THE ALEMBIC

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A traditional concept of education has been that of a teacher on one end of a log, and a student on the other. Socrates is usually imagined questioning his few students and gradually drawing them into agreement with him. These two elements—the teacher and the student—have long been considered basic to the educational process.

But today Socrates must go into a crowded lecture hall, where he faces, usually to his detriment, a third element—the boob. This element is the product of an age of mass education.

The proponents of this mass education believe that the greater the number of people in our schools, the higher the level of education of our society. This presupposes the capacity of the mass to be educated. It is undemocratic, pseudo-intellectual, and narrow to believe otherwise. We answer to these charges and ask to be tolerated by our liberal-minded readers.

The third element goes to college because to be without a diploma is a social handicap. For them college is a social whirl, interrupted by classes. This social whirl can take many forms. It can be week-end parties and nights at Bradley's. It can be trips home every time some third cousin has a birthday. It can be meets and games and broken training rules. The whirl is not conducive to study.
Unfortunately this third element is the one to which the average teacher caters. Quality suffers—both the quality of the teacher and that of the student. But this is inevitable in education which strives primarily for quantity.

Now we can recognize the third element, but how are we to recognize the other two elements? It is true they are becoming extinct, but perhaps the following descriptions of the teacher and the student will aid you.

The ideal teacher could be described by Chaucer's words about the Clerk: "Gladly would he learn, and gladly teach." These twin delights are the two necessary qualities for a good teacher.

First, the teacher takes a delight in his subject. He can never exhaust his subject, and the fact that his students may never rival him in his mastery of the matter should not deter him from further study. With an increase of knowledge his perspective will change, and, when he returns to the classics of his field, they will reveal an unsuspected wealth.

Then, the teacher takes a delight in teaching. He enjoys guiding the student's mind to the truth, though this is a battle between student and teacher. The student is more inclined to the sensually satisfying Mickey Spillaine than to Vergil. The teacher, however, knows that the intellectual pleasures stimulated by reading Vergil are more lasting and wholesome; hence he finds his fulfillment in weaning the student from Mike Hammer to *pius Aeneas*.

These delights in teaching and learning are the qualities of the few ideal teachers. The many may be divided into two groups.
socrates and the third element

The first group is cynical and wise-cracking. They believe that they have learned enough about the subject to satisfy the dolts taking their courses. One Latin professor of this type had so stylized his lectures that appropriate jokes were written in the margin of his copy of the text. One day a perverse student took the professor’s book and interrupted the lecture at the proper times with “That reminds me of a story . . . . ”

The other group stopped learning on that happy day when some unobservant guest-speaker told them the world needed them to solve its problems. The world fares better than their students.

Now we can look at the student. The “lean and hungry look” has always identified the student. His environs are unfamiliar to most of us, but there are “libraries,” and in these asylums the students gather. Real students sometimes know better the finer points of a subject than does the poor teacher; and so the poor teacher usually feels uncomfortable in his presence. The third element—the boob—curses the real student for ruining the “curve,” by which the boob’s two correct and eight wrong may become a “C.”

The two basic elements—the teacher and the student—must be preserved. The problem is a method to remove the third element. We are reminded of Eugene O’Neill’s plan for an evening in the theater which would have been unforgettable. Disgruntled at the rudeness of the New York play-goers, he planned this program: after everyone was seated, even those late-comers, the curtain would open to a stage bare except for a machine-gun; and then a gentleman in formal dress, after slowly and methodically removing his cape, top-hat and gloves, would fire the gun into
the audience. Of course, it would have been a one-night stand.

Because we cannot overturn the social order in a year, the good teacher, in addition to the delights in teaching and learning, must develop a third quality—a ruthless justice. There are many people in our schools who are diligent, industrious, and eager to learn; but they should not be in college, because they have not the ability. They should be failed.

When the teachers develop a ruthless justice, the dropout rate may soar, but the few—not necessarily the least important element in a society—will thank them.

Michael Fitzgerald
Many students, without ever so phrasing it in their minds, believe that the retreat is merely the living for a short time of a passive, quasi-monastic existence. Let me define those terms and attempt to stand by my definitions. Their retreat is passive in so far as they need only sit, arms akimbo, staring at the retreat master, who, they hope, will chisel goodness on their souls; it is quasi-monastic because they kneel, bowing their heads low and beating their chests in quick time, while their minds wander from free coffee and "dunkers" to the perfectly marvelous weather of late.

To be sure, there are those of a more serious vein who pay closer attention during the Mass, Benediction, and conference. Still, do these understand the purpose of a retreat? What is the focal point of a retreat? Is it the attendance at Mass, or the ideas put forth by the retreat master? I believe the goal is the retreat confession. All the other functions are highways of grace and wisdom which lead a soul to the Sacrament of Penance. Understand, these highways—or means, to be more prosaic—are very important; yet they are not the end. The object of a retreat is the Sacrament of Penance.

As we all know, the Sacrament of Penance requires an examination of conscience. To examine one's conscience may not always be a pleasant task, but honesty with one's
self is essential. Particular attention must be paid to those deep-rooted qualities which we call habits, because they have a real and definite effect in determining the morality of our actions. We know this from the very definition of a habit which "... disposes a subject well or badly either in regard to itself or its actions."

During the conferences, the retreat master devotes much time to several or all of the habits, especially the moral virtues. But all is not over with his closing sentence. His plan is to make one aware of the faults which have been ignored or have been beaten down by dishonesty with self. A person who wishes to make a worthwhile retreat must, after each conference, spend time adapting the priest's observations to his own life. Has he developed within himself virtues of faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance?

Such sins against faith as heresy and apostasy are rare in a Catholic college, but there are other branches on the tree of faith which are more often overlooked. One must ask himself whether he has sought knowledge and understanding or has been guilty of willful ignorance concerning matters of faith.

In regard to hope one might ask whether he has despaired in trying to conquer a vice which has grown ferocious and seemingly too unbridled to tame.

For most people the mention of charity brings forth in their minds the picture of a dollar sign. Each person, be he rich or poor, is able to practice charity every time he deals with his fellow humans. Unrestrained impatience with the faults of one's neighbors leads to hatred, the vice opposed to charity, under the forms of envy, discord, contention, schism, war, strife, sedition, and, in short, much of the unhappiness in this world. Charity is the pivot with-
habits and retreat

out which the moral virtues wander aimlessly under such names as “humanitarianism.”

Have we acted prudently in choosing the means to our ends? Have we acted without prudence in advising others?

Have we by deed or word been dishonest concerning that which is owed to God or neighbor?

Have we, with fortitude, sincerely striven to govern our passions, attempting to gain added strength through sacrifices, prayer, and good acts, as well as through the sacraments? Have we turned away from our duties?

Have we, with temperance, beaten down the concupiscences which revolt within us? Have we thrown back all the unlawful pleasures hurled at us by the world, and made wise use of the licit pleasures as rational beings ought?

These are the same questions asked before the use of the Sacrament of Penance. They are the same questions brought to mind by Fathers during the retreat, for the retreat is also an examination of conscience, but on a larger scale. Having made the decision to “confess one's sins,” the individual must “amend his life” and make restitution by “doing penance.” Those vices which one renounces leave in the soul a vacuum, so to speak. If virtues are not called upon to fill the emptiness, vices may return as before to inhibit the flow of grace into the soul. However, the development of virtues is, as we know, a difficult task.

To capture a monkey, a hollow coconut shell filled with rice is placed in the vicinity which the animal is known to frequent. There is a hole in the coconut just large enough for the animal to pass his hand through to the rice. When the monkey finds the treasure, he thrusts his hand through the opening and grabs a fistful of rice. Much to his amazement he finds that he cannot withdraw his hand. He will jump, pull, claw, bite, and scream in
terror. He will do everything but the one thing which would save him—release the rice from his greedy paw.

Humans are much the same as the monkey. A man will go to a doctor who diagnoses his case and prescribes a remedy. Rather than follow the doctor’s good advice for, let us say, abstinence from “such and such,” he will forsake other things instead, find no improvement, decide that the doctor was a quack, and resort to visiting another specialist who will only give him the same remedy.

The examples may be compared to man’s treatment of his soul. After a man realizes the possession of a vice within himself, he will give up anything else, convince himself that God would never demand such an impossible sacrifice, or ignore the issue entirely.

But let us suppose that the retreat master’s words have stirred him into the confession of his sins. While the penitent recites the act of contrition he will note the phrase “... and amend my life.” This is quite explicit in the Sacrament of Penance. One ought not confess his sins with the intention of doing nothing about a personal reformation. A struggle for the annihilation of vice ought to follow the confession. As a help in the struggle, retreat masters expound the necessities of virtue.

We are now left with the result of a sincere retreat—peace of soul. There is a lightness of spirit after one has been freed from the yoke of vice. Death is now less frightening. It is no longer the cruel blade which severs the thread holding one to this life. That thin thread which once suspended the soul over the abyss of eternal hatred is now swung over to the side of heaven. Let it be severed!
Far from the village, 
Beyond the bare pines, 
Below the dark mountains, 
A spectral light shines.

Just past the forest, 
Deep in the damp 
Heart of swampland 
Glows a ghost-lamp.

Cutting the darkness, 
Sharp as a lance, 
Over the marshes 
The fairy-flames dance.

Strangely enchanting, 
This demon breath 
Lures the lost stranger 
On to his death.

Half-covered with mud 
In a thicket of reeds 
The hapless wayfarer 
Lies, clutching at weeds.
I stood by the shore,
    the sea ebbing and flowing at my feet.
The moon lay like silver cloth on the water.
The sand was as gold as the dirt was brown,
    where I first saw time in an old man,
    tending a fire in a rusted barrel.
An old man, and I saw worn rock
    and monuments, still, empty, decayed.
An old man with parchment hands, and I knew
    I must not look in time for eternity.

It grew cooler, and I could taste salt on my lips.
I turned over small rocks with my foot,
    just as they once turned small rocks in the temple,
    when they would stone her, but He stopped them.
A poor woman, but I have seen many of them,
    her sisters, I mean.
They are all ugly,
    carrying a huge sore in their hearts.
I must not look in the flesh for love.

The sea washes the shore, carrying away the dead and wasted.
I have been washed.
    How could I have carried such a heaviness in me for so long?
a time for remembrance

But he cleaned me,
    unworthy, always taking, too weak to give.
He took me and showed me his power,
    as a priest,
        his fingers wet with the oil of consecration,
    changed bread to God
        with five words.
The altar did not crumble under the weight of divinity.
    The priest moved on and spoke and lifted a cup,
        filled with His Blood,
    And lowered It again.
        But there was only silence.

He took me and showed me His Love,
    as a kneeling girl,
        clothed in Black-sorrow and White-purity,
    shook with sobs and sighed from her heart
        before Him on the altar.

He took me and showed me His Care,
    as the hands of friends,
        folded in prayer,
    snatched me from death,
        as I foolishly chased
            the beauty of Ugliness.

The sea moved away from the shore,
    pulled by the moon, drawn from earth.
Oh God, be to me as a moon.
A drab poster on a solitary pole
sang the coming of
Captain David Jones,
Diver Extraordinaire,
And my child’s eyes glistened
with the reflected light of
pool all fire, only six feet deep.
and a high white ladder,
way up, a 100 feet, it says.
And my child’s tongue told the coming,
And my heart waited,
And my ears heard
of that first dive,
when he lost both arm and leg,
as he fell
like swooping bird
to the side of the tank.
and his wife left him and he climbed again
and fell.

And the carnival came
with the booths and the brassy-voiced men
and the feel of money beneath my fingers
and the greasy taste of too-hot dogs and too many.
the ladder grew and grew and seemed to bite the sky,
then at the top there was a platform.
capt. David Jones, high diver

"When do you jump, Mister?"
"Captain ... not me, my son ... go way."
And one leg, one arm,
grimacing, snarling,
hobbled off to the darkness.

And the warmth left the earth,
the moon buried itself in black clouds,
the sweating, breathing bodies stopped,
as one leg jounced, bounced, swung to the top
like man-made-ape,
and in a breath of flame
fell to pool of fire,
in his moment.
The sweat flowed, and breath was once more acrid.

i-child left, bathed in violence,
and spilled my childhood
out onto the sheet,
no longer white.
The man who drinks liquor merely to "ice" himself will down many varieties indiscriminately from shaving mugs or flower pots. But the man of taste, the man who appreciates the better brews and blends, recognizes a drink for what it is: a symbol of gracious living.

The drink that has most captivated the connoisseurs of gracious living is the Martini. There is nothing quite so civilized or cosmopolitan (or potent) as a dry Martini. From presidential receptions to Sunday picnics, in crystalware or paper cups, the Martini reigns supreme. Of uncertain origin, it has become prominent during the twentieth century—the culmination of hundreds of years of grape squeezing.

Although an unbelievable number of Martinis is consumed daily, their mixture is a science mastered by few; and this fact is unfortunate, for how is an ambitious young man to be in the social "whirl" without an accurate knowledge of this necessary science. It is, therefore, to these young men that this banter is directed.

The requirements for the master Martini maker are few: a steady hand, a quick eye, a flare for the dramatic, and a devotion to precision.

For the ingredients you need: gin, dry Vermouth, crystal clear ice cubes, olives, lemons, calipers, a knife, a spoon, a strainer, two measuring graduates (one large; one small), and yourself—a very precise individual. Some pre-
fer to mix the cocktails before the guests arrive, and to keep the liquid spirit imprisoned in blank or ornate bottles. This not only results in a guest or two eyeing the decanters distrustfully, but also robs the discerning drinker of a supreme pleasure, that is, witnessing the creation of this magnificent "aristocrat of good cheer." With this thought in mind, gather your guests about you as a hen would her brood, and with a few deft and dramatic movements begin.

Pour the gin freely, but accurately, into the large graduate; 250 cubic centimeters should do. This action should be done in the manner of a chemist measuring an exact quantity.

The gin is now poured into a thoroughly chilled mixing glass, filled to the top with ice cubes. The gin is poured in first because most expert Martini men agree that the Vermouth would be badly bruised if it were poured onto the bare ice cubes. There is no place in a good Martini for liniment for Vermouth bruises.

Ah . . ., now the test of skill!

Pour the Vermouth accurately but not freely into the small graduate; two cubic centimeters should suffice. This, in turn, should be splashed (not poured) into the mixing glass with a rapid and dramatic turn of the hand.

With a flourish, stir the concoction no less than twenty-five revolutions. Wrist action is very important here: keep the head well back to avoid inhaling intoxicating fumes as a clear mind is essential until the preparation is completed. (This last action should definitely produce an audible murmur of approval from the group.)

It would be wise to practice the next few movements a number of times before the guests arrive, for a fumble here will brand you an amateur. An olive must be speared, measured, and placed lightly in the cocktail glass
in one swift, proficient movement. The size of the olive is most important, since one that is too large will displace too much gin.

With the strainer in its proper place, pour the contents of the mixing glass into the cocktail glass, and with a knowing look twist the lemon peel over the glass. This has no effect whatsoever upon the cocktail, but will so impress the onlookers that they will, in all probability, go a bit wild, gathering around you and shouting congratulations. It is important here that one doesn’t become too intoxicated with success, for, inevitably, during the confusion one or two designing individuals will try to make off with the contents of the mixing glass. But what could be a finer compliment for the young artist?

The perfect Martini can be followed only by another, and another, and another. . . . But a word of caution: as you are held in esteem for your accomplishment with the mixing glass, you will be held in contempt for your failure to control its contents. The man of discernment ought not become a man of indiscretion.
(As told by a lad who has trouble with his th's)

I t'ought dat I would never see
a number quite as hard as t'ree.

But one was easy, so was two;
den teacher said, "Write t'ree now, too."

A t'ree—it so confuses me!
I just can't tell it from an E.

I tried and tried but couldn't write
a t'ree dat teacher said was right.

So I don't see why dere must be
dese t'ings like numbers, spesh'ly t'ree.

Two's are made by kids like me,
But only teach'r can make a t'ree.

—30—
(t'irty)
The platform was crowded with the elite of the Sunnydale School for Girls. This was commencement day with the ceremonies and awards and endless speeches. Sunnydale, a "school for gentlewomen," was sending into society another group of girls, "reared in an old world tradition, educated in the virtues, and prepared for all the exigencies of modern life in a ladylike way."

Bettina was uncomfortably warm. Her face was stiff with make-up; her lips were dry, but she was afraid to wet them. The delicate toilet water was losing its battle with sweat, and she was conscious of her own stench. She leaned forward, and her dress peeled from the lacquered back of the big study chair.

Miss Adamms, a flat, sixtyish woman, who would blush becomingly to be called a "sexagenerian," approached the speaker's platform. Clasped in her almost sterile, marble hands were her notes. Neatly written, bound with a pink ribbon, these notes had the words "morality," "integrity," and "modesty" capitalized, for these were words capitalized in Miss Adamms' life.

Miss Adamms finished with an exhortation that the girls preserve themselves in chastity by cultivating modesty in actions, thoughts, and words. She nodded humbly in acknowledgment of the applause, raised her hand for silence, and introduced the orchestra.

The sleek, effeminate Mr. Todd tapped imperiously
for attention; the awkward, homely girls of the orchestra looked toward him with all the idolatry of starving adolescents; the music began, halting and pianissimo at first, and then jerking forward with confidence.

The other time it had been one of those tinkling waltzes to be heard after several cocktails. Bettina had come home from school unexpectedly. She had entered by the kitchen with her key. She heard her mother's laughter in the parlor. There was another voice. Straining forward, Bettina recognized her uncle's deep basso, half-humming, half-singing some tune from a Rodgers and Hart show. Bettina ran forward and pushed at the locked door of the parlor. The sudden stop of the song, the alarm in her mother's voice, and the few moments of awkward silence—then the door had opened. "Why, hello, darling! Yes, Uncle was helping me plan the activities for the church social. Why, what's the matter, Bettina? That's alright, Dick. I'll go after her and explain. Damn kids anyway."

Bettina now glanced toward her parents. Her mother's hand was clasping her father's beneath the huge, white straw hat that all gentlewomen wore in June in Sunnydale. The dark damp and the fleshy smell seemed so far-away, and Bettina smiled as her mother laughed into her handkerchief at something her father had scrawled on the program.

Miss Adamms came forward at the end of the number, complimented the girls on their talents, and beamed at Mr. Todd, who mirrored the beam in his toothy smile. Like so many satellites, each of the girls glowed in the reflected smile, giggled, and wondered how to phrase this in her diary.

"And now, most proud parents, we come to the annual awards for grace, scholarship and literary excellence."
The next few minutes had once seemed the most important in Bettina's seventeen years. They had been like the ephemeral beauty of some overwhelming desire; now Bettina wished that they would never come.

It had begun in Miss Locke's room that late autumn day, made almost unbearably beautiful by the clear air and the myriad tones and tints of Nature. Miss Locke was new, as new as the school year. She had not been sucked into the petty rivalries of the school. It was true that Mrs. Jenkins, the dowager of the English Department at Sunnydale, resented Miss Locke's new methods and resented the friendly interplay of ideas and affections in Miss Locke's classes, but the trouble had not erupted yet. Mrs. Jenkins had not yet badgered the neurotic Smith girl into sobbing out a tale of horror. Miss Locke had not yet been dismissed unjustly on slanderous charges.

On that bright autumn day Bettina had seen the slip of paper with the titles for the Literary Excellence themes. Traditionally, the titles were not known until the afternoon during which the girls sat in the long study hall for three hours and wrote—proctored by all available instructors; for, although Sunnydale was for gentlewomen, there was a need of proctors. Miss Adamms was not one to lead anyone into temptation.

"And the first award, for grace and beauty—truly vanishing qualities in our society—is given to Miss Adelaide Friss."

Miss Friss, in a high-waisted gown that spilled forth in lace and satin, walked to the platform in a distressingly graceless fashion. A few parents, not initiated into the school gossip, exploded after the first shock. They relaxed on finding that this latter-day Euphrosyne was soon to be married.
That list of titles in Miss Locke's careful printing had been implanted in Bettina's mind surely and irremediably. She could not forget them. After a long session with the Sunnydale conscience, she chose one and began to work. At first she planned to write for the allowed three hours, then put the essay away, and a day before the contest memorize her theme. After the first draft, however, she was not satisfied. She began to read widely in philosophers. Studying them, she sat long nights, wrapped in blankets, and puffing on forbidden cigarettes. Her ideas constantly changed under the impetus of her reading. The essay grew to such proportions that it would require three hours of constant writing to finish it. She memorized the essay—the new words, the names of Greek and German philosophers, quotations from the Bible and from the latest novel. At times the Sunnydale conscience screamed and wailed; then it became only a rather hoarse whisper, and finally it died. She was ready. On the day of the writing, she smoked a full pack of cigarettes and chewed a package of Sen-Sen to hide the odor. Seated at last at one of the make-shift tables in the study hall, she laid out the five pens. Nothing must go wrong. She counted the blue booklets; there were only four. In agitation she called for two more. Six were necessary, because under pressure she wrote in a great illegible scrawl. She didn't hear the biting voice of Miss Adamms reading the instructions, but, as soon as the voice stopped, she picked up her pen, wrote her name clearly, and scrawled the title, "The Problem of Evil and Western Man."

"The second award for scholarship—a virtue not often found in young girls, but common in the gentlewomen of Sunnydale—is given to that brilliant young lady—only thirteen and about to go further on, indeed to go
on to the very heights of Parnassus—our own Mirabella Bronte. Mirabella, dear, please come forward. Come now, no false modesty. That's a good girl. Ladies and gentlemen, proud parents, Mirabella Bronte.”

Mirabella was known among her classmates as “Acne,” and “Fat.” The “proud parents” may have been the parents of the children with whom Mirabella studied, for her own parents were quite ashamed of her. She spoke rapidly, the words clicking forth like a toll gate in a subway rush hour. She had an awkward way of twisting her head, and she was very round-shouldered. Mirabella’s avocation, shared with no one, was the composition of prose romances in the style of Kathleen Windsor, and she was now at work on the career of Empress Irene, the circus performer who became a Byzantine Empress.

Mirabella clutched at the small plaque, but it slipped from her fingers. Biting her lower lip, she carefully picked up the pieces and carried her award back to her chair.

The moments were passing too quickly now, as they had passed too quickly while she waited for the results. That was the strange thing. She had begun to hope that she would not be even a candidate; but Miss Locke, her voice filled with joy, had told Bettina that she was one of five candidates. That was the week before the trouble ending with Miss Locke’s unjust dismissal. Now Bettina hoped that she would not win. She could not. There was justice; all these virtues that Miss Adamms spoke about protested her winning. No, she couldn’t win; but she was afraid she would.

“And now, the final award. This year the decision was most easily made. One was so far superior to the others. The essay touched on that force which negates and destroys, that force we abhor, that force with which
we are engaged in an unending battle. It is fitting that this essay be written by a Sunnydale girl, very fitting. And so I present the literary excellence award to that brilliant young defender of virtue, the author of "The Problem of Evil and Western Man," Miss Bettina Northup. Bettina, my dear, please come forward."

Bettina arose quickly as if frightened. She felt strangled in her own filth. She was a hypocrite. The applause grew louder. She had cheated and lied in the very defense of virtue. Her father stood, his hands stinging with applause for his "baby," and her mother tugged at his suit-jacket self-consciously. The virtues had not won. And she was overcome, as if she had drunk too deeply of a big sore, infected and vile. She was a sharer in some ugly communion of evil.

She walked heavily and sadly to the speaker's platform. Miss Adamms handed her the plaque, and, leaning over, said quietly, "Today you are a lady."
Sing of poets yet unborn
of measures not yet writ
of lines and stanzas, metre, rhyme
Think man, and sing of it.

Who will they be to shake the earth
its glories to proclaim
its beauty and its ugliness
Speak! say but a name.

A name, a voice, a scratching pen
a word, a line, and Lo!
a poem, a memorial
They will wish it so.

They'll look, examine, seek and find
the thousand joys of life
and searching they'll discover
Pain, misery, grief and strife.

Thus will they find their bailwick
this corner of the All
rising, let them rise alone
And falling, let them fall.
a plea

Weep not for those who pass in song
in stanzas, metre, rhyme
weep not for those who are to come
In distant, hazy time.

Sing, sing in praise of them
or shout, or whisper low
but man, down to eternity
Do not in silence go.

hail and farewell

Salve once great city
though low in dust you lie
Once were you great and splendid
and thus you had to die

Salve once great city
stout walls encompassed all
Then Hector tempted Patroclus
and brought their thund'ring fall

Salve once great city
destroyed by beauty's lust
Whose object now is carrion
and molders in your dust


Salve once great city
a thousand shouts in praise
Of all that was so splendid
in ancient, happy days

Vale once great city
now the hour has come
The ballad must be ended
the song, so softly sung

Vale once great city
by Scamander's flowing pool
Great city that did suffer
when Paris played the fool

Farewell now windy Ilion
enjoy your sleep of peace
Beside the quiet Simois
sleep now in sweet surcease.
'Tis said:  
"We are dust . . . . "  
upon the dunes  
of  
shifting  
desert-sands.  

Mirage-like tides  
and trees  
our solace  
that blind,  
burning eye  
. . . . sees.  

Blood-orange rose,  
beige-blue hill  
—sagebrush in disguise.  
Sweet sounds  
orchestral whisp’rings  
Of shifting grains.  

My parched senses  
but unreal,  
betrayers.  
Withal I thought:  
"My love is real."  
But no.
Spirit-winds
. . . . call
to places-past-the-sun,
for we
are . . . .
only dust.

Imagine her advent:
   Radiant in soft-white array,
So child-like, God-sent,
   Fancy this luckful day.

Dream the dream of cherished flight,
   Tomorrow, how much dim?
Lady, tell now, how much light?

A day of love to great deeds sworn,
   This maxim none misgives
Yet of our days the most forlorn—
   Tomorrow's all, yet never lives.
Such is the grandeur of the night:
   A shade to show the brightness of the day;
A thousand-eyed reflection of jaded joy and sublime sorrowing—
Divine affections in communion through sky-mirrors visible to earth.

No din. No Scorn. A shadow with a gleam
   When flesh must fade for heaven is near—
Time to taste life.

My heart finds failure in its scope:
   Spaced splotches colored gay and grim.
The vastness of the night—
   The meter of the fullness of our days.
His name was Maurice, and he happened to be a Frenchman. Nationality doesn't matter. When I first met him, he was a chauffeur, driving an enormous Packard for our rather wealthy next-door neighbors in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. A little man, with a drooping black mustache which gave him a deceptive air of melancholy, he was discreetly correct in his neat dark blue uniform, appearing automatically when needed and fading out of the picture when his work was done. It was not long before I realized how often he was needed, how often I heard the phrase, “Ask Maurice, he'll know.” And he did know, whether it was how to get the water heater to stop acting as though it were on the verge of exploding, or what to do about sunburn, or where to dine.

It was not until an automobile entered my life that I fully appreciated to what extent Maurice was able to endow the most trivial happenings with dramatic quality. I had never owned a car or driven one, and I asked Maurice if he thought he could help me find a cheap one.

“But certainly,” he said and, whipping a newspaper from his pocket, turned to the classified ads. “Hmm,” he said presently. “A Ford, seven years old, $250.”

We went to the address. Before ringing the bell, he turned to me and, in a tone of the darkest conspiracy, said, “Let me do the talking—don’t show any enthusiasm.”
maurice

It was a nice little car at a price I could afford, so I had to muster quite some effort to appear indifferent. Maurice sighed and touched the vehicle with one forefinger, gingerly, as though he half expected it to disintegrate under such pressure.

"Two hundred and fifty dollars," he murmured, eyeing the owner in pained disappointment.

"She climbs like a mouse," the owner said eagerly. "Try it, you'll see."

Maurice looked pityingly from him to the car and then at him again. Dubiously, Maurice got in, and we drove off. Once out of sight, we drove at breakneck speed for ten minutes, then stopped; and Maurice stooped under the hood with a flashlight. When he emerged, he nodded.

"She's good," he said, patting the hood affectionately. "Unusually good. We'll offer two hundred dollars."

"Two hundred dollars," he repeated firmly.

As we drove back into the garage, he mopped his brow as though he had just been through an experience so harrowing that it was a wonder the car's owner was still allowed to be at large.

Of course we got the car for our price after the proper exchange of headshakings and doleful looks. But the real drama began when I became Maurice's pupil. After I had mastered the fundamentals—with the car set up on blocks so that I could practice shifting gears and applying brakes—we proceeded to the open road. For sheer melodrama no movie has ever surpassed the situations into which, in imagination, Maurice thrust me.
Leaning forward, a look of intense concentration on his face, he would suddenly raise a trembling finger and cry, "Attention! Look! There ahead of you—a young mother with her little child. She is leading him by the hand. Suddenly the child pulls away and darts across the road. The mother screams and runs forward (here his voice broke) to save the baby. Now she stumbles. We are almost upon them." Shuddering, he clasped his hands over his eyes. "Stop!" I stopped, bathed in sweat, hearing the hideous sounds of crunching bones under the wheels of my shiny Ford. To this day, whenever I see a child crossing the road half a mile ahead, I feel like a potential murderer.

Maurice took nothing for granted. An idea to him was not something to be gulped down whole and then at some later time regurgitated and served up in a garbled version. Like a complicated piece of machinery, it was something to be held up to the light, examined, and then taken apart carefully and neatly.

In everything he said or did, there was always a hard inner core of realism. He worked for the rich, and although he was always more or less short of money—for he had a large family—he did not envy his employers. All his life he was in a position of subservience, yet he never lost his dignity. He never asked for a favor, never expected anything from life except what he was able to wrest from it with his own hands.

It was Maurice who first made me realize that the measure of a person's worth is not what he knows or what he has accomplished, but what he is. By this standard Maurice himself rates high indeed. In a world filled with
lacerated egos screaming for attention, it is good to know that people like this still exist.

I doubt that Maurice, when the time comes, will have any difficulties at the gates of heaven. Once inside those gates, he will probably be looking at them with a critical eye and suggesting some improvements in the way they are hung. Or he may even install some kind of electric eye so that they might swing open by themselves for all comers. In such a case we may conceivably meet again.
Night is a thousand different things. Night is calm and gentle, like the peace of a sleeping child. It is soft with velvet darkness and rich with jeweled stars. Night is the lingering kiss of the sea breeze, the muted murmur of the surf on the sand; silver in the light of the serene, full moon. It is a lazy village street with street-lamps shining amid the green leaves. Night is whispered secrets of the pine forest told to the wind. It is the unwearied chirp of crickets in the darkened swamps, punctuated by the abrupt flash of fire flies. It is the mournful train-whistle across the plains, stirring sadness in a man’s heart though he knows not why.

Night is the waterfront shrouded in fog, the big, dark shapes of the vessels gleaming dully, wetly, with beads of moisture on their iron plates. The light at the top of the mast is haloed. The fog-horn gropes with blind fingers. The doleful clang of the bell-buoy is muffled by the fog.

Night is the rich smell of lilacs by the porch rail; it is the creak of the old one’s rocker and the glow of his pipe in the darkness.

Night is the lonely foot-steps of the sentry, the flickering shapes of the tents in the winking camp-fires, the troubled dreams of those who sleep there and the thoughts of those who cannot sleep.
High above soars the owl in solitary majesty. His great eyes probe the blackness. This is his domain.

Night is the wrath of the sudden storm, the whip-crack of the thunder, the white stab of lightning and the lash of rain, beating hard on the earth.

Night is the twinkling lights of the carnival, the innocent laughter of the children riding the carrousel mingled with the firm beat of the hurdy-gurdy. Their eyes shine with merriment. Soon they will be home, sleeping in mother's arms.

Night is the cloak of the fugitive. For him there is no sleep. His footsteps scurry in the alleys, as he glances furtively over his shoulder.

Night is the tender muse.

Night is the giant of grim visage.

Night is a thousand different things.
“Oh! Small Cylindrical Fibroid,  
So snowy-white and natural,  
Ye purify passing colloid  
Without asbestos or charcoal,  
Please help this lowly one decide  
What we poor mortals should Thee call.”

Thus cackling through my cancerous throat  
I humbly begged for inspiration;  
For two full months now had I sought  
To find a fitting appellation.  
This prayer was the last resort,  
A straw to clutch in desperation.

There’re those amongst you who, perhaps,  
Will scoff at what I here proclaim:  
Those twenty-thousand filter traps  
Have powers beyond that to “de-bane”;  
For scarce one second did elapse  
Ere I had found a worthy name.

Now in my dahlia Thunderbird  
Gadding through the land I go,  
And everywhere I am revered,  
I have become a national hero;  
For I did choose the winning word,  
I named the filter tip “El Draino.”
This is my last chance to be
uncivilized
you say and leave smooth man-ways for the tangle-brush to
run
bent-over down a twisty path through branchy arms
outstretched
tasting the self-righteous salty taste of
sweat
while you walk a little declaring this was my last act
uncivilized
then crashing through the bush a big raggedly-furred
buffalo
squinting at you beady-eyed snorting paws the ground you
run
eyes wide with the smell of fear
run
with faltering legs and pounding heart
run
gasping at the pain (right here) in your side
run
till the giddy earth comes to meet you claims you till you
lie
sobbing writhing in the raw damp dirt
outstretched
which only shows there will be
violence
until there are no more buffaloes and maybe
no more men.
The time was nineteen hundred hours and the last dying rays of the sun silhouetted our number three team as it came shuffling over the ridge. We had at least an hour before we would move out; the men settled back for a smoke. The C. O. had briefed us the same afternoon and he made it quite clear that this raid would be no hit or miss affair. The wheels back at division were turning and they wanted a prisoner bad, and any patrol leaving the M.L.R. had explicit instructions to bring one back, or to stay out until one was produced, a trick not easily accomplished.

The objective picked out for us was a small cluster of straw houses situated about a thousand yards to our front in a gully that nestled right in the sights of Joe Chink's carbine. We knew the place rather well, for during the past week we were watching old slant eyes and his buddies through the glasses as they sneaked down into the village to see their girl friends, whose unmistakable white linen Eskimo suits were plainly picked out by the sharpest eyes in the squad.

While Uncle Mao's boys were celebrating, it was up to us to sneak in undetected and, at a prearranged signal, serve the refreshments and then clear out with our prize. In all we numbered fifteen men, including the gunny and
The raid

one officer. The first man in the squad would be armed with a shotgun while the rest of us would carry T.O. weapons. It would be up to the front man to blast off with the shotgun in case of ambush. We had all been given our ration of Jap beer and the bottles that we saved were now filled with gasoline. These would be used on the straw huts before returning.

The sun had disappeared completely now and the last cigarette butt was extinguished as we moved down through the barbed wire on to a well worn path that zig-zagged through an open field toward the enemy lines. The moon winked at us as it darted between the clouds which swept across the star-studded sky. It threw a brief spotlight on the village whose shape loomed up eerily ahead of us. We were about fifty yards from the huts now; the soft voices of the chubby girl-sans were carried off on a coughing wind. At that instant an explosion rocked the quiet night and one of the gook sentries slipped to the ground. Sgt. Willie Kozack had hit him chest high as he jumped from a trench to the left of the nearest hut. The party was on. The oily, sweating, Oriental bodies came spilling out of their nests to be met with a piercing, flesh rending hail of jagged missiles. Their bodies fell to the deadly fire as grain falling to the scythe. Bayonets flashed and cold steel tore red, angry flesh from bone as one tears the pulpy skin from an orange, intestines slithering forth on the ensanguined dust.

Our number one fire-team whose particular job was to pick off a straggler had made the coup and was dragging the naked prisoner off in the direction of our own lines when directly in front of us a Red patrol appeared on the road blocking our path of escape.
The idea of being trapped by these insignificant, foul-smelling dwarfs was too much for us to bear. Spitting venomous words we threw ourselves on the enemy with such fury and fire that they were completely routed.

We carried our wounded back to the lines along with our valuable prize. The men greeted us with a hearty slap on the back and a warm beer. Mission accomplished.
Fletcher sat watching the rats, smooth, white creatures playing life in a cage. They lived and died in the most quiet way. There were no violent moments with the snap of steel and the agonizing cry of death. There was only the steady progression from the litter to the incinerator. The interim was routine, filled with meals, injections, operations, sleep, and hours of amusement on the treadmill.

Fletcher watched and noted as one, younger and sleeker than the others in this cage, leaped from the treadmill and dashed violently against the wire sides. Frustrated, the rat drew back, startled and hurt. The others ignored him and diligently ran on. In the following minutes the younger rat circled the cage in bewilderment, then, in a shy and submissive way, joined the others on the treadmill and busied himself until lunch-time with the constant running.

After lunch Fletcher left the door of the cage open. The rats were once again on the mill, and the younger rat was among them. Smelling freedom, he looked at the door but quickly turned away. For a few moments he raced ahead on the mill, and the others, upset by the speed, were tumbling off. Then he quieted suddenly and ran at the standard pace.

Fletcher was finishing the notation of this experiment, when Carnie, a lab assistant, entered. Carnie was a great
hulk of athlete, quite out of his element in the precise and delicate world of research. He had no patience with the rats and couldn’t see any point to Fletcher's independent research. As long as his assignments were done, he would get a degree; independent work was unnecessary, hence valueless.

As Carnie flipped through the note-book, in which Fletcher recorded the fluctuation of weight, change of diet, and formation of behavior patterns, he grinned, and then reminded Fletcher of his appointment with the president of the college.

Fletcher knew. He could not forget. It had been dogging him since he had submitted the application for scholarship. This morning he had shaved carefully and had taken his suit out of the cardboard box. His tie was pressed, his shirt clean; he even had his shoes shined. An incursion into the "ivory tower" was not to be treated lightly. And he needed the money.

In the long walk to the lab he had rehearsed his words. Intelligent smile, firm handshake, pensive look, and the "thank you" of acceptance—all had been practiced as he paced the lab floor before beginning work.

"Carnie, take care of things while I’m gone."

"Yeah. Remember to leave your shoes outside the door.”

“And don’t you go dropping any categorical imperatives, while I’m gone.”

"Categorical imperative" was one of the president's favorite phrases, and all the students imitated it, mimicking the gesture and the intonation of the president.

In his youth the president had been an ardent Marxist with a cultivated Brooklyn accent and a good word for the proletariat. He had held posters in Communist rallies
and once had spit at Rockefeller; but, as he often said at cocktail parties, he had taken a good look at the proletariat and decided we were better off with capitalism. He became a Hegelian, and now in his middle age he was a Kantian with the conservative ways of the doctor of Konigsberg. His hate of liberals and his championing of the American way of life had won him his present position and a citation from the D.A.R.

Fletcher entered the Administration Building, a huge, drafty mansion, left by a misanthropic millionaire, who wished to plague generations of students and teachers; however, the administration, in an unthinking moment, had chosen this as the site of its offices. Fletcher stood at the switch-board and told of his appointment. The operator, a dowdy woman in her mid-forties, buzzed the president and spoke crisply into the mouthpiece.

"Fletcher to see you. . . . Yes, sir. . . . You may go up, Mr. Fletcher."

The president had been waiting for this lab assistant. The Committee on Scholarships had approved his application, but the president did not approve of scholarship students, especially poor ones. In a better time there would have been none of this. After all, education was the prerogative of a certain class, and that class certainly wasn’t the proletariat. And then this Fletcher was rather radical, not in the school tradition. "Tradition is the bulwark of the nation." Yes, one of his better lines . . . from the acceptance speech. The D.A.R. woman, a gap-toothed creature, had giggled and tittered and not understood a word. But Tenley of Barker, a good man, had read the speech in the paper and had sent him a letter of congratulation. One of his better moments.

The president arose and walked quietly to the door.
He listened as Fletcher ran down the corridor, paused—probably straightening his tie, and knocked cautiously.

The president pretended not to hear. Then, the knock became louder and more urgent.

The president snapped, as if shocked by such rudeness, “Come in!”

Fletcher entered, thrust his hand forward firmly. The president ignored it for a moment, and, when the hand relaxed, grabbed it. Limp handshake—the boy has no character.

“Well, Fletcher, how is your family?”

The boy really had no family. Some maiden aunt had reared him, and she had sent him away four years ago. Since this remark was the usual greeting, the president saw no reason to deviate from his procedure because a student was an exception.

“My aunt is fine.”

Fletcher tried to conceal his malice. The interview had not been this way in his countless practices. He had been too abrupt in knocking, and his hand must have been weak and perspiring. But he realized that this was the president’s fun. He must have been recommended for scholarship, since this was the president’s way of expressing displeasure.

“I was talking to Professor O’Connor. It seems that he isn’t satisfied with your work in his course.”

“I don’t find the course stimulating, sir.”

The president hadn’t expected candor. O’Connor really was an idiot—a rather befuddled old man, whose scholarship was seriously dated. Perhaps he would recommend retirement. Fletcher’s candor, however, was tantamount to indiscretion. The president thought of several remarks on the qualities of a good student, and perhaps
brother rat

a reminiscence . . . about student days at Atlanta and Professor Bates, another idiot. But no, this boy was radical. A few sharp words.

"You should not place your opinion above the judgment of your superiors. You must accept the experience of age, sir."

Fletcher regretted what he had said. Even though it was the truth and the members of the faculty were all too ready to admit it, you never told the truth to the president—only what he wanted to hear. Fletcher was becoming irritated and tired and decided to bring the matter to a head.

"I am very sorry, sir. I have been worried about money for the next term; and I do want to continue my research."

The president was disappointed. His feline nature enjoyed toying with this formidable little mouse . . . this different mouse out of his native surroundings . . . like the Country Cousin in La Fontaine. He cleared his throat brusquely, tugged at his suit jacket—conservative flannel—and prepared to talk business.

"Yes, I understand, Fletcher. Your advisor is very satisfied with your work, and the Board has considered your application and studied your background. We realize your handicaps, and in an earlier day you might have been one of the prol . . . er . . . countless uneducated. But today, with our beneficent system . . . well . . . you have the scholarship. The industry of others suffices for the lack in background. Nothing personal, of course. You realize that there are certain obligations, and, since Professor Clark, your advisor, is leaving, you will discontinue your research and have more time to devote to your studies."
Fletcher had not minded the remarks about his background, because he was not his background. He had seen himself become a stranger to his old neighborhood and friends—changing interests, different problems; he had lost so much, and now he was filling the gap. But his advisor leaving? Why? And the president had a note of malicious glee in his voice, when he spoke of "time to devote to your studies."

“But, sir, you spoke of certain obligations. What are they?”

The president had him squirming. He would demonstrate his power. He also noted the far-away panic in Fletcher's voice. Was it really so important to watch rats run around a cage? Disgusting work.

“You yourself said that O'Connor was not a stimulating lecturer. Perhaps you could do a much better job. At any rate, during the next semester you will have two sections of O'Connor's groups. It's a very popular course, you know.”

Fletcher knew why it was popular—taught in a big, darkened auditorium; countless slides of marine life; ideal for 8:00 after a lazy, relaxing night at some bar. His research would have been completed by June, and then perhaps he could have gone on to a better school. It was like smelling freedom, and a cold hand kept him back. He could walk out now; but what school would accept him? He wouldn't get a good recommendation. Knowledge wasn't much without recommendations.

“Thank you, sir, very much. I'll try to live up to your trust in me.”

Once again Fletcher put forth his hand, more quietly, less impulsively. It lacked the firmness of the earlier greeting. The president ignored it for a moment; when he did
brother rat

thrust forth his hand, Fletcher turned and walked to the door.

The president sank into the leather chair. A very good afternoon. Yes, most enjoyable. Perhaps he would call O'Connor and tell him about the new student assistant. Yes, he would phone.

As Fletcher walked back to the lab, he hated for the first time the regular paths and the tiny trees which were twisted into straight lines by wire and rubber. He hurried along and didn't look around him.

When he reached the lab, Carnie was preparing the evening diets. He looked up and smiled, but turned back to his work at the answering frown.

“Well, did you get it?”

“Yes. Now get out of here!”

Carnie grabbed his jacket and left. He never had understood Fletcher. People who got all the breaks and didn't appreciate them irritated him.

Alone in the lab, Fletcher threw his jacket dejectedly over a chair and reached mechanically for the notebook. If he had been observing his own actions, he would have written this reaction in bold letters to be used in a report. Now he walked over to the cage where he had seen the violently different rat earlier in the morning. Violently different, and now what?

He became engrossed in the rats on the mill. Their claws clutched at the spokes of the wheel as they ran steadily on and on. Their tails bounced and slid with the swift movement. Their white bodies quivered as they tired, but, driven on by the momentum of the machine, did not stop. The wheel revolved quickly. One or two fell, but clambered back, as if desperate and frightened to act by themselves.
Fletcher noted this in cramped letters. Then he was struck for the first time by the knowledge that these rats were prepared for everything but reality. They would be defenseless in the musty, filthy cellar. They would scorn the garbage so necessary for life. They would be slain by the true rats—the vicious, lice-ridden rodents of the alley. They had lost something, a spirit or a defiance or whatever it was that made a rat a rat, able to meet reality. Then he remembered the violent rat of this morning—the whole one, the true individual, able to leap from the treadmill and act without a mob.

Hopefully he looked for that younger, sleeker rat. But he was indistinguishable from the rest. He was integrated. He was no longer as one. He was in the many.

And Fletcher could only smell the cages and the wheel. He could only feel the steady movement of all the wheels, and they seemed to engulf him. He was no longer the observer. The initial panic left him, and he resignedly closed the notebook and left the lab.
Once I cried and wept and rubbed ashes in my eyes:
   I was alone,
       that ugly, hated word I knew in the nursery and in bed.
   Mine was not the small-talk, the slap on the back or the quick rejoinder.
I could only talk with thick, unwieldly tongue,
       with heavy, dead words, that fell and clanked before they could be heard.
   I was alone.
But, one day, I talked to someone who caught my words in his mighty, omni-all hands.
   He slapped them into life and reached forth with love, undemanding, all-giving.
I was alone. I love.