

The Ching Yuan Chai Treasury of Imperishable Ephemera

Dear Family, Former Students, Colleagues, and Friends: (December 2005)

I have had this project in mind for some years, but haven't had the time or patience to carry it out. Now, with my 80th birthday coming up, I decided to use part of this holiday season to type out, for very limited distribution to some email correspondents and a few others, selections from what I can find or remember of my versifying and song-writing over many years. Some of it (Part II) goes back to my time as President of the Manuscript Club at Berkeley High School (1942-3) and as new undergrad at U. C. Berkeley (1943-44), when I intended to be an English major and eventually a writer. The best of it (Part I) dates from the years I spent as a U. C. Berkeley professor (1965-95), and was mostly done for Faculty Club Christmas parties and other occasions. Feel free to share this (with proper crediting please)—I haven't copyrighted it (excepting Dan Destry's Dilemma.) It's not in chronological order—the juvenalia is at the end, where no one but family and close friends are likely to find it--some of it makes me wince today. (A lot, even more wince-inducing, has been left out.) Part I is more or less chronological, except that the two operettas are at the end; Part II follows no order.

So, a happy and prosperous 2006 and many more years of health and productivity to all of you.

Ching Yuan Chai Chu-jen, James Cahill

A. Verses from Academia

Sudden and Gradual Limericks

In 1986? I attended, along with Tu Wei-ming, a conference on "Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought" organized by Peter Gregory; I presented a paper on Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's theory of the Southern and Northern Schools (see my Biblio. for 1988.) Peter announced a limerick contest; I wrote the following six, and won the contest by sheer number. Most referred to particular papers in the conference.

Sighed Shen-hsiu, "For ages and ages
We've reached our satori by stages.

These young monks are turning
Away from our learning—

They can't wait to make it as sages."

Cried Hui-neng, "It's queerer and queerer!
My prajna is suddenly clearer!
It came to me just
As I blew off the dust
From Shen-hsiu's metaphorical mirror!"

Wu-chun, Southern Sung master of Ch'an,
Was enlightened one day in the john.
When asked "Was it sudden?"
He replied "I'll say nudd'n—
It'll make an amusing kôan."

"My Perfect Wisdom," said Chih-i
"Won't get you the truth in a hurry.
These Channists, I fear
(Who have yet to appear)
Will make things that are clear become blurry."

Ikkyû made the remarkable claim
That satori and sex are the same.
"I'm for Sudden," he said,
"But my girlfriend, in bed,
Says that Gradual's the name of the game."

The satori of Master O'Doul
Came about as he fell in the pool.
Poor O'Doul nearly drowned,
But recovered to found
The Sodden Enlightenment School.

Faculty Club Christmas Party Songs

For some years after I moved back to Berkeley in 1965 I was one of a group of people—most of the others were Oriental Languages faculty—who were responsible for the performances at the Faculty Club Christmas parties, or contributed to them. Excerpts from the two full-scale "operetta" productions, Dan Destry's Dilemma (1967) and Dan Destry's Return (1983), are below;

preceding these are some songs that I wrote for parties in other years. A fervent admirer of Weill/Brecht and the like, I was trying for songs with a similar political “bite.”

1966, “A Night at the Old Alhambra “

Cyril Birch and Doug Mills had both been involved in performances in the English music hall tradition at SOAS in London, and our offering this year followed that tradition. Pat Brown (who was in the audience for the first performance) had just been defeated for the governorship of California by Ronald Reagan; in this song he mourns his defeat. Tune: “The Man On the Flying Trapeze.”

Once I was gov'nor, my confidence firm,
 I thought I was bound for my seventeenth term.
 But the voters they turned like the slipp'riest worm
 And elected a man of the stage.
 The opponent I faced, he was handsome
 He was polished as I'd never been,
 So I never could please them one quarter so much
 As the man on the cinema screen—oh—

He floats through the issues as I never could,
 Distinguishing clearly the bad guys and good,
 But nobody ever was sure where he stood,
 And my job he has stolen away.
 I attempted to brand him a Bircher
 I said he was callow and green,
 But none of this counted one quarter so much
 As his face on the cinema screen—oh—

He says I've been lazy, he says I've been lax,
 He says he'll stop crime and he'll lower the tax,
 And the U.C. professors will be feeling the ax—
 And my job he has stolen away.

(Alternative last verse, vetoed by others as going too far:)

He rides on the backlash, he plays on their fears,
 He's probably in for the next twenty years,
 The South may be happy but the North is in tears,

And my job he has stolen away.

"Campus Camp-feuer" was the title of a group of songs also on this program. The departure of a group of professors, led by a Prof. Feuer, who had conspicuously left U.C. Berkeley because of its radical tilt and were moving to an Eastern institution, was much under discussion. I wrote several cowboy songs for the occasion:

1. (Tune: "I'm Goin' to Leave Old Texas Now")

I'm goin' to leave
 Ol' Berkeley now,
 They've no more room
 For the sacred cow.

They've gone and let
 All the old things change
 And the students there
 Are all so strange.

They don't wear shoes
 And they ain't refined,
 And the weed they use
 Ain't the tumblin' kind.

I'll pack my books
 Take my canteen
 And I'll head back East
 Where the ivy's green.

And to all my friends
 I say adieu (adoo)
 It's a safer place
 I'm a-goin to.

2. The Students' Farewell to Their Professors (Tune: "Red River Valley")

From this campus they say you are leaving,

We shall miss your sharp wit and wry smile,
 For now we'll be seeing you never,
 Instead of just once in a while.

Come and puff on your pipe as you used to,
 Do not hasten to bid us adieu,
 For who now will guide us in our theses
 On subjects no one's heard of but you?

We will always remember your lectures,
 'Though the contents were never very new;
 Even though it was all in our Fybrates (prepared lecture notes]
 It was so nice to hear it from you.

Come and sit by our side as you used to,
 Even though there is nothing more to say,
 And remember the old Berkeley campus
 And the students who drove you away.

While you're back there in safer surroundings,
 Where the students give no cause for fear,
 We'll go on advocatin' force and vi'lence
 With the blessing of your colleagues out here.
 Come and sit (etc., second chorus)

3. (Tune: "Home On the Range")

(Partly lost; two stanzas recoverable:)

Oh, give me a class
 Where the rebels don't pass
 But are quickly and firmly expelled,
 Where nobody fights
 For the grape-pickers' rights
 And established procedure's upheld

The campus I'd like
 Is where students don't strike
 And the non-students strictly are non,
 Where squads of police
 Are preserving the peace
 With the faculty cheering them on.

1969: “Call to Meeting”

This show presented the Academic Senate debating issues such as how to use the new U.C. land on the moon (a People’s Park?), the future of the Ethnic Studies programs, controversial courses, etc. At the end, a representative arrives from Sacramento, where the Regents had been meeting, to announce that all the problems had been solved. (The reference to “Max” in the last stanza must be to one of Reagan’s henchmen; I can’t remember.)

(Tune: “Everything’s Up to Date in Kansas City,” from Oklahoma.)

Everything’s been resolved in Sacramento—
 The students now can leave us all in peace—
 The U.C. land upon the moon will never be a park,
 For parks are too much trouble to police--
 The Regents have signed a contract now with NASA,
 They’re making it a missile launching site—
 It’ll be the nicest campus that a college ever had,
 They’re building student housing all around the launching pad,
 And if the kids don’t want to live up there, it’s just too bad—
 The Regents have set everything aright,
 The Regents have set everything aright.

Everything’s been resolved in Sacramento—
 The Regents are good at making up our mind;
 They favor ethnic studies if the ethnos is their own—
 All others are subversively inclined.
 The Regents are getting rid of third-world students
 By setting up a program they can’t stand—
 The College of WASP Studies is replacing L & S,
 And wealth replaces learning as the measure of success—
 We’ll teach ‘em to make more money while non-WASPS are making less-
 The Regents have our problems well in hand,
 The Regents have our problems well in hand.

Everything’s been resolved in Sacramento,
 And controversial courses have to go—

All new ideas in lectures have to pass a screening board,
 The B.E.D. becomes the B.E.O. (spoken: Board of Educational Orthodoxy)
 The Regents have found a way to cut our budget,
 Reducing all those salaries they pay—
 They say that objectivity is what our teaching lacks,
 So nearly all the faculty are going to get the axe—
 They're firing everybody who is left of dear old Max—
 The Regents solved a lot of things today,
 The Regents solved a lot of things today.

(The messenger then passes out copies of the new Faculty Hymn, which the Academic Senate sings as a finale. It should be remembered that strong faculty self-governance was U.C. Berkeley's pride. The music was written by the composer Andrew Imbrie; I had conceived the hymn as a kind of chorale, but he made it a spirited march. I wrote two stanzas, the first and fourth below; Cyril Birch later expanded it by adding stanzas two and three for performance in a year when I was away. It continues to be sung at Christmas parties and other occasions at UCB, its original context forgotten.

Later note: David Littlejohn tells me that the additions were made for the show that he and Andrew Imbrie did in 1985.)

We pledge allegiance
 To the Regents
 Of the University
 On each campus
 Rubber-stamp us
 Save us from diversity

After troubles
 Daily doubled
 Find we now our role at last
 Gutless, blameless,
 Witless, aimless,
 Living in our glorious past

Free of tension
 No dissension
 Mars the tenor of our days
 Unexcited
 Hearts united

Calmly offer hymns of praise

What a blessing
 Acquiescing
 Brings upon us from above
 From each warder
 Law and order
 Radiate like perfect love

1970: "Faculty Foibles"

President Hitch, under pressure from Sacramento and the Regents, was admonishing the faculty to spend more classroom hours in teaching. We responded in a skit giving our view of this matter, ending with a

Finale: (music by Andrew Imbrie)

Recitative: Everyone respects the professor—
 No image more prestigious than his (should be "or hers,, but--):
 Yet everyone wants the professor
 To be something other than what he is:

Sung, faster: The radicals regard as sin
 His willingness to serve within
 A racist institution;
 At Sather Gate they hand out sheets
 Demanding that he take the streets
 And join the revolution.

 The Regents, on the other hand,
 Denounce him when he takes a stand
 Against their machination;
 For what they want, but won't admit
 Is nothing less than his polit-
 lcal emasculation.

 His colleagues on committees see
 His field of scholarship to be
 In need of constant nurture;

So he must be, to win their praise
 And periodic merit raise
 A diligent researcher.

Meanwhile his students fuss if they
 Have less than twenty hours a day
 Of access to his blessing—
 And if he takes off any time
 They charge him with the awful crime
 Of absentee professing.

With reputation rising, he
 Is offered a consultant's fee
 Which lures him off to *more* work;
 And once his expertise is lent
 To industry or government
 He finds he's doing *war* work--

Or else, for change of scenery,
 A chairmanship or deanery
 Becomes his occupation,
 And all his time and energies
 (Whatever he has left of these)
 Go to administration.

Scholar, author, entertainer,
 Father-confessor to the young,
 Money-raiser and campaigner
 Many more we haven't sung—
 Can people playing all these roles
 Expect to keep their minds and souls?
 For the professor we beseech:
 Give him room and let him teach!

Please, Mr. Hitch,
 We didn't need your pitch;
 We know we haven't taught
 As much as we had ought,
 But we've had other kinds
 Of problems on our minds.

So tell your Regent friends
 That when the pressure ends
 And when we're less harassed
 Than in the recent past
 Then teaching will return
 To be our main concern,
 We'll love the undergrad
 As if we were his dad,
 And harmony will reign
 In Berkeley once again.

1971: "Beyond the Workload"

Governor Reagan, that year, was sending budget-cutters to our campus to look into ways we could economize, such as (actual suggestions) canceling small classes and selling rare books from the library. We addressed this bitter song to them, and to Reagan.

(Tune: Kurt Weill's music for the great Second Act Finale to Three Penny Opera)

You gentlemen who come to trim our budget
 And show us how we should economize
 It's very clear, however much you fudge it
 You're here to hurt, and not just to advise.
 You say that smaller classes have to disappear,
 You say that we should auction off our books,
 The fate you plan for us is like Procrustes' bed—
 You'll trim the limbs until the patient's dead.
 A university can surely perish
 When they attack who are supposed to cherish.

The University—
 Who really needs it?
 It eats your money up with no immediate return,
 But the society
 That keeps and feeds it
 Depends for life in what its children learn
 If art and intellect are to survive,

Let's keep the University alive!

Our Guv'nor in your Sacramento mansion
 Consid'ring all your legislative bills
 Supporting exploitation and expansion
 Vetoing those that try to cure our ills,
 You say that we must do without a salary raise,
 Until the stringent situation ends—
 In fact the stringency's selectively applied:
 You're starving us while fattening your friends.
 A university, in human factors,
 Deserves as well as aero-space contractors—

The University—(etc., repeat)

1974, "The University Explorer"

Jerry Brown, son of Pat, had just been elected governor, after a campaign in which both candidates looked considerably more intellectual than the incumbent (R. Reagan). Recalling that young Jerry had once been a U. C. undergraduate in classics, we addressed to him this song, suggesting that he brush up his classics to impress the voters, and also that he appoint U.C. professors to state office. It contains one couplet (the Fritos/vetoes one) of the kind that makes its writer feel a glow, as if it had been sent down from heaven.

(Tune: "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," from Cole Porter's Kiss Me Kate.)

You gubernatorial candidates
 Chose a different image to cultivate,
 You laid on that intellectual stuff—
 Eight years of the opposite were enough.

And now you'll follow your dad
 In governing California
 Our old Classics undergrad,
 And we feel it's wise to warn ya--

Brush up your classics,
 Start quoting them now,
 Brush up your classics

And the voters you will wow

If you want to make waves in the media
Try to sound like an encyclopedia

When your critics are painfully blistering
Put them down with a passage from history

You'll impress all the folks on the Water Board
If you come in your gown and your mortar board

Brush up your classics
And they'll all kow-tow.

Brush up your classics,
Start quoting them now,
Brush up your classics
And the voters you will wow

They're less likely to brand you a rascal
If you throw at them quotes that are classical

They will buy all your bills legislative
If you make proper use of the dative

If you feed them Greek phrases like Fritos,
Then they won't override all your vetoes

Brush up your classics
And they'll all kow-tow.

Political jobs most often go
To trusted friends and to party pro,
But it's hard to tell the geese from swans,
And the trusted pros may end up as cons.
But make appointments you must
And the way to avoid polemics
Is appoint the ones you can trust--
We mean of course us academics--

Brush off your professors,
 Start appointing them now
 Brush off your professors
 And the voters you will wow—

When the great ship of state you are steering,
 You're in need of some Naval Engineering (gesturing to colleagues)

After teaching the laws of the mineral,
 He may end up as Attorney General-- (pointing)

You will make, with this new highbrow emphasis
 Sacramento the tenth of the campuses—

Brush off your professors,
 And they'll all kow-tow.

Bush off your professors,
 Start appointing them now,
 Brush off your professors
 And the voters you will wow—

After languishing in his laboratory (British pronunciation)
 He may turn up a genius for oratory— (pointing)

As an expert in art quattrocento (pointing)
 He may end up in old Sacramento—

For the dullest of academicians
 Can't do worse than the real politicians—

Brush off your professors
 And they'll all kow-tow
 (But reluctantly)
 All kow-tow
 (They won't like it!)
 They'll all kow-tow.

1980: Song (sung by Cyril Birch and myself) at rally against Proposition Nine, another tax-cutter, like the infamous Prop. 13, that would have sharply reduced state services and forced cuts in higher education.

(Tune: "St. Louis Blues")

We hate to see (Tune: I hate to see that evening sun go down--)
 That Proposition Nine
 Don' want to see
 That Proposition Nine
 Got Thirteen already
 And we're in decline

Feel it tomorrow
 Like we don' feel it today
 Feel it tomorrow
 Like we don' feel it today
 'Cause that ol' state surplus
 It's gonna drain away

California voters (Tune: St. Louis woman--)
 Think hard before you choose
 Ain't gonna save much
 Compared to what you'll lose

You'll keep some dollars
 But you'll be feelin' dumb
 When your house burn down
 Before the firemen come—

Got those Prop Nine blues when we think what will happen if it win—
 Then the rich will get richer but for us all the trouble begin—
 But those folks down south, they might go and vote it in

Poor old U.C.
 You're gonna feel so blue—
 Poor old U.C.
 You'll be feelin' so blue
 'Cause Mr. Jarvis
 He's got it in for you.

Gonna cut programs
 And a campus or two—
 Cut out those programs
 And a campus or two—
 Freezes on hiring
 Just to see us through.

You U.C. students
 You listen here to me—
 You'll pay tuition
 For what you now get free

You better tell your friends
 Write home and spread the news,
 Or you'll be joinin' us
 Singin' those Prop Nine Blues—

Got those Prop Nine Blues, when we think what will happen if it win—
 Then the rich will get richer but for us all the trouble begin—
 But those folks down south, they might go and vote it in.

Center for Chinese Studies New Year's Banquet Songs

David Keightley and I, for two years, sang funny songs at the Center for Chinese Studies New Year's banquets. Transcribed here are mine.

1989 (Tune: "Everything's Up to Date in Kansas City" from Oklahoma)

Everything's up to date in P.R. China,
 They've gone about as far as they can go—
 Some folks here now are getting rich, we're told by Mr. Schell,
 But they ain't us or anyone we know—

Capitalism's come to P.R.China,
 And Deng Xiaopng allows free enterprise—
 We used to have these great big stores, without any merchandise,
 And now they're filled with everything from TVs down to rice—
 The only problem now is that you can't afford the price—

They're up about as high as they can go (they may go higher),
They're up about as high as they can go.

We're making progress now in P.R. China,
Advancing on the technological track—
We're training lots of scientists by sending them abroad,
And now and then there's one of them comes back—

We're learning to use barbarian inventions,
Computers and all that electronic stuff;
If asked about our famous pride and how we can sink so low
We only smile mysteriously, because inside we know
That the Chinese invented all of that a thousand years ago—
We knew when we had progressed far enough (says Mr. Needham)
We knew when we had progressed far enough.

The fetters are off today in P.R. China,
You can do whatever you feel like doing now—
The clothes you see on women who are walking in the street
Would shock the pants off poor old Chairman Mao—

They had an exhibition there in Beijing,
The first Chinese nude oil painting show;
The Chinese once were modest, but they ain't that any more—
These pretty girls had stripped themselves of every stitch they wore—
You could see things there that no Chinese had ever seen before—
They went about as far as they could go (or somewhat farther)
They went about as far as they could go.

For the 1990 banquet we were asked to write songs supporting the drive for funds to build a new East Asiatic Library; the present one was cramped, and many of the books had to be paged and brought in two days later from the storage facility near Richmond. My song:

Intro: You need to use a Chinese text—
To have to wait is wrenching--
You feel a momentary urge
To fly to Harvard-Yenching--

(Tune: “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” from Gentlemen Prefer Blondes)

We live in the age of the micro-computer
 But books are what the scholar reads,
 Your Mac with its mouse, though it couldn’t be cuter
 With its smiley face
 It may erase
 Your database—
 When Cyril Birch
 Conducts research
 It’s a book, not a screen, that he reads—
 Steve West with his Ch’i-l [a Chinese characters program]
 Won’t make it with me-e—
 Books are what a scholar needs.

You find them in East Asiatic Library
 The books the Chinese scholar reads,
 A rich Asian feast of delights literary,
 Though the chance is small
 That they’ll enthrall
 Joe Rosenthal-- (University Librarian, disliked by Asianists)

E.A.L.
 Would serve us well
 With a building that suited their needs—
 But meanwhile they’re sent in
 From out near San Quentin—
 The books the Asian scholar reads.

We ask you to send in your fat contribution
 For the building E.A.L. now needs—
 We can't just depend on the state institution—
 Their priority
 Is sure to be
 Biology—

There's a chance
 Of matching grants
 And a forest will grow from these seeds—

So send in your dollars
 For students and scholars
 In the building everybody needs!

1967. “Dan Destry’s Dilemma, or Publish or Perish, or Both”

Our 1967 performance was our most ambitious, being a full-scale operetta in Gilbert and Sullivan style, using the music and forms of their songs. I wrote the libretto and most of the songs; Ed Schafer made up the names, contributed one song, and played Phoebe Grindsby, the oldest grad student in the department; Cyril Birch contributed a song and was Dan Destry; Doug Mills, Japanese language specialist who was our pianist, contributed two songs. I was Joseph (Indian Joe) Asteroid, aging hippie poet. Howard Hugo of English was Prof. H. Ludendorff Threep, Chair of the Dept. of Socio-Anthropomorphics; I doubled as Cyprian Quagmire, Vice-chair; Bob Wasser of Sociology was Prof. Jasper Smirk, Asst. Vice-chair; and Gareth Thomas of Materials Science, a fine Welsh tenor, was Pamela Runcible, undergrad student and Dan Destry’s love. Adele Hugo, Howard’s wife, a dancer who had directed G&S productions at Harvard, was stage and music director and worked out our fairly elaborate choreography. What follows are my songs, with a summary of the plot and a few snatches of dialogue. G&S buffs will catch many echoes and allusions. (Footnote: Han Shan Tang Books in London recently listed a copy in their catalog, noting the names of eminent sinologues and offering it as a rare and significant document in our field; it was purchased by the British Library. I sent them, free, a copy of “Dan Destry’s Return”—see below--to accompany it.)

Dan Destry, a young assistant professor at U.C. Berkeley, is up for tenure, and the departmental Committee of Tenured Faculty is meeting to consider his tenure promotion. They enter in stately procession.

Chorus (Music: “March of the Peers” from *Iolanthe*.)

Loudly let the trumpet bray
 Tantantara, tantantara,
 Loudly bang the sounding brasses
 Tantantara tsing boum.
 As upon its stately way
 This unique procession passes

Tantantara (etc.)

Bow, bow, instructors and assistants,
Bow, bow your heads and keep your distance,
To our dicta offer no resistance,
Tantantara tsing boum.

We are men of tenured powers
Academia's finest flowers
Ruling from our ivied towers
Tantantara, tsing boum.
Always off to distant cities
Serving on the great committees,
Freed of teaching responsibilities
Tantantara, tsing boum.

Bow, bow (etc.)

Threep cautions the others that they must weigh carefully Destry's qualifications—"and by that I mean, of course, first and foremost, his record of publication."

Trio ("Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady," from Iolanthe)

Threep: He's been long enough
Assistant prof,
Now for the upper rungs he's reaching—
But when you vote
Please take note,
Tenure was never won by teaching!

All: Never, never, never, tenure's never won by teaching!

What is lecture? Only air,
Once it is given, nothing's there,
What remains for all to see
Is in his bibliography.

Quagmire: Since scholarship's aim
Is to win fame,

Be impressive, not instructive—
 You'll have no chance
 At foundation grants
 If you haven't been productive!

All: Never, never, never miss a chance to look productive!

At your discoveries give no hint
 Till you're the first to put them in print—
 Sharper than the serpent's tooth
 Is the untrammelled search for truth!

Smirk: The knowledge we gain
 With trouble and pain
 We must then dispense with prudence;
 Uttered in haste
 It goes to waste—
 Put it in books and not in students!

All: Never give unpublished information to your students!

Cast not pearls before the swine,
 Knowledge is best when bottled like wine
 Favor the scholar, not the school—
 Publish or perish, that's the rule!

Smirk has been given the job of compiling Destry's bibliography, and reports with great satisfaction (he regards Destry as a rival) that there is only a single entry, and that in the New York Review of Books. Threep agrees that this is no grounds for tenure, and comments also that he has seen Destry holding hands with a student, Pamela Runcible, in public—"That kind of thing is all very well in the privacy of one's office, but in public?!" They leave; Smirk gloats; Phoebe Grindsby, the Oldest Grad Student in the Department, enters, and the two confer about getting rid of Destry—Phoebe because he once spurned her amorous advances. Phoebe reminds Smirk of her hold on him—it was her fertile imagination that was the source of data for the detailed studies of student sexual behavior on which Smirk's meager reputation rests—he is too shy to talk with anyone about such things. They invoke the name of the leading scholar in their field, the brilliant and mysterious von Schreik—"the ideal of all of us, author of

Going absolutely loony
 But is undeniably hip—

And everyone will say
 As you walk your mind-blown way,
 “If this young man expands his mind
 With pot and LSD,
 Why, what a very thoroughly turned-on young man
 This turned-on young man must be.”

A communal kind of living
 Full of loving and of giving
 Is the doctrine you’ll expound;
 In an atmosphere so intimate
 It isn’t any sin to mate
 With anyone around
 Though the girls are unattractive
 They are sexually active
 And besides, they keep you warm—
 But their comments will be scathing
 If they ever catch you bathing
 Or declining to perform—

And everyone will say
 As you walk your weary way,
 “If this young man sustains a life
 That would be the death of me,
 Why, what a very strenuously hip young man
 This hip young man must be!”

Joe asks Dan why he wants to stay in Berkeley anyway, when
 “anybody can see that the university is going to pieces.” Dan reaffirms his
 faith in its continuing greatness in a stirring song.

Solo with Chorus (Tune: “When Britain Really Ruled the Waves,” Iolanthe)

Dan: When Berkeley really ruled the roost
 In Gov’nor Warren’s day,

The Legislature and Regents both
 Declared that we should sign an oath
 That we're as pure as they.

The sole effect of that decree
 Was to drive off the faculty--
 Yes, many good men went away
 In Guv'nor Warren's glorious day.

Chorus: Yes, many good men went away
 In Guv'nor Warren's glorious day.

Dan: When Berkeley shook with FSM (Free Speech Movement)
 In days of good Pat Brown,
 These worthy folk grew rather gruff
 Because we weren't severe enough
 In chopping students down.

At last they gave their anger vent
 By chopping down our president— (Clark Kerr)
 Yes, Berkeley's honor went astray
 Upon that ignominious day.

Chorus: Yes, Berkeley's honor went astray
 Upon that ignominious day.

Dan: But when our Legislature grants
 The money that we need
 And gets through its collective nut
 That anything that's badly cut
 Will very surely bleed—
 And when That Man returns at last
 To roles in which he's better cast
 As bright will shine old Berkeley's rays
 As in the happiest of days
 When once again that face we know
 Is only on the Late Late Show—

Chorus: As bright will shine old Berkeley's rays
 As in the happiest of days.

Or I'm not Phoebe Grindsby!

Young Destry claims to have made his name
 As the great von Schreik's assistant,
 But his own capacity for research
 I suspect was non-existent.
 When scholarship
 Of glamour is stripped
 It unquestionably *is* work;
 So he stole an unpublished manuscript
 And published it as *his* work—

A thirst for praise
 And a salary raise
 I am sure his true designs be—
 But he should be hissed
 As a plagiarist--
 Or I'm not Phoebe Grindsby!

Threep asks Destry what possible explanation he can have for what sounds like scholar theft; Destry says that there is an explanation, but he cannot honestly reveal it. Indian Joe intervenes: "Since Dan won't reveal the truth, I must. The fact is that Dan Destry and the great von Schreik are—one and the same. Von Schreik does not exist, except as an assumed name under which Dan has published all his writings." Threep, astonished, asks why, since these were brilliant papers, Dan hasn't taken credit for them; Indian Joe again replies for him: "Because he has not wanted to bring dishonor on his parents! The cent figures in all his studies of radical and non-conformist behavior, the subjects of those hair-raising accounts of immorality and anti-social actions, are—his own mother and father. That is why he was able to write about them with such penetrating insights, and to include such intimate details. But he knew that if he used his own name, the truth would become known; and he wanted to protect their reputations." Threep asks Indian Joe how, if Dan has kept the truth so well hidden, he knows all this? Dan says "Don't tell him, Joe—you needn't", but Joe continues: "But I might as well. I am his father; I am the protagonist in all his studies of the successive stages of American Bohemianism, from the Greenwich Village variety down to the contemporary hippie movement." He admits being "very much over thirty," and says that he has preserved his youthful appearance and manner by keeping up with each new generation. "And my name isn't really Joseph parenthesis Indian Joe end parenthesis Asteroid at all—that's only what I call myself in my present incarnation." Asked to explain, he elaborates in a song:

Solo (“I Stole the Prince,” from Gondoliers.)

Indian Joe: Dan’s mother and I, when he was born
 Were writers for the New Masses,
 Bohemians good in every way,
 In Greenwich Village we chose to stay,
 We were friends of Edna St. Vincent Millay
 And worshipped the working classes.
 We scorned bourgeois society
 That capitalism dirties—
 It was, you see, the way to be
 The only significant way to be
 In the radical nineteen-thirties.

Chorus: In the radical nineteen-thirties.

Indian Joe: We turned away from the God that Failed
 To expand our powers mental;
 We were existentialists, and then
 Went off to Japan to study Zen,
 Vedanta and Yoga and nine or ten
 Other doctrines transcendental—
 We sought enlightenment earnestly
 With metaphysical sorties—
 It was, you see, the way to be,
 The only conceivable way to be
 In the mystical nineteen-forties.

Chorus: In the mystical nineteen-forties.

Indian Joe: We then again renewed our youth
 And joined the Beat Generation—
 We dressed in cast-off clothes and had
 A charmingly squalid North Beach pad
 And used all the words convention forbade
 In illiterate prose creation—
 Our jazz was cool and our love was free
 And our thoughts were suitably sour—
 It was, you see, the way to be
 The only respectable way to be
 In the age of Eisenhower.

Chorus: In the age of Eisenhower.

Indian Joe: And so across the decades through
 Continual transformation
 I've followed the lead of the avant-garde (pause)
 Though of late it becomes increasingly hard (pause)
 And you see me now as a hippie bard (a tempo)
 In my latest incarnation!
 I keep turned on with LSD
 In hallucinatory heaven—
 It is, you see, the way to be
 The only quite bearable way to be
 In nineteen sixty-seven!

Chorus: In nineteen sixty-seven!

Threep asks: "What then, was your original name?" Indian Joe answers, after a pause, a bit shamefacedly: "Reginald Bunthorne." There is now no possible obstacle to Destry's tenure promotion. Threep mentions one small question remaining, saying to Dan, "I assume that you intend to marry Miss Runcible?" "I will," Dan replies, "if she will still have me." Pamela thinks she will, after all, now that she knows he had a family background she can approve of, even though it may change her whole outlook on life. Pamela sings:

Solo ("The Law is the True Embodiment" from Iolanthe)

Pamela: When you begin by loving a square
 Who knows where you may go from there—
 You'll find that soon your love extends
 To take in all his middle-class friends.
 An all-embracing tenderness
 Is what we hippies all profess—
 And yet in practice, hip or straight,
 We draw the line at those we hate—
 My love embraces all, but please
 Don't let it embrace my enemies!

Chorus: Her love embraces all, but please
 Don't let it embrace her enemies!

Pamela: You feel your boundless love increase
 Until you're loving your local police,

You're loving all you most abhor
 Like President Johnson and the war.
 This softening of the mind and heart
 Can easily happen, once you start—
 And yet, with all these risks in view,
 I'll still begin by loving you!
 My love embraces all (etc.)

Phoebe (aside): My plot has gone awry; not only have I failed to destroy Destry, but he is lost to me forever. I must fall back on you, Jasper (turning to him). Shall we make it double wedding? Or shall I sing another revelatory aria? (Begins to sing ☺ “When Jasper first began research . . .”)

Smirk (hastily): Phoebe! I love you! Yes, I will marry you! (Aside to Threep): This may be the only way we will ever get her out of the Department, sir.

Phoebe (overhearing, aside): Ha! Out of the Department indeed! Little do they suspect that I am only exchanging my present status for that of another semi-permanent fixture of a university department, the degree-seeking faculty wife! And when I have my doctorate, I will force them to take *me* on the faculty!

Sextet (“Never Mind the Why and Wherefore,” Pinafore)

Smirk: Never mind the why and wherefore
 Love can level rank and therefore
 Since on this my future hinges
 I will take you as my wife;
 You'll be banished to the fringes
 Of the academic life

Chorus: Bake the cake and call the preacher,
 Ring the Campanile bell
 For the union of the teacher
 And the student he loves well!

Threep: Just this once it's not imprudent
 To be intimate with a student—

Indian Joe: But a scandal it will bring on
 If she doesn't have a ring on—

Chorus: Rend the air with celebrations
Of their coming nuptial bliss
Student-faculty relations
Never, never were like this!

Phoebe: Never mind the why and wherefore
Love can level rank and therefore
Though you were as rich as Croesus
You would not support me too—
I will finish up my thesis
And I'll teach along with you!

Chorus: Bake the cake (etc.)

Indian Joe: She has from the very start meant
(to Threep) To remain in your department—

Threep: I've a splendid way to lose her--
San Francisco State can use her!

Chorus: Rend the air (etc.)

Dan: Never mind the why and wherefore
Love can level rank and therefore
Off with buttons, you won't need 'em (removes large buttons
In your new capacity— from Pamela's busom)
If you practice sexual freedom
It will have to be with me!

Chorus: Bake the cake (etc.)

Threep: And the only tea that's sipped on
Will be that of Thomas Lipton—

Indian Joe: And the pot's to cook the soup in
When you have a student group in—

Chorus: Rend the air (etc.)

Pamela: Never mind the why and wherefore

Love can level rank and therefore
 Our engagement has been no test
 Of compatibility—
 I will organize a protest
 If you don't prove right for me!

Chorus: Bake the cake (etc.)

Indian Joe: As she knows, the only good war
 Is the Battle of the Boudoir

Threep: And when other wars don't blight it
 We can all stay home and fight it—

Chorus: Rend the air with celebrations
 Bake the cake and call the preacher
 For the amorous relations
 Of the student and the teacher
 Down with petty prejudice!
 There is nothing here amiss!
 Matrimony will legitimize—their/our—bliss!

And so directly into the Finale. Our chancellor, Roger Heyns (who was in the front row for the first performance), had recently received an offer from the University of Michigan—President? can't remember—and had turned them down.

Finale (Tune: "For He Is an Englishman," Pinafore)

Threep: For he is a Berkeley man!
 For the faculty has voted
 And he's going to be promoted
 And remain a Berkeley man!

Chorus: And remain a Berkeley man!

Indian Joe: For he might have gone to Michigan
 But they'll have to go and fish again
 As we made them do before

Chorus: With our worthy Chancellor!

Pamela: For in spite of tempting offers
 From schools with well-filled coffers
 He remains a Berkeley man

He remains a Ber-r-r-r-keley man!

Chorus repeats entire number, the last four lines slower, in a grand manner, with trumpet added. END OF OPERETTA

1983: Dan Destry;s Return, or the Academic Beggar’s Opera
(A Wry Entertainment for Academic Beggars)

This was in the midst of our great budget crisis, and our theme for this year seemed appropriate: ways in which U.C. Berkeley might draw on the expertise of its faculty to earn outside income, if it were not so honest. Chancellor Mike Heyman agreed to appear briefly and sing one song, as Chancellor Mike Highwayman (“the name was later corrupted by shortening.”) Cyril Birch directed, and wrote the last section; a bad throat prevented him from playing Dan Destry again--musicologist Tony Newcomb took the part. We used the arrangements of the Beggar’s Opera songs by Frederick Austen, which I knew from a recording and the piano score; done in 1930s England, it updates the harmonies and turns some of the songs into contrapuntal ensemble pieces. Since I love these songs, this was a pleasure for me to write; it was not, on the other hand, such a rousing success as the 1967 Dan Destry—more subtleties than good laughs; the music less familiar to most of the audience, so that echoes in the songs were lost on most of them.

Prologue (piano playing softly “Battle Hymn of the Republic”)

Narrator (Joe Asteroid, solemnly:) Four-squared years ago, in 1967, a group of us brought forth upon this stage a new musical, titled “Dan Destry’s Dilemma, or Publish or Perish, or Both,” conceived in a spirit of fun and dedicated to the question of whether a young assistant professor could win tenure and remain at U.C. Berkeley. Now we are engaged in a great budgetary crisis, testing whether that university, or any university so badly underfunded, can long endure. (etc.)

Scene: Dan Destry and Pamela have become a bored middle-age academic couple; their marriage has gone flat, and they miss the excitement of the sixties. Dan laments the commercialization of society, in which the aggressive get rich and the university is impoverished. His father Joe Asteroid appears (like Mephistopheles in Faustus) and relates how, after spending a decade making porno films, he has now sunk one step lower and become a self-realization consultant, the man from AIMYSIP (the Asteroid Institute for Maximizing Your Self-Interest Potential), giving

popular seminars on such subjects as “How to Prosper While the World Around You is Falling Apart,” “Dare to Be a Sonofabitch,” and “Your Worst Impulses Are Your Best Guides to Success.” Hearing Dan’s account of the University’s plight, Joe advises that they must overcome their scruples and join the society around them in enriching themselves through dishonest practices. Joe gives Dan a vision of how that might be accomplished. [Note: writing this more than twenty years ago, I had no inkling of how far my bitter vision would come to be reality, with academic scholars twisting their research and writing to please the corporations that pay them, and all the rest.]

Beggar’s Opera Segment

Chancellor Mike Highwayman, outwardly an advocate of law and order but secretly supportive of MacDestry and his robber band, is awaiting their first annual report on the forceful fundraising activities in which they have engaged during the past academic year. Musing on his secret role, he asks rhetorically why he does it, and answers: “Because for the present my real concern is—and must be—money!” (Mike sang well, but I recall telling him: “You’re a great chancellor, but you need to learn how to come in on the upbeat.”)

Solo, Mike H. (Tune: “Through All the Employments of Life”)

For all academia’s woes
 ‘Tis money supplies the solution
 And, as every good chancellor knows
 Brings health to a sick institution.

For the faculty comes and it goes,
 The buildings can stand or can fall,
 As for students, who cares about those?
 It’s money that’s key to it all.

Yes, the faculty comes and it goes (etc., repeat)

Dan enters with his band, and explains that they have organized into platoons, according to academic specialties, of which the first is the Foundation Grant Proposal Writers. They sing their marching song:

Song, MacDestry and Chorus (Tune: “Let Us Take the Road”)

Let us seize the chance—
 Hark, I hear the approach of deadlines—
 We'll join the academic breadlines
 And pursue foundation grants.

See the pen I hold--
 So prettily we write the jargon
 Our project sounds like a bargain
 And they send us pots of gold!

MacDestry then introduces Lieutenant Prudence Polymath, leader of their platoon of Research Report Writers, who explains how they can overnight produce a learned and publishable paper on any subject; these are submitted, after an interval, to the foundations, along with letters of acceptance from the appropriate scholarly journals. Realizing that enough research has been done already—"It's all there in the learned books and articles that fill our libraries, if only you read them, as hardly anybody does"--she and her platoon have mastered the skills of "putting the data together in new and imaginative ways."

Song, Prudence P. (tune: "'Tis Woman That Seduces All Mankind")

The search for information keeps scholarship alive,
 Ransacking all the records for the undiscovered fact,
 And yet the awful time * must finally arrive
 When all the extant records have been thoroughly ransacked.

When all the facts are in * must scholarship expire,
 And publication cease * and we lay down our pen?
 Oh no, so long as grants * provide us with our hire,
 We'll rearrange the same old facts again and again—
 We'll go on rearranging them again and again.

Destry introduces Professor Hyman Hayseed, their agricultural specialist, who explains their operation. U.C.'s agriculture departments have developed plants and fertilizers and insecticides that have brought huge profits to generations of California farmers and agribusinesses. "And how do they repay us? By supporting tax measures that allow them to keep their profits, instead of sharing them with us." He points out that each

agricultural advance generates some new problem, which they then have to solve. Now they have developed an integrated ecological system: they offer a new group of fast -growing, better-tasting vegetables—Superveggies—which won't grow unless they are fertilized with their patented, rather expensive Superveggie Compound. But in each bag of this are the larvae of an insect that ravages the crop—unless the farmers buy U.C.'s patented insecticide—which, however, proves to have toxic properties to which U.C. sells the only known antidote. “Isn't it beautifully symmetrical? Private industry, of course, supplied a number of useful models for the concept.”

Song, Prof. Hayseed (Tune: “I'm Like a Ship on the Ocean Toss'd”)

We plant the bugs in the farmer's field
 They multiply and are ravenous
 The farmer's faced with declining yield,
 He comes to appeal to us--

But then the insecticide poison we sell
 Turns out to be lethal to humans as well—
 Surprise, surprise, surprise!
 To our captive clientele.

Yes, then the insecticide. . . (repeat)
 For the antidote's ours as well!

MacDestry introduces Prof. Parchment, who heads an office within Graduate Division in charge of awarding graduate degrees. He points out that advanced grad students cost the university more than they bring in. To balance this, his office has begun setting aside a number of doctorates that they sell to the highest bidders. He cites historical precedents such as the sale of papal dispensations by the church and the Chinese practice of selling official rank, circumventing the exam system. Mike Highwayman asks whether they sell masters degrees also, for lower prices; Parchment says no, nobody will pay much for those, since they aren't worth enough on the job market.

Song, Prof. Parchment, MacDestry, and Chorus (tune: “Liliiburlero” or, in the Beggar's Opera, “The Modes of the Court”} (Sung contrapuntally)

The masters degree * so common has grown
 It's no use at all in getting a job,
 Nobody thinks * the M.A. alone
 Sets you above * the rest of the mob.

But happy he * whose Ph.D.
 Can land him a cushy professional post—
 So why should it nurture
 Some petty researcher?
 It goes to whomever will pay us the most.

MacDestry introduces Prof. Brenda Bizadstrom of Business Administration and Computer Science, whose team uses its high-level computer skills to transfer funds from the accounts of private corporations to the University. “Our rationale is simple,” she explains, “We are only collecting what has been promised to us. President Reagan has told us that reductions in public funding for educational and cultural programs will be made up by increased funding from the private sector. We are only taking him seriously (*someone* has to) and collecting it.”

Song, Prof. Brenda B. (Tune: “If Any Wench Venus’ Girdle Wear”)

Once, when our funding resembled our needs,
 We found it easy to stand out.
 Now we’re invited to don beggar’s weeds
 With hat in hand for a handout.

But begging for funds consumes too much time,
 We scorn to wheedle and hector—
 ‘Tis better by far to become what we are
 And steal from the private sector.

She introduces Prof. Juggledigit of the Math Department, who works with her. He explains that their targets are corporations that make big profits but somehow escape paying big taxes. His team determines what their taxes would have been under a less business-friendly administration, and transfers that amount to the University’s account. Professor Bizadstrom manages the cover-up, transferring the deficit back and forth until it is “lost in the complexities of advanced accounting procedures.”

Duet, Profs. Brenda B. and Juggledigit (Tune: “Over the Hills and Far Away”)

He: I can break their access codes,
Assess their profits to precise amounts,
Then with secret transfer modes
I mail their tax to our account—

She: I disguise the deficit,
Back and forth I make it cross
Till at last it appears that it
Is only a normal business loss—

He: All the taxes they don't pay
She: We collect another day
He: When we make their funds to stray
:
(Repeat verses, together)

Destry next introduces Prof. Paul Prosesmith of the English Dept., whose team produces highly saleable pornographic books, which they write in the prose styles of famous and respected authors and sell as the work of those authors. People who would be ashamed to buy such books in their usual form feel comfortable buying and reading these. (I didn't sufficiently appreciate John Gay's skills until I tried writing in some of these meters—here, four-syllable lines with two-syllable rhymes.)

Song: Prof. Prosesmith (Tune: “Cease Your Funning”)

Books, when shameful
Seem less blameful
If they're signed with famous names.
Falt'ring virtue
Cannot hurt you
In the prose of Henry James

Sado-masochs
Love the classics
When they feature their favorite vice—
Lurid reading

With good breeding—
That's what brings the highest price.

Finally, Dan introduces Prof. Polly Morfus Perverse of the Psychology Dept., an attractive young woman with whom Dan himself is on the edge of having an affair. She has organized some of their prettiest women majors and grad students into a program of highly profitable nude encounter sessions, which, like Professor ProseSmith's books, permit the customers to get their gratification while escaping feelings of guilt, by giving them a gloss of academic respectability. The young women use their training to identify the customer's sexual leanings and problems and "tickle his libido verbally" in the guise of giving him therapeutic treatment. She sings their commercial:

Song, Polly: (Tune: "If the Heart of a Man")

When the heart of a man is depressed with care
There is nothing so good for dispelling his woes
As to tell them in intimate detail to
A charming young woman without her clothes.

Analysts, therapists, shrinks and such,
None of them really can help that much—
Far less expensive and quite inoffensive
Is the nude with the cool intellectual touch.

This concludes Dan's presentation; he and Mike Highwayman sing a

Duet, Mike H. and Dan (Tune: "When You Censure the Age")

We have had quite enough
Of unproductive stuff
Such as scholarship for scholarship's sake—
Now we're ready to conform
To the current social norm—
From here on, old U.C. is on the make!
(Repeat, contrapuntally)

Mike Highwayman and others leave; Dan congratulates his band on their success, and suggests that they repair to their favorite bawdy tavern at

the Durant Hotel for an evening of roistering, after which he and Polly can “slip upstairs to a rented room for the old game of ‘the shaking of the sheets.’” He and Polly sing:

Duet, Dan and Polly: (Tune: “O What Pain It Is to Part”)

Polly: Oh, what joys adult’ry brings!
 Marital relations
 Lack these sweet sensations--
 Oh, what joys adult’ry brings
 With its guilty but delicious sensations!

But if either spouse should learn
 Of our affair, ‘twould take a darker turn—
 Still, until that dismal day we spurn
 To sever our adulterous relations!

Dan But if either spouse should learn (etc., repeat together)

They embrace. Music continues, then suddenly turns discordant, lights flicker, all but Dan are drawn offstage by invisible force, leaving him standing. Enter Pamela and Indian Joe.

Dan: “Pamela! What are you doing here? You’re not part of this vision.

Pamela: “Your vision is over, Dan—it’s not going to happen. Joe has turned it off—I’ve converted him back to his old counter-culture self” (by playing 1960s records at him –Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Simon & Garfunkle etc.)
 They agree that while they wouldn’t want to return to the sixties, they can hang onto some of the ideals they held then, and not sell out altogether.

Trio. Pamela, Dan, Joe (Tune: “Oh Polly, You Might have Toyed and Kissed”)

Dan: The sixties were times of fires and strife,
 Of radical thoughts and extremist views—

Pamela: We were simplistic
 But idealistic—

What we had we should not lose.

All: We were simplistic (etc.)

Joe: My poems denounced the bourgeois life

I courted the counter-culture muse—
Pamela: We were simplistic
 But idealistic—
 What we had we must not lose.
All: We were simplistic (etc.)

Dan objects: “If we’ve got to go back to having scruples, and we can’t follow Joe’s advice on getting rich, what can we do to solve our problems?”

Pamela: “I don’t know—maybe nothing. But better no solution than that one.”

Song, Pamela (Tune: “Can Love Be Controlled By Advice?”)

Pamela: When once your integrity’s lost,
 What matters what else you obtain?
 When your threshold of honesty’s crossed
 You’ve abandoned far more than you gain.

For our university’s plight
 The cure may be worse than the cold—
 There may be nothing better in sight
 Than to hold on to what we can hold.

My part of the operetta ended there. Cyril Birch wrote a more rousing and upbeat ending, in which specialists from different departments, humanities and sciences, had come together to devise and carry out legal and above-board money-making projects. The Orientalists and the meteorologists, for instance, have developed a weather forecasting technique, using the Book of Changes, by which the weather can be infallibly predicted a whole year ahead. Classical archaeologists have used ancient Assyrian techniques to project excess bureaucratic verbiage into the atmosphere as an impenetrable screen that will protect the country from its enemies; the president has allotted “one thousandth of one percent of the defense budget” to this project, “more than enough to cover U.C.’s total needs for the next millennium!” For the finale, the chorus sings to Mike Heyman: “For he is an honest man!” using, like the 1967 finale, “For He Is an Englishman” from Pinafore.

B: Juvenalia; Sonnets and Other “Serious” Verse; Comic Verse

Night Sonnets (1942-3. Berkeley High School)

- I He sat upon the dampish bench and thought.
 All spherical around him was the night,
 Diluted just a little by the light,
 A cold white light that fingered all it caught
 And let it go. He raised his hand, and sought
 To see it as it was, to see it right—
 This could not be his hand, so blue and white,
 This pale thing could not be what God had wrought.
 This was not he; he was of other times;
 He was not of this age; he was alone.
 They were not his, these gross escapeless crimes,
 These wavering, shuddering beings he had known.
 Eternity was throbbing in his brain.
 He should not be here. He must not remain.
- II I looked up from the street, upon a hill,
 And there a massive house, blotting from view
 The stars behind, against the silver-blue
 Rose up before me, lifeless, black, and still.
 I stood and watched it silently, until
 A pale, flat, yellow light appeared in two
 Small upstairs windows, and a man looked through.
 Resting his hands upon the window sill
 He stood, a depthless shadow, muddled-grey;
 Searching the sky as one might read a book,
 He saw the moon and stars—and was afraid—
 For then he turned, as if to go away;
 But hesitating, turned back with a look
 Into the street below, and pulled the shade.

III Upon a dim-lit corner, all alone,
 A boy and girl stood in the thin night air
 And spoke aloud of shining places where
 They'd been that night, and people they had known.
 But curiously somber was their tone,
 And curiously cold for such a pair.
 They spoke on bravely, seeming not aware
 That these strange, hollow voices were their own.
 And silently the night crept in, until
 Its emptiness enveloped every word,
 And swallowed others ere they could be heard.
 The moon was thin and flat, the sky was clear,
 And all was awful silence, deathly still,
 As they were, clasping tightly in their fear.

IV The things of earth lie bare now, as they are;
 For much of them is hidden by the light
 Of day, but nothing hidden by the night,
 And all reveal themselves, as does a star.
 The trees are black and deep; the motor car
 A blind and roaring thing, and gardens bright
 In sunshine, now enchanted; now the sight
 Unblinded—all is clear now, near and far.
 (Unfinished—reused in one of a series of one-a-day Love
 Sonnets for Hazel, not included here)

The Ten Commandments

In Spring 1944, nearing my 18th birthday and being drafted into the army, I was still a freshman at U.C. Berkeley, studying Japanese but also taking an English class from a young teacher named Newell Ford—romantic in a Byronic mode; a few of us became devoted to him and his new wife Alison (Alysoun), and saw quite a lot of them outside class. (He later taught at Stanford.) We composed for him a series of verses on The Ten Commandments; I did the Introduction and, for some odd and inappropriate reason, the one on adultery.

Misanthropic Stanzas by Way of Introduction

The moralizing platitude
 Is very nice in theory;
 The thought of Peace and Brotherhood
 Is comforting and cheery.

But if you try your moral rules
 Upon your Nippon foeman,
 He'll say "These 'Melicans such fools!"
 And slash out your abdomen.

Or if you try "Thou Shalt Not Kill"
 Or start out "Jesus said—"
 He'll smile at you, and wait until
 You're close, then shoot you dead.

So tell him all about how men
 Are brothers—he will let you,
 Shake hands with you, and smile, and then
 Cheerfully bayonet you.

The moral maxims were in place
 In other centuries,
 But they are scarcely fit to face
 Such brutal days as these.

The time is out of joint, and we
 Were put here by perverse fate;
 Trapped in a sordid century--
 One scarce could think a worse fate—

So, you who want to, go and slay,
 Pursue your pleasures hollow,
 And the same rules you scorn today
 Tomorrow you will follow.

Some day will come the Grand Forgiving
 When all the rules return to stay.
 I hope that I will still be living—
 Because—I like them, anyway.

Commandment VII: Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

1, The Situation

In all ages and all nations
 There have been the same temptations,
 With but trivial variations—
 They have not changed much.
 And, of evil avocations
 The one with strongest fascination's
 The Extra-Marital Relations—
 Adultery and such

Beauteous damsels, lush and sultry
 Made men hanker for Adult'ry;
 As with any other sin,
 Some resisted, some gave in.
 You who fought
 And yielded not,
 What did you gain
 For all your pain?
 Nothing, I guess
 But Righteousness,
 Which, at best
 Lacks zest.

Those of you who yielded
 As the greater deal did
 Suffered the removal
 Of divine approval.

Many, if history does not lie
 Were outstanding genii
 Few like Pierre and Heloise,
 Suffered for their activities,
 Or went to torture without end
 Like Francesca and her friend.

(Not the plural of genius!)

But speaking on the whole

The consequence was small--
 Only a damnéd soul—
 That's all.

II. The Remedy

If you want your love to fall
 Where none can criticize it,
 A short and simple ritual
 Completely purifies it.

Chorus of Unscrupulous Judges:

"Come to Reno and discard your wife;
 Why the same one all your life?
 Throw her off and get a new—
 Reno is the place for you!"

As soon as you have paid the fee,
 You can feel entirely free,
 Henceforth you are chaste—
 Love to suit your taste!
 You can love in any fashion:
 With a vegetable passion,
 Love aesthetic,
 Love poetic,
 Pure, seraphic,
 Violent, Sapphic,
 High, Platonic,
 Slight or chronic,
 Fixed, unmovéd,
 A la Ovid,
 Rustic, Thalian,
 Bacchanalian,
 Innocent, childish,
 Oscar Wildeish,
 Holy love, for great Jehovah,
 As a pastime, on occasion,
 Flitting love, like Casanova,
 Fleshly love, the Rabelasian,

Whatever sort your love may be,
It's all right if you pay the fee!

Chorus of unscrupulous judges:

Come to Reno and discard your wife!
Why the same one all your life?
Cast her off and get a new—
Reno is the place for you!

III. Conclusion

It's easy not to covet,
It's easy not to kill,
There are but few
In these times who
Make graven idols still—

But when you have occasions
To adulterate
Oh, but the temptation's
Powerfully great!

Closing couplet: A Thought to Leave With You

If there were no adultery,
Where would Leonardo be?

Fragments of Unfinished Verses on the Romantic Poets

Wordsworth

On writing poems, Wordsworth had
A very curious notion;
He didn't like his feelings hot—
He liked them older, colder.
And when he saw a lake, or tree,
Or child, and felt emotion,
He didn't tear it from his breast-

He left it there to moulder.

On moonlit nights
 With stars above
 He's whisper to
 His lady love,
 "If you'll but grant me
 What I seek,
 I'll write a poem—
 Wednesday week."

Byron

A masculine siren,
 George Gordon, Lord Byron,
 Lured many fair maids to his lair;
 His shocking impropriety
 Expelled him from society,
 But Byron went away and didn't care.

'Twas after his ruin
 He wrote of Don Juan,
 A young man whose morals were free;
 He said "I can be lyrical
 Or bitter and satirical
 I write of things Venetian
 Or the glory that was Grecian,
 I'm a dreamer and a ponderer,
 An outcast and a wanderer.
 I also am a wronged man," said Lord B.

Keats

Keats, on the other hand,
 Was not of noble sources;
 His father owned no land—
 He lived by lodging horses.
 And Keats, if fortune's ways
 Had proven not contrary,
 Would have lived out his days
 A London 'pothecary.

Invocation:

We thank thee, Muse of Culture and Poetics

For saving him from physics and emetics.
 You might try telling Ruth,* if she will hear ya,
 Just what you think of cultures and bacteria.
 *(Ruth Alleman, studying bacteriology)

But Keats had not so long to last,
 His health began to fail him fast,
 And only in his last few years
 Did he get really hot—
 If he had had more time to write,
 Ten years or so, perhaps he might
 Have written stuff like Will Shakespeare's—
 Or then, again, might not.

Shelley He hated all that throttles
 (fragments) Life unrestrained and free,
 He put his thoughts in bottles
 And flung them in the sea.

"O I should like to rise and pass
 Among the stars and planets,
 But I am chained to earth, alas,
 Like stones and pomegranates."

"Throw, throw off your heavy manacle!
 O, how I detest the tyrannical!"

They loved it when the wind did blow
 And made the treetops curly;
 They wore their collars open, so
 They all—died—early.

Recently Discovered Fragment of Greek Drama, translated in the quintains of
 Swinburne (written a few months before I was drafted, in 1944)

(Place: the countryside behind Sparta. Time: the beginning of the Trojan War. The
 Greeks are preparing to sail.)

Chorus: The country is arming
 To rescue its queen;
 All Sparta is swarming;
 The weapons' cold sheen
 Reflects in the sunlight, and warships prepared in the harbor are seen.

Behold here a youth
 Who is walking alone
 His words sound, in truth,
 As more somber in tone
 Than those of the People, who joy in a good rousing war of their own.

And chiefly the aged—
 Strong curses they throw,
 As virtue outraged
 Against the vile foe
 Whom they have not seen, and know naught of, and probably never will know.

And maidens and wives,
 Who suffer no danger
 Of losing their lives
 Or of killing a stranger;
 Albeit the woman moans loudly, the war does but little to change her.

The youth is of Sparta
 Whom Theus they call
 A scholar at heart, a
 Great sorrow doth pall
 His once-cheerful face, in despair at the stroke that upon him doth fall.

Theus: Despairing I sing;
 There is no retreating,
 Menelaus the king
 Has sent to me Greeting;
 In vain were all outcries and teeth-gnashing, tearing of hair and breast-beating.

And just to return
 Menelaus's wife,
 I must see burn
 The best years of my life;

Oh, this is not mine, this unreasoning struggle, this passion-born strife!

Chorus of Ah, say not so, Theus,

Elders: Our offspring, our son,
'Tis thus you repay us
For all we have done;

We fed you and raised you and taught you—we now have a war to be won.

All the while we did feed you
You stood with us then—
And now that we need you,
When other young men

Are hast'ning to join with our army, will you not repay us again?

Chorus: Pray mark: they upbraid him

As lacking in morals,
And seek to persuade him
To take up their quarrels,

And they will reward him most highly with honors and speeches and laurels.

Theus: 'Tis said great Ulysses
Was much loath to sever
From home and his Mrs.
For years, or forever,

To make from loved Ithaca perilous journey to hero's endeavor.

If vainglorious Venus
Had kept not her vow
There would be between us
No enmity now

Or if the accurst golden fruit had been left as it grew on the bough.

(Here the manuscript fragment ends.)

Farewell Poem: Being a Ballade with Double Refrain (in the manner of Francois Villon, in his favorite meter—as, "Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan?")
(Composed on the eve of departure for the Army)

You ask, why this somber tone?

Hear, I am a Selectee!
 Hence cometh this piteous moan—
 The Army is not for me.
 I've "Greetings" from Franklin D.
 (The Friendly Touch he employs)
 So, after one short week free,
 Farewell to civilian joys!

Farewell now to all I own,
 Nargileh and library,
 'Tis little relief to groan
 "The Army is not for me!"
 And "Fighting for Liberty"
 Is nice for a while, but cloys,
 And leaves one with weakened knee;
 Farewell to civilian joys!

One thought doth in part atone:
 How useless to them I'll be!
 The R.O.T.C. has shown
 The Army is not for me.
 "They all are in step but he!"
 "Precision he quite destroys—"
 Ah, then I could shout with glee,
 "Farewell to civilian joys!"

Envoy: Though, Prince, you can surely see
 The Army is not for me,
 I'm off now to join Our Boys!
 Farewell to civilian joys!

Sonnets Just Like William Shakespeare Almost, and other incidental poems
 (Composed on my 18th birthday and in the few days following, for Anita)

Sonnet I: On a Faded Yellow Dahlia (August 13, 1944)

Dear flower, thy loveliness is fading fast,
 And yet thy fragrance lingers as before,
 Deep in thy golden heart, until at last
 It too shall die, and thy poor life be o'er.

So human beauty, when its outer glaze
 Is faded, lingers on within the soul,
 And one who loved it as in other days
 May, in the ruins, see the perfect whole.
 Time must bring change, and change must bring decay,
 Yet the soul lives unchanged its brief, sweet hour;
 When it is gone, all passes swift away
 As breath of air, or fragrance of a flower.
 Since it must be so, do not weep your fate,
 Enjoy the beauty now—the soul can wait.

Sonnet II: Written on His 18th Birthday (see Shakespeare's no. 73)

That time of life thou may'st in me behold
 When golden springtime fades to summer's glow,
 When unexpected miracles unfold,
 New thing to taste, to try, at length of know.
 And, as in earth, when heaving mountains change
 With valleys, and the seas pour o'er the earth,
 When mighty nature splits the mountain range
 And rocky, steaming islands have their birth,
 So is't within me; there the tumult churns
 As old is blasted, and the new transcends;
 And a strong melancholy oft returns
 And sadness with a burning rapture blends.
 Yet, ere I met thee, t'was not half so bad;
 For now, a thousand raptures I must add!

Imploring Verses (August 14, 1944)

(Hang Far Low's was a restaurant in S.F. Chinatown.)

Talking Russian, low-grade punning,
 Chasing ferries which aren't running,
 Ringing doorbells very late,
 These things I can tolerate;
 Even if (oh name accurs't)
 You agree with Mr. Hearst;
 I can pardon all of those,
 But *please* don't sing at Hang Far Low's!

If you hold a conversation
 With a sailor at the station,
 Even if you don't know Pooh,
 I will not abandon you.
 Causing me to miss the train
 I'll pardon once, though not again;
 I can stand such sins as those,
 But *please* don't sing at Hang Far Low's!

Sonnet, Incomplete from Lack of Inspiration (August 16, 1944)

Alas! T'was but three days ago, no more,
 Poured forth as lava from a burning soul
 Still smould'ring madly from the night before
 Two sonnets, rather poor ones on the whole;
 But this cannot be e'en so good as those,
 For dim now are the passions it did quicken.
 See! It's degenerating into prose!
 My Inspiration's dying! See it sicken!

* * * * *

Inspire me yet again, or it shall die!
 Inspire me yet again, or so shall I!

Verses Written in Imitation of R. L. Stevenson, to be set to music as a song
 for my little sister Carol (1944)

Other children, far away,
 Live in strange enchanted places—
 Misty forests where they play,
 Narrow streets and foreign faces—
 They know how these really look;
 I must see them in a book.

I have looked out every day
 Thinking that perhaps I might
 See a princess on her way
 To her castle and her knight;
 She will never come, I fear—
 Not a princess passes here.

I have searched our whole backyard
 For a genie in a flagon,
 I have searched it very hard—
 Not a griffon, not a dragon,
 Creatures that are only found
 On some legendary ground.

Where have all the heroes fled?
 Do they live among the stars?
 Will some child, when I am dead,
 Dream of days of motor cars?
 Who then will his heroes be?
 Will he read a tale of me?

Verses for Léonie, I (1942)

Rushes by the pond-side
 Bending brown tips slightly
 With a thin and rustling
 Clashing, as of foils,
 And the warm and golden
 Water, touching lightly
 Where translucent marsh-plants
 Lay in oozy coils—

On the soft green pond bank
 Inches deep with clover
 Léonie was lying
 Legs outstretched and bare--
 I was there beside her
 And I did not move her
 Only sank my face deep,
 Deep into her hair.

Verses for Léonie, II (1947, written from Korea)

(Reference: Lecture by Prof. Frank of UCB on the indestructibility of matter)

Recall Professor Frank of Chem 1A:
 "There may well be six, seven, eight or more
 Air molecules within this room today
 Of those that caught the reek of Caesar's gore."

The sweetness of the clover bank where we
 Lay amorous in the sun five springs ago
 Give to the winds to bear across the sea—
 Hold blossoms in your hand and softly blow.

Fainter than faint, it will be strong enough
 To draw from me one salt nostalgic tear;
 I shall send out an alcoholic puff
 To let you know what I have come to here.

Fragments of Song (tune: "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General")
 (Written during basic training?)

I am the very model of a modern U.S. fighting man,
 I know a lot, although I'm not a thinking or a writing man;

I know the gory side of war, but little of the tactical,
 My education's very short, and hor-i-bul-ly practical,

They feed me scientifically with vitamins and minerals,
 They feed me just as well, they say, as four- and five-star ginerals,

I know the way to hide a truck by parking it below a tree,
 And when I speak of Brownings I am not discussing poetry—

The trouble with all this is that I'm nothing but a war machine,
 I steadily improve as I become less man and more machine—

Two Translations (done while taking German class, 1944)

I. The Joyous Wanderer (Dear Fröhe Wandersmann, Eichendorff)

Him upon whom God bestoweth

Wealth, He sendeth wand'ring far;
 To him His wonders vast he showeth,
 Field and mountain, moon and star.

The lazy ones, at home a-lying,
 Miss the thrill of morning's red;
 They know but of children's crying,
 Sorrow, trouble, want of bread.

The little brook from mountain springing,
 Larks that heavenward whirr and dart,
 Why should I not with them be singing,
 Full-throatedly, with joyous heart?

The good God only shall rule o'er me;
 Field and stream and lark and tree,
 Earth, Heav'n, he shall preserve them for me,
 He who best has guided me.

II. The Song of the Flea (from Goethe's Faust: sung by Mephistopheles in Auerbach's cellar)

There was a monarch stately
 Who had a gigantic flea;
 He loved him quite as greatly
 As though a true son were he.
 His tailor and his hatter
 Were called, and came in haste;
 "Now, clothe my flea to flatter
 A gentleman of taste!"

In silk and satin gleaming
 This insect now was dressed,
 Had ribbons from him streaming,
 A cross upon his breast.
 A minister created,
 He wore a star of state;
 And all the fleas related
 To him were rich and great.

And sorely did they pester;
 The courtiers had no peace--
 The queen and maids who dressed her
 Were bitten without cease.
 They dared not pick or scratch them;
 The itch they could not fight.
 But we are free to catch them
 Whene'er we feel them bite!

Free rendering of Francois Villon, "Ballade of Good Doctrine"

Whether by peddling dope you make
 Your cash, or at shooting dice you cheat,
 Or counterfeit, you will likely bake
 Like others who have felt the heat.
 Hypocrites, perjurers indiscreet,
 Thieves, pillagers, others like those
 Where, do you think, does your profit fleet?
 To liquor and to whores it goes.

If you make rhymes, satire, or shake
 The cymbals, or if drums you beat
 If you're a barker for some fake,
 If you play farces in the street,
 Or high-brow drama for the elite,
 Win at poker, dominoes,
 Wherever it comes from, I repeat,
 To liquor and to whores it goes.

Or, if the "honest" course you'd take
 Work hard, and plow, and sow your wheat,
 Rub down horses till you ache,
 Save hard, and never overeat;
 Then, if your thrift is quite complete
 You'll save enough for some sweet repose.
 But do you retire and save your feet?
 To liquor and to whores it goes.

Take your "stuff cuff" and your "reat pleat,"
 Your frippery and fancy clothes,
 Take it all, and hurry, "vite!"
 To liquor and to whores it goes.

Poems to Hazel. During my year studying Japanese at the Army school in Ann Arbor I had a girlfriend named Hazel, and on one occasion vowed I would write her a sonnet a day for a month, unless she (whatever). I ran down poetically, and broke up with Hazel (the two events not causally related), before the month was up. The sonnets are not worth preserving; one of them, written when I could not see her because I was kept in to mop floors, ended with this quatrain:

Yet always shall I think upon Thy Face
 And it shall light that Gloomy Dungeon'd Place
 As doth the Sun a Cloud, and by Its Light
 The murky-grey Mop Water shall shine Bright.

Also for her, later re-used for another: a Ballade in the Manner of Francois Villon

How very soon a lady's fame
 Will fade and disappear
 Unless some verse enshrine her name
 Against the decaying year,
 'Tis poets' loves we now revere,
 Locked in romantic lay,
 But they are naught, for thou art here
 But they are passed away.

What if Villon did not acclaim
 His Catherine? I fear
 Her name had died with those who came
 To look upon her bier.
 Fair Julia, and Celia, dear
 To Jonson—famed are they,
 Yet only names—for thou art here
 But they are passed away.

And Beatrice, noble dame
 Whose love, it would appear,

Kindled such a poetic flame
 In Dante the austere?
 It well may be they had no peer
 During their glorious day—
 It matters not, for thou art here
 But they are passed away.

Envoi: Stay but a moment, shed a tear
 For these fair ladies—pray
 For their sweet souls—for thou art here
 But they are passed away.

Mrs. Duffey's Boarding House (ca. 1943?) fragment

A filthy creature is the rat,
 It carries flea and louse;
 Its customary habitat
 Is in the boarding house

And yet we chase the rodents from our shelves,
 And live within the boarding house ourselves.
 Why don't the humans change their habitats
 And leave the boarding houses for the rats?

Yellow Book Sonnet (1953)

In 1953 I re-met in New York, by chance, a close friend from my time in the occupation in Korea (1946-48), a poet named Ellis Settle. We had enjoyed writing verses for each other, often in the set forms, packed with allusions and echoes (as many as possible) from well-known poems. He had married in the interim, and as a wedding present I gave him and his new wife Joanna one of my treasures, a complete set of the hard-cover periodical The Yellow Book, the famous fin-de-siecle publication in which Max Beerbohm's "The Happy Hypocrite," drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, and many other notable works of that age first appeared. On the flyleaf of the first volume I inscribed this sonnet:

The Yellow Book! It hath the dying fall

Of music heard when sweet, soft voices die,
 As the Old Order, passing, spreads a pall
 Where dead, morocco-coffined poets lie.
 The Yellow Book would claim, as Something New,
 The privilege of Youth to sneer at Age;
 And yet the Good, the Beautiful, the True
 Appear in masquerade on every page.
 Moving sedately through facades of wit,
 The Queen commands the final reckoning;
 Without his mask, the Happy Hypocrite
 Enters another Idyll of the King.
 Censure it not, then; on the flyleaf write:
 "Its Skin was Yellow, but its Soul was White."

Earlier (1947?) Sonnet for Ellis (who complained that his poems were cold and intellectual)

Pressures that ooze forth lava, as lead from mold,
 Heats that melt stone like wax within the earth,
 Terrible forces give the diamond birth—
 And yet behold it, clear and hard and cold.

Or see the star, in headlong frenzy rolled,
 Burning its life out, round the heaven's girth,
 Its ardor space-enveloped, of no worth
 As warmth, an icy glitter to behold.

Crystalline are the fruits of mighty strain;
 Hot from the body's labors, the soul's curse,
 Black skin drips glassy beads onto the ground.

Transparence grows from passion or from pain;
 He who looks deep into your lucent verse
 Sees flames of hell within the crystal's round.

Three Seoul Streetscenes (1947, as an officer in the Occupation in Korea)

I. Flies

How very wise
Are the flies!

A Korean beggar lies in the street,
His head in the mud, mud at his feet;
And he moves not in his sleep,
Merging into the garbage heap
 On which he lies.

When every motion brings him pain,
Why should he wish to move again?
 And the flies
 Very wise
Crawl on his mouth and nose and eyes.

The sun-broiled offal reeks and seethes;
Fearful, I wonder if he breathes—
A fevered rolling of the head
Shows that he is not yet dead.

 But the flies
 Very wise
Do not wait until he dies.

Now the sound of oxen hooves
Clipping by him in the street
Wakes him; woodenly he moves,
Rising stiffly to his feet.

 And the flies
 Also rise
Buzzing their annoyed surprise.

With delicate fingers, from the wet
He lifts the butt of a cigarette
And drops it with a crafty glance
Into the pocket of his pants
 As through his rattling breath
He smiles a thin smile over the prize
Which altogether justifies
The pain of living in his eyes,
 The staving off of death.

But the flies
 Are more wise:
 In pin-point brains they realize
 How little changes when he dies.

II. Trio

Boy: Daddy, look!
 That dirty gook
 Made a face at me just then!
 Look, he's doing it again!
 Shoot him, Daddy, shoot him dead!
 Shoot him through the head!

Captain: That there guy
 With one eye?
 He's just smilin' at you, son!
 He ain't gonna hurt you none!
 If he tried to, he's sure be an-
 Other dead Korean!

Korean: Sickly, pale,
 Ugly, frail,
 Well-fed child who calls me gook--
 How repulsive you would look
 If you stood by my boy's side
 If he hadn't died.

III. Untitled

All along the streets of Seoul
 Youths with twisted faces loll
 Glaring at the passers-by
 With bitter hatred in their eye

(So this is Korea, thinks Mrs. J.
 Who got off the boat just yesterday)

Beside the Bon Chung, on the ground

A boy in tattered clothing sits
 Selling tubes of ointment found
 In Army prophylactic kits

(How terribly sordid, thinks Major B.
 As he walks with his wife and progeny)

Into his cart an old man bails
 Brown liquid out of wooden pails
 The smells of human ordure rise
 Attracting myriads of flies

(How can they stand it? says Mr. L.
 Crossing the street to avoid the smell)

Beside his towering firewood pack
 A withered man rests on the street,
 Then lifts the burden to his back
 And staggers wearily to his feet

(What do they live for? asks Colonel R.
 Driving by in his motor car)

The Ballade of the Dead Squirrels (written for my English teacher at Berkeley High, Miss Constance Topping, who loved squirrels. It won a prize, and was read, at the Berkeley Poets Dinner, at the Claremont Hotel. 1942)

High up in an elm tree lived Earl the squirrel
 In his home, which he'd built from an old packing case
 Nearby lived a girl squirrel, the beauteous Pearl,
 Who had silken-smooth fur and a rhythmical grace
 She looked upon Earl as a dare-devil ace,
 And he'd leap and cavort through the tree-tops, while she
 Would wave with her hanky, a small bit of lace—
 For a squirrel has much the same feelings as we.

In a storm-blasted oak tree dwelt villainous Merle,
 The lowest of rodents, disgrace of his race,

A churl of a squirrel, with an insolent curl
 To his tail, and a cynical smile on his face.
 He too loved Pearl; with a jealous grimace
 He gnawed a large notch in the branch of the tree
 From which Earl always leapt in his dizzying pace—
 For a squirrel has much the same feelings as we.

But 'twas Pearl who leapt on it, and Merle saw her whirl
 From the tree, and lie limp in a heap at the base;
 Then he fled to his oak-tree hole, fearing that Earl
 With revengeful and murd'rous intent would give chase.
 But Earl knew revenge cold not help to replace
 What he'd lost, and left Earl to his own misery,
 And a small furry body went hurtling through space—
 For a squirrel has much the same feelings as we.

L'Envoy:

Ah, Teacher, of Merle there remains not a trace,
 But, bleached and grown over by weeds, one can see
 Two skeletons locked in a deathless embrace—
 For a squirrel has much the same feelings as we.

(Note, roughly a century later: excuse the dangling modifier! This was one of two ballades I submitted to the Poet's Dinner competition—I really hoped the other would win—it was titled "Ballade of the Changing World," another imitating Francois Villon.)

You ask, And what if this goes on?
 What can this tumult lead us to?
 And have we built our Helicon
 To see it fall, and start anew?
 History answers, cold and true:
 From times recorded by no pen,
 The cycle has been carried through—
 They fall, and rise to fall again.

Buried is ancient Babylon,
 Lost is the continent of Mu,
 In ruins stands the Parthenon;

Empty the temples of Peru.
 These were once great: they are but few
 To those that have risen high, and then
 Have vanished , leaving not a clue;
 They fall, and rise to fall again.

You say, We fight, so that, anon,
 Others may live as we now do;
 Our sons shall have, when we are gone,
 The way of life in which we grew.
 Shall History throw itself askew,
 Bring back La Vie Parisienne?
 No; these shall go in spite of you;
 They fall, and rise to fall again.

You ask, Where is the world we knew,
 A peaceful world of happy men?
 Ask rather: Where is Xanadu?
 They fall, and rise to fall again.

Blackberrying in the Midway

(Unfinished poem written when I was 35, i.e. midway through our three-score-and-ten, or in 1961?)

Gentler than a caress, being free of passion
 The soft and tender-fingered tug that drops
 Berry into cupped hand. Force brings scratches,
 And the ones that hang on are sour anyway.
 Take it easy! say the vines, And take them all!
 More will be ripe next week, more the week after
 And a thorn's puncture, if you don't pull against it
 Leaves but a tiny wound. (Those stains on your hands
 Are only juice from the berries—yours
 Lacks that tinge of blue.) Man was once a food-gatherer—
 Be so again.

For old Chinese, the ideal occupations
 Were fishing and faggot-gathering, neither required

Sowing or cultivation, but only reaping.
 Take it easy! said the Taoists, Don't fight it.
 They lived on fungus, berries perhaps, and pine-nuts.
 Or so they said, and so they advised disciples.

Those vines are the far-wandering offspring
 Of a planted patch, now wild and spreading
 A slow-diminishing heritage, ever sparser.
 Three years ago, a single slow passage
 Out from the house, as far back as the clearing,
 Eyes cocked for blue-black and red among the leaves
 Would more than fill the pail. Now, scarcely half.
 No matter; the thickest, heavy-hung bushes
 Were always on the slopes across the road.

Across the road, a giant step through the gap
 (Now shifted) in the rose-hedge. and into
 A grove of new pines! A tangling scratchless passage
 Through needle-shower sprays, and dusty pungency
 Erect boles set too close (thinning comes later),
 Branches arranged in tiers, superimposing
 Patterns of neatly-ruled line, cross-hatching light.
 Through this constructivist order, twining upward,
 The surviving berry vines, still green, still bearing
 Crowd what space they find. But a weightless fall
 Of needles, year upon year deepening
 Around their roots, will turn them brown and brittle.
 The strangler smothered.

Who would plant pines where blackberries had been?
 Someone, surely, with a Confucian mind.
 Pines, for the old Chinese, meant steadfast virtue,
 Unbending in storm, unaltered by season. Berries
 Spread, bear, migrate, die; pines endure.
 And I, having two weeks ago passed over
 The midway of this our mortal life, now find
 Pines where blackberries were. Must I, from now,
 Endure the enduring? Who can eat shade
 And pungent fragrance? Taoist recluses,
 Aspiring to immortality, lived in caves

Oph. Expelled! But the account that he gave us
Of why he left before matriculating
Spoke of disgust at the irrelevance
Of education there at Wittenberg.
Tell me the truth, what *really* was the cause?
Perhaps it will explain his present state.

Ros. Indeed it may; for, as you know him now,
Moody, rebellious, ineffectual
Imagine then our Hamlet as a student!

Oph. My mind reels at the thought, but I will try.

Ros. And to fill out your fancy's imagery
We'll now employ the flashback formula
(A stage convention yet to be invented)
Transporting us at once to Wittenberg
Five years ago. You'll e'en participate
(The dearth of players requiring that you do.)
Come, Guildenstern and I shall play ourselves,
Gertrude and you his classmates, Claudius
His new professor of astronomy
In whose first lecture we now find ourselves.

(Lights out, chairs moved; these five are found seated as lights come up.
Enter Claudius as Professor.)

Prof. Good morning, students; welcome to you all.
I trust you've had a pleasant Quarter break.
This class, Astronomy 6B, for which
6A is the prerequisite, will deal
With ordained motions of the heavenly bodies.

Ham. But tell us first, professor, how *you* come
To give this course, in place of our revered
Professor Faustus, whom we had last Quarter?

Prof. Faustus has left the University.
Inquire not after him. Let us proceed.

In this first lecture, which is very short,
 I shall outline the questions we'll pursue.
 Are there many heavens above the moon?
 Are all celestial bodies but one globe
 As is the substance of this centric earth?
 Leading authorities maintain 'tis so,
 And it is not our place to question *them*.
 As are the elements, such are the spheres,
 Mutually folded in each other's orb;
 All jointly move upon one axletree,
 Whose terminus is term'd the world's wide pole.
 Nor are the names of Saturn, Mars, or Jupiter
 Feign'd, but are erring stars. So much today;
 We meet on Wednesday, here, at this same hour.
 By then you should have purchased copies of
 The new edition of Ptolemy (sound the P to make meter right)
 (Available in low-cost paperback.)
 Please read the first three chapters. So, farewell. (Exit)

Ham. (leaping up) So, Rosencranz and gentle Guildenstern,
 Tell me what has transpired while I've been gone.
 What has become of Faustus, our dear prof,
 Who taught us all that we desired to know
 Of sweet rebellion 'gainst the established Church,
 Who served as Faculty Advisor to
 The movement or which I'm the President—
 I mean the S.H.S., or Students for
 Heretical Society? I do fear
 There's something rotten here in Wittenberg.

Guild. Have you not heard? The Regents have dismissed him,
 With full approval of th'Administration
 And the Academic Senate Committee
 On Inquisitions.

Ham. Oh, my prophetic soul!

Ros. He's charged, they say, with having sold *his* soul
 To Lucifer.

(Lights down, then up again; Faustus on stage)

Faust Why have you brought me here? I was engaged
 In dalliance with my sweet Helena.

(to Guild.) Were you the one who interrupted me?
 I think your name is—Hamlet, is it not?

Guid. I'm not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be.
 My name is Alexander Guildenstern.

Faust I never could remember students' names.

Ham. *I'm* Hamlet; it was I who brought you here
 To learn from your own lips the truth about
 These charges brought against you. Is it true
 You've signed a contract with old Lucifer?

Faust So what then if I have? Professors sign
 Worse contracts all the time. Why, just last month
 Professor Kissingerus took a job
 As chief advisor to young Fortinbras
 On strategies to overthrow the Poles,
 Teaching him new and more efficient ways
 To smite the sledded Polack on the ice.
 If he can sell *his* soul, why shouldn't I?

Ham. A fair reply; we'll use it in our handouts.
 But what of Hell? Have you had glimpses of it?

Faust (warmly) I have; Lucifer took me on a tour,
 And as I had suspected, all one hears
 Is foul distortions of a biased press.
 There may be certain deprivations now
 Imposed on the inhabitants, but these
 Are only temporary sacrifices
 Which all must make toward the achieving of
 A better, healthier society.
 They say that in five years they will surpass
 Heaven in producing milk and honey—
 It's true, technical problems yet remain

In cooling it, and managing to hide
 A certain taste of brimstone; but they'll do it!
 They're working hard, one has to give them that.

Ham. Your words strike to my soul—by which I mean
 You tell me what I'm predisposed to credit.
 Your motives, then, were lofty—you intend
 To fearlessly expose the propaganda
 Of the established Church, and spread the truth!

Faust Something like that indeed was in my thoughts;
 But mainly I intended to escape
 The dullness of the academic life—
 I think I always was a secret swinger.
 And then when Lucifer held out to me
 Those honey'd promises of far-out sex,
 Even beyond th' imaginations of
 The sleazy makers of X-rated films,
 And the recapture of my wasted youth,
 What could I do but sign? And so I signed.
 But now you must excuse me—Helen's waiting.
 Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me.

(Lights out, then up; Faustus is gone.)

Ham. Oh all you host of heaven! Oh earth! What else?
 To think that they have fired this worthy man
 For making such a reasonable choice!
 I'm now resolved more than I ever was
 To make them reconsider their decision.
 We *cannot* tolerate injustice!

Oph. Ham,
 We all agree the time is out of joint,
 But why are *we* obliged to set it right?

Ham. You talk like someone over thirty; who
 Will do it if we don't? The only issue
 Is whether we should try by peaceful means
 Of fair persuasion to effect our end,

Or bring th'Administration to its knees
 With crippling blows 'gainst its security.
 We plant a bomb, we occupy an office,
 And soon or later, they capitulate.
 Which do we think would be the wiser course?

Guild. It seems to me that we should first decide
 Whether the reinstatement of old Faustus
 Suffices, as a cause, for our involvement.
 Perhaps his actions justify his firing.

Ham. A pox upon your indecision, sir!
 The matter's very simple, as I see it.
 We recognize the Church to be corrupt;
 Heresy opposes to the Church;
 Faustus they say has practiced heresy—
 And therefore Faustus merits our support.
 Such bootless arguing just wastes our time;
 The only question is our course of action.
 Since you are of no help, / must decide. (Pauses, holds head)
 I feel a curious urge to draw apart,
 Addressing certain words unto myself.
 If you'll excuse me, I shall do so now.

Ros. I think, my lord, it's called *soliloquizing*.
 In moderation it's a harmless thing—
 But too much talking to yourself, they say,
 Betokens psychological disorder.
 So pray, don't let this grow into a habit.

(They withdraw to the side of the stage and sit there. Hamlet strikes an attitude.)

Ham. To trash, or not to trash—that is the question.
 Whether to aim at quiet revolution
 By operating still within the system
 Or to take arms against th' Establishment
 For reasons of its gross inequities
 And by opposing, hurt it. To trash, to sit-in—
 Oh wow! and by defiant act, to end

The feelings of frustration that the young
 Are heir to; truly 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished. To demonstrate—
 Perhaps to be arrested: there's the rub;
 For in that fell arrest, what cops may come
 To bloody up our heads with brutal clubs
 Must give us pause; there's the respect
 That makes calamity of confrontation.
 For who would bear the stifling pressures of
 This Late Mediaeval society
 When he could, with a well-placed bomb or two,
 Hasten the coming of the Renaissance—
 Were it not that the Powers who oppose
 The advent of a more enlightened age
 Will ruthlessly put down such an attempt.
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
 And enterprises of great pitch and moment
 With this regard their currents turn awry
 And lose the name of action . . .

Guild. Really, Ham,
 You ramble over-long, and to no end.
 If you intend to act, for God's sake do it!

Ham. Your words strike to my soul—I said that once.
 You're right; procrastination is a curse.
 I'll go at once and rouse my followers,
 And ere the day is out, a hundred strong,
 Confront the Chancellor with our demands.
 And if they are not met—let them beware!
 No one shall say that Hamlet cannot act!

(He rushes out. Others rise, Queen exits, chairs moved back.)

Ros. And so, my fair Ophelia (for we now
 Must all revert unto our former roles,
 The flashback being over) Hamlet went
 And took decisive action, just this once,
 And found himself arrested and expelled.

Oph. I understand—and ever since that time
He has been paralyzed by indecision
Through having learned, by harsh experience
The outcome of impetuosity.

Ros. One thing is very plain—that he is not
The kind of person you would want to marry.

Oph. He says unpleasant things to me, such as
That I should get me to a nunnery.
I've never even much liked Sunday school!

Ros. We must devise some plan to stop this match.

(Etc., as on p. 80 of W. S. Gilbert text.)

(Addition to ending, following Claudius's last speech on p. 89:)

Claud. So, Hamlet, get thee gone—and don't come back again!

Ham. I welcome your suggestion, and will go.
If what you say is true, then I shall make
A striking figure on their public stage.
It's plain I'm not appreciated here.
And when I tire of that, why, on again—
Unto a place that I have heard about
Called Harvard of the West. I'll change my name
To something foreign—let's say, *Savio*—
And there indulge my taste for rhetoric.
Perhaps I can regain the mode of action,
For better or for worse. And so, farewell!
To Engle-land!

(Business of farewell, Hamlet exits dramatically, others strike pose, lights out.)

A Day At Creed's (alternate title, not by me: Creedo in Unum Bookstore)

The composer Gordon Cyr and I, since our time together at Berkeley High School, had planned to compose an opera—or, in one grandiose plan, a cycle based on the Arthurian legend. Several were started; none was ever completed. In 1949 (when I was doing undergrad work in Oriental Languages with Peter Boodberg, Edward Schafer, Ch'en Shih-hsiang and others, also doing a weekly radio program on the new Station KPFA, and many other things) we were living with three others in a big house with a large living room and hall, in which we held musicales. We composed a chamber opera to be performed in our living room, four people taking thirteen parts and playing the piano when offstage (as at least one performer had to be all the time) wearing a bathrobe with "Orchestra" painted on the back. It was set in Creed's bookstore, where I worked part-time; located as one of a row of shops that stretched at right as you exited Sather Gate. It had begun selling used records as well as books. The owner, Earl J. Schilling, professed worry that Creed's was turning into a record store, and that perceived danger was the theme of our chamber opera, along with a wider commentary on Berkeley intellectual life. It was performed several times in our living room—at the first performance, several people came in tuxedos and evening attire, and someone in the lobby was renting opera glasses so you could look through them the wrong way and think you were at the Metropolitan. The performers, besides Gordon and me, were Donald Aird and Walter McKibben. A performance on campus followed, and one on Radio Station KPFA; a recording made from that survives, and some old Berkeley people still own it and gather to play it, for nostalgia. I include here only the opening chorus, sung by Schilling with two clerks, Morrill and Albert; a patter-song trio by the same three; and Morrill's song to a Little Old Lady who wants a copy of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, expounding to her the deep inner significance of that theme (and discouraging her from buying the book.)

Opening Chorus

Come—to—Creed's,
Where eccentricity breeds!
Every Berkeley intellectual
Radical and ineffectual
Comes—to—Creed's
For every book he reads.

Come—to—Creed's
From Plato to Andre Gides,

Esoterica and erotica,
 Whatever you're wanting, we have got a co-
 lection of at Creed's
 To cater to your literary needs.

Patter Song, Trio

All: We---have---

(very fast:)

- M. Dostoievsky
- A. Kabalevsky
- S. LP disks of Alex Nevsky
- A. Piano music by Arensky
- M. Tertium Organum by Ouspensky
- S. Bach transcriptions by Stokowski
- A. A. Brailowsky
Plays Tchaikowsky
- M. Mathematics books by Tarski
- A. Cello solos by Piatagarsky
- S. Books about Vaslav Nijinsky
- M. Sac' du Printemps by Stravinsky—

- A. Puccini
Bellini
Sibelius
And Delius
Ponchielli
Corelli
Menotti
Scarlatti
Rachmaninoff
Gretchaninov
Beethoven
De Koven
Gastoldi
Vivaldi
Tristan and Isolde
And G. Frescobaldi!

- S. Paradise Regained by Milton
Lost Horizon by James Hilton
- M. Books on allergy and sinus
St. Bernard and Tom Acquinas
- A. Adams' St. Michel and Chartres
Existentialism—Sartre
- S. Gazzaladra by Rossini
With Arturo Toscanini
- M. H. Longfellow
- A. Pirandello
- S. Verdi's or Shakespeare's Othello
- A. Amarola
- S. Emile Zola
- M. Books about Savonarola
- S. Henry Miller
- M. Friedrich Schiller
- A. String quarters played by the Griller
- S. All the symphonies of Dvorak
Psychological tests by Rorschach
- M. Children's books by Felix Salten
Sitwell's poems set by Walton
- A. All of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets
Gerschwin played by Kostelanetz
- A. Novels by the sisters Bronte
Don Quixote by Cervante
Boccacio, Patrarch and Dante
The Verdi brothers, Giusepp' and Monti!
- S. Books about Mahatma Ghandi
Pelleas and Melisande
- A. Books on holy matrimony
Vivaldi's Quatro Stagioni
- M. Birth of Tragedy by Nietzche
Orpheus and Euridice
- S. Tschaikowsky's Andente Cantabile

- A. Collected works of Francois Rabelais
Faust, a play by Wolfgang Goethe
Mozart's opera Zauberflöte
- M. Virgil Thompson, Gertrude Stein,
Mozart's Kochel thirty-nine
- S. J. S. Bach
Ernest Toch
Philosophy by Mill and Locke—
- All: We—can--fill
All—your—needs
If—you—will
Come to Creed's!

Morill's Song About Rebecca (first stanza from memory)

Rebecca was the wife, you know,
Of Isaac son of Abraham,
 The sage from whom
 As we assume
 The Jewish race began;
She also was the mother of
Esau and Jacob, who you know
 Was father to
 The Joseph who
 Appears in Thomas Mann.

You see the great significance—
The esoteric significance—
 It isn't often noticed but
 It's undeniably there.

D. Club Scribe Chronicles

During my years at U. C. Berkeley I was a member of two clubs, the Kosmos Club and the Arts Club. Each met monthly, had dinners at the Faculty Club (or sometimes elsewhere, for the Arts Club), and listened to papers by members. At each meeting, one other member would be appointed Scribe, or Chronicler, to compose a humorous report of the paper to be read at the next meeting. I did quite a few of these; three of them are included here, because I happen to have kept copies of them. I have abridged them, to take out the duller parts; I won't offer any identifications of participants or other references.

Kosmos Club, May 1, 1972, responding to paper by Prof. Damon on Homer.

"After Second Looking Into Lattimore's Homer, or: The Meter Doesn't Matter If It Ends with Strawberry Shortcake"

On the first of the fifth month, celebrated as May Day,
 Came together by evening the monthly assemblage of savants.
 In the Faculty Club's Great Hall they met, in accordance with custom,
 Sipping their nut-rich sherry, consuming their close-curved cornchips,
 Feasting on succulent viands, with wines both purple and pale-gold
 Chosen by Diliberto, dextrous-with-digits Stephen.
 Then when the feast was finished, cigars reduced to ashes,
 They gathered again in the Great Hall, by Maybeck's dragons guarded.
 Now did their chief Monguio, hemisphere-girdling Luis
 Call the meeting to order, ask that guests be greeted (. . .)
 Then your humble scribe was heard, reading his ill-made minutes.
 These matters once transacted, all were quiet with waiting.
 Up spoke Professor Damon, of English and eke of Comp Lit,
 Reading a well-wrought paper titled "Unwritten Literature."
 The poet Homer, he said then, following Milman Parry,
 Wasn't really a writer, but rather a chanter of stories.
 He marks an early stage in a very long-lived tradition
 That still is carried on by someone in Yugoslavia.
 This oral mode explains Homer's tendency to ramble,
 His repetitiveness, and several other stylistic features.
 Notably his attachment to certain descriptive phrases.
 It turns out that the reason he employs them over and over
 Is that to think of new ones would break the flow of his singing.
 Thus the sea is wine-dark only to fit the meter,
 Achilles swift-footed only when three syllables are wanting,
 And the dawn rosy-fingered, even in cloudy weather,

Not from eating pomegranates but just because it's simpler.
 Accounts of battle likewise are shaped by fixed conventions,
 With the events arranged to fit an existing pattern.
 (This venerable tradition, sanctified by centuries,
 Still can be seen in practice in Pentagon press-releases.)
 Likewise the enduring Odysseus, returning from his travels,
 No doubt thought he was clever to dress himself as a beggar
 Before confronting Pelelope and all her persistent suitors.
 In fact the reason he did so, though he could scarcely know it
 Was to conform with some old established narrative pattern.
 And so our poet, relieved of the burden of improvising
 Original turns of plot, fresh epithet and image,
 Allowed the very practices we now mark students down for
 (Red-pencilling the padding, writing "cliché" in the margin)
 His task made even lighter by laxity in meter
 Which (judging from Lattimore's version) gave him considerable leeway,
 Was able to spin his tale out, telling a well-known story,
 Filling twenty-four books without the war even over.
 (There is, one must grant, a certain inescapable momentum
 That makes one feel he could go on just about forever
 In more or less impressive heroic Homeric hexameters,
 As is amply proven by the present composition.)
 And yet, as Professor Damon in closing words assured us,
 The poetry has no sense of mechanical contrivance,
 Or, as one might expect, of ponderous lumbering motion,
 Like that of the horse the Greeks built, as present for the Trojans.
 It is, as Damon put it, supple and freely moving,
 Proving again that in all art, restraint results in freedom.
 Thus he spoke, and remained there, waiting to answer questions
 Put by his fellow savants, they knowledgeable in all things.
 First to question was Stewart, of Fire and Storm the singer,
 Asking about the epithets applied to the sea and to heroes (. . .)
 Great was the erudition bared in this mighty encounter,
 Yet always did Damon skilfully fend their trenchant queries.
 Then all the assembled savants, drunk with wine and with wisdom,
 Like the surviving Greeks when the sack of Troy was over,
 Tired, but looking forward rather boozily to the next one,
 Wended their homeward ways to presumably faithful consorts.
 Thus came at length to a close the Kosmos Club's May meeting.
 Respectfully submitted by your humble scribe, James Cahill.

Last section of chronicle of Arts Club paper by Anthony Newcomb, March 1981.

Finally, our speaker made the extraordinary suggestion that Wagner had "fiddled with the text," and "wreaked dramatic havoc on the text to accomodate the music." Following on the rest of the paper, this would seem to be an argument that the actions of characters in the Ring are largely determined by the particular musical proclivities of the composer; since he is unable or unwilling to achieve resolutions in his music, they are doomed to achieve none in their affairs . . . A four-opera cycle about who gets a gold ring thus ends with nobody getting it, or at least keeping it. One might suppose, following this suggestion, that if the composer had been of a different musical bent, the story would have developed very differently, toward neat solutions and happy endings instead of the reverse. Opera-goers would then have found, when they settled into their seats and opened their programs;

THE ABDUCTION FROM VALHALLA, OR THE MAGIC SCHWERTCHEN, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, an opera that can mercifully be performed in a single evening.

Synopsis: Siegmund enters swimming at the bottom of the Rhine, pursued by the dragon Fafner. Three Rhinemaidens appear and help him, pointing to the magic sword which is embedded in a nearby tree. Siegmund pulls it out and slays the dragon with it, thereupon singing his familiar aria "Der Drachenschlager bin ich ja." By way of reward, the three Rhinemaidens introduce him to his female counterpart Sieglinde (who is also, rather improperly, his sister,) and the two sing an amusing duet about how many children they plan to have: "Erst, eine kleinische Siegmunde," "Dann, eine kleinische Sieglinde," und so weiter.

In fact, only one child eventuates, and is named Siegfried. The three Rhinemaidens give him the magic Schwertchen, his father Siegmunde having retired and relinquished it, and urge the young man to rescue Brynhilde, the daughter of their queen, from the castle of Valhalla, where she is being held captive in the seraglio of the sinister Wotan. Wotan has organized, for devious S&M purposes, a harem of butch bodyguards known as Valkyrie, who dress in full armor (they wear, for instance, the metal breastplates known as "Tanks for the Mammaries") and emit earsplitting cries of "hayatoho!" to the music of "Die Hölle Rache." Brynhilde is their reluctant leader; her honor has so far been preserved by the fact that when she and Wotan come together, they can think of nothing

better to do than sing lustily at each other, often for a half hour at a time, to the exhaustion of both.

The scene shifts to Brynhilde's chamber, where she is being assaulted by the evil Hagen, who has surrounded them with the magic fire to repel interruption. Fortunately, Brynhilde's armor impedes his lecherous intentions, allowing time for Siegfried, with the help again of the Rhinemaidens, to cause the Rhine to overflow its banks and put out the fire, after which he rescues Brynhilde with the magic Schwertchen. Wotan re-pledges his devotion to his wife Fricka, a mezzo-soprano, and the opera ends with a grand finale as all the happy couples embrace.

A noted critic, to the charge that this libretto did not make much sense, replied that in comparison with the Ring of the Nibelungen it exhibits a positively Mozartian clarity.

Chronicle of Thomas Rosenmeyer talk for Arts Club, March 3, 197?

A merry evening of light-hearted fun was enjoyed by the Arts Club at its February meeting as Professor Thomas Rosenmeyer, in a paper titled "Sneer, Dangle, and the Greeks," revealed new depths of humor in Sheridan's comedy "The Critic." Those who had regarded it, like the editor of the Oxford World Classics edition of Sheridan's plays, as simply a burlesque of a burlesque, found they had missed much, indeed most, of the point. Rosenmeyer forcefully impressed on the cultured Arts Club listeners, some of the more learned of whom must have already been aware of it, that the real dramatic irony of the play lies in Dangle's failure, as critic, to realize that he is participating in Sheridan's brilliant contribution to Restoration parodies of Neo-Classic imitations of Seneca's derivatives of Aeschylus as parodied by Euripides. (Your chronicler vaguely recalls that Aristophanes was involved somehow, but was left uncertain about just how. If he has somewhere missed the full intricacies of this line of transmission, so that some of the humor has eluded him, he will no doubt be enlightened by more learned colleagues, and enjoy a good laugh later.)

Professor Rosenmeyer thus revealed to us an onion-like structure surrounding the play, with layers within layers of comedy. Corresponding to these we must imagine, extending over centuries, the audiences arranged in similar layers, enjoying a similarly layered structure of increasingly subtle jokes. At the core are Dangle, Sneer, and Puff, the audience for the play-within-a-play, to whom all true

understanding is denied, and who thus cannot laugh at all. The majority of Sheridan's audience, one must suppose, constitutes the main bulk of the onion; they appreciated the simpler humor of the play, and in varying degrees the satirical references to English tragedies with which they were familiar. A thin layer, truly onion-skin, is added by H. Scriblerus Secundus, the learned critic whose cogent comments on some aspects of the dramatic conventions employed were quoted by our speaker. A small minority within Sheridan's audience, who recognized the allusions to conventions of Latin and Greek drama, must have formed another layer of understanding, to be joined by well-read readers and commentators ranging over the nearly two hundred years intervening (the play was first produced in 1779). The addition of still another layer, enveloping all the others, had to await the advent of a reader of the play who was himself engaged in the writing of a book on Stoic drama and who possessed the subtlety and deviousness of mind to expound what all the rest had missed. This was none other than our speaker. Your chronicler, who hopes that he has not with his feeble comments added a dry outer skin to the whole, concludes with the observation that it is enough to drive one back to Neil Simon and the simple, unlayered tomato.

Respectfully submitted, James Cahill

