of the highway sign itself. After all, the idea of the university advertising itself on a billboard creates a convenient symbol for the latest happenings in the world of the liberal arts.

Lately, certain schools have made a great effort toward synthesizing the liberal arts with the commercial world by somehow merging their two goals -- knowledge and money. Probably in an attempt to attract the new money-oriented generation, Linda Salamon, dean at Washington in St. Louis, declares that corporations are snatching up the liberal arts graduate because he has acquired a "set of abilities" much in demand in the business world: "critical thinking, the ability to manipulate data, grasp an argument, and decide whether you're being given good information."

If Salamon is right, then, and the liberal arts can serve as a stepping stone toward the mainstream of corporations and high incomes, perhaps all universities belong on the billboards. It would certainly be the dawning of a new age, for the liberal arts tradition has always been somewhat distinct from the commercial world. The liberal arts, in fact, have rarely been regarded as real in terms of the commercial world, in which everything exists according to its monetary worth. Newman admitted as much a hundred years ago:

Good means one thing, and 'useful' means another... this is what some great men are slow to allow. They argue as if everything, as well as every person, had its price, . . . expecting education to be useful. They naturally go on to ask what there is to show for the expense of a University, if it does not at once make this man a lawyer, that an engineer, and that a surgeon.

A few years ago, the outpouring of education articles pointed out the impracticality of a liberal arts education with great glee, as if they had discovered something new. They cited the numbers of liberal arts graduates whose elegant knowledge brought them less income than a truck driver or gas station attendant, or those who were truck drivers or gas station attendants. Some articles even predicted that people would soon stop getting liberal arts degrees altogether, as soon as they all got the word that the degree was not practical.

Since money is not and never was the goal of a liberal arts education, the assumption of the articles, that students went to liberal arts schools expecting to land high-paying jobs after graduation, seems absurd.

Yet most students today expect just that, according to even more articles on the subject. Two years ago, Newsweek interviewed students on various college campuses across the country, asking them what their post-graduation goals were and what they wanted to do in life. Most said "anything," or "money" -- as one girl put it, "To make a large enough income to buy what I want." The writer didn't ask her what it was she wanted to buy, but he noted how different he thought this attitude was from that of the liberal arts students in his own generation in the 60's. Then, he said, students wanted to do a certain thing rather than make a certain amount.

What this writer didn't seem to understand was that "doing your own thing" went out with peace, love, happiness, and ecology. We students of the 80's, having grown up during the post-60's swing towards conservatism, tend to regard such abstract idealism as part of a druggy, degenerate dreamworld. We were too young to participate in the do-your-own-thing era and young enough to echo our parents' disapproval of it. Our understanding of the long-haired hippies that poked flowers in gun barrels usually came from TV comedies, where they painted army vehicles pink and yellow and called each other Moondog and Sunshine.

Students of the 80's saw the abstract ideals of the earlier generation come and go without leaving a concrete monument or changing the economy. We saw, also, a decade of laid-off workers, from the safety of the living room, and heard our parents' Depression stories about eating lots of potatoes and never having heat in the winter. And we were advised by well-meaning teachers, who were having to strike for more pay, not to go into such impractical occupations as teaching.

Security, comfort, and making a living seemed so much the focus of the adult world that living itself took on secondary importance. No wonder the students of the 80's think money the goal of education and the purpose of life. "Things" are real, and since money buys them, it buys reality and security -- things you can keep. The last generation's goals like peace, love, and happiness were merely ideas that never amounted to anything solid or monetary; they only

existed in the mind -- reason enough to suspect their validity, for today words like "imagination" or "mental" immediately connote insanity.

Yet the counter-60's movement is not the only cause of the modern student's money-obsession. Andrew Hacker, a political science professor at Queens College, believes that the steady increase in possessions and luxuries of the average American family has caused the children of the past decade to believe those luxuries necessary for human existence. Today, six times as many households have dishwashers, clothes driers, and air conditioning as those of a decade ago, says Hacker, and children themselves require "more elaborate outfitting than ever in the past, from designer jeans to personal computers."

Having grown up either accustomed to stereo equipment, calculators, and blowdriers or, learning to desire the same, it is no wonder that the first generation of luxury-children is obsessed with how much income they will bring in immediately upon graduating, rather than what they will do in itself. "More people worked at what they liked in the good old days," writes Hacker, "and still brought in the bread. But today we expect a lot more than that. Men and women desire comforts and enjoyments the earlier generations never heard of."

Hacker's comment on what people want and expect from life brings to mind a reflection on the same subject written a century ago by John Ruskin. Referring to the atmosphere of unrest and the attempt of the English government to stifle it by doling out bread, Ruskin writes:

It is not that men are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure.

One wonders if the situation has changed any today, or if it has not worsened. If the recent generation of college students regard money as the goal of education and their ultimate goal in life, they are no better off than Ruskin's factory workers, "looking to wealth as the only means of pleasure." What that factory worker and the modern student seem to share is an interpretation of "work" as an unpleasant exchange for the good things in life. Ruskin's suggestion that the good things come ultimately from the work, rather than the bread, goes over like a wet rag in our comfort-culture.

Buying happiness, instead of doing it, is not a new idea. Philosophers have been attacking it over the centuries, insisting that human life should be more of a giving-out action than one of taking in; that human reason could not be satisfied with constant feeding and taking, but finds fulfillment in projecting outward. When Christ

said, 2000 years ago, "It is better to give than to receive," one suspects that he meant giving was better for humans now, not at some vague point in one's afterlife. Even then the idea was not a new one; Aristotle had said, three centuries earlier, that happiness consisted of "virtuous activities."

Neither Christ's nor Aristotle's statements carry much charm or appeal in the billboard world, however, to "want more." Yet, by "virtuous," Aristotle means that activities should be a movement out from the self, done for a good other than one's own appetite.

The idea obviously contradicts the billboard world, which tells us over and over that we are missing out on something, that to enjoy life, we need to buy anything from a cigarette

to a dream vacation and then lie back and enjoy ourselves, soaking in as much pleasure as possible.

With the idea that happiness is something to buy and absorb pounded into the mind day after day, it is remarkable that the liberal arts have survived as long as they have. For that tradition bases itself on Aristotle's idea that the good life must be generated rather than bought. The idea is unpleasant not only because it means that one cannot own happiness, but because, in a world where one only works for pay, Aristotle suggests we work because we like it, on Saturday even, or the day after exams, or after retirement. Likewise, he suggest that we concentrate on giving in a world where success is measured by how much one can accumulate.

Perhaps, then, this recent movement to synthesize the liberal arts with the make-more world of the billboards, and to somewhat modify Aristotle's bothersome suggestions, is less an attempt to attract students to certain universities than an attempt to keep the tradition from dying altogether. Yet, one wonders, how do you compromise between a world which claims knowledge for its goal and one which claims money. One or the other will have to change, and I suspect it won't be the commercial world. Although it hasn't been around as long as the liberal arts, it has certainly embedded itself more firmly in every facet of modern society. As the recent sign-burning incident proves, you can destroy one billboard, but another will grow immediately in its place.

Ecce Quam Bonum:

VIEWING STUDENT GOALS

By Janice Jaffe

In an attempt to guide my first-year language students in the right direction, I asked them their thoughts on the purpose of studying foreign languages. The discussion turned to the purpose of education in general. As a former student I had experienced the richness and value of a liberal arts education and had developed my own convictions on the subject. Later, being a teaching assistant and doing graduate work at the University of Wisconsin I witnessed a career-oriented approach to education. There, a large number of students pursue a narrow curriculum which emphasizes skills required to enter the job market. Yet, even that exposure did not prepare me for the responses of some of my students. I was stunned when, in all candor, a student suggested that the purpose of education was "to make money," particularly since no one rose up to challenge the notion. I was further shocked when a bright-eyed freshman claimed that my own views on education were "idealistic." I would never deny that three years at Sewanee as an undergraduate, and many months of study of Don Quijote brought out some romantic ideals in me, but some of my students seemed to be unfortunate victims of too harsh realism at too young an age.

The student's comment reflected a much more complex set of attitudes than I realized at the time, attitudes shared by many students at Sewanee and a great many more outside of Sewanee. I have since been pondering what I see as a radical shift in students' outlooks on education. I'm sure I can offer no better explanation for this change than the ones many educators have propounded about the relationship between business trends and academic curriculum. However, my thoughts have led me to wonder if it isn't time to look at the possible virtues of a shift backwards.

During my freshman year, when I stumbled between the links between the various courses I was studying, I responded with delight as the world began to fit together. The breadth of my experience at Sewanee, both in and outside of the classroom, constantly affirmed my decision to attend a liberal arts college. It seems that five or ten years ago a large majority of students enjoyed a similar experience. They were quite absorbed in their studies, in the depth and variety of knowledge they were acquiring, in the values it helped articulate for themselves, and in the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with stu-

dents and faculty alike. The success of the Student-Faculty Dialogue is a clear testament to the fact that that spirit has not been lost at Sewanee. Yet, the numbers in attendance at each dialogue attest as well to the dwindling of that spirit. While I know that this is the prevailing atmosphere at academic institutions across the nation, it makes it no less difficult to accept at my alma mater.

Many newspapers and magazines in the past few years have dedicated space to analyzing trends in education, particularly college choices and curriculum. Educators claim that college-age youth is responding to difficult economic conditions, the glut of professionals in the job market and the consequent scarcity of professional positions for anyone lacking a highly formalized background in one particular area. We have all seen the movement away from strictly liberal arts-oriented programs, and, particularly in state schools, towards programs in specific areas of engineering, journalism, business administration, international relations and computer science, all extremely valuable. There are hundreds of such programs which equip students to move directly from an undergraduate degree into a profes-

sional level job. Practicality and pragmatism enable these students to face an ever more difficult-to-enter job market. Meanwhile, a real quest for knowledge and understanding of the world we live in is often relegated to the shadows, as college becomes a mere stepping-stone along the way to supposed happiness promised by a successful career.

I detected something of that attitude in the student who asserted that the purpose of education was to make money. I sympathize with the concern it reflects, especially among students at large, public institutions. Yet I do not understand that attitude at Sewanee. Surely students who spend nearly \$10,000 a year for four years to obtain an undergraduate degree, which most will supplement with a more advanced degree before they actually enter the job market, cannot justify such an outlook. Can students who choose not to reap the most from Sewanee's liberal arts curriculum be rationalizing in some way?

I'm sure some will argue, and rightly, that the quality of education they receive here ultimately makes the cost practical. Anyone who hopes to excel in any profession needs the tools he or she can develop here, the ability to think and evaluate critically, and communicate clearly about a wide variety of topics. I agree wholeheartedly, but I fear that often, although students set out to acquire that sort of knowledge and expertise, they become side-tracked, expecting to learn by osmosis, and they graduate from Sewanee with the degree but without the education the university sought to provide them.

Students now seem to ignore the opportunity to absorb the great value of Sewanee's program and drift towards one of two polarities. At one extreme are students who focus attention on the sacred GPA almost to the detriment of actual learning, as if a certain GPA were, itself, the key ingredient for success after graduation. At the opposite end of the spectrum, certain students tend to view Sewanee as the last oasis in which to enjoy a sort of last-fling of childhood immaturity before facing the barren desert know as the "real world."

In either instance, to put it in consumer terms, many students may be so concerned about future income that they graduate without getting their "money's worth" from the principle virtues of Sewanee's liberal arts program. What is more relevant is that if students could, during some of their time here, abandon some of those practical concerns, and open themselves to seek the real gifts of learning, they might discover that a lucrative career was not of such utmost importance after all. I can't blame students for being affected by the climate of the society in which we live; but it seems important to acknowledge a problem, with an eye towards correcting it.

It seems that Sewanee offers some effective antidotes to the at-

titudes described above. For all those students who missed the introduction in the university catalogue in their haste to scan the requirements for graduation, notice these words from page five:

Sewanee offers a challenging and stimulating program in the liberal arts, studies which are the basis for an understanding of the world, society, and one's self.

It would seem helpful for students to inquire regularly of themselves, "Have I accepted the challenge and stimulation/ Can I articulate what I've learned of the world, society, and myself?" For others who feel pressured and worried by what they will face after commencement, another bit from the catalogue, page six:

"Sewanee's location removes the academic community from the problems and distractions of many urban areas? Is this place now somehow failing its students in that area? Here is one last jewel to ponder:

"The College of Arts and Sciences seeks to develop the intellect and character of its students in such a way as to prepare them for lives of service in a rapidly changing world." Perhaps some need to examine that statement and evaluate whether or not Sewanee is really the college of their choice.

Ironically, the students whose attitudes seem to coincide most closely with the precepts of the university and who, consequently, are the least victimized during their time here by the pressures to be successful in the future, are those whose financial aid is contingent upon maintaining a certain GPA. I can only conclude that the pressure and the value of those 10,000 dollars per year have been instilled in them to such a degree that they seek above all to ensure that they derive the greatest possible benefit from their studies at Sewanee. I wonder again if many students aren't using practicality and such concerns for the future as a justification for avoiding making education itself the highest priority.

Perhaps those launching a mad race through college -- only to continue on a mad course through some graduate program toward the finish line marking success -- should consider precisely what success means. Most of us are programmed in today's materialistic society to believe that once we have the job or career for which we have spent so much time, money, and energy preparing ourselves, we will automatically be happy. The focus is all too often on prestige, power, or material wealth. Happiness then becomes equated with possessing something outside of ourselves rather than striving, as "lives of service" suggest, to offer something of ourselves. The other risk involved in this race with its focus on the future clear if we reflect on the number of times we have said or have heard others say, "I'll be so happy when..." By con-

stantly setting our sights on some future goal which promises us fulfillment, there is a real danger of racing through most of our lives waiting to begin living. If the race doesn't end, life will never begin. Many students waiting for a diploma discover after graduating how shallow their lives were such potentially rich years. In Walker Percy's novel *The Second Coming*, able to possess everything he desired in life except happiness, begins to examine the vague feeling of emptiness and depression which afflicts him. He realizes he's been running a kind of race, and he reflects:

How did it happen that now for the first time in his life he could see everything so clearly? Something had given him leave to live in the present. Not once in his entire life had he allowed himself to come to rest in the quiet center of himself but had forever cast himself forward from some dark past he could not remember to a future which did not exist....Is it possible for people to miss their lives in the same way one misses a plane?

I don't suggest that we can't find happiness or fulfillment in a life in which we enjoy material comforts; however, if we emphasize those comforts too much, we may run a life-long race without ever living fully.

The wisdom offered by the Delphic Oracle is, "Know Thyself." The best use of our education sets us on this path. What is implied in these words is the need in our lives for constant questioning of ourselves and the world around us, of our desires and of imposed values, in an ultimate quest for what is true and good. The openness with which moral and ethical concerns are voiced and discussed at a Christian institution, it seems, offers Sewanee students a distinct advantage in that area. The church aids us in focusing our lives not on outward goods and upward mobility, but on inner truth and, consequently, right action for progress and the elevation of humanity.

Students who see an undergraduate education as a stepping-stone on the road to success run the risk of obtaining a mere degree, another possession, instead of gaining in knowledge and understanding.

I realize that we cannot completely ignore practical concerns or the necessity for financial security. Perhaps, though, we can move away from material progress as a key to fulfillment in life after college, and toward spiritual and mental progress both during and after college, as a key to improving the quality of life for ourselves and for others. This, ultimately, is the purpose of any education.

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

By Robert Crewdson

"The educational experience." Ah, that blissful description of four years of liberal arts education. What admissions officer has not gone to bed at night repeating that phrase over and over again, hoping perhaps that no one will ever ask him what it means. It is dutifully printed in the first paragraph of every college record and is touted by every school, even if their principal specialty is veterinary medicine. The liberal arts school, however, has adopted the phrase as its legitimate offspring.

Often I've wondered what the phrase meant, especially having gone through the "experience." Though some college catalogs seem to say so, the number of athletic squads or community organizations on a given campus is not the central ingredient of a solid liberal arts education, or education of any kind. In many ways, the approach is more important than the substance when it comes to liberal arts education. Many people in the educational profession today have never grasped that idea. That is why the phrase "educational experience" is really incorrect. It should read "education is an experience." True education is a relationship between the individual and the world around him, and the strength of his education can be measured only by the vitality of the relationship.

Occasionally I recall the wise words one National Park Service Superintendent told his new guides to the park's scenic wonders. "When viewing the Grand Canyon with the visitor," he cautioned, "don't explain to them how beautiful it is." What he understood was that education had little to do with the mere transmission of information to the student. Rather, the job of the interpreter (teacher) was to facilitate a learning experience between the student and the subject, or in broader terms, the world around him. Thus, information becomes not the object but the vehicle by which interest is stimulated in the student to gain a deeper understanding of the particular subject area. It is much more than teaching someone "how to think." It is making him want to think in the first place.

Perhaps it would be helpful to divide education into its external and internal aspects. The external nature of the educational experience consists of developing an educational climate or environment. The University of the South is a prime example of how this should be done on the liberal arts level. It involves the availability of a wide range of outlets for student participation, individual development and

leadership, including those of an academic, athletic, and social nature. It involves the provision of facilities and professional support for those facilities in all areas of educational endeavor. It includes the availability of free, open, and provocative discussions of a wide range of topics and issues, whether academic, moral, ethical, or political. Happily, this journal is another step in that direction.

Of course the most important aspect of the educational environment is the curriculum requirements and standards. The maintenance of a comprehensive and rigorous core curriculum is essential towards developing the many areas of knowledge within the individual student's learning experience. Because the problems people face in the real world cannot be divided into those strictly historical, political, religious, or philosophical, a familiarity and standard competence with many fields is imperative. This is the tried and true heart of the liberal arts education, and its breadth will act as a barometer for the cumulative value of that particular educational process.

The second, or internal, aspect of the educational mission involves, more than anything else, commitment and professional excellence. Commitment makes the external factors work and gives them significance for the student. Commitment is the driving force behind the development of the educational relationship between the student and his world.

One can question whether professors are really capable of generating this learning relationship. Graduate schools in the United States emphasize research. Practice with several classes while a Ph.D student does not necessarily make an effective teacher. Of course, one must deal with the fact that the various academic disciplines are professions as well as teaching jobs. But that raises another serious question. Is the professionalization of academic disciplines, so much a part of 20th century education, actually harmful to the educational mission? This, perhaps, is the most important question to be addressed in liberal arts institutions today. The discovery of knowledge is a vital part of education, and no one suggests that it be abandoned. Yet has this aspect become the focus of educators? Is it not a force pulling in the opposite direction of developing the student's potential, of spending time with him? Graduate schools produce researchers, not teachers. While the system developed

in this century could be beneficial by allowing people to do both, a careful ordering of priorities and emphasis is crucial. If the teaching position is used as a base for what could be called professional pursuits instead of the other way around, there is a problem; and it has to be met. The resolution of this question will have more to bear on the problem of commitment and professional excellence than any other reform currently spoken of in liberal arts circles.

On one level, the attempt at definition here has already highlighted the importance of liberal arts education in the world. One contribution of educated citizens to their society lies in guiding and controlling the tremendous ramifications of technological progress. A society of technicians, if unchecked by those with a broader awareness of the moral and ethical consequences of the new technological society, will run roughshod over the moral and ethical basis to any free and just society. Genetic engineering readily comes to mind as an area of progress which could cause irreparable damage to fundamental social values by replacing them with new ones over which society has no control. Nuclear weaponry is another obvious example. Liberal arts graduates understand society as a whole, from its historical and political roots to its fundamental philosophical and religious values. As such they provide the glue for a society undergoing rapid technological change.

If the educational system in the United States is to succeed, it will require a fundamental overhaul. But the goal has to be defined first, and to that end this essay is dedicated.

Robert L. Crewdson is a recent graduate of the University of the South and is presently working toward his M.A. in American History at The College of William and Mary.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AT SEWANEE

By Trey Shipp

While studying in Woods Lab recently, I overheard an admissions tour guide proudly tell a group of perspectives "our faculty don't spend all their time doing research like at the big state schools -- they concentrate on teaching".

The tour guide was correct to say Sewanee's faculty concentrate on teaching. But his assumption that research conflicts with teaching infers that research exists only for faculty laurels and overlooks that research can exist for the education of students as well. Student participation in research is not only appropriate for a liberal arts school, but it is also a very effective teaching tool. Undergraduate research is a process in which students learn by doing. It is research that not only expands the breadth of knowledge, but more importantly expands the breadth of the student.

Both scientists and non-scientists alike have recognized the value of research as an educational tool. The humanities, for instance, often require their students to investigate topics related to their fields. They recognize that the value of a student researching "The role of the Solicitor General before the Supreme Court from 1859-1860" comes not from the gain of factual information concerning the Solicitor General from 1859-1860, but from the skills one learns by completing such a project. This type of "hands on" experience is even more essential to the science major, since Science is the investigation of the unknown.

Unfortunately scientific research demands so much student and faculty time as well as a large amount of each science department's budget, that it is easy for a school to compromise on seeing that students get the necessary experience. But if we do not use research as a teaching tool, science teaching may become just a teaching of facts instead of "higher education".

AN ACTIVE FORM OF LEARNING

In the common methods of instruction, such as listening to lectures and reading textbook material, students simply have a passive role of absorbing material. But upon leaving college one must assume an active role of speaking and writing. Undergraduate research helps bridge the transition between passively absorbing and actively doing. A student involved in a research project starts with the passive role of collecting information and gradually has to use more and more skills until his role is an active one of presenting

results by speaking and writing. The usual tests and papers of a class are not as effective in helping students make this transition. When I take a test or write a paper, my mistakes don't remain in my mind long afterwards. My mistakes in research certainly do. You don't forget the times a bad calculation ruins a whole day's work or when the source you spend all day searching for to support your thesis turns out to directly refute it. I learn from these mistakes as one always does when the consequences are real.

The value of undergraduate research is that it teaches students how to learn. Besides, the role of a college education is not to produce learned individuals, but to produce individuals with the capacity to learn. Even the brightest student will forget four years of memorized facts. It is much better to teach the skills for self-education, for it is a more effective process which lasts a lifetime. In Mediaeval times the Bachelor of Arts degree was a certification of such skills. As Mortimer J. Adler points out in *How to Speak/How to Listen: "the B.A. degree was a certificate of initiation into the world of higher learning. It did not signify that those certified were learned, but only that they had become competent as learners by virtue of having acquired the skills of learning."* (pp. 7).

And not only does undergraduate research teach students to learn independently, it goes on to achieve what I consider the main purpose of a liberal arts institution -- to inspire a desire for learning. A technical school can substitute for any college that teaches only facts. A good college teaches the skills for learning while also providing the motivation for it. An education of merely facts ends with graduation and gradually degrades with time. A Liberal Arts education on the other hand should grow throughout life and never die.

FEW OPPORTUNITIES

A few students do participate in scientific research at Sewanee, often obtaining good results, while others choose to work at research institutions during the summer or during a semester. But on the whole, few science majors receive the opportunity to participate in all aspects of a scientific investigation. All students, though, should complete some type of research or independent study before leaving college. And if possible, a project that allows the student to follow it from the begin-

ning of information gathering to the presentation of results. A big problem, though, confronting students at Sewanee is finding an opportunity for research. Certainly the best solution is to work full time during a semester or summer with no other classes to worry about. But often students cannot afford to work in a low-paying research job. Also, because of the stringent degree requirements at Sewanee, few students can take a leave of absence. And if it is possible for a student to leave, he might not be inclined to do so. Let's face it, the afternoon lab class is not an exciting one. What could be inspiring about spending all afternoon inside, repeating an old experiment that has been repeated before, and knowing that when your through it will require a long write-up?

It is a shame that such too often this is the only contact science majors have with the laboratory for they are being cheated out of experiencing the excitement of discovery. Students need to learn that actual research results are not something you include in your lab report for a grade, they are answers to the unknown world. This has to be exciting to the scientist; this is exciting to anyone.

Sewanee needs several on-going research projects on which students could participate. Research is a creative exercise

and as such it rightfully belongs in the curriculum of a liberal arts school. Every science major should have the opportunity to participate in research as should every English major read literature. Sewanee's science program isn't lacking because we don't have a linear accelerator or don't teach that advanced course in neuropharmacology. At Sewanee, with the noble goal of teaching people the skills for life-time learning, students can learn the true essence of science -- its inherent creativity. Something that won't become outdated in five years.

The Grand Vision : The University of the South in the Ante-bellum Period

By Richard Westling

While recently studying the early changes in organization and curriculum at The University of the South for a course in intellectual history, my research raised more questions than I had anticipated. My first surprise came when I attempted to understand what Arthur Ben Chitty has called the "Utopian Air" which surrounded the founding of the University.⁽¹⁾ Chitty's characterization was by no means exaggerated; men like Polk, Otey, and Elliot envisioned an institution so great in size, quality, and endowment that it would be unequalled in the western hemisphere. The second discovery I made was the short time in which the project developed and how close it had come to being a reality when the nation was split by bloody civil war. The vision of The University of the South -- although weathered and aged by the long years of conflict -- did not disappear; it was realized, though at a much slower pace and on a scale much different than the founders had anticipated. It is the vision conceived by the founders and the efforts made to bring their dreams and plans into fruition which provides the focus for my essay.

Sevanee -- like many other developing institutions -- suffered greatly the effects of the American Civil War. Indeed so great was the loss that the university envisioned before the war could not be realized in the post-bellum South. Although the grand vision was unattainable after the war, it is important to understand what fostered the university's planning in the ante-bellum period. The answer here lies in its conception during a period of unprecedented economic prosperity and intense Southern nationalism. Southerners watched the growth and modernization of the northern industrial states without jealousy, confident in a slave system which was proving its economic profitability. This immense profit was attributable to the ever-increasing price of cotton, and to the planters' inability to perceive any limit to the market for their primary cash crop.

Americans believed in old fashioned "Yankee" ingenuity and the technological revolution raged forward to surpass even the developments of the European nations. As J.G. Randall and David Donald have pointed out:

(1) Arthur B. Chitty Jr., Reconstruction at Sevanee. (Sevanee, Tenn. : The University Press) 1957. pg. 73.

Americans were exulting in the wonder of their contrivances -- their heating systems, sleeping cars, river and ocean steamboats, engines, improved plows, Colt revolvers, Goodyear rubber patents, power looms, and typesetting machines. Standardization and technological automatic production were adding stimulus to economic life which was to go to the root of American philosophy.⁽²⁾

which allowed great men to nurture great ideas, and which gave them the perseverance to transform their ideas into reality. It is against this background that we must place the men and ideas which would become The University of the South.

Leonidas Polk, First Bishop of Louisiana, was the visionary of The University of the South. Polk was blessed not only with vision, but also with the talents which helped him turn his vision into reality. Bishop Polk, a native of North Carolina, was born at Raleigh on 10 April 1806. He entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill at age 15 in 1821. Two years later he received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. While a cadet at West Point, Polk distinguished himself both militarily and academically finishing eighth in his class.⁽³⁾ Yet more important to Polk's later calling was his conversion to Christianity under the influence of the Academy Chaplain, the Reverend Charles P. McIlvaine.⁽⁴⁾

Shortly after being commissioned order to enroll in the Episcopal Seminary at Alexandria, Virginia. Polk was ordained in 1830 and began his work in the regions opened by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. He went to work establishing the dioceses of the Episcopal Church in the southwest region made up of Louisiana and Arkansas.

(2) J.G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2nd Edition. (Lexington, Mass. : D.C. Heath and Co.) 1969. pp. 7-9.

(3) Moultrie Guerry, Men Who Made Sevanee. (Sevanee, Tenn. : The University Press) 1944. pg. 23.

(4) *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

(5) *ibid.*, pg. 23.

When he visited Europe in 1833, Polk first encountered the great European centers of learning. His travels acquainted him with the educational institutions of both the British Isles and the Continent. Polk marveled at these great academic institutions, and it was in the shadow of Oxford and Cambridge Universities that the Sevanee idea was conceived.

After leaving Europe, Bishop Polk did not let his brain-child die, rather he nurtured and developed the idea. As early as 1852 he began collecting material on the university systems of England, France and Prussia.⁽⁶⁾ He persisted in his efforts to found "an Oxford, a Gottingen, or a Bonn, or all three combined ... neither in the spirit of servile copyists nor yet with ... superiority" to the lessons of experience.⁽⁷⁾ Thus the great southern university had been fermenting in Polk's mind for a few years when he dispatched his letter to the Southern Episcopal bishops on 1 July 1856.⁽⁸⁾

Polk's letter called for an inequality of the European universities and one which would compare favorably to the Ivy League institutions. The Bishop appealed to his colleagues' sense of duty and charged them with the responsibility for promoting the welfare of the Church in the South. The letter argued that the Church's interests would be best served by the creation of an educational system which could provide southern men the opportunity to study theology and other academic disciplines.

A major theme in Polk's letter stressed the importance of educating the southern male in his homeland. Polk pointed out the inability of the existing southern institutions to provide education comparable to their northern counterparts. He rejected the practice of sending the southern youth to the north for an education. He felt that in the north the young southerner was too far removed from parental influence and values and that he was forced to deal with a foreign and unfriendly climate.

(6) *ibid.*, pg. 19.

(7) *ibid.*

(8) Chitty, Reconstruction at Sevanee. pg. 45.

(9) George R. Fairbanks, History of The University of the South. (Jacksonville, Fla. : E. & W.S. Drew Co.) 1905. pg. 12. This source is out of print; some copies are available at The Sevanee Archives, The University of the South, Sevanee, Tennessee.

The second major theme of the letter declared the need to establish a Church university which would impart to young men Christian principles and instruction in the Church doctrines. Lastly, Polk wrote that the success of the institution could be assured by the joint participation of the ten Southern Episcopal dioceses. Polk felt this alliance would enable the Bishops to accomplish what no diocese could do alone because the funds and the manpower necessary to success would be at hand.

Bishop Polk's letter was so comprehensive and well organized that the Bishops incorporated it, with the only minute alteration, into the manifesto which they sent out to all the Southern dioceses on 23 October 1856.⁽¹⁰⁾ Along with Polk's message they included nine provisions outlining the proposed organization of the university. These nine provisions set out the membership of the Board of Trustees; the execution of the University Funds Campaign; that Episcopal Church's exclusive authority over the university; the general location; and the stipulation that no construction would be commenced until at least \$500,000 had been appropriated to endow the university.⁽¹¹⁾

Perhaps most amazing was Polk's full-grown -- like Athena springing from Zeus's head. It was in this vein that he wrote Bishop Elliot in 1856 saying:

There is no reason why ... we might not in five years have a Church University which would rival Harvard or Yale A movement of some kind is indispensable to rally and unite us, to develop our resources and demonstrate our power.⁽¹²⁾

Polk's foresight was again provided the needed rallying point; and after its adoption, the canvass for necessary resources proceeded rapidly. On October 10th, 1860, just four years after the Bishops' "Address to Members and Friends of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the South and Southwest", the cornerstone of the central building of The University of the South was laid.⁽¹³⁾

The Trustees selected the site 27-28, 1857 in Montgomery, Alabama.⁽¹⁴⁾ The actual selection

(10) *ibid.*, pg. 21.

(11) *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

(12) Guerry, Men Who Made Sevanee, pp. 19-20.

(13) Chitty, Reconstruction at Sevanee, pg. 50.

(14) Fairbanks, pp. 30-31.

was made from among a number of sites including: Huntsville, Alabama; McMinville, Tennessee; the vicinity of Chattanooga, Tennessee; the vicinity of Cleveland, Tennessee; Atlanta, Georgia; and Sevanee, Tennessee. On the 17th ballot of the Trustees, Sevanee was chosen as the site for the still un-named university -- shortly thereafter The University of the South mountain location was picked because of its large size -- almost 10,000 acres, and because the university would be away from the influence of town life.⁽¹⁶⁾

The proscribed funds for the this was largely due to Polk's amazing success in the solicitation of his own diocese. The Diocese of Louisiana alone contributed \$264,160 of the original endowment. Polk's example was taken to heart by the other nine Bishops who felt that similar results could be achieved in each of the remaining dioceses. Bishop Elliot of Georgia was so optimistic as to expect a \$3,000,000 yield in his home state using Polk's intensive methods.⁽¹⁸⁾ Thus within two years the Board of Trustees' endowment committee could report that the necessary funds had been pledged. The announcement of pledges equalling \$478,000 was made at the Trustee meeting in Beersheba Springs, Tennessee on August 10-12, 1859 seemed to insure the success of the university.⁽¹⁹⁾

By 1859 the Trustees saw the within their grasp. With the largest campus in the United States and an edowment of equal magnitude it seemed certain that their goals would be reached. They would establish:

... an intellectual centre, at which shall be concentrated all the means and appliances, whether of libraries or of living minds, to impart instruction in all departments of human learning, and to cover the whole area of attainable knowledge. So

(15) *ibid.*

(16) *ibid.*

(17) Chitty, Reconstruction at Sevanee, pg. 71.

(18) *ibid.*, pg. 58. The confidence which Elliot had in Polk's methods was probably attributable to his work with Polk in Louisiana.

(19) Telfair Hodgson (ed.), University of the South Papers, Series A, No. 1: Reprints of the Documents and Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the University of the South, prior to 1860. (Sevanee, Tenn.: The University Press) 1888. pg. 135. This source is located in the Sevanee Archives, The University of the South, Sevanee, Tennessee.

that it will be unnecessary for the youth of the nation to be transported beyond the seas, in pursuit of educational resources and facilities: but, they shall find the treasures of the old world and the new collocated, and offered in the richest profusion, at their own doors.⁽²⁰⁾

The Trustees were also able to:

... take satisfaction in reporting to 2,000 assembled dignitaries that more money was in hand, or pledged, than had ever been raised at one time for an educational institution in America. The amount -- \$500,000 -- seems not large today, but it was 1865 before sums that size started Cornell and Lehigh Universities.⁽²¹⁾

The domain and the endowment provided the ingredients for an institution of great size and quality. This was clearly indicated by the projected cost of the central building -- almost \$300,000.⁽²²⁾ This is an awesome figure especially when contrasted with the projected cost of Walsh Hall which was a mere \$35,000 in 1889.⁽²³⁾

The destiny of Polk's vision seemed to be inevitable success, when fate changed dramatically in 1861. The outbreak of the war brought misfortune to the Mountain. When concluded, four years later, Otey, Polk and Elliot were dead. The buildings lay in ruins and the university was penniless. It was left to Bishop Charles Todd Quintard and George Rainsford Fairbanks to resurrect The University of the South and to attempt to fulfill "The Grand Vision".

(20) *ibid.*, pg. 145. Excerpted from an address delivered by William Giles Dix, Esq. at Beersheba Springs, Tennessee on August 19th and 22nd, 1859, and also by invitation of the Historical Society of Tennessee, at the Capitol, Nashville, Tennessee on September 18th, 1859.

(21) Arthur B. Chitty Jr., "Sevanee: Then and Now", Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 4., Winter 1979. pp. 387-388.

(22) Mooltrie Guerry, "Leonidas Polk and The University of the South", Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Vol. VII, No. 4., December 1938. pg. 385.

(23) Fairbanks, pg. 284.

Big Mouth

By Alan Chouse

I always had a big mouth. For as long as I can remember that's why my mother said when I spoke back after a reprimand. "Big mouth." Or, when I added a comment upon an adult conversation to which I was not supposed to be listening, she added to "Big Mouth" the charge of "Big Ears". (Eavesdropping was then, is now, considered to be impolite, if not uncivilized). And there was another anatomical metaphor we used about my house, in a medium -- sized factory town in central Jersey -- New Jersey, known to most of you as The Garden State -- and that was to have "eyes bigger than one's stomach." That charge your mother hurled at you when after a second helping you didn't clean your plate. You have eyes bigger than your stomach. And a big mouth. And big ears.

Picture this creature now with these overlarge ears, the wide mouth of a frog or even the fabled Ubangi warriors we used to marvel at (in the Ripley's "Believe It or Not" cartoons or in the pages of National Geographic) whose lips had been stretched with plates to fit some fashion that to us, in Jersey, seemed as comical as our pinkish, scared faces ravaged by the endocrinological firestorms of U.S. chocolate-brimmed adolescence might have seemed to some young African boy. Ears, mouth, eyes, larger than our stomachs. Picture this creature: and add to it the roamin' hands of one of our first sexual jokes -- "Why do girls like Italian men?" "I dunno, why?" "Because they got roamin' eyes and roamin' hands! -- though in those days my hands never roamed far from home. In any case, here you have the very portrait of the sensuous beast. A loathsome but comical boy. And my big mouth -- most of all it was my mouth -- got me into trouble outside of home as well as in! What at home we called "back talk" did not get a boy very far at school.

The first time it got me into a scrape happened this way: my first grade teacher at Public School No. 7 in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, chose, me, lucky fellow, to do the honors of erasing the board and clapping clean the erasers at the end of the day. Not so lucky was the small bank of kids whom she had ordered to stay behind as punishment for some infraction of the rules in class or in the halls. I returned from out of the doors and the ritual of pounding the erasers against the side of the reddish brick school wall when I saw them there, and felt a phrase forming in my throat even as I set the freshly clapped erasers on the base of the blackboard wall.

"So long, 'suckers," I slung over my shoulder as I hurried from the room only to meet the teacher on her way in to check on the unhappy band.

"What disgusting language!" she said, grabbing me by the collar and leading me to a seat at the front of the impressed band of stay behinds. I had a big mouth. And for the first time it had gotten me in trouble with the authorities. What did I know about the sexual connotations of the remark I'd flung at the other kids? I'd sooner have understood, at that age, the principle of atomic fission than the intimate act my phrase had conjured up for the teacher, an act of having to do, of course, with the mouth, lips, tongue -- something just the opposite of anything we'd want to perform in public. But here it was, for a moment, the image of the sexual taboo born on the lips of my big mouth. Long after the other kids served out their sentence for the day, I remained behind, lucky only in that however medieval Perth Amboy, New Jersey seemed we had moved out of the era of having our big mouths washed out with soap. Big mouth. Dirty mouth. That was the equation.

Big ears filled up with dirt, too, the dirt of gossip. If you listened quietly in a room filled with jabbering adults -- though they never flung the charge of big mouth at each other no matter how long and hard they talked -- I learned from an early age you could hear all kinds of interesting things: who had said what to whom about whatever seemed important not so much because of the facts but because of the intensity of the speech rhythms with which the adults conveyed the news. Here was ritual, here was social intercourse as powerful as any I had ever known until then. And as a boy who sat on the floor pretending to be studying the pages of Life magazine might hear tales of titans: of butchers who had short-weighted customers or sold them a tough cut of steak; of women who awoke one morning to find a tumorous swelling in the side, and God forbid you should know it, men who slapped their wives or stole money from their business, or came home drunk -- another absolute taboo, as exotic and as murderous in its own way as the bulge rising up beneath someone's skin.

Big mouth, dirty mouth. Big ears, dirty ears. And the eyes? Oh, big eyes had peeked through a keyhole and seen some forbidden sight's, Neal Rappaport's sister changing her skirt on the other side of the door. But no more than that because we are

talking here of an age of such coverups and wrappings over as to rival the Persian chador in propriety, of the age of crinoliness beneath crinolines beneath crinoliness, of guards and wrappings and holders for the breast which the early church fathers would have found adequate. Ironically, it was only confessants of the true church of Rome who showed anything at all to the hungry eyes of big mouth.

Millie Sanfrancisco, niece of the owner of our town's best pizza parlor, allowed as how, yeah, she could come over and play a few hands of strip poker if us guys was willing to take it off if we lost.

Half an hour into the game found Big Mouth in his tee shirt and undershorts, Big Mouth's friend Joe, as lucky as a poker player as Big Mouth would ever meet, still in his trousers, shirt, and vest, their mutual friend Ron, the dealer, who had come to the table on this high summer day wearing an old winter coat, and several sweaters beneath that even before you got to his three shirts and underlayers, Ron, now down to his basketball jersey, while here sat Millie, as cool if not cooler than the weather Ron's clothes conjured up, in her snow-white bra and slip. Behind Big Mouth's quivering lips his teeth chattered in anticipation as Ron delt the next hand. What visions might come with an ace or a wild duce? With luck, cool Millie might show us more than our roaving eyes had ever seen up close, certainly more than our trembling, roamin' hands could ever hold!

Cut the cards, schmuck-doodle! That's Joe talking. He always talked much dirtier than he delt. In fact he hardly ever delt at all if he could help it, but he behaved like the most knowledgeable of nineteenth century river boat card sharks as far as Big Mouth was concerned. C'mon, c'mon. Hey, Millie, we're really going to sling it to you now!

And here's Millie still sitting as quietly as if she were sunning herself on the brick steps behind her uncle's pizza place, her tightly coiled hair, the tannish pigmentation of her fulgent breasts speaking of centuries of visiting Africans to the southern shore of Sicily where her parents first saw the light -- and lived to emigrate and raise a daughter for whom even Jews were better partners at strip poker than Negroes.

So deal the cards, ass-hole, she says to my friend Ron, with the assurance of a player whose greatest desire is to win all by losing all.

She had nothing up her sleeve. She had no sleeve, only a long glove of arm that led to the darkish cape of her shoulder that draped down to those -- at least to the Big Eyes of Big Mouth -- monumental breasts. Millie's breasts lurked half-present behind their guardian cups like fearsome beasts in the Roman arena in days when her ancestors and Big Mouth's sought after strange gods or had already embraced them.

Aren't you getting worried? Ron asked as he began to pass around the cards for the hand. I'm getting worried, he confessed out loud, glancing down at his knees that stuck out from his shorts like sticks from an erector set.

We laughed, the guys, that is. Millie didn't smile. What did she know that we didn't? That she could do anything and then confess it and be absolved, was what we understood her secret to be. If God was alive and well and sometimes transmuted into the wafer that she took on long tongue than anything was possible -- even strip poker with the likes of us. Oh, but what was confession to the lost heathen likes of Big Mouth? Nothing but telling on yourself to someone with ears fit to be filled with dirt!

But what's to confess about this strip poker game? At that moment, when it had appeared as if the ultimate hand had been dealt to us and we sat rigid in our anticipation of watching Millie lose the last shroud that covered her upper body (worried of course, that we might have to reveal just how rigid we were), at that instant where big eyes and ears and lips converged in time someone came in the front door.

Jeez, Joe yelled, it's my mother!

Holy shit! Big Mouth let out with an oath! And that lost afternoon ended with a scramble for our clothes, and a hasty exit out the back door.

The back door appears to be an appropriate place for which to exit for those who spout back talk from their big mouths. The rituals by which big mouths and big ears and big eyes become alerted to the sensual necessities of expressive language, partaking of exits to the rear. Let me illustrate with an example, this one from art, rather than life:

The space of sky above us was the colour of everchanging violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the

ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness.

To modern readers and writers alike this is a famous passage from a famous story. The path to wisdom that leads from the so-called "decent" facades of middle-class turn-of-the-century Dublin houses back on through the backyards and alleys and gardens and stables is a downward tending trail, a descent in miniature into the underworld, a trip back in anthropological time, and in psychological time as well. It's the latter that intrigues me most at the moment since the last living world we heard from, Big Mouth, was the epithet Holy Shit!, and it's the horse-dung that lends its perfume to those Dublin stables where music is born that makes me meditate on -- of all things you'll say -- the relationship between art and excrement, excrement and the near-holy act of creating poetry and fiction.

Freud says -- "somewhere," my notes say, since I haven't yet tracked down the reference, though I'm convinced that I'm not making it up -- that the earliest sign of the creative imagination in the human child is the infantile manipulation of the feces. Here is invention primeaval, contact with the first thing outside the self that the human animal can transform into something other than itself. Now granted that plastering one's own fecal matter onto the wall nearest the crib or all over the sheets and cribstruts may be a far cry from the radical transformation of life into art that Levi-Strauss defines as the transition of the raw into the cooked -- but, according to reports of eye-witnesses close to the subject of investigation, I mean his parents, Big Mouth started out on his career this way. Some accounts even have him smearing the plastic material over his own face and body, an aesthetic experiment as yet unmatched in galleries in New York's Soho but one certainly on the horizon in a world in which, to paraphrase Ivan Karamazov, the frame is gone and anything is possible.

So much of Big Mouth's childhood and adolescence, not an uncommon one in the back alleys and factory streets of central New Jersey, was comprised of this curious fusion of the sacred and the profane, of artfulness and utter vulgarity, of the holy -- and the shitful. But it's precisely this recognition of the power of obscenity that seems to have convinced Big Mouth of the power of language. No grade school teacher intoning Wordsworth could have the same effect on him as recollecting the results of telling some opponents at touch football to fuck off and being overheard by an adult who told his parents who punished him -- "for his language" To be punished for

your language meant that your speech must be as such a crime in New Jersey as stealing hub caps or heisting crates of Coca Cola, a few of the crimes Big Mouth had committed, lucky guy that he was, without getting caught. This kind of awareness of the root, and brute power, of language in one Jersey writer -- I'm thinking of Philip Roth -- can lead to the production of a novelist with a mind like Henry James and a mouth like Lenny Bruce. Roth, in a certain way, for all the fineness of his feeling characters, has never gotten out of Newark. But his experience has led him to create one of the most distinctive voices to come out of our garden state, edenic Jersey. Voice: as the novelist Lonoff say to the Roth-surrogate Nathan Zuckerman in The Ghost Writer, he's got a voice that begins around the back of his knees and reaches well above his head.

"Poetry", Auden tells us in a poem that makes something happen in Big Mouth's mind, "makes nothing happen." ("It is a way of happening," the poem goes on. "A mouth." A Big Mouth?) But say that you believed that poetry was Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and nothing akin to the back talk that came out of your own big mouth, and you might believe that too. Poetry, on the lips of Big Mouth's teachers was all prettiness, sweetness, smelling of bath powder, talcum. If real life was nothing at the time but dark back alleys, ugliness, and the degraded cultural existence of the children of industrial workers you might need a language whose power to make you laugh and admire its turns and shape in the air before you was as rough and ready as the environment, a cosmic speech built of metaphor appropriate to the occasion and with a velocity like that of the stones pitched at you by one of the hunkies from Hunkytown if you strayed too close to their turf.

Sometimes under inspired circumstances and proper conditions, we pitched language that hard. Such early lessons in how a hurled verb and noun might curve around and clip your ear like a boomerang misfired took place in these verbal contests we used to call on our own turf "The Mother Game;" In black, urban culture it's sometimes known as "the dozens."

Look: here's Big Mouth, Joe and Ron, running down the back alleys toward the rear of the house where live the Timmerman twins, Arnie and Mate. It's a weekend morning, time for verbal jousting of a specially sexual nature, with the incest taboo at the tip of everyone's tongue.

Hey, Joe, says Nate Timmerman, I hear your mother's walking around Polack Town with a mattress on her back yelling 'curb service'!

Oh, yeah, Joe throws back at him, I here your mother kissed a Hunky and nine months later you came out smellin of onions.

Strange mixture of defense of

ing up her sleeve. She
ve, only a long glove of
d to the darkish cape of
er that draped down to
at least to the Big Eyes
th -- monumental breasts.
reasts lurked half-present
eir guardian cups like
casts in the Roman arena in
n her ancestors and Big
ught after strange gods or
y embraced them.

Are you getting worried? Ron
he began to pass around the
r the hand. I'm getting
he confessed out loud,
down at his knees that stuck
his shorts like sticks from
or set.

laughed, the guys, that is.
didn't smile. What did she
at we didn't? That she could
hing and then confess it and
lived, was what we understood
ret to be. If God was alive
ll and sometimes transmuted
he waffer that she took on long
than anything was possible --
trip poker with the likes of
ph, but what was confession to
st heathen likes of Big Mouth?
ng but telling on yourself to
e with ears fit to be filled
dirt!

But what's to confess about this
poker game? At that moment,
it had appeared as if the
ate hand had been dealt to us
ve sat rigid in our anticipation
atching Millie lose the last
ud that covered her upper body
ried of course, that we might
to reveal just how rigid we
), at that instant where big eyes
ears and lips converged in time
one came in the front door.

Jeez, Joe yelled, it's my
her!

Holy shit! Big Mouth let out
an oath! And that lost
ternoon ended with a scramble for
k clothes, and a hasty exit out the
ck door.

The back door appears to be an
appropriate place for which to exit
or those who spout back talk from
their big mouths. The rituals by
which big mouths and big ears and big
eyes become alerted to the sensual
necessities of expressive language,
partaking of exits to the rear. Let
me illustrate with an example, this
one from art, rather than life:

The space of sky above
us was the colour of
everchanging violet and
towards it the lamps of the
street lifted their feeble
lanterns. The cold air
stung us and we played till
our bodies glowed. Our
shouts echoed in the silent
street. The career of our
play brought us through the
dark suddy lanes behind the
houses where we ran the
gauntlet of the rough
tribes from the cottages,
to the back doors of the
dark dripping gardens where
odours arose from the

ashpits, to the dark
odorous stables where a
coachman smoothed and
combed the horse or shook
music from the buckled
harness.

To modern readers and writers
alike this is a famous passage from a
famous story. The path to wisdom
that leads from the so-called
"decent" facades of middle-class
turn-of-the-century Dublin houses
back on through the backyards and
alleys and gardens and stables is a
downward tending trail, a descent in
miniature into the underworld, a trip
back in anthropological time, and in
psychological time as well. It's the
latter that intrigues me most at the
moment since the last living world we
heard from Big Mouth, was the
epithet Holy Shit!, and it's the
horse-dung that lends its perfume to
those Dublin stables where music is
born that makes me meditate on -- of
all things you'll say -- the
relationship between art and
excrement, excrement and the
near-boly act of creating poetry and
fiction.

Freud says -- "somewhere," my
notes say, since I haven't yet
tracked down the reference, though
I'm convinced that I'm not making it
up -- that the earliest sign of the
creative imagination in the human
child is the infantile manipulation
of the feces. Here is invention
primeaval, contact with the first
thing outside the self that the human
animal can transform into something
other than itself. Now granted that
plastering one's own fecal matter
onto the wall nearest the crib or all
over the sheets and cribs may be
a far cry from the radical
transformation of life into art that
Levi-Strauss defines as the
transition of the raw into the cooked
-- but, according to reports of
eye-witnesses close to the subject of
investigation, I mean his parents,
Big Mouth started out on his career
this way. Some accounts even have
him smearing the plastic material
over his own face and body, an
aesthetic experiment as yet unmatched
in galleries in New York's Soho but
one certainly on the horizon in a
world in which, to paraphrase Ivan
Karamazov, the frame is gone and
anything is possible.

So much of Big Mouth's childhood
and adolescence, not an uncommon one
in the back alleys and factory
streets of central New Jersey, was
comprised of this curious fusion of
the sacred and the profane, of
artfulness and utter vulgarity, of
the holy -- and the shitful. But
it's precisely this recognition of
the power of obscenity that seems to
have convinced Big Mouth of the power
of language. No grade school teacher
intoning Wordsworth could have the
same effect on him as recollecting
the results of telling some opponents
at touch football to fuck off and
being overheard by an adult who told
his parents who punished him -- "for
his language" To be punished for

your language meant that your speech
must be as much a crime in New Jersey
as stealing hub caps or heisting
crates of Coca Cola, a few of the
crimes Big Mouth had committed, lucky
guy that he was, without getting
caught. This kind of awareness of
the root, and brute power, of
language in one Jersey writer -- I'm
thinking of Philip Roth -- can lead
to the production of a novelist with
a mind like Henry James and a mouth
like Lenny Bruce. Roth, in a certain
way, for all the fineness of his
feeling characters, has never gotten
out of Newark. But his experience
has led him to create one of the most
distinctive voices to come out of our
garden state, edenid Jersey. Voice:
as the novelist Lonoff say to the
Roth-surrogate Nathan Zuckerman in
The Ghost Writer, he's got a voice
that begins around the back of his
knees and reaches well above his
head.

"Poetry", Auden tells us in a
poem that makes something happen in
Big Mouth's mind, "makes nothing
happen." ("It is a way of
happening," the poem goes on. "A
mouth." A Big Mouth?) But say that
you believed that poetry was
Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a
Cloud," and nothing akin to the back
talk that came out of your own big
mouth, and you might believe that
too. Poetry, on the lips of Big
Mouth's teachers was all prettiness,
sweetness, smelling of bath powder,
talcum. If real life was nothing at
the time but dark back alleys,
ugliness, and the degraded cultural
existence of the children of
industrial workers you might need a
language whose power to make you
laugh and admire its turns and shape
in the air before you was as rough
and ready as the environment, a
cosmic speech built of metaphor
appropriate to the occasion and with
a velocity like that of the stones
pitched at you by one of the hunkies
from Hunkytown if you strayed too
close to their turf.

Sometimes under inspired
circumstances and proper conditions,
we pitched language that hard. Such
early lessons in how a hurled verb
and noun might curve around and clip
your ear like a boomerang misfired
took place in these verbal contests
we used to call on our own turf "The
Mother Game;" In black, urban
culture it's sometimes known as "the
dozens."

Look: here's Big Mouth, Joe and
Ron, running down the back alleys
toward the rear of the house where
live the Timmerman twins, Arnie and
Mate. It's a weekend morning, time
for verbal jousting of a specially
sexual nature, with the incest taboo
at the tip of everyone's tongue.

Hey, Joe, says Mate Timmerman, I
hear your mother's walking around
Polack Town with a mattress on her
back yelling 'curb service'!

Oh, yeah, Joe throws back at
him, I here your mother kissed a
Hunky and nine months later you came
out smellin of onions.

Strange mixture of defense of

one's own mother by attacking the other boy's mom! strange mixture of racial, or, at least, tribal, bias and violent sexuality, and incestuous overtones, particularly when the Timmerman twins played it, attacking their own mother in each jest. I don't pretend to understand it, but I do want to suggest that it showed off Big Mouth's powers of inventions to great advantage, and helped him to discover that by shaping words you could outdo an opponent, make people laugh, and for the moment change the environment immediately around you.

Some seed time this was for Big Mouth's soul! It did wonders, though, for his voice, The Garden State was no green pleasant land, but the next phase, the stage beyond early childhood, did offer some slightly more sophisticated evidence on behalf of Big Mouth's; our Everychild's, development as a writer. Open your big eyes on this screen. It's Jane Nadel's ninth birthday, a dozen kids crowded into her parents' small apartment, and suddenly, after the record player breaks down, Big Mouth leaps forward and volunteers to hum show tunes through a slice of tissue paper stretched across a comb. He'd done this earlier in life, accompanying his grandfather who played the violin late some Saturday nights when the old man, impressed into baby-sitting, decided to stave off boredom with a rendition of "God Bless America." And hadn't Big Mouth loved to puff out tunes on a kazoo at other parties? Now here he was, stage center, and the tissue paper trick didn't work. So of a sudden he felt inspired into doing full-scale imitations of some singing fool favorites of the day -- and oh what a pleasure to shape one's voice and face into the sound and form of other people! Can real art be far behind?

It was for Big Mouth. In a state and I don't mean New Jersey, in which only the lowest and most humble and the most vulgar pastimes possess any of the true vitality necessary for the conception of something resembling art, the educational system -- the means by which one generation passes to another all that it knows about life and poetry -- and the school system in particular, lay in a shambles. Because of the mess in formal education, a lot of Jersey artists Big Mouth knew had to begin over again and again, creating themselves *sui generis* from the stuff of their own experience and vitality, and they lost time because of the attendant false steps, because of the confusion in the labyrinth without a thread to guide them. But of course this doesn't just happen in Jersey, although in Jersey the case is writ large. It is a peculiarly American thing, this notion of beginning over again without guidance, of reinventing or rediscovering Eden. In the garden state, paradoxically, we found ourselves losing time on the road to Eden because every time we lost a tire we found ourselves reinventing the wheel.

Some New Jersey writers of previous generations caught the state of innocence quite beautifully in their work, and it's there for all to live in as permanently as anything we know. Whitman's Camden, William Carlos Williams's Patterson, and of a later generation, Allen Ginsberg's and Lerol Jones' and Philip Roth's Newark are there for all to see, in all their ugliness and beauty, home at least, if not home free.

Among my generation there's less of a sense of wonder, more of a recognition of the paradox of growing up in the garden state in a condition of industrially wasted innocence. In lyrics and poems as different as, say, the verse of Robert Pinsky from Long Branch and the songs of Bruce Springsteen from Asbury Park, you get the impression that Jerseyans were, if not born to run, at least educated by experience that they had, if they were going to survive, better get going fast.

Big Mouth probably took longer than a lot of other writers to learn such things about life, possibly because he had an immigrant father, a ruthlessly unintelligible education until he luckily reached the university level, and because of the vagaries of temperament and disposition. As he ventured out into the world, married, raised children, divorced -- several times over -- he spent a great deal of time biting down on his lip. His childhood seemed as distant as life on another planet, and adult life -- "strange days indeed," as John Lennon has been telling us, recently in a sad, posthumous lyric -- lost its savor. Rough pleasures of the most vulgar and raucous days of youth seemed unattainable to him.

This is not to say that a certain pattern of sadness, if not hopelessness and misery, didn't overlay even those raucous early years. On this drawing table where the circles of fun and filthy pleasures dot the chart of the writers progress, place the film on which the a finer hand has brushed in touches of pain, dismay, despair, and helplessness. Here lie images of back alleys that offer as much horror as beauty, where boys mistreat the mute and the retarded, catch alley cats, hang them in the dark dank garages, and set them afire, set afire entire empty fields of weeds and watch the smoke threaten nearby houses, and lock siblings in trunks and abandoned refrigerators. Here's a boy's world of viciousness and sometimes violence, a realm of gangs and theft and unwarranted disdain for others beyond the pale, whether the opposite sex or another tribe of race. "Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry," Auden says in his elegy for W.B. Yeats. Mad New Jersey -- the region of the country that Fitzgerald used in *The Great Gatsby* for his model of the wasteland -- as such as comical New Jersey of back alley humor and comb and tissue paper theatrical debuts hurt at least one writer into poetry. Camden,

Paterson, Newark, Long Branch: You couldn't get any more insane if you tried. Those cities, decaying now with their carbon streets, dark bow lanes where the stench of cats lights up the hollows of burning garages, seem madder than ever, you've got to have a big mouth to bite off and chew that stuff and spit it out as poetry. You've got to have eyes bigger than your stomach, big ears -- and a big heart as well.

Big Mouth's father had only the heart. When he arrived in New Jersey after some years in the Orient, and Russia before that, he unpacked the will to write as well as make money. Setting up a typewriter in a small alcove off in the living room of a second floor apartment in that same factory town where he would raise his

But most important of all you've got to open that Big Mouth and call back, talk back, into time, and recall into the present and onto the page... Joe the loudmouth, Ron the dealer, Millie Sanfrancisco in her slip and bra, ...the madness of cats aflame in the back alley...and the father, oh, the father, the father tap-tap-tapping at his machine on Sunday, every Sunday, call him back, talk him back to life if you can, fix him fast on the page, even as he tries in his own feeble way to call back fathers even more dimly remembered...

children he tapped-tapped-tapped at the machine all day Sunday, from morning until mid-afternoon. Even now as he's typing this, with some correction for the more fluid sound of the electric machine, Big Mouth can cup his big ears into time and match up his own tap-typing with the sound of his fathers machine and take into himself the ghost of his father, the Sunday writer, the man whom life had hurt enough to produce the will to write. Alas, he had no ear for English and his Russian had broken up into fragments over the years. He spoke with a slight accent (though that never stopped Conrad of Nabokov) but he saw with an accent as well, trying without success to impose the patterns of Russian comedy onto the material of pathetic American city life. And even if he did make some progress over the years and produce a fragmentary autobiography that Big Mouth helped him publish at least one portion of, he was no more than an amateur's amateur, and, unlike Sunday painters, for Sunday writers there is no hope.

Graphomania, that was F're Big Mouth's serious affliction. And graphomania, as Milan Kundera explains it, that obsession with

writing books, has proliferated today "among politicians, cab drivers, women on the delivery table, mistresses, murderers, criminals, prostitutes, police chiefs, doctors, and patients" and proves "that every individual without exception bears a potential writer within himself and that all mankind has every right to rush out into the streets with a cry

of "We are all writers!" The reason? Kundera explains it well: "the reason is that everyone has trouble accepting the fact that he will disappear unheard of and unnoticed in a indifferent universe, and everyone wants to make himself into a universe of words before it's too late."

So, everyone is a potential Big

Mouth. But you've also got to have Big Ears, too, and perfect the fine art of eavesdropping, which is considered rudeness in our society. And you've got to have those Big Eyes, too, eyes that devour as much of the world as they can take in, even to the point of making their owner sick to the stomach on experience, aching and glutted with more knowledge and stories than he can ever digest let alone produce. You've got to have Big Nerves -- which is to say, the capacity to be utterly shameless both life and art true to feelings in the way that most generals and bankers and factory owners never attain. And you've got to perform open heart surgery each day on your chest and let that Big Heart flop around in air like some great gory fish you've caught bare-handed in the bloody pond of memory.

But most important of all you've got to open that Big Mouth and call back, talk back, into time, and recall into the present and onto the page all of those painful moments and figures whom most people would think best left unremembered. Joe the loudmouth, Ron the dealer, Millie Sanfrancisco in her slip and bra, the mythic-large mother at the door who breaks up the game, the Timmerman twins cursing each others' mother (some comedy, of course, but dark obscene comedy), and the madness of cats aflame in the back alley. You have to call back all the worst time as well as the best before it slips away and you have no time at all, animals on fire, street fights, birthdays, funerals, first kiss, first taste of ice cream, music we danced to, songs we sang, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunt, and the father, oh, the father, the father tap-tap-tapping at his machine on Sunday, every Sunday, call him back, talk him back to life if you can, fix him fast on the page, even as he tries in his own feeble way to call back fathers even more dimly remembered, all of us with our Big mouths burning, lips cracked from the heart, chanting, Come up, Come up out of the deep dark gardens in the back alleys where the odors arise from the ashpits, from that holy smouldering shitheap we call the long and nearly lost, the long lost past.

Alan Chuse is a visiting Brown Foundation Fellow.



"Study of a Study"

Book Reviews

Things About to Disappear

Allen Wier

The Book of Laughter
and Forgetting

Milan Kundera

Review by Tom McConnel

Review by Thomas Lakeman



Like most collections of any kind, Allen Wier's volume of short stories is rather uneven, but it is an impression all the more easily taken away from the book because of the heights to which some stories and passages rise.

"An Elegy," the opening selection, is an imitation of the pastoral elegy, complete with headings (lest we miss the point) designating the poetic conventions each selection is based upon. Occasionally, the freshness and fluidity of the prose approaches a lyricism akin to that of Shelley's pastoral elegy for Keats, *Adonais*, from which Wier takes his epigraph for the story: "...till the Future dares forget the Past." The rueful tone of "An Elegy," which concludes with a short and unsatisfactory reunion of two long-time friends, arises not because the future forgets the past, but because of the mere fact that the future moves on to leave the past, because of the intolerable and unalterable paradox that human beings must dwell in the world of time in which all things change.

The last of these eight stories, the one which lends its title to the whole, takes place at summer's end, as does "An Elegy." Having buried his father after combat with long illness, the narrator takes his leave of Texas. But one more sadness, an automobile accident which he witnesses, intervenes before he can escape by darkness. After aiding the victims as best he can, his melancholy and tension compounded, he resumes his journey—and his mournful reminiscences of the transitory fleeing him even as he is fleeing it. The story's final paragraph is perhaps the best sustained passage of prose in the volume.

The other stories, too, demonstrate qualities which recommend this collection: a felicitous language which ranges from the lyricism of "An Elegy" to the dullness of the quotidian rendered by the very words of "Mr. Ollie, Think of the Baseball"; a striking aptness and relevance of metaphor; an imaginative richness which discovers the extraordinary always in the ordinary—but chief among those qualities is the consistency with which Wier denies us the comforting opportunity of conveniently forgetting or complacently overlooking, and so sparing ourselves, the evanescent moments of joy and sorrow, the things about to disappear, which make up our lives.

"In February 1948, Communist leader Klement Gottwald stepped out on the balcony of a Baroque palace in Prague to address the hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens packed into Old Town Square. It was a crucial moment in Czech history — a fateful moment of the kind that occurs only once or twice in a millenium.

"Gottwald was flanked by his comrades, with Clementis standing next to him. There were snow flurries, it was cold, and Gottwald was bareheaded. The solicitous Clementis took off his own fur cap and set it on Gottwald's head.

"The Party propaganda section put out hundreds of thousands of copies of a photograph of that balcony with Gottwald, a fur cap on his head and comrades at his side, speaking to the nation. On that balcony the history of Communist Czechoslovakia was born. Every child knew the photograph from posters, schoolbooks, and museums.

"Four years later Clementis was charged with treason and hanged. The propaganda section immediately airbrushed his out of history and, obviously, out of all the photographs as well. Ever since, Gottwald has stood on that balcony alone. Where Clementis once stood, there is only bare palace wall. All that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head."

With this passage, Czech author Milan Kundera begins his testimony of the gradual erasure of his homeland from the map of Europe. It is, he reveals, a process that began with the Nazi takeover in 1938, only to be carried out with even grimmer efficiency by the Soviet Union after 1948. This was the year of the Communist takeover, as well as the year that Kundera, a student at the University of Prague, was disbarred from the Communist Party. Since that year, the whole of Eastern Europe has fought a slow, retreating battle to preserve its own cultural identity. As one of Kundera's characters puts it in the opening chapter, "the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

All of the characters in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* fight this battle on personal grounds, to preserve those qualities of their own identity as Czechs through the preservation of memory. The book is divided into seven sections, each telling the story of some individual's reaction to the "Prague Spring" of 1968, in which a brief spell of rebellion against Soviet authority ended in a brutal, counterrevolutionary invasion. None

of the protagonists ever meet; yet all are bound in a common story of laughter and anguish, of memory and forgetting, of love and indifference for a dying nation.

The first section, "Lost Letters," is probably the best in the novel. It deals with Mirek, an intellectual and veteran of the Prague Spring, who, in the last few hours before his arrest by the secret police, tries vainly to recover love letters written twenty-five years previously. In this chapter, we learn of the liberation and rebirth of Czechoslovakia after World War II, in which hundreds of thousands of bright-eyed youths worked together to create a new nation, an "idyll of justice for all." Their vision was one of a world without strife where all is harmony like some grand Bach fugue. But as these young idealists soon discovered, the harmony of the fugue was one that did not allow stray voices. "Anyone who refuses his note," reports Kundera, "is a black dot, useless and meaningless, easily caught and squashed between the fingers like an insect." The 1968 rebellion was a valiant effort by these former young idealists to return dissenting voices to Czechoslovakia, to resurrect the past. Men like Mirek who fought in that rebellion could not be allowed to survive it. Mirek realizes his doom; yet, curiously, he searches not for escape but for remnants of his own past, letters given to a mistress long forgotten. But he is caught and arrested before he can recover them, and disappears along with the Prague Spring. Only the letters remain, like Clementis's hat on Gottwald's head, a silent, unclaimed memory.

The second section, "Mother," deals with an aging woman who can remember a poem she recited in 1918, the year of Czech independence, but for whom the Russian invasion of 1968 has no significance. Her world, says Kundera, is a small and private one; as Russian tanks roll into Bohemia, she is concerned only with her ripening pears, as if her world were a huge pear with a tiny, insignificant tank, no bigger than a ladybug, perched on the edge. This style of illustration runs throughout the work: the battle for memory is not fought in the streets of Prague; but within the self, not for nations but for individuality. In another section, also called "Lost Letters," a heroine named Tamina, exiled from Czechoslovakia, concentrates furiously on the face of her dead husband, trying desperately to memorize every detail without even the aid of a photograph. Her struggle is a futile one, as is Mirek's to recover his letters and the old woman's to recall the poem she read in 1918. It is futile because the world after 1968 is one in which memory is the enemy of the state, not only in politics, but in art, religion, and even within the human mind. As in Orwell's 1984, the Communist state is not content with

were obedience; it must eradicate any personal memory of goods and evils which might permit a dissenting voice.

Often, Kundera departs from the main track of a story to tell some facet of his own life. He defines graphomania, the uncontrollable urge to write, as the result of three basic conditions: "1. a high enough degree of general well-being to enable people to devote their energies to useless activities; 2. an advanced state of social atomization and the resultant general feeling of the isolation of the individual; 3. a radical absence of significant social change in the internal development of the nation (in this connection I find it symptomatic that in France, a country where nothing really happens, the percentage of writers is twenty-one times higher than in Israel)." He suggests that his nation after 1968, and much of the world, is in danger of becoming a society of graphomaniacs, where the isolation of each individual causes him to build a wall of words about himself, driving him deeper into isolation, deeper into the struggle to preserve memory through documentation.

Kundera tells of his own battle: as a film critic and professor at the Prague Institute for Advanced Cinematographic Studies, he helped foster the New Wave in Czech film-making. After the Russian invasion, Kundera was dismissed from his post, and all his works were banned from publication. He saw himself in danger not of professional ruin but of being wiped from the memory of his people. He, and the thousands of intellectuals like him, were forced to leave Czechoslovakia and to allow the voice of their culture to fall silent. Kundera describes the death of his father, a prominent concert pianist left unable to speak or play by a severe stroke; the growing senility and alcoholism of one of his country's greatest poets; and Kundera's own, final journey across the border into the West.

Laughter runs throughout the book. Kundera defines two kinds of laughter: the sort that comes from a knowledge of life's order and grace, and the sort that comes from a knowledge of life's futility. The first is the type best suited to the destruction of memory. Two schoolgirls read *Rhinoceros*, Ionesco's play of the death of identity and decide that the author's purpose in turning men into rhinoceroses was to create "a comic effect." Having found the truth, they probe no deeper, and laugh at their clever understanding of Ionesco's universe. Their story enters the world of fairy-tale when the two girls, together with an approving teacher, laugh and sing with each other and slowly, in a circle, rise through the ceiling and disappear into the sky.

"I too once danced in a ring,"

Kundera relates. This was in 1948, the year the grand fugue began in Czechoslovakia. But he was cast from the party and from the circle; he witnessed the hanging of Zavis Kalandra, Czech surrealist. Kalandra's friend Andre Breton wrote an impassioned plea to Paul Eluard, Czechoslovakia's most renowned folk singer, to help prevent the execution of one of the country's greatest artists. The day of hanging, Eluard denounced Kalandra and, with Klement Gottwald, sang a boyish hymn to peace and harmony, laughing with the knowledge that the world was beautiful and made sense. And so Kalandra was executed; and Eluard danced with the others, floating into the sky and forgetting.

The Book of Laughter and Forgetting is a simple masterpiece, drawing together people who will never know how closely together they fight and raising against them an army of the laughing and the forgetful. Kundera's style moves from realism to fairy-tale, from romance to satire. He tells of lovers, poets, children, and the

...after the Russian invasion of 1968, every Czech was confronted with the thought that his nation could be quietly erased from Europe...

aged, woven together in tragedy. The translation by Michael Henry Heim is excellent, conveying the strong sense of color and irony that is Kundera's trademark. We laugh at his characters just as we cry for them, and we come to know a part of Western culture that Soviet brutality strains to keep from us and ultimately from itself. All is brilliantly summed up in Kundera's interview with Philip Roth in the book's afterword: "If someone had told me as a boy: One day you will see your nation vanish from the world, I would have considered it nonsense...but after the Russian invasion of 1968, every Czech was confronted with the thought that his nation could be quietly erased from Europe...I don't know whether my nation will perish, and I don't know which of my characters is right. I invent stories, confront one with another, and by this means I ask questions. The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything. The wisdom of this novel comes from having a question for everything."

WAKE UP and SPEAK!

Send your essays,
book reviews, and art to



Journal of Arts and Sciences