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ARTICLES

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The Bill Casey Award

The Bill Casey Memorial Fund annually awards $100 to the author of the best article, story, or poem appearing in each volume of *San José Studies.* Friends and relatives of Bill Casey, a faculty member at San Jose State University from 1962 to 1966, established the fund at his death to encourage creative writing and scholarship. The recipient of each award is selected by the Committee of Trustees of *San José Studies.*

The Bill Casey Award in Letters for 1986

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for his article in the fall issue:

"Fascist of the Last Hour."

The Committee of Trustees also awarded a one-year subscription to *San José Studies* to the author of the best work (exclusive of the Bill Casey award) published in the categories of (1) poetry, (2) fiction, and (3) articles. The 1986 recipients of these awards are:

Poetry	**Mordecai Marcus** for her poems, "Closet Thoughts" and "A Press of Needs," in the spring issue.
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ARTICLES

Reflections on the Performance of Ritual and Art

Mary Lewis Shaw

THE relationship between ritual and art being vast and complex, this essay examines it from a limited point of view: the sole focus is on the Yaqui *Deer Dance* and *L'Après-midi d'un Faune,* examples of performance within American Indian and European cultures.

The principal medium of both the *Deer* and *Faune* is dance, and the two works are equally tied to special music and particular texts. In each case, the primary figure is that of a wild woods animal-immortal who is interpreted by one male dancer. The common subject choice is not fortuitous, for the deer and faun are historical carriers of cultural significance, animals of mythical stature for Yaquis and Europeans respectively.

The major and most readily apparent difference between these performances is that the Yaqui *Deer Dance* is perceived as ritual, the effecting of a rite, while the *Faune* is viewed as an instance of performed art. The *Deer Dance* was conceived to be and remains an intrinsic element in a ceremonial event; the *Faune* was created to stand alone, a self-sufficient work of art. This difference in function immediately presents a rationalization for the very different histories of the *Deer Dance* and the *Faune* and seems responsible for other dissimilarities which will be explored.

The *Deer Dance* is essentially non-evolving. Ideally, it is effected today as it always was, and it is attached to no particular period within the growth of Yaqui culture. In this it already lacks an important aspect of the European idea of art, which characteristically seeks to propose a timeless "fond" garbed in an up-to-date or timely form.[1]

By contrast to the *Deer Dance,* the ballet, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* is

The *Faune* Caresses the Scarf

Of his performance in the ballet Nijinsky said, "To be able to give to the world the perfection of the art of centuries by the movements of the dance is my ambition and delight." (Nesta MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed.*)

marked by a particular birth date and place (Paris, 1912), a renowned group of artists—Mallarmé, Debussy, and Nijinsky—and a series of developments or "movements" that have determined the course of modern art. That the *Faune*'s premiere created a scandal and has now become a classic underlines the point that European art is essentially evolving in relation to culture.

It is my object both to explore the fundamental difference between ritual and art as the major area of divergence between the two dances and to reveal some of the similarities that give them a rather large common ground. But before relating the Yaqui *Deer* and the European *Faune* to each other, I will describe each dance separately to show how each is expressive of its cultural context.

* * *

The first encounter between Yaquis and Europeans occurred in 1553. The conquistador, Diego de Guzmán, on an exploratory expedition around the Sea of Cortez, was warned by a people who called themselves the "Yoeme" not to cross over a line representing the northernmost boundary of already conquered territories. De Guzmán nevertheless crossed the line and was rapidly defeated in battle. The "Yoeme" subsequently acquired a name among the Spaniards (who called them "Hiaquis" after the Rio Yaqui) and a reputation as most fierce among the warriors of New Spain.[2]

There was no further direct contact between Yaquis and Europeans until the advent of a second Spaniard, Captain Hurdaide, into Yaqui territory in 1610. Again there was a battle and again a Spanish defeat. Hurdaide quickly retreated to his Villa Sinaloa garrison, 250 miles south of Yaqui country. Over the next five years, the Yaquis sent delegations there of up to 400 Indians for "friendly" visits and peaceful negotiations. The Yaquis were curious enough and strong enough to wish to explore Spanish settlements in conquered neighboring territories for their own purposes and on their own terms. They were respectfully received by both military and Jesuit authorities, who showed off their churches, schools, and agricultural establishments—the sum and benefit of 20 years' work on the part of Jesuit missionaries.

Impressed by the seeming well-being among their neighbors and the prosperous air of the communities and farms, the Yaquis, cultivators themselves, invited the Jesuit missionaries into their territory. They came after four years to begin a "Jesuit-Yaqui collaboration" which was to endure peacefully for a century and a half.

That both Yaquis and Jesuits could view the encounter of their cultures as positive is due to a unique equilibrium of powers within the history of the conquest of Mexico. By 1617, the conquistadors of New

Spain were fairly wearied and weakened with the burden of maintaining the lands they had already taken, and they were suffering a serious falling off of power at home.

The Yaquis, for their part, were strong and well rested. They remained untouched for a time by the shock and force of Spanish plunderers at their prime. Having defeated the Spaniards on two occasions, the Yaquis maintained their self-confidence, and they were able to benefit from a slow acculturation to the Spaniards at a distance. These circumstances allowed a relationship to build which corresponded to the ideal set forth by Bartolomé de Las Casas, who hoped that Europeans in cultural encounters with the natives of New Spain would cause new vitality and growth, rather than disease, death, and destruction.

But Yaqui relations with their neighbors were not always to remain so happy. The Yaqui virtue, a strong spirit of independence and confidence in managing their own affairs, was eventually to prove their downfall. A series of uprisings beginning in 1740 never resolved themselves and resulted in widespread Yaqui extermination in 1887 (now by Mexican authorities) and the migration of many survivors to the United States—in and around Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona.

The Yaqui-Spanish collaboration did, however, allow for the growth of a new Yaqui religion and the development of a truly bicultural world view. This religion and its rites are the context of the *Deer Dance* as it is and has been performed for at least four centuries.

According to 20th century Yaquis, one of the reasons for their initiation of the collaboration was an attraction on their part to the Spaniards' religion: "We invited the Spaniards into the country; their God reminded us of the Sun. We adapted Catholicism to Yaqui religion."[3]

Following is an extract from Yaqui literature in *The South Corner of Time;* it is entitled "Christianity as told by Anselmo Valencia":

> . . . . some Mayos (cousins of the Yaquis) who had been converted to Christianity, came to the Yaquis and told them about the Spaniards who were peaceful and carried no weapons. The Yaquis asked that these peaceful ones be brought in, but that no armed man could enter their territory. They were converted easily because when the missionaries called their God "Our Father in Heaven," pointing upward toward the sky, then the Yaquis thought that here were others who shared their beliefs about *"Itom Achai Taa'a, Our Father Sun."* And then, too, the missionaries' cross looked almost like the Yaqui sun symbol. The missionaries came and stayed on, converting the Yaquis to Christianity. Up to that time, the Yaquis had been sun-worshipers with their own ceremonies and dances, among them the Deer Dancer, Pascola, Coyote, Raccoon, and

Naji (water-fly) dances.

The Yaqui converts asked questions about the man on the cross—who was he? Why was he crucified? Who were these people that had crucified him? They took the Christian beliefs and dramatized them, acting out all the events in the Passion of Christ, *Cuaresma.* Yaquis were probably told that those who followed Jesus were both good and bad. Thus, they had the Matachinis, angelitos, and church group to represent the good. The missionaries allowed the Yaquis to include their own nature beliefs with Christianity. That was the only way they would have been allowed to stay. The ceremonies of the people, the Pascolas and Deer Dancer, were seen as being good.

But the evil ones were made to look as ugly as possible. The name of these evil ones Fariseos (Pharisees) is *Chapayeka* in Yaqui. *Chapa* means long or flat, and *Yeka* means nose, so *Chapayekas* are long-nosed Pharisees as the Yaquis saw the Spaniards. . . .[4]

It is evident by this account and upon witness of any present-day religious ceremony that the Yaqui religion is a rather extraordinary synthesis of Christian and Yaqui world views.

Edward H. Spicer, foremost authority on Yaqui culture, describes the Yaqui religion thus: a "two part dichotomized universe," a human world, which grew with the town-life established with the coming of the Jesuit missionaries, and a natural world not changed by men.[5] For the Yaquis, the world of nature is the spritual world—the Huya Aniya—and it is in sharp contrast with the human world, which is essentially controlled by the powers of human labor, agricultural and ceremonial, through the Catholic Church. This is not to say that the Yaquis do not view the Christian powers over the human world as sacred. Rather, the difference between Yaqui and European Christianity is that the Yaquis refuse to perceive the human as dominant over all. Their compartmentalized vision of spirituality allows them to keep a sense of sanctity for both the human world and the world of nature, while the European Christian system treats nature as essentially material and subordinate to the spiritual world of man. The Yaquis thus remain constantly preoccupied with how their rites and sacraments might beneficially affect not only their communication with the Other—their fellow human being and his idealized forms in the dominant figures of Christianity—but also their communication with the equally powerful forces of non-human oriented nature, their communication " with the World."

In several Yaqui ceremonies, which commemorate a holy day on the Christian calendar, the spirits of the Huya Aniya are also invoked through the rites of song and dance in the figure of the Yaqui Deer:

> It is from the immortals that the special power for dancing and making the music appropriate for . . . the Deer . . . and other animal dances is channeled to men. . . . The very essence of the Huya Aniya was incorporeality. . . . The Supernatural might be invoked in words, the words of songs such as those to which the Deer Dancer danced, but it was never represented in sculptural forms except as masks. . . . The devotions were dance and song which themselves evaporated, as it were, with the end of the singing and the dancing . . . The Huya Aniya was a realm of timeless events. . . .

The following describes the *Deer Dance* as performed in both Arizona and Mexico during the Yaqui Holy Week festival, a yearly enactment of the events of Christ's Passion. The Deer does not dance until the *Gloria,* which arrives at noon on Holy Saturday and lasts through the night into Easter morning. He appears as Matachinis, and Angelitos are throwing flowers to ward off the Fariseos' attack upon the church.

The Deer Dancer is called the "Maso," which means deer in Yaqui. He is always male but of no particular age, and his functions as Deer Dancer are as exclusive and personal to him as are orders to a priest. When effecting his rite he wears a stuffed deer's head upon his own, the antlers wrapped round with a red silk ribbon. His head is bound in a large white cloth. A rawhide strip under his chin holds the deer head steady. The Maso is bare to the waist and wears a mother of pearl cross/sun symbol on a string of black and white beads. Around his waist is a rebozo of dark blue-green falling just below his knees, with rolled-up trousers underneath. The heavy leather belt that girds him is called "rihutiam"; it is made of numerous deer hoof rattles hung close together on strips of rawhide. Around his ankles are strips of butterfly cocoons, "teneboim," also sewn on strips of rawhide. The cocoons have pieces of fine gravel inside. In each hand the Maso holds a gourd rattle, "aiyam," each of a slightly different shape with one handle painted blue, one red. At no time during the ceremonies does the Maso wear shoes.[6]

The Maso is accompanied by three Deer Singers who sing words and play instruments which are exclusive to the *Deer Dance.* One Deer Singer plays a water drum, "va kuvahe," which is a large half-gourd floating inverted in a pan of water. The other singers play sets of two rasping sticks, "hirukiam": one, a large narrow stick with a series of notches which rests on an inverted half-gourd, and the other a smooth heavy stick used as a rasper.

The Maso is a very serious character. When not dancing he remains aloof and motionless with his arms crossed in front of him. Enacting the part of animal, he does not speak.

Invoked by the music of the Deer Singers, the Maso approaches the

—photo by James S. Griffith, taken with permission

The Yaqui *Deer Dance*

The Maso dances to the singing of Deer Songs in Tucson, Arizona. The Yaqui religion and its rites furnish the context of the *Deer Dance* as it is and has been performed for at least 400 years.

ramada, his sacred ground, glancing nervously around him and in all directions "suggesting the movements of a deer on guard." He is bent from the waist, and his arms are extended toward the ground. He begins his dance suddenly. Standing in one space but turning in different directions, he shakes his gourd rattles and with his feet pounds the ground in rapid and rhythmic steps. When a Deer Song has been sung through, he stops dancing as suddenly as he began.[7]

The dance is intense and yet restrained. Its rhythm is captivating and the seriousness with which it is performed compels emotional excitement in the viewers, regardless of their acquaintance with the signficance or symbolism of the dance. The dancer does not represent the Deer, he is the Deer. He seems to be responding to the drive of some kinetic force within him. The words and music drive him to dance.

The following are the words of some of the most commonly heard Deer Songs, each of which would be sung three times for one dance. Included is the Yaqui text for one of the songs.

Text 1

Sewa malici ye.usuweyekai imsu
(flower) (fawn) (you are about to come out) (this)

Sewaba. mppo yeyewe
(in the flower water) (you play)

iyiminsu seye wailo sewatebacipe
(yonder) (flower world) (in the flower patio)

Sewaba. mppo yeyewe
(in the flower water) (you play)

sewa malici ye. usuweyekai imsu
(flower) (fawn) (you are about to come out) (this)

sewaba.mppo yeyewe
(in the flower water) (you play)

Text 2

Now let's all of us sleepy ones wake up, little brother (the fawn)
Well, little brother, well, let's all of us sleepy ones
Wake up together, little brother.
Yonder in Seye Wailo in the flower patio,
Now we sleepy ones, let's wake up, little brother.

Text 3
Under the drippings of the cholla juice
You are standing, flower fawn.
You are standing and bending your horns to rub.
Yonder where you live under the mountain
over there in that place
under the drippings of cholla juice
you stand and rub your horns.
Flower having the body of a fawn.[8]

* * *

The first publication of Mallarmé's poem, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* in 1876 marks the official beginning for what was eventually to premier in 1912 as the ballet of the same name. But as early as 1865, when Mallarmé had submitted a manuscript entitled *Le Faune, intermède héroique* to Théodore de Banville and Constant Coquelin, he had envisaged a theatrical production of his work.[9] This theatrical version was never to be realized, and the text was subsequently reworked as a poem. The final version has no indications as to stage decor or the movements and gesticulation of the faun; yet such indications seem somehow sublimated therein or transposed back into the verse. Perhaps the implicit performability of the poem is responsible for its becoming the best known to the general public of Mallarmé's works.

The poem has been attributed to particular sources. These range from contemporary verse—Musset's *Rolla* and De Banville's *Diane au bois*—and painting—some popular works of Boucher—to the literature and art of antiquity—a line of Horace: "Faune nympharum fugientum amator" concentrating a classical bas-relief into four words.[10]

To show how Mallarmé's poem serves as source in turn and how it relates to the texts of the Yaqui *Deer*, several comments are in order. *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* is the long narrative of a mythical animal—the faun or satyr—speaking in a half-sleepy, half-wakeful state. Situated in a typical faun locale, a rustic woodland, the faun communicates his reverie sometimes in an interiorized mode, and sometimes more formally, recited as in soliloquy. His discourse vascillates between two worlds: the physical and sensual world which is proper to all beings in nature and the intellectual or metaphorizing dream world of humanity, the world of imagination and visions.

> The visible and serene, and artificial
> breath of inspiration which regains the heavens.

The two worlds are constantly juxtaposed, and the faun seems caught or torn between them:

> Did I love a dream?
> My doubt heaped up by the ancient night,
> is ending in many a subtle branch
> which, the very real woods remaining,
> proves, alas, that quite alone
> I offered to myself for triumph
> the ideal fault of roses.[11] (present author's translation)

Oppositions between the "real" or natural and the "imagined" or human are no sooner proposed by the faun than dissolved by his constant merging and confusion of the two. As mythical man-beast, he embodies a duality that is essentially a problem of human nature. On the one hand the faun's bestial aspect is emphasized; he is simultaneously represented as half-animal and half-man, the animal features obviously regarded as the aberrations. He is revealed in a natural scene concerned with a most natural and "animalistic" function, sex. On the other hand, the poem counteracts the bestial aspect of the scene and player by endowing the faun with problems and an attitude which are conversely quite human, that is, intellectual, in his metaphysical questioning about what represents what, and psychological, in his virginal fears and fancies.

The tendency to humanize the animal hyperbolically is particularly strong in European civilizations and appears to function to assure man of a reigning position over the natural world.

Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune* had its premier on December 22, 1894, at the Société Nationale in Paris. It is hard to say how closely the *Prélude* reflects meaning in Mallarmé's poem, because of the abstract quality of musical meaning. It can be said, however, that the music explicitly attempts to capture some measure of signification in the poem by the borrowing of its title and that it was created as an independent expansion on an existent artistic theme.

Debussy does not attempt, in a tangible way, to join his creative powers with those of Mallarmé, as might a composer of opera working with a librettist; rather, he uses Mallarmé's poem as a springboard for inspiration. He perceives qualities of the poem as potential qualities in his own creativity and proceeds to transpose verbal affect into musical impression. The relationship of the poem to the music may thus be seen as ancestral. Debussy's work is like an homage. There is no actual reciprocity between music and poem, since the *Prélude* was not conceived as an actual accompaniment to the poem. The powers of influence are one-sided from poem to *Prélude*. Furthermore, the very creation of the

music implies to some degree a violation or transgression of the poem.

Mallarmé himself qualified Debussy's work by calling it an expansion of his own. Debussy quotes him as having said on first hearing the *Prélude:* "I was not expecting anything like this! This music prolongs the emotion of my poem and communicates its setting with more passion than its tone." And Mallarmé addressed the composer in a letter thus: "Your illustration of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* would present no dissonance with my text were in not that it goes further, actually, in nostalgia and in light, with finesse, with uneasiness, with richness." A headline in *Mercure de France* declared: "Debussy, aspire à l'héritage de Mallarmé."[12]

When Nijinsky was interviewed in 1912 about the intentions of his choreography in *Faune,* he explained: "To be able to give to the world the perfection of the art of centuries by the movements of the dance is my ambition and delight."[13] This boastful statement of purpose at least clarifies that Nijinsky perceived himself as having undertaken a worthy project reflective of a long-standing cultural heritage. Along with their reactions of shock to the novelty in the ballet, pro-*Faune* critics also perceived it as worthy of its cultural heritage. A *London Times* critic complimented the ballet by saying that the poetry and music are "but two sources of the new spectacle in the eight minutes in which are compressed the learning of the scholars and the dreams of the poets of a generation." Another instance of critical acclaim was, "What one finds in Nijinsky [is] a vision of the antique which is quite our own." The ballet was seen as a representation of "classic truth rather than beauty."

The argument or plot of the ballet followed naively a possible "storyline" of Mallarmé's poem:

> A young faun plays his flute on a hillock and tramples on the grapes: unperceiving, seven nymphs linger at the foot of the hillock. The faun with simple, sensuous curiosity creeps toward them. They flee; but one has left in flight a scarf. She timidly seeks to regain it from the odd, wild forest creature, but in vain, and she does not come within the range of his brown arms; and goes. The faun goes back to his hillock, caressing the novel, soft, delicious texture of the scarf.

The simplistic ballet argument shows that Nijinsky perceived the meaning of the *Faune* to be primarily sexual. The ballet is a story about a faun who has a "passion for fleeing nymphs," who desires them, but who possesses finally only the shadow of their presence. "Couple, adieu; je vais voir l'ombre que tu devins": the shadow alluded to in the closing line of the poem is symbolized in the ballet by the left-behind scarf.[14] The faun is thus perceived as a thinking being in a state of sensuality, he is like a human in a "flower world."

* * *

The Huya Aniya or Seye Wailo as the scene for the Yaqui *Deer Dance* is not so very different from the *Faune's* woodland habitat. It is a flower world, a place of immortals and idealized beauty and sensuality for the Yaqui Deer. As in Mallarmé's poem, in the Deer Songs there is an implied fusion of the mythical animal with water and flowers: "Flower fawn you are about to come out, this in the flower water you play." In the second text, the sleepy fawn is incited to wake up, to join in and revel in the flower world: "Well, little brother, well, let's all of us sleepy ones wake up together, little brother. Yonder in Seye Wailo, in the flower patio. . . ." There are lines in Deer Songs that deliver sexual connotations, such as these in the third text:

> Under the drippings of the cholla juice
> you are standing flower fawn
> you are standing and bending your horns to rub . . .
> you stand and rub your horns
> Flower having the body of a fawn. . . .

Whether or not we perceive the Deer as desiring the flowers in the same way as Mallarmé's *Faune,* it is clear that there is a sensual relationship between the Deer and the flower world, which is in keeping with the association, according to Yaquis, of the Deer with flowers and rain as a fertility figure. A key difference, however, is that, while the European *Faune* is clearly set apart from his natural surroundings, desiring or wanting objects that are inaccessible to him, the desire of the Yaqui Deer is consummated. He does not suffer from an intrinsic duality ("ce mal d'être deux"); he is not in opposition to but a part of the flower world. It can thus be conjectured that the Yaqui perception of sexuality and procreation is much less complex and metaphorically distant than the European; that is to say that, while the *Faune* is presented as dreaming of absent nymphs in images inspired by the beauty of the water and flowers that surround him, the body of the Yaqui Deer is indistinguishable from the other components of the flower world: "Fawn having the body of a flower."

The *Faune* is literally a man-made immortal, and he bears the mark of this heritage in the half of his traits that are human. He is forged of human fantasy, and he represents something that is inevitably removed from himself, or absent, because, outside the domain of mythology and art, there is no such thing as a faun. The *Faune* is thus exclusively sign or symbol. Not so in the case of the Yaqui Deer.

The Deer is not part man, and he does not partake in human thought or discourse. He is not speaker, but spoken to, in the words of the Yaqui Deer Songs. He is an animal-immortal and a divinity in that his powers lie

—photo by David J. Jones, Jr., Courtesy Rosamund B. Spicer

Palm Sunday

A procession on Palm Sunday, 1937, in the plaza of the Yaqui village of Pascua, Arizona. The Deer Dancer is in the middle, holding two gourds. At the edge of the photograph is one of the acolytes of the Catholic Church.

beyond the domain of human jurisdiction. But the powers that he carries are belong to all the living world, the whole realm of "flora and fauna." The Deer is simultaneously purely natural and purely divine.

The sexual "symbolism" of the Yaqui *Deer Dance* pertains directly to fertility. It indicates the on-going process of creation which is not exclusive to humanity, but embraces all life in the eternal renewal of the natural world. The Yaqui Deer, then, ought not to be perceived as a symbol, at least, not in the European accepted use of the term. He does not stand for something else. The Yaqui lives by the deer, once a primary source of food; and when ceremonially the Deer puts on the head it is so that his relationship with an all-important fellow creature might remain as concrete and present to him as possible. Through his close contact with the Deer, the Yaqui can remain within the all-encompassing harmony of nature's supreme laws.

While the *Faune* signifies an ever-growing tendency on the part of the

European to find himself or to rectify his image where he is *absent*, as in nature, the *Deer* is a way for the Yaquis to move in the opposite direction. The *Deer* is a medium for the Yaquis to lose themselves in a world which they perceive as everlasting and thus far greater than themselves. The Yaqui heaven, the Flower World, is not distant, nor dominated by the image of idealized man. In contrast to the European, it is fundamentally presence; it is here on earth.

Outside the horns he wears, Nijinsky's *Faune* is dressed like a classical demi-god. He moves in an angular and stylized way, and the bas-reliefs of antiquity are interpretants for the series of poses that constitute his dance. However, once recorded, this construct of symbols which constitute the dance is perceived as the fruit of the personal creativity of Nijinsky. The ballet can clearly be repeated, but it cannot be recreated; for it is the stamped or signed product of the imagination of one creator. What is left to the dancer in any given performance of the *Faune* is to re-materialize the patterns of the original structure and to enhance it once again with interpretive punctuation, by varying, according to his own understanding, nuances of accent or tone, and by adding the particular color of his own virtuosity in technique or dramatic expression. A viewer of various performances of the *Faune*, whether of Nijinsky's original, of Serge Lifar's "reconstruction" of the 30s, or of Rudolf Nureyev's of 1979, might leave the theater with fairly different impressions. Such differences are not only allowed, they are even encouraged, in Western art. What is expected is a new and personalized rendition of the work virtually each time it is done.

This variety is all quite the contrary to the experience of Yaqui *Deer Dance*. Here, by contrast to the *Faune*, the Deer dancer has no written or set exteriorized pattern or choreography to adhere to or modify. The *Deer Dance* is nowhere recorded as part of a possible repertoire; it is learned by apprenticeship and stored within the memory of the dancer who chooses to assume a life-long role. The Maso must be so imbued with the person of the Deer that his dance is of a second nature to him. Furthermore, there is no room for personal interpretation. The excellence of the Deer dancer is judged primarily by his authenticity and strict adherence to tradition; and although a particular dancer's technique might be considered superior, no eye is given to his originality.

It can be argued, then, that Europeans and Yaquis have quite different notions about what is aesthetically pleasing. For the former, it is the mark of the individual and the novel; for the latter, it is the rendering of the collective and the known. Added to these essential differences in the manner of delivery and reception of these dances, important differences are manifest in their time and place of enactment.

The *Faune* is a seven to eight-minute dance. It is performed arbitrarily—that is, on no particular date and at no particular time—and

usually for no other occasion than the celebration of itself. It can be given in any theater, and on any stage, which it will dominate as a picture does its frame or a statue its pedestal. This work of art is so independent that its context—or time and place of performance—recedes into virtual insignificance, which is not at all the case with an effective delivery of the Yaqui *Deer Dance.* The Ballet Folklórico de México has performed it as a part of their repertoire, but the version which they have offered has so little relation to the ceremonial dance that Yaquis view it as a misrepresentation, and even a bastardization, of their culture. On one occasion, I witnessed the performance of a fairly authenic *Deer Dance,* by a "real" Maso at the Musée de l'homme in Paris. This spectacle certainly showed good intentions on both sides for a positive instance of cultural sharing, although there is irony in the French choice of *lieu* for their visiting artists. The performance did not work, however. It seemed ineffective and absurd, which was apparent in the general signs of ill-ease and embarrassment both on the part of the audience and among the performers. Such failings may be said to be due to the enormous importance for the *Deer Dance* of its particular cultural context: the appropriate time and place of enactment.

The *Deer Dance* is part of a religious ceremony. Its time of happening is not at all arbitrary, neither as to when it begins or ends nor as to how long it should last. All these matters are determined by a sequence of events and the surrounding ambience or more or less religious fervor within a Yaqui ceremony. A *Deer Dance* lasts the duration of a Deer Song thrice sung through, but it can be repeated with intermissions throughout a period of several hours or even a night and day, as during the festival at Easter. The place of enactment is far from irrevelant; the ground is prepared and sanctified so that it might exert its power over the dance. And the dancer does not dominate the stage, as he generally does in European art.

These particular differences in time and space and in the perception of the locus of power recall the fundamental difference between the *Deer Dance* and the *Faune:* that the one is perceived as ritual, while the other is perceived as art. Faced with this generic difference, the many factors that tie the two dances together—the similar choice of hero, of media of expression, and of theme—recede in significance.

For this observer, it has seemed easier in some ways to grapple with the description and purposes of ritual, undoubtedly because there is an inevitable distance between the Yaqui rite and myself, whose cultural heritage is primarily European. The *Deer Dance* does not carry me to a flower world as it should nor allow me to lose my objectivity in a general "communication with the world." Rather, while it touches me, it leaves me interested and intact, prepared to observe the ritual pattern of the Other.

The *Faune* seems even by its nature more complex, not only because it is closer to me but also because its patterns and the cultural phenomena which have produced it are more inconstant. According to present-day dance experts such as Nureyev, the *Faune, Sacre du printemps,* and other Ballets-Russes productions have revolutionized the world of ballet, but it will take historical distance to judge this new state of the art. As ritual, the *Deer Dance* is witness to the Yaquis' great desire for and religious devotion to the maintenance of an eternal status quo.

Notes

[1] The dual nature of art as described by Baudelaire, for example, in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne." Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes,* v.3. Louis Conard, Libraire-Editeur, Paris, 1925, 52.

[2] This section draws on Edward H. Spicer, *The Yaquis: A Cultural History.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1980, 5, 13, 17.

[3] Felipe Molina, *Seyewailo: The Flower World: Yaqui Deer Songs.* Larry Evers. Film text by Felipe Molina. University of Arizona, Tucson.

[4] Anselmo Valencia, in *The South Corner of Time: Hopi, Navaho, Papago, Yaqui Tribal Literature.* Ed. Larry Evers. Sun Tracks, Tucson, Arizona, 1980, 191–192.

[5] This section draws on Spicer, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68.

[6] Details of the costuming are taken from Carleton Stafford Wilder, *The Yaqui Deer Dance,* unpublished Anthropology M.A. thesis, University of Arizona, 1940, 37–43.

[7] Spicer, 105.

[8] Wilder, 73–98.

[9] Stéphane Mallarmé: *Oeuvres Complètes.* Paris: Gallimard, 1945, 1449.

[10] Nesta MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed: By Critics in England and the United States, 1911–1929.* New York: Dance Horizons, 79.

[11] Mallarmé, 50.

[12] Mallarmé, 1465.

[13] This and the next four quotations are from MacDonald, *Diaghilev Observed,* 79, 80.

[14] Mallarmé, 53.

Cardboard Kingdoms

Raymond P. Wallace

THERE is is a category of fiction that seems never, as a separate class, to have received any critical attention at all. Probably it has not before been recognized as a distinct genre. I refer to a group of novels which I have dubbed the Cardboard Kingdoms, works of fiction which employ fictitious countries as significant plot elements, usually as the principal setting for the action. Mythology, fairy tales, science fiction, the supernatural, "lost race" tales, and utopias are excluded from consideration.

What is left is the body of work concerned with imaginary countries presented as if they occupied an actual location on a map, reachable by ordinary means of transportation; some few volumes even include sketch maps. For the most part they are tales of romance or intrigue, having in general rather simple plots but a great deal of incident. Their goal is to provide light and entertaining reading of a suspenseful nature, with ample action, and there are far more of them than may be supposed. The common theme is generally one of struggle for the sovereignty, the maintenance in power of a rightful sovereign, the recovery from a usurper, or the displacement of a despot. In a few, particularly among the later ones, there are overtones of sociology, economics, or political theory.

The earliest such novel I have found is George Meredith's *The Adventures of Harry Richmond,* first published in England in the Cornhill Magazine as a serial in 1870–1871, and shortly thereafter in book form, and now practically unprocurable. It is not a very good example of the genre, since Meredith did not appear to understand the popular novel. It concerns young Harry Richmond, son of an English country gentleman, who sets forth on his travels in search of a milieu where he can realize his unspecified ambitions.

In a small imaginary German principality, Harry meets and falls in love with the Crown Princess Ottilie. There is a ridiculous duel with a rival for her hand, in which both parties are wounded. But he still plans to marry Ottilie, until it is pointed out to them that German law prohibits an heir to

a throne from marrying a commoner. Harry concedes that he is not the man for her, she placidly marries her dull nobleman, and Harry returns to England to marry the girl next door. He inherits his grandfather's fortune and settles down to the somnolent life of a country gentleman.

This is obviously not a thrilling plot for the general reader, although Meredith intended the book as a bid for popularity, which it never achieved. It has other defects. The author introduces a plethora of characters who have no vital connection with the story but are seemingly there merely to demonstrate oddities of behavior or situation. Owing to Meredith's literary reputation in other fields, however, *Harry Richmond* did receive critical notice, not as a Cardboard Kingdom but on literary grounds. Opinion varied widely, some considering it as his best work, others as an ambitious failure.

I find the best summing up to be that of Margaret Tarratt in 1971, who writes of the novel in *Meredith Now: Some Critical Essays*:

> . . . it can have a bewildering effect, since it does not follow any clearly recognized formal lines. A stream of characters and incidents are introduced in the arbitrary tradition of the picaresque. The novel combines this element with a heterogeneous assortment of fiction genres—the fairy tale, Ruritanian romance, confessional autobiography, and Goethean *Bildungsroman* which may well disconcert the reader's expectations. It cannot sensibly be read outside these traditions. (from Margaret Tarratt, "The Adventures of Harry Richmond—Bildungsroman and Historical Novel," 165, in *Meredith Now: Some Critical Essays*, S. C. Ian Fletcher, ed. 1971, permission to quote from Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.)

Since there was no Ruritanian tradition for more than 20 years after *Harry Richmond*, her comment is tantamount to saying that it could not be sensibly read at the time it was published, and I would add that it still cannot be. Later in life Meredith himself seems to have had an inkling of this attitude toward his work, but without understanding why. There was a public recognition by colleagues and friends of his 80th birthday, and he summed up the situation: "Certainly at this late date they accord me a little glory; my name is famous, but no one reads my books." (Quoted in J. B. Priestley's *George Meredith*.) Indirectly, Meredith had made a pungent comment on the critical attitude of the small, closed circle of British literati of the period, as opposed to that of the reading public. After all, the intent of an author in publishing is to communicate something to readers. If there are no readers, it implies either that he has nothing of interest to say or that he doesn't know how to say it.

Two or three of Meredith's circle may have discerned the germ of

something, for they followed his example and published Cardboard Kingdoms, but their mistake was that they did follow in his footsteps and left prints no deeper than his.

Zenda

It was not until 1894 that a British lawyer, Anthony Hope Hawkins, really found the formula; he published as Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, which set the style for three decades and has been sporadically followed since. It deals with the obscure fictitious Kingdom of Ruritania and the stirring events by which a pretender and plotter is foiled and the rightful king placed upon the throne.

The hero is a British nobleman, Rudolf Rassendyll, a gentleman of leisure, who is in fact not a Rassendyll at all, since one of his ancestresses had been seduced by Prince Rudolf of Ruritania while he was visiting in England. The lady's husband, Earl of Burlesdon and Baron Rassendyll, discovered the matter and fought a duel with the prince and wounded him, but at the same time caught a chill and later died without having had opportunity to adjust matters regarding the expected child. The lady kept her mouth shut, and in due time she bore a son who inherited the titles and estates of the cuckolded nobleman, even though the boy bore a noticeable resemblance to the members of the House of Elphberg of Ruritania. Meanwhile Prince Rudolf had returned to Ruritania and had subsequently become King Rudolf III.

Hope established the convention that the hero should be a very superior fellow, and since Rassendyll tells the story in the first person he makes no bashful bones about his attributes. He states that he is 29 years old, six feet two inches tall, speaks German and French as well as he does English, and some Italian and Spanish. He says he is "a strong, though hardly a fine, swordsman, and a good shot. I could ride anything that had a back to sit on; and my head was as cool a one as you could find. I made a very fine figure."

Where is that British restraint we hear of? Subsequent writers established much the same persona for their heroes more gracefully, by allowing it to become apparent from the hero's behavior and the remarks of other characters.

Rassendyll goes to Ruritania out of curiosity, to attend the imminent coronation of a new king, and while walking in the woods near the castle of Zenda he encounters the king and his aides. The remarkable resemblance between the two men is noticed and Rassendyll is invited to dinner at the nearby hunting lodge.

Now the villain comes on the scene. Duke Michael of Strelsau, the king's morganatic half brother, hopes to gain the crown for himself; and if the king does not appear for the coronation at the capital on the morrow,

Michael will claim the throne. He causes the king to be drugged by a servant and goes off to make his own arrangements. When the king's aides cannot arouse him from what they believe to be a drunken stupor, they persuade Rassendyll to impersonate him and to play his part for the coronation, after which he is to leave secretly so that the king may take his rightful place on his recovery.

The coronation duly takes place with Rassendyll as stand-in. But when the aides return to the hunting lodge, they find the servant murdered and the king gone. Eventually it is discovered that Michael has identified Rassendyll and is holding the king prisoner in Zenda until the impostor can be assassinated, whereupon the king will also be killed and Michael assume the throne.

The castle is attacked by trusted men, Michael is killed, and the king is freed. It is agreed that the imposture shall never be disclosed and that the king shall regain the throne as if he had always held it. Although Rassendyll and Princess Flavia have fallen in love, she deems it her duty to marry the king to provide some restraint on his known tendency toward dissipation. Rassendyll returns to England, and once a year receives a red rose from Flavia and sends one in return.

It is impossible within the narrow limits of a brief synopsis to convey the pace and urgency of the novel, but it is a well-told tale. The complexities of the action are well worked out and solved with a flair for romantic intrigue. *The Prisoner of Zenda* was an enormous success and within two years was in its 31st edition; innumerable editions have appeared since, and millions of copies have been sold.

Four years later Hope published a sequel, *Rupert of Hentzau,* in which Count Rupert, a former assistant villain, makes his debut as a full-fledged scoundrel. In London he steals some letters from Queen Flavia to Rassendyll, with the idea of blackmailing the king for a large sum of money. At his meeting with King Rudolf a misunderstanding occurs, and the hotheaded count kills him. At that moment Rassendyll, close on the trail, arrives to recover the letters and kills Rupert in a duel. Again he impersonates the king, and again the confidential aides urge him to remain on the throne, recognizing that he would make a far better king than the dead man was. But British authors are squeamish about commoners marrying royalty or impersonating them permanently. While Rassendyll is walking alone in the garden to think it over, he is assassinated by a disgruntled servant who takes him for his master, and Queen Flavia remains to rule alone.

This sequel was also an enormous success, but after having killed off most of his principals the author could extend the series no further. He did contribute some half dozen other Cardboard Kingdoms which, although well received, did not have the immense sales of the two described.

Although a number of imitators produced Cardboard Kingdoms shortly after the publication of *Zenda,* the one with the greatest impact did not come along until seven years later, in 1901. This was *Graustark,* by George Barr McCutcheon, an American newspaperman. He was not an imitator, having never read *Zenda* nor even been in Europe. He maintained that his only inspiration was the Arabian Nights.

The Graustark story is this: Grenfell Lorry, a wealthy young American, tall, handsome, broad-shouldered, and powerfully built, is homeward bound on a transcontinental train. There he meets a Miss Guggenslocker, who unbeknownst to him is really Princess Yetive, sovereign of the Principality of Graustark, and who is completing a world tour in company with her uncle and aunt. Lorry sees her off from New York aboard a ship for Europe. After brooding for a time, he concludes to visit Graustark but is unable to find it on any map or get any information about it. Thinking to do better in Europe, he takes a ship and meets a friend, Harry Anguish, in Paris, where they find out the location from the postoffice. After several days of train travel, they arrive at Edelweiss, the capital of Graustark. The location never becomes more explicit for the reader than that it is bordered on the north by the Principality of Axphain and by the Principality of Dawsbergen on the south.

Lorry still does not know who Miss Guggenslocker really is. While Anguish and he are walking along a dark road one night, there occurs one of the remarkable coincidences—sometimes practically incredible—that writers of Cardboard Kingdoms frequently use to get over a plot difficulty.

The two men stop to rest in the gloom under a hedge, and a group of conspirators assembles in front of them to discuss a plan to kidnap the princess. They speak in English "for greater security" because "the night has ears." But they don't take the precaution of looking around for any of those ears. The master plotter, who has a distinctive voice, calls his henchmen by name, names his confederates inside the castle, and outlines the plan so that the eavesdroppers are fully briefed.

The Americans have no time to call the police, so they undertake to foil the plot themselves. They follow into the castle and knock out and capture eight men, although two of the conspsirators escape. By this time the police arrive and forthwith execute the eight, so that there is no one left to confess and identify the instigator. But the melee does result in the princess's disclosing her identity to Lorry, with a heartfelt expression of gratitude.

Graustark owes an immense debt to Axphain which is due shortly, and there are no funds. If it is not paid, Graustark must cede two-thirds of its territory to Axphain. Prince Bolaroz of Axphain has proposed that a ten-

year extension will be granted if Princess Yetive marries his dissolute son, Prince Lorenz, who is now in Graustark to press his suit. At an inn Lorry overhears the prince make a coarse remark about Yetive and knocks him under a table. A challenge passes, and the duel is set for the following morning. But the prince is found stabbed to death, and Lorry is arrested and confined in the Tower. Yetive secretly releases him and hides him in a monastery.

In the meantime Lorry overhears the distinctive voice of the planner of the abduction and identifies it as that of Prince Gabriel, ruler of Dawsbergen. Lorry leaves the monastery by night and appears in the morning at the ceremony where the princess is to sign away the six northern provinces. Gabriel is there as witness, and Lorry accuses the prince, who loses his nerve and charges one of his staff with having betrayed him. He is seized and charged with the murder, Lorry is freed, and Bolaroz withdraws his demands and grants the extension.

The next day Yetive convenes the council and announces that she will abdicate if not allowed to marry the American. The council agrees, the law is changed, and they are married. This is an ending which would not have been possible to the legitimistic Hope, but American writers are not so fastidious about permitting a commoner to invade the royal line.

Graustark was immensely popular and reached all-time best-seller rank. Although it did not pass through so many editions as *The Prisoner of Zenda,* the individual printings were considerably larger, so the number of copies sold was at least comparable.

Five Sequels

McCutcheon wisely preserved enough of the principal characters, so that over the next 25 years he was able to produce five sequels. In the last of the series, *The Inn of the Hawk and Raven,* he performs a tour de force, in that in a wild and rugged portion of Graustark there is discovered a secret valley which comprises another even smaller country under its own sovereign.

Those who have read and enjoyed *Zenda* and *Graustark* will be pleased to know that the 1985–1986 edition of *Books in Print,* reports that both volumes are still in print by several publishers, 92 and 85 years, respectively, since their first appearance. Some of the sequels are also offered.

These two novels filled a want for romance and adventure that were missing from the daily life of the industrial age, and they created a general pattern that has been popular ever since. This is not to say that subsequent authors were copyists, any more than mystery writers are. They merely make use of a broad generic form and create their own tales. Many of the subsequent novels, although unquestionably Cardboard King-

doms, in that they are set in imaginary countries, do not follow the rest of the pattern.

I have researched and analyzed approximately 300 Cardboard Kingdoms and have established the following seven characteristics that define the truly Graustarkian novel.

1. *The Fictitious Country.* This is preferably small and preferably a monarchy, but not necessarily so. Some few novels that fall into the Graustarkian subclass have postulated large countries, and some have other than monarchic forms of government as the sovereign power.

2. *The Crown (or Government) Is Threatened.* The threat may come from another claimant against the rightful sovereign, or it may arise from the refusal of an impostor occupying the throne to relinquish it. Corollaries are the attempt to overthrow the regime by a corrupt or revolutionary body, or from a foreign government.

3. *The Wicked Uncle.* This is a generic term for the villain, who may be an uncle of the sovereign, or a brother, a half brother, cousin, nephew, regent, or other colorable claimant. The adversary position is essentially that of the Good Guys and the Bad Guys of the movies.

4. *The Intervening Stranger* (who in some cases amounts to an Interfering, or even a Meddling, Stranger). This is another generic term. He is usually a foreigner, in the majority of cases an American or an Englishman, since most of the authors have been one or the other. The Intervening Stranger (usually the hero, but not always) takes a prominent part, from various motives and circumstances, in the struggle for the crown.

5. *The Remarkable Coincidence.* This is a convenient device used by authors to get past some plot difficulty, whereby the hero becomes involved in the intrigue or becomes possessed of information not otherwise available.

6. *The Chase.* This is more or less the classic chase of movie melodrama. It may take various forms, on horseback, by car, by motorcycle or other transportation, and in one case by bicycle. Sometimes the hero pursues the villain, sometimes he is pursued.

7. *The Duel.* Some writers, Americans especially, are reluctant to permit their heroes to fight a duel. A challenge may be allowed to pass but is contemptuously rejected or is answered by a knockdown blow to the jaw. When the hero cannot honorably refuse, events may be contrived by which the duel is prevented from taking place. Where a duel with rapiers or broadswords is fought, the villain is frequently known as "the finest swordsman in the kingdom," but the hero may take a few lessons from a famous fencing master who teaches him an infallible "secret stroke." Or he may have been a former cavalry officer, skilled with the saber; or perhaps during his schooldays, he was the singlestick champion of Putnam Hall, which suffices.

The duel in William Wallace Whitelock's *When Kings Go Forth to Battle* is a special case, this being one of the most ineptly written stories in the field. The hero is skilled with the singlestick, but that isn't enough. He falls back on his "superior endurance," but that isn't enough either. When he is wounded in the cheek, he loses his temper and smashes his opponent's teeth with the hilt of his sword, whereupon he is adjudged to have won the duel.

Whitelock's hero is named Wyfeffoth, and we are never told his first name, the author apparently having presumed that improbable monicker to be sufficient identification. But just to clinch the matter, he gives him a bosom pal and assistant hero named Wislezenus. There can never have been another team of Wyfeffoth and Wislezenus in all history.

When the conflict is with pistols, the hero turns out to have been the champion pistol shot of his regiment or of his London club; or he is a former cowboy from the Far West, able to split a bullet against a knife-edge at a hundred yards. In any case, a Graustarkian hero may sometimes honorably avoid a duel, but he is never allowed to lose one.

In 1895 Richard Harding Davis, writing in *The Princess Aline,* said:

> A hundred years from now there will be no more kings and queens, and writers of that day will have to choose their heroes from bank presidents, and their heroines from lady lawyers and girl politicians and typewriters. What a stupid world it will be then!

We are now approaching the 100-year mark, and the supply of kings and queens is largely depleted; an increasing percentage of the Cardboard Kingdoms published in more recent years treats not of royalties but of presidents and dictators. Otherwise the formula is much the same. Given the imaginary country, there may be a plot by the Bad Guys to overthrow the government, or a righteous campaign by the Good Guys to unseat an evil dictator.

There have been a number of unexpected quirks in the overall pattern of this genre. At the turn of the century, Arthur W. Marchmont was a prolific writer of such novels. In *When I was Czar,* he chose to put an American named Harper C. Denver on the throne of Russia—not an imaginary country but an imaginary ruler.

The island of Naxos, an independent duchy some 600 years ago but now belonging to Greece, had its independence restored by Robert W. Chambers in *The Laughing Girl.*

One author postulated the United States under President Aaron Burr, and another gave us France under Napoleon IV. Peter Dickinson, as late as 1976, placed a fake royal family upon the British throne in *King and Joker.*

Frances Sterrett in 1922 presented *The Amazing Inheritance,* an engaging, jolly romp in which an American salesgirl inherits a Pacific island kingdom. The story begins with the immortal line: "Tessie Gilfooly, you are the Queen of the Sunshine Islands!" Other members of the royal family are the late King Pete Gilfooly, Tessie's vagabond uncle, and Granny Gilfooly, the Queen Mother.

Cardboard Kingdoms have fared very well in public acceptance. Although many of the older titles will be unfamiliar to today's readers, compilers of sales figures have listed at least 15 all-time bestsellers. This is in spite of the facts that no figures are available for earlier novels and that such compilations ignore sales abroad, mail order sales, and book club sales. Not a bad showing for novels whose purpose is to entertain and amuse, to while away idle hours, which they must certainly have done.

Some of the Graustarkian novels have been comic in intent, and a few are outright spoofs. Foremost among these are *The Kidneyed Caper* by Alan Chase, *Kings Back to Back* by Carroll and Garrett Graham, and *Adrift in a Boneyard* by Robert Lewis Taylor.

The last-mentioned neatly demonstrates what can be done about locating an imaginary country and setting the scene, without a map and without encroaching upon another nation's territory. His country is the Balkan Republic of Poderkagg, capital Gastritis, with a suburb of Tinderbox. The population is 13,812, descended from "Semigoths, although the strain was augmented by the infiltration of Mosques, Kurds, Wheys, Boors, Franks, and Schillings." It is "kind of north of France and Switzerland, but it's fairly close to Yugoslavia, and Spain, and you wouldn't really call it far from Germany and Russia and Greece and some of those places . . . accessible from several directions," except that you have to go through the Balkans to get there. Nothing could be more explicit, and certainly no cartographer could place it more precisely.

There have been a number of authors of considerable literary stature who have written Cardboard Kingdoms, but not always successfully. Sir Winston Churchill, winner of the 1953 Nobel prize in literature, published *Savrola* in 1897. But he had no flair for this genre and devoted himself too assiduously to an exposition of military tactics during the revolution in the Republic of Laurania. The readers of popular literature are not charmed by details of troop movements and the adequacy of weapons.

Alphonse Daudet, famous as a satirist and critic, tried his hand with *Kings in Exile.* But he did not understand the popular novel, and he was unable to elevate his subject to a high literary plane, so that the reader is left with boring trivia. Most of his biographical notices today do not bother to mention this work.

Leslie Charteris does not rank highly among men of letters, but he

knows his craft in what he writes, and he turned out a good one, *Le Saint Refuse une Couronne*, published in Paris. I could find no copy in English, so I queried the author. Charteris replied that he had written the book in French for his Paris publisher, and that it had never been translated. It deserves to be, for it is a good example of the genre, with the Saint as hero employing all his old flair.

Thomas Mann, another Nobel laureate, was the premier German novelist of the early part of this century and acquired world-wide fame. He wrote a Graustarkian novel published in this country in 1916 under the title *Royal Highness*. He was able to produce a work of literary stature while keeping it interesting as a Cardboard Kingdom.

Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*, while it is set in the imaginary South American Republic of Costaguana, is primarily a political novel, with a searching exploration of a man's psyche. Critics have been confused and baffled by it. Some have considered it his most significant work; others have shared the opinion of Claire Bloomfield (in *Paradise of Snakes*, 1967) that it is an astonishing failure. A recent biographer, Frederick E. Karl (*Joseph Conrad*, 1979), grants that it is difficult to follow the chronology of events in *Nostromo*. I will take that a step further: the chronology cannot be followed.

In 1917 Norman Douglas gave us *South Wind*. The locale is an imaginary island off the north coast of Africa, once ruled by the Good Duke Alfred, but later not really ruled at all, although it has an administration of sorts. This is a subtle and complex novel with a unique and delightfully entertaining cast of characters, witty and filled with subtle and half-hidden allusions. It should not be rushed at, but read in a relaxed and reflective mood to savor its delicate nuances.

There have been others of high literary reputation who have written in this field; even Mark Twain tried his hand at it, or at least flicked his pen at it, in *The Curious Republic of Gondour*. His effort is really no more than a sketch and is not a romance at all; his purpose was satire. Amusingly, because of its title it is sometimes shelved among the travel books by librarians who have not the time to examine the contents of their volumes.

Edgar Rice Burroughs should be mentioned, although he is perhaps low on the scale of literary excellence. But he was an immensely popular author of light fiction. He is principally remembered for his Tales of Tarzan, John Carter of Mars, and novels of adventure on Venus. Many of those are still available. One would think him the last man to produce a genuine Graustarkian novel, but in fact he wrote two.

The first was *The Mad King*, in two parts bound together, although each part amounts to a complete novel in itself. In the first part, Barney Custer of Beatrice, Nevada, rescues the rightful king of Lutha from the machinations of the Wicked Uncle and establishes the king on the throne. In the

second part, Barney returns to Lutha, goes through the requisite number of adventures, and when the wholly unsatisfactory king is assassinated by his own men, Barney establishes that his mother was the runaway Princess Victoria Rubinroth of Lutha. He marries a spare princess and mounts the throne as King Barney I.

The second such novel is *Tarzan and the Lost Empire,* wherein a Roman legion had become lost in a hidden valley of Africa about 1800 years ago. They split and founded two separate countries, each under its own emperor. These groups turn out to be the Good Guys and the Bad Guys, with constant strife between them. Tarzan finds the valley, straightens out their differences, and unites them under the Good Emperor. The young German archaeologist who has been captured and enslaved is freed and marries the daughter of the benevolent Caesar. Tarzan goes back home.

Oppenheim as King

E. Phillips Oppenheim was the undoubted king of the Cardboard Kingdoms. He wrote at least 15, but only two of them could be called Graustarkian. The other 13 all postulated the fictitious country, but had not enough of the seven definitive characteristics to be included in the Graustarkian subclass. Altogether he published about 160 books, some of which I have not been able to secure, so it is possible that there were among them more of the Cardboard Kingdoms.

Last, and least among the lesser, is a novel by Elinor Glyn, who in 1907 published *Three Weeks,* which in my opinion is one of the worst of all bestsellers, so that the less said about it, the better.

The foregoing pages have presented a cursory survey of the category of fiction employing imaginary independent states as the field of action. Few have attracted any formal criticism, and those few only such as have been written by authors who have attained eminence in other fields. This minor number have been analyzed chiefly on the basis of their underlying themes, which may be philosophical, psychological, political, economic, or the like. Frequently, such critical appraisals have paid little attention to the story itself, except as a vehicle for the author's concept of developing a generalization from particulars.

The typical critic is earnest; he does not read for diversion, or at least when he does, he does not write about that experience. The body of work discussed herein is dismissed as subliterary, with a note of contempt dismissing it as "escape reading."

It rather seems that perhaps the chief reason that professional criticism has not been directed to the Cardboard Kingdoms is that such novels do not need it. Critics are analytical, and these novels do not need analysis; they speak for themselves and tell their own story, leaving the critic with nothing to say, having lost his function.

But after all, what is wrong with escape reading, if that is what it is? If a person has a boring job or is in an anxious situation which cannot be immediately resolved, there would seem to be nothing culpable in reading for a few hours a light book that lifts his mood. The taint on escape reading seems to be a tacit implication that those who do such reading are not facing their problems, and there is the even vaguer implication that by "serious" reading they somehow are. This pseudo-syllogism leaves out altogether the person who daily faces reality, copes with it, and likes later to relax with some light reading. And I have not seen the evidence that serious reading solves anyone's difficulties; sometimes they are not solved even for the characters in the book.

It is noteworthy that when a Graustarkian romance is made into a motion picture or a play, it ceases to be called escape and becomes entertainment, perhaps of an inconsequential nature but nonetheless respectable. It must be only such an appeal to the visual and auditory senses that makes opera respectable, for the libretti of many operas have ludicrous plots.

Chess is regarded as an intellectual pastime, never called an escape, but it solves no problems except those on the board. For most players it leads to nothing more; a single game may consume as much time as reading a book and be equally entertaining. Or consider the hours people spend watching a sports game on television, and sometimes the greater part of a day and a sizable sum of money to see a game played on the field. Yet some of them see no inconsistency in adopting a patronizing attitude toward light reading, characterizing it as a waste of time.

I prefer to resist the mass-conditioning toward accepting the opinions of others on what I should read. One's tastes should be one's own, and I find as much disparity of literary quality, expressive skill, and human understanding among the volumes of the Cardboard Kingdoms as I have found among those of the five-foot shelves. The Graustarkians are designed to move the heart and to instill the sense of romance, rather than to exercise the mind. In a world largely devoid of such values, there is something undeniably stirring in the spectacle of a defeated Wicked Uncle being given a horse and a ten minute start for the border; or conversely, a dethroned king riding in hot haste for the frontier, with the reins in his teeth and a satchelful of the crown jewels in one hand, and his blazing revolver in the other. If reality is what is wanted, King Carol II of Rumania is said to have left his domain very much in this manner, except that he stood on the rear platform of his private train, with the satchel between his feet and a revolver in each hand.

My business on the jury's done.
—Will Carleton

John Steinbeck and American Literature

Warren French

FOR the keynote address at the Second International Steinbeck Congress in the author's home town of Salinas, California, in 1984, I used the occasion of what I described as the end of the first period of Steinbeck criticism, marked by the publication of Jackson Benson's monumental biography, to review the characteristics of the writings of this period and to single out those that I thought remain the most valuable guides to the introduction of his work. The occasion of his birthday brings Part II of this retrospective review. It must come to grips with the challenging question of exactly what John Steinbeck's place is in American literature.

One of the fascinating things about keeping up with John Steinbeck is that continually expanding one's knowledge of him is no antiquarian pursuit. Even in the time since the Salinas Congress, several things have come to light that place his work in a new perspective and require further appraisal of his position among the writers of this nation and of the world.

Most significant among these new developments was a report from William J. Bennett, then Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, in *The New York Times* of August 12, 1984, and in other leading papers that a poll of several hundred humanists, which asked them to name ten books that every student in the United States might have been expected to study before graduating from high school, listed *The Grapes of Wrath* as the only novel considered essential reading for the educated person; and, more, it was the only work by a 20th century American writer to be included on the list with the works of Shakespeare, Homer, the Greek tragedians, the Bible, and great American documents like the Declaration of Independence and *The Federalist*. Further, in a list of 25 of the most important books for high school students to read com-

piled from a survey of Chicago-area schools, two of Steinbeck's works were included, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men.* Only three other 20th century American novels were included, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird,* J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye,* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea.* Steinbeck was the only writer besides Shakespeare and Dickens to be represented by more than one title. The reports of these lists did not provide any of the rationales behind these selections. Some justification may be demanded, however, since those of us who have followed Steinbeck's fluctuating reputation over the years know that his novels have not always been so highly regarded and indeed are even today sometimes censored and suppressed in high schools.

About the same time that these reports were publicized, I learned from a forthcoming book on the writer who may indeed be able to lay a claim to being America's most popular novelist, Louis L'Amour, that until L'Amour's Western romances took the lead in 1975, Steinbeck had been the best-selling author in the popular series of Bantam paperback books. It would be difficult to find another example of the works of an author receiving such unmistakable evidence of being not just popular and critically respected but enjoying unique reputations with both the mass audience for paperbound books and authorities in humanistic education. Steinbeck's books can be seen by these reports to stand in an unparalleled relationship to their age and to have prospects of undying value for the times to come.

Steinbeck and His Times

To begin, then, what is Steinbeck's relationship to his own age? I am convinced that, as the historian Frederick Jackson Turner recognized even before the end of the 19th century, the most crucial event in the shaping of the American experience since the organization of the Republic was the closing of the frontier some time around 1890 after a century of unremitting expansionism. Throughout the first century of the forging of an American identity and the formulating of the American dream, there had always been the "territory," to which the restless and ambitious individual might flee to escape the constraints and frustrations of a closed state.

Like Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, the centenary of whose birth we celebrated in 1985, perceived the tragedy of the loss of the frontier when he depicted, for example, in *Main Street* Carol Kennicott's first arrival in Gopher Prairie: "Now they were stopping at a squat red frame station, the platform crowded with unshaven farmers and with loafers—unadventurous people with dead eyes." Carol subsequently seeks out the survivors of the old pioneer days; but she is badly disappointed to find that, having lost their money in a grain elevator, they have also lost what-

Movie Premiere

At the world premiere of the motion picture, *East of Eden,* John Steinbeck is interviewed by a radio reporter outside the theater March 9, 1955. After the screening, a supper party was held on the roof of the Sheraton-Astor Hotel for the benefit of the Actors' Studio.

ever pioneering spirit they possessed.

Lewis's satirical portraits have not aged well, however, because he was too much distanced from the consequences of the closing of the frontier to produce works that embodied the crisis that the nation faced. His solution—in reality an ultra-Romantic one—was to write off the whole experience as irretrievably gone. Gopher Prairie was not, as Lewis saw it, a community that had suffered a special fate. Rather, he presents Carol, after her introductory tour of Main Street, as beholding "not only the heart of a place called Gopher Prairie, but ten thousand towns from Albany to San Diego." He has Carol finally describe these "savorless people . . . viewing themselves as the greatest race in the world" as ". . . dullness made God." Carol, like other Lewis characters to follow, ultimately does not solve the problems of facing a permanently changed condition but withdraws into a fantasy of having "kept the faith" even in the face of admitting that she has been beaten.

In contrast to Lewis, John Steinbeck was born into a particularly dramatic relationship to the events precipitated by the closing of the frontier. Born at the end of the road of the transcontinental migration in one of the agricultural communities closest to the Western shore of a country still fundamentally agrarian, he was surrounded not only by a Midwestern community that had already settled into an unimaginative course, but also one whose last survivors among those animated by the pioneering spirit were trapped by natural forces beyond their control. In the earliest of his great works, *The Red Pony* cycle of stories, Steinbeck gives dramatic form to the most trying problem that faced the young people of his place and generation, obliged to grow up in a situation that precluded the options that had been open to preceding generations.

The problems posed by the tide of American migration reaching the Pacific Ocean had troubled our visionary artists long before the closing of the frontier itself. In *Facing West from California's Shore* and *Passage to India,* Whitman had foreseen that the age of "thoughtless" movement was coming to an end. In the latter and longer poem, citing the great technical achievements of the year 1869 that accomplished the "rondure of the world," he optimistically expressed the hope that "After the seas are all cross'd (as they seem already cross'd) . . . Finally shall come the poet worthy of that name,/ The true son of God shall come singing his songs" to lead the human race to "Passage to more than India!"

In the briefer and less celebrated earlier work, however, Whitman had pictured his speaker as "a child, very old," "Facing west from California's shores,/ Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound" and questioning "But where is what I started for so long ago?/ And why is it yet unfound?)."

The question had certainly not been resolved by Steinbeck's time; and, in one of his grimmest works, *To a God Unknown,* he creates characters that suggest that the answer might be found only in self-sacrificial death. On a trip from the family farm to visit the coast, Joseph Wayne meets an old man who tells him, "I am the last man in the western world to see the sun set. . . . I've seen it every night for twenty years." He goes on to explain that "every night I kill some little thing, a bird, a rabbit or a squirrel," as a sacrifice to the setting sun. "Some time it will be perfect," he concludes; "When it comes, I myself will go over the edge of the world with the sun." Ultimately, Joseph himself follows the lead suggested by the old man, sacrificing himself to save his people from a drought.

This apocalyptic work proved, however, to be only an aberrant phase in Steinbeck's career. For the writer who named as his favorite poem to be read at his interment, Tennyson's *Ulysses,* with its concluding injunction "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield," would not remain acquiescent in gentle surrender to inscrutable forces.

Steinbeck's *The Leader of the People* is, in fact, despite some flabber-

gasting misreadings in recent years, a prose evocation of the spirit captured in Tennyson's monologue. Jody's maternal grandfather has been one of those like Ulysses who has "become a name for always roaming with a hungry heart," seeking "to sail beyond the sunset." In his final speech, when the realization is cruelly brought home to him that his day is over, he describes the spirit of pioneering: "It wasn't Indians that were important, nor adventures, nor even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast. And I was the head. It was westering and westering. Every man wanted something for himself, but the big beast that was all of them wanted only westering. I was the leader, but if I hadn't been there, someone else would have been the head. The thing had to have a head. . . . The westering was as big as God, and the slow steps that made the movement piled up and piled up until the continent was crossed.

"Then we came down to the sea, and it was done."

When Jody timorously observes that "Maybe I could lead the people some day," the old man smiles: "There's no place to go. There's the ocean to stop you. There's a line of old men along the shore hating the ocean because it stopped them." Even worse, he fears, "Westering has died out of the people." The grandfather is contrasted to Jody's unimaginative father, who, like Ulysses' son Telemachus, is content to sit at home and rule the conquered lands and make them fertile. Jody rejects this spirit but receives no encouragement that he will inherit the mantle from the defeated old man.

Whether "westering" was a familiar term in the country of Steinbeck's childhood or whether, gifted with his imaginative capacity, he invented it, it serves exactly to describe a motivation that is not the result of rational calculation or carefully instilled indoctrination but a subconscious, perhaps instinctive, urge that the special conditions of a moment in history have given free rein. The particular problem of Jody's grandfather and the other old men who sit by the Pacific's shores hating the ocean is that they have perhaps no longer the energy nor the imagination to get into a new pattern of activities that will require not just emotional response to challenging stimuli but thoughtful consideration; they have become candidates for what today in academia is called "faculty redevelopment."

As Jody intuits, there arise subsequent opportunities to lead the people, but the kind of leadership demanded of his grandfather depended upon a strong heart and muscles and a powerful will and native cunning. Those traits are no longer adequate when problems concern a tamed and occupied landscape and an increasingly technological society. Grandfather in the story is not a thinking man but a feeling and acting man, so that there is no place for him to employ his talents once the specific challenge of subduing the land has been met. He is not prepared to meet the enormous demands of shifting his role from man acting to

After the Nobel Award

John Steinbeck is shown with, at left, the Prime Minister of Sweden and, at right, Steinbeck's wife, Elaine, following the awarding in Stockholm of the Nobel Prize for Literature, December 10, 1962.

man thinking; but the tale of this frustration is not his alone. There would be no outlet for him in Silicon Gulch. It is the story of a whole culture facing the end of the set of conditions upon which it has based its life-style. This culture is in the same position as those cliff dwellers in the same Western country who some eras before had faced the disappearance of the conditions that made possible their extremely specialized way of life. They have not survived. Clearly grandfather and his tribe are also on their way out. If any descendants of the cliff dwellers remain, we cannot recognize them any more than we could recognize grandfather's descendants in the like of his son-in-law. *The Leader of the People* is a tale of a young person standing at a turning point in history, attracted to a way of life that he is warned is no longer available to him and repelled by the life that seems his heritage; and it is hard to conceive of youth on the verge of adulthood facing a more appalling crisis. Will it be able to find a way out? At the moment, all Jody can think of is to offer his dejected grandfather a glass of bitter but refreshing lemonade to cool his heated feelings and to help him regain a sense of feeling wanted. It is a small but significant indication of Jody's ability to rise above the immediate; and it is also a gesture that is to establish an important motif in Steinbeck's work.

Part of Cycle

The Leader of the People is, however, more than an autonomous story; it is also the final part of a short story cycle. And Jody's generous gesture is, even with the frame of this work, the final evidence of the education that he has passed through since his violent and irrational killing of a vulture as a form of revenge for the death of this beloved red pony for which the whole cycle of four stories is named.

Twenty-five years ago in writing on Steinbeck, I argued that these four stories together "tell of a young man's emerging into compassionate manhood by painfully learning, through four crucial personal experiences, of the fallibility of man, the wearing out of man, the unreliability of nature, and the exhaustion of nature." In relation to the present topic, however, it may also be observed that Steinbeck's cycle is not simply a highly personalized tale of a regional rite of passage, but that the stories considered together also offer a remarkable parallel to Northrop Frye's famous analysis of "the seasonal cycle of the year" in *The Anatomy of Criticism.*

Steinbeck does not begin, as is most often expected, with a story of spring and the season of rebirth but with an autumnal tale, appropriate to the particular conditions of the time and place that he is writing about. Of "the sunset, autumn and death phase," Frye writes that the archetypes of tragedy and elegy are myths of the fall, of the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice, and of the isolation of the hero—terms that apply exactly to *The Gift,* as the first story is ironically titled. The story begins with the fall of a "travelling show," from which Jody's rancher father purchases a delicate red pony. The dying god is Billy Buck, the ranch-hand in whose infallibility Jody loses faith; and the pony suffers a violent death, the effects of which are somewhat therapeutically relieved by Jody's irrational killing of the buzzard. As a result, Jody's disillusioning loss of innocence and ignorance isolates him from both supporting adults and the children around him.

At first glance, the second story, *The Great Mountains,* seems scarcely a winter's tale, for its action begins in "the humming heat of a midsummer afternoon." But winter is also a season in men's lives; and every property but the ironically hot, sunny backdrop makes the story fit Frye's description of the myths of darkness and dissolution, "of floods and the return of chaos, of the defeat of the hero, and Götterdämmerung myths." An old man returns to his birthplace, now owned by others. His plight recalls past dispossessions and satirizes the archetypal chaos provoked by the literal-minded rejection of the significance of historic loss. Finally, we do not see the old man and the old horse, which he appropriates as a companion, die violently; rather, they dissolve before our eyes into the endless landscape, as he is defeated not only by old age but also by the dis-

appearance of the gods of his culture. "Full of a nameless sorrow," Jody witnesses these events; and he is defeated, too, for this time no buzzard serves as scapegoat to allow him to escape knowing the full weight of the inevitability of death—even in Arcadia.

The third story, *The Promise*, is unmistakably a spring tale of "dawn" and "birth," especially if the hero of the individual story is perceived as a colt that is ripped untimely from its dying mother's womb—like an invincible hero of legend.

The "archetype of romance" appears in this tale of "revival and resurrection," to follow Frye's terms, in the extraction of life from death following the pattern of seasonal rebirth. While sentimentally we may mourn with Billy Buck the death of the mare, the survival of the colt represents "the defeat of the powers of darkness, winter, and death"; and Steinbeck's language in describing the scene takes on a quality appropriate to the archetype of "dithyrambic and rhapsodic poetry," as in the following passage, to remind us that life and death are inextricably intermingled:

> The afternoon was green and gold with spring. Underneath the spread branches of the oaks the plants grew pale and tall, and on the hills the feed was smooth and thick. The sagebrushes shone with new silver leaves and the oaks were hoods of golden green. Over the hill there hung such a green odor that the horses on the flats galloped madly, and then stopped, wondering; lambs, and even old sheep jumped in the air unexpectedly and landed on stiff legs, and went on eating; young clumsy calves butted their heads together and drew back and butted again.

At first it seems difficult to reconcile *The Leader of the People* with "the zenith, summer, and marriage or triumph phase," with "myths of apotheosis, of the sacred marriage, and of entering into paradise." Yet the tale is surely both "pastoral and idyll," an account of the fusion of man with nature. The entry into paradise, however, seems now in the past, and the paradise lost.

In this context, Jody's gesture takes on its climactic significance; for the last word is not to be the defeated grandfather's. Jody has learned to do the right things at the right times, so that he may be the new hero. "Westering" may be dead; but the term is only a provincial name for a universal urge. The spirit itself may be manifest again, as it was before the American frontier was even known; and Jody seems to display the capacity that motivated the pioneers in their particular quest: "Now Jody marched seemingly alone, with high-lifted knees and pounding feet; but behind him there was a phantom army with great flags and swords, silent

but deadly."

The point of this brief comparison of Steinbeck's story-cycle with Frye's theoretical structuring of repeated mythical patterns in narratives of heroic quests is that Steinbeck created here not just a story of a youth's coming-of-age at the time of a traumatizing reversal in the American way of life but a vividly told tale that places this particular experience within the context of a basic recurrent pattern in human experience. Certainly there is no question here of Steinbeck's imitating the pattern that Frye describes, since *The Anatomy of Criticism* follows by 25 years Steinbeck's early work. Steinbeck's work rather indicates the artist's perception that underlying individual human experience are patterns of universal human experience that the critic subsequently illuminated. Steinbeck perceived a crucial turning point in the American experience not finally as a tragic defeat of past traditions but as a historical inevitability necessitating the beginning of a new quest stimulated by youthful imagination.

L'Amour's Difference

At the beginning of this essay, I mentioned one incidental connection between Steinbeck and Louis L'Amour. A more significant comparison is appropriate. Robert Gale's new study stresses two main points about L'Amour's work: first, that his popular tales of the American West never venture beyond the closing of the frontier but remain always in the increasingly legendary time when "westering" was an active force; second, even this land is mythically oversimplified, because never in his many novels has L'Amour dealt directly with the Civil War as part of the 19th century American expansionism. My guess is that L'Amour, perhaps not even consciously, avoids writing any tale that would involve taking sides in that great national conflict, because he does not want to alienate continuing partisans of either side or to acknowledge that there was ever any rift in the American psyche about what constituted "good" or "evil" forces. However popular his work may be, one commanding difference between his work and Steinbeck's is that L'Amour has never faced the challenge of dealing with a necessity for changes in the American way of life that may cause frustration, despair, and defeat to those whose qualities—like Jody's grandfather's—once the most valued by our culture, are no longer adequate to deal with the changing problems of the culture. The implications of L'Amour's work with its reductive, nostalgic, and reactionary view replacing Steinbeck's in popularity, I leave to each person's individual speculations.

I have dealt at this length with Steinbeck's early work, *The Red Pony*, because I think that, as a result of its very brevity and simplicity, it has often received less than the attention it deserves, and to make the point

that, even if John Steinbeck had published nothing after 1936, he would be entitled to a high place among American writers on the basis of this story-cycle alone. Certainly it has served to introduce young readers both in this country and abroad to great literature. Because it poses none of the problems of language and "adult situations" common in even many of our best writings today and because it provides figures with whom inexperienced readers can readily identify, it is often the first piece of really serious writing that American schoolchildren confront, without realizing how serious indeed it is; and in Germany at least, it is one of the most popular introductory texts to the studies of English.

I do not intend, either, on this occasion to make my weary way, work by work, through Steinbeck's whole production, passing out measured praise and dispraise. Something, however, must be said of the two works cited in the polls that I commented upon at the beginning, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Of Mice and Men, Steinbeck's first adventure into the play-novelette form and still the only thoroughly successful example of this genre that he or anyone else has produced, is reputedly the American novel most often used today in high school courses. It is also a work that can be approached from many points of view, but again I will limit myself to the question of its relationship to the fictional apprehension of the closing of the American frontier.

Part of the appeal of *Of Mice and Men* emanates from its serving finally and unequivocally as the embodiment in novel, play, and ultimately film of the death of the American Dream. Now, "the American Dream" is a most slippery term, for there were many such dreams, perhaps as many as there were individuals; but the most highly publicized version of the dream, and I suspect also the most widely embraced one, was the 18th century vision, fostered by a seemingly endless frontier, inspiriting both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, of Thomas Jefferson's independent yeoman, the farmer who worked his own soil, a property large enough to support him and his family comfortably in the "pursuit of happiness" but small enough so that he could finance and manage its operation on his own. Such an individual was depicted by Steinbeck himself in *The Grapes of Wrath* as endowed with certain special virtues as a result of his relationship with the land:

> If a man owns a little property, that property is him, it's part of him, and it's like him. If he owns property only so he can walk on it and handle it and be sad when it isn't doing well, and feel fine when the rain falls on it, that property is him, and some way he's bigger because he owns it. Even if he isn't successful he's big with his property.

Of Mice and Men depicts the destruction of a dream that is built upon this conception of a man's relationship to his property. Although George and Lennie are only itinerant ranchhands, they still try to keep alive something like Jody's grandfather's faith in "westering" by their vision of owning their own ranch, where they will raise rabbits. And while this dream no longer seems possible of fulfillment on a national scale, George knows a place and believes he sees a way to raise the money that will make possible a modest personal realization of the dream.

But, as in the Robert Burns' poem from which the novel takes its title, "the best laid plans of mice and men/ gang aft agley." Written at the height of the Depression, Steinbeck's novel might have been expected to be another of the many disgruntled blasts that placed the failure of the individual dream on the breakdown of the "system," and to some extent *The Grapes of Wrath* was such a blast. But perhaps the greatest magic of *Of Mice and Men* is that it is a virtually timeless work. Read now nearly 50 years after it was written, it seems a story of this moment, as indeed it is of this and every moment. Fewer details date the narrative than do those of any other of Steinbeck's or his contemporaries' works. Played especially on a sparsely furnished stage, it succeeds curiously in precisely the same way as its great rival of exactly the same period, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, in introducing us into a timeless landscape, where we meet familiar figures—the travelers with a dream, their supporters, their detractors, and their tormentors—on the road that winds endlessly through a landscape which transcends California, dominated by a Dream, and which we have all visited in dreams.

The death of the dream in this work is not, however, the fault of any "system" but of the natural limitations of man himself (of course, since any system is the product of fallible mankind, the same certainty of failure is inherent in it, but Steinbeck is not interested here in what Thoreau called "expedients," but rather in the most basic contract between two individuals). Humanity's vision, the capacity to dream, is infinitely greater than the ability to realize this dream. We are part of nature. We can imagine something beyond nature; but we cannot escape the limitations that nature imposes upon us. *Of Mice and Men* recapitulates the point of *The Leader of the People*, but it carries us far beyond the particular conditions of the turn-of-the-century United States or even the powerful motif of the quest. If the restless spirit of Ulysses cannot be assuaged, neither is the abiding security of Telemachus's state assured. People live on the illusion of possibility, however. As George tells another character after Lennie has killed Curley's wife, "I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we could."

The articulation of the underlying point behind the novel, however, is entrusted to the only black character of any importance in Steinbeck's work. Crooks, the crippled stable buck, listens to Lennie's recital of the

dream and responds scornfully: "I seen hunderds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads. Hunderds of them. They come, an' they quit an' go on; an' every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head."

The difference between the "plenty of books" that Crooks reads and *Of Mice and Men* is that Steinbeck has managed to distill from those books into his novel a universal perception of life in terms of a recognizable language and situation that enables many readers to grasp for the first time the vast uncertainty of things that may leave our only hope in dreams. Significantly, *Of Mice and Men* ends with the same kind of gesture as *The Red Pony.* The wise jerkline skinner Slim twitches George's elbow, "Come on, George. Me an' you'll go in an' get a drink." The pain cannot be cured; the dream cannot be restored, but, again, a soothing refreshment may make the situation possible to endure, especially when accompanied by an unselfish gesture.

The Grapes of Wrath, we may recall, ends in exactly the same way, although the magnificent gesture of offering restorative refreshment in that novel has been subjected to some of the silliest commentary written about American literature. In *Of Mice and Men,* Steinbeck expresses the half-humanity of the undreaming Carlson by having him ask of George and Slim, "Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?" In *The Grapes of Wrath,* he leaves it for the critics to express their own condition.

Deathblow of Frontier's Close

The Grapes of Wrath is, however, much more specifically related to the deathblow that the closing of the frontier administered to a traditional American dream than is the dark vision in *Of Mice and Men.* In this epic novel, Steinbeck succeeds in both expressing and juxtaposing the immediate and universal implications of his ultimate vision.

Steinbeck's structure for generalizing the principal narrative of the Joad family through the use of inter-chapters has been discussed many times, so that it is sufficient to point out how the author himself stresses that the story is not just that of one individual family but of all humankind and even, through the parable of the land turtle, of all life itself, of every creature animated by what George Bernard Shaw called the "life force." In the pivotal chapter 14, Steinbeck articulates the universal implications of his narrative in one of the passages that surely must have been in the minds of those recommending the novel as essential reading:

> . . . man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments. This you may say of man—when theories change and crash, when schools, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back.

Thus the story of what Steinbeck calls "Manself" is as he sees it once again the story of Tennyson's Ulysses, for whom "All experience is an arch wherethro'/ Gleams that untraveled world." All life is a movement toward the unknown.

But as Steinbeck's credo just stated acknowledges, people stumble forward mistakenly at times; and, within the context of the argument of this paper, of the multiplicity of meanings one can perceive embodied in the narrative of *The Grapes of Wrath,* the need is to focus upon its dramatization of the consequences of the closing of the frontier.

The movement of the Joads and the other migrants is, among other things, a manifestation of the same urge for "westering" that the grandfather brooded over in *The Leader of the People.* When in the past in the United States, things have gone wrong at home and opportunities have dried up, people have hit the road for the beckoning West; and the Joads, impelled by circumstances beyond their control, are irrationally yielding to a time-honored impetus. This time, however, the program to reenact a traditional scenario is doomed to defeat; for the "promised land" beyond the sunset is no longer unconquered space. It is occupied by descendants of previous generations of migrants who have established their claims and are determined to hold on to them. "Westering" is an outdated impulse that no longer corresponds to the actual conditions in the land. The migrants are greeted by the possessors of the land as the despised "Okies," whom the owners "hated . . . because the owners knew they were soft and the Okies strong, that they were fed and the Okies hungry; and perhaps the owners had heard from their grandfathers how easy it is to steal land from a soft man if you are fierce and hungry and armed."

The power is on the side of the possessors, however, and Steinbeck is no advocate of revolution; rather, his whole text is a powerful caution against it, demanding new action, new thought that will heal rather than destroy the nation. Behind the warning of this work that is finally a cautionary novel lies the realization that the nation has reached the dismal state that it was in during the Depression because it has persisted in facing the future with the same kind of thinking that impelled its expansion

during the 19th century when that century's conditions no longer exist. The government had made some limited efforts to deal with the problems of the migration; but these had served only to demonstrate that indeed, as Thoreau argued, the government is capable only of creating expedient solutions to passing problems. The government can achieve nothing more than the collective wisdom of the people permits; and if this collective wisdom is the inadequate product of "narrow dark alleys of thought," the system will disintegrate.

In Steinbeck's mind, however, virtue cannot be legislated. The change essential for adjustment to changing conditions cannot be imposed on the people from above; it must grow up from within them. Ultimately such change, as Steinbeck presents the matter, can come only from a co-operation between individuals that then expands to constantly larger groups working together. "Use' ta be the fambly was fust," Ma Joad tells the neighbors who have helped her during Rosasharn's stillbirth. "It ain't so now. It's anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to do." "It ain't so now" sums up the perception that drove the author through the agony of writing the novel—as we now are able to share it through the availability at last of the journal he kept during the months of an incredible labor. We cannot live on outdated illusions; we must begin to build new dreams by first accepting things as they are.

All three of the works of Steinbeck that I have dwelt upon here in suggesting his deservedly high place in American literature end with a variation upon the ancient act of communion—a sharing that recognizes the sacrality of life and the need for the acceptance of the necessity for change, no matter how disagreeable it may be to our preconceptions.

This essay is based on a paper delivered on February 27, 1985, at the John Steinbeck Research Center, San Jose State University, at a celebration of what would have been the novelist's 83rd birthday.

FICTION

A Visit to Chartres

by Pierce Butler

MARTIN walked slowly, so as not to tire his father who was already breathing heavily. The air was warm and moist, even in the shade. He could not think of anything to say.

Now why this interest in churches and religion all of a sudden? Mr. Burke asked.

I've always been interested in religion, Martin said. In one way or another.

He sounded as though he did not really believe what he was saying.

They followed the course of a narrow, tree-lined canal, beneath the shuttered houses. Mr. Burke stopped and took a large white handkerchief from the pocket of his shirt. He folded it carefully and placed it against his brow. In this attitude he narrowed his eyes and surveyed the steep cobbled hill. Martin waited for him, a few paces ahead.

Ye gods and little asses, Mr. Burke said. Now I wonder if. . . .

He whistled tunelessly through his teeth and faced each of the street corners in turn. There was a cluster of canvas chairs on the sidewalk near him, by the open door of a dim cafe.

What do you think? he asked his son.

I'd like to get to the square before the tour buses arrive, Martin said.

Are you sure you wouldn't like a little something?

Let's wait 'til we've worked up a thirst, Martin said.

Mr. Burke swayed indecisively, peered again into the gloom of the cafe and came toward his son. He placed each foot with slow care, as if he thought he was treading on ice. Martin gave him a close look. His brow and the crown of his head were damp beneath the strands of thinning hair.

Are you right?

Right as the rain, Mr. Burke said, with an indifferent shrug of his sloped shoulders.

They went up the hill, side by side. Martin could see the weathered stone of the apse and the strangely black glass of the windows. He was

glad for his father's sake that the lane was in shadow. They came out into the square, and he looked up eagerly. Mr. Burke turned aside coughing, pulled out his handkerchief and spat into it. He cleared his throat with difficulty and looked toward the row of shop fronts facing the porch.

Now, he said expectantly.

Let's walk around it first, Martin said. Or would you like to rest for a while?

People came and went in the square. Martin watched them, his glance lingering on the women. The cobbles reflected the heat of an ascending sun into his face. Mr. Burke pursed his lips into a mild grimace of annoyance.

Aren't you going to step inside and say a prayer at all? he asked.

Of course, we'll see the inside, Martin said. But first we should see the sculpture.

His father's face assumed a diffident expression.

Did you remember your glasses? Martin asked him.

Ah! Mr. Burke exclaimed, slapping his fist into an open palm. He looked at his son in irate disbelief.

Why don't you wait here and I'll go back for them?

Ah, sure, don't bother, Martin. I'll be all right. Ye gods, he murmured vaguely. It's brutal. What?

Martin did not say anything. Mr. Burke swung about energetically and faced the row of shop fronts.

Well, I don't know about you, he said, but I'm going to put my feet up for a little while. I think I see a little pub there in the corner, and I'm going to stroll over in that direction, sit down in the shade of one of those umbrellas and have myself a long cool drink! I have to get out of this bloody sun, anyway.

I'll come with you, Martin said.

Suit yourself now.

Mr. Burke advanced confidently across the square. Beneath the awning of the cafe he paused and waited for Martin. He put his hand in his pocket and took out a jumbled handful of coins and notes.

Now I wonder, he murmured, if I can get a little drop. . . .

Martin spoke in French to an immaculately attired waiter and led the way to a table from which he could see the porch. The waiter brought them two bottles of beer with two tall glasses. Mr. Burke looked bemused; the corners of his mouth drooped. Martin poured a beer. He looked up at the steep planes of the old *flêche.*

Really now, how come you're taking an interest in these old churches all of a sudden?

Mr. Burke swirled the beer in his glass and frowned at it. A tuft of hair in one of his bushy eyebrows stood up like an exclamation point.

I might write something about them.

But tell me, Martin, he said persuasively, is that any kind of a job you have at all? I mean, is there any future in it?

There'll always be newspapers.

But no, Mr. Burke said. I mean, is there a salary to it? Will you ever get a pension out of it?

I've told you that I get paid for each submission, Martin said. And that's how I want it, he added emphatically. That way my time is my own.

Oh well, Mr. Burke conceded, if that's what you really want. It just seems to me a waste of your degree. . . .

His mild gaze took in at once the bright square and the porch mottled by light and shadow.

It's a pity your mother couldn't have come with us today, he said. She would have liked this.

I'm a little worried about her, Martin said. I tried to talk to her doctor the other day, but I couldn't get anything out of him. Are you sure she's getting proper care from that fellow?

He's a very careful man, Mr. Burke said with a sigh. I've known him for donkey's years. No, it was that last operation that really took it out of her. You don't remember: it was after you went away. But she's over that now, thank God. It's only a touch of a cold she has—though that cough of hers is a caution!

A wasp spiralled about him. He swung his hand at it, rattling the bottles and glasses.

Bloody so-and-sos, he muttered.

Martin pushed his chair back and rested his elbows on his knees. It was apparent that he was agitated, even though he was sitting still.

Let you go on and look at it, Martin, Mr. Burke urged. I'm not as fit as I used to be. It's a while now since I used to cycle back and forth to Tipp'rary town—six days out of the week in all weathers! I'll be grand sitting here. Come back when you're ready. We'll go inside and say a prayer for your mother.

I'll get you another, Martin said, rising.

Listen, Mr. Burke whispered. Would they ever have a drop of whiskey in this place?

Martin signalled to the waiter. Mr. Burke heard him say something that he did not understand. He watched his son's slight figure walk briskly across the square and mount the steps of the porch where he stood for a long time, looking up. The waiter came, placed another bottle of beer on the table and removed the empty bottles and Martin's glass without a word.

Mr. Burke dozed in the still warm air, lulled by the monotony of foreign voices. Someone was speaking loudly nearby. He awoke with a start, surprised by the brightness of the scene which hurt his eyes. Martin stood beside his chair.

Do you want to take a look inside? he asked. It'll be cooler than here.

They walked across the square to the west portals, Mr. Burke stepping warily. There was a line of people before the shabby wooden doors. Mr. Burke felt the weighty heat of the sun through his thin short-sleeved shirt. He was glad to step into the cool lofty gloom, though he could not see anything except a blur of colored lights far above him. Martin touched his sleeve and led him past the souvenir desks into the nave.

Isn't the glass wonderful? he said. Some of the windows depict the lives of the saints.

Obediently Mr. Burke looked up. He could see the tall planes of light but no definite shapes within them. Martin led the way up the nave to the crossing.

The rose windows are very famous, he said.

Mr. Burke looked up at the huge circles pendant in the spacious dark, the massive columns, and the rows of gloomy arches. There was echoing space all about and above him. People strode past, gaping, as casually as on a public thoroughfare. From behind the great altar Mr. Burke heard the sound of loud irreverent voices.

I'm just going to say a little prayer, he whispered to his son.

He pinched the crease of his trousers and lowered one knee to the uneven floor. Gripping the back of a chair, he set down the other knee. Martin stood behind him, looking down upon the bowed head and rounded back.

Mr. Burke twisted his neck and peered cannily over his shoulder.

If you knelt down and said a prayer maybe one of those editors would take something from you a little more often.

I might, Martin said, if I thought it would work.

Mr. Burke stood up, dusted his knees and turned to the exit. Martin glanced once toward the ambulatory and followed him down the crowded aisle. Incoming tourists pressed by them in the narrow entrance. Mr. Burke went ahead of him with a satisfied air and stopped to regard the brilliant cloudless sky.

Ah! he concluded.

Martin turned again to the aged facade. He felt that there was something in it that he might be able to grasp, if he could only make a sustained effort of perception.

You know, his father said expansively, after you were born your mother had to spend six hours or so on her knees in the church. She wasn't too pleased about it either, I can tell you. She wanted to know why I didn't have to go too! The priest—poor man—was addled, trying to explain it to her. After all, she says to him, it's not as if my husband had nothing to do with it!

He chuckled quietly to himself.

But that was the custom in those days, he said. Every woman who was

after having a baby had to get "churched."

The Church has always regarded women as unclean, Martin said.

Mr. Burke pursed his lips.

That may have been the case long ago, he insisted. But things have changed since then.

Women are still supposed to be seen and not heard, Martin said rashly. Look at the nuns over in the States that the Pope wants to expel from their orders just because they signed a petition saying that reasonable people can differ on the subject of abortion.

Yerrah, there must have been something else behind it, Martin, Mr. Burke said, squinting in irritation. That sort of thing would never happen in Ireland.

You're damn right it wouldn't!

Mr. Burke looked as though he had been personally insulted.

I suppose it's just *knocking* the Church you are in those articles of yours, he said with quiet disgust.

They went through the lane on the other side of the cathedral, between the wide steps of the porch and the souvenir shops with their window boxes of geraniums. Martin looked wistfully at the erect and solemn statuary; Mr. Burke's eyes rested on the gay displays with an expression at once diffident and dismayed. They walked in silence until they came to a little park overlooking the surrounding countryside.

If you'll sit here in the shade, Martin said, indicating a bench, I'll go back to the car and get the lunch. I'm not trying to wear you out, you know.

Mr. Burke sniffed and sat down. When a moment later he looked for his son he could not see him anywhere among the people in the park. He leaned back, glad to take the weight off his feet. A bright hillside, blotched with pink, swam before his eyes. His body felt hot and heavy. He was restless and looked about him for his son's approach long before he expected him to appear.

Martin came up and placed a foil-wrapped package on the seat between them.

Man does not live by bread alone, he said. But it helps.

He folded back the edges of the foil. Mr. Burke leaned over and selected a sandwich. Absently he munched the tomato-moistened bread. He looked out into the blue haze of the valley, holding the half-eaten sandwich upon his knee.

Take another, Martin said. There's plenty.

No, no, Mr. Burke insisted. Let you finish them.

Martin meshed his fingers and took a deep breath.

Listen, Da, do you mind if I ask you something? he began in a rush. Do you think you could ease off a little?—for my mother's sake if not for your own.

Mr. Burke's eyebrows popped up, furrowing his bronzed forehead.

How do you mean? he asked cautiously.

He looked down at the remnant of the sandwich in his hand.

Well, look, Martin said hastily. It's probably none of my business, but you're drinking more than is good for you—by anybody's standards.

Mr. Burke's eyes widened, dispersing the laughter wrinkles at the corners.

Do you tell me so? he said quietly.

He seemed genuinely surprised and impressed, as though he had been told a fact of enormous significance.

That's all I have to say about it, Martin said.

Mr. Burke nodded sagely. They sat together, watching the people on the paths. A portly man in a business suit went by them, hand in hand with a tall bejewelled woman in a silk dress. Martin stared after the woman.

We should hit the road, his father said. Your mother will be wondering what happened to us. I told her we were only going to visit a church.

Martin got up immediately, and they walked back to the square. The parking area was lined with cars and buses. Visitors filled the porch.

I haven't seen all of the glass, Martin said. And I'm supposed to write something about it.

Look, Mr. Burke said. Let you run back in and take a last look. I'll wait for you here.

Are you sure?

Go on, go on.

Martin hastened up the steps of the porch. People emerged and stood blinking in the sunlight, blocking his way. Impatiently he squeezed past them into the cool, flagged interior. He hesitated at the crossing, where he could see the windows of the chancel. In places the glass was pierced by thin, laser-like rays that traversed the dim caverns of the vaults. His eyes moved from one brilliant figure to another, glutted with color. The great arches distracted him from the glass. For an instant the dark cross of space above him seemed remarkable and awe-inspiring. He remembered that his father was waiting.

He came out into the heat and looked around him. Mr. Burke was not in front of the porch. Martin paced back and forth, stepping around people who were looking up at the figures above the doors. He felt annoyed and apprehensive at once, though he expected to come upon his father at every moment. Mr. Burke did not appear.

Martin crossed the square and walked through the tables on the pavement.

Hi! an urgent voice hailed him.

He looked all around. He heard his father's laughter behind him.

What is it they say? Mr. Burke chuckled. Man does not live by bread alone.

Mr. Burke was reclining with his feet upon an adjacent chair, a jug of water and a glass of whiskey on the table in front of him.

You see I'm not as green as I'm cabbage-looking, boy, he said. Look over there.

Martin read the painted sign: we speak English. Mr. Burke's hectic grin exposed discolored teeth and gathered little tributaries of wrinkles at the corners of his eyes.

What'll you have?

I'm all right, Martin said.

I know you're all right—but what'll you have?

I'll take a raincheck.

You'll what? Oh, suit yourself, Mr. Burke said easily.

Martin pulled a chair back from the table and sat down.

Ah! Mr. Burke said. This is the life. What?

He surveyed the square and the cathedral with evident satisfaction.

Isn't it marvelous all the same? he said.

Martin did not speak.

You know, Mr. Burke said, with a sly glance at his son, the priests have done more for us than a fellow like you would like to think.

Kept the faith alive, so they wouldn't find themselves out of a job.

Ah, come on now, Martin, Mr. Burke said genially. A fellow of your intelligence. Credit where credit is due.

He took the glass of whiskey in his hand, brought it quickly to his lips and drank.

There was a fellow by the name of Flannery, he said sadly, used to live back the glen there . . . oh, years ago. My father—God rest him—used to say that he'd take the laces out of your shoes and come back for the eyelets, the same fellow, Jimmy Flannery.

He chuckled softly, remembering. Martin raised his head and placed his elbows on the table.

Anyhow, Mr. Burke said, he had a falling-out with his brother over a farm the brother had there the other side of the Galtees. The brother got sick—he was an old bachelor and had no one belonging to him—so Jimmy went to look after him. He waited on him hand and foot, but the story was that the will was already made and that the brother had left the house and farm and everything he possessed to some cousin or other over in the States that he'd only seen once before in his life. Well, the parish priest, Father Burke that was, no relation of ours, got a note from Jimmy Flannery telling him to come quick, that the brother was on his last legs. So he drove out there, and he found the brother in bed with an old shawl wrapped around him and a towel over his head. I'm very bad, father, says he, and I want to go to confession to you and to get the last sacrament from you so that I can die in peace (this was a fellow now who'd hardly set foot inside a church since his confirmation—and he was

so stingy that people said he still had his confirmation money too!). I've treated my brother Jimmy very badly, he says, and I don't want to go to my grave with that on my conscience. So the priest gave him absolution and extreme unction and the rest of it. Where's your brother, by the way? says Father Burke. He's gone for the doctor, says the man in the bed. But I told him to drop by that new solicitor's first and leave a note for him: it's damn all use I have for the doctor at this stage but the least I can do is to take care of Jimmy and all he's after doing for me. Anyhow, he asked the priest to leave him and the solicitor came and he made over the farm to Jimmy and by the time the doctor arrived Jimmy was sitting there with the tears flowing down his cheeks and the brother was stretched out a corpse in the bed.

Mr. Burke leaned toward Martin, moist eyes agleam with revelation.

And that was that, he said. But according to my father—God rest him—Jimmy pulled a fast one on them all. You see, the brother died an hour before the priest arrived. It was Jimmy in the bed that he spoke to—and the brother's corpse was under the bed! Isn't that a good one! It was Jimmy the solicitor spoke to as well, though he didn't know him from Adam. By the time the doctor arrived Jimmy had the corpse back in the bed and he was sitting there with the will in his hand crying his eyes out. The poor generous man, says he; he did well by me at the last.

Martin smiled and shook his head. Mr. Burke laughed, coughed, and spat into his handkerchief. Ruefully he rubbed his tearful eyes.

But didn't the priest know who it was in the bed? Martin asked.

Mr. Burke picked up his glass and drank.

Now that's a moot point, he said pleasantly. He wasn't used to seeing Jimmy at mass—because he never went, from one end of the year to the next—and he wouldn't have seen the brother since he was a child. According to my father, he had his suspicions. But he never told a soul.

What? Martin said. He gave the last rites to a man in the pink of health and turned a blind eye while a will was forged!

Yerrah, look at it this way, Martin, Mr. Burke said. It all worked out for the best. Jimmy got the farm, which was only what he deserved—your man in the States had no more right to it than you or I, really. And the brother—agnostic or whatever he was—had the consolation of religion, in a manner of speaking, that is.

I can't believe you, Martin said.

What? Mr. Burke exclaimed. You're not going to tell me that God will damn a poor fellow on a technicality!

Martin laughed in amazement and slapped his palm upon his knee.

You're a hard man, he said.

Mr. Burke's eyes gleamed with covert pleasure. He drained his glass and looked about him, blinking.

We'd better be making tracks, he said. It's not right to leave your mother

on her own all this time. Will you have another?

How did you and Mam meet each other? Martin asked.

God, you have me there, Mr. Burke said.

He waved his hand ineffectually at a pair of wasps that hovered about the rim of his glass. The waiter came and stood by the table. Mr. Burke looked at Martin. He lifted his feet from the chair and smiled hesitantly. Martin looked away.

A whiskey? the waiter pronounced.

Mr. Burke nodded in grateful embarrassment and handed the waiter his glass.

Would you have a little ice by any chance? he asked.

The waiter poised attentively in leaving.

Ice, Martin said distinctly. *À la glace.*

Et Monsieur?

No, Martin said.

The waiter returned and placed the drink on the table. Mr. Burke reached out and encircled it with his fingers.

I'd never have a drink at lunchtime if I was at home, he said. Unless maybe of a Sunday or a holiday.

He poured water in his drink.

How did I meet your mother? he wondered. God, you know, I couldn't tell you. Isn't that a fright? It must have been around the time I started working there in Barronstrand Street. That's a while ago now. I've been working for those so-and-sos for—what?—40 years, and I've hardly missed a day—except when I was out for six weeks that time with the pleurisy. Nineteen forty I started. I was just after coming down from Tipp, and I didn't know a sinner in the place. I used to feel rightly browned off coming into work in the mornings—because I'd spent the previous evening hanging around the digs. I was there in Manor Street, you know. It wasn't a bad place, but sure there was no life in it, after the village.

He took a drink from his glass. His eyes widened as he leaned earnestly across the table. Martin saw the loose folds of flesh upon his tired cheeks.

I can remember tossing a coin, Mr. Burke said, to know would I get the hell out of it and go off to the States after Tommy and the rest of them. Head or harp: would I go or stay. Well, as luck would have it, it came down harp, and I decided to stick it out for another while, anyway. I remember there was this young fellow used to stand across the street from the shop, just by the cathedral there, and he had only the one leg. It was around the time of the war: I suppose that's how he lost it. He was a handsome poor fellow too, about the same age as myself. But he was very shook. He used to be there every morning, hail, rain or shine, with the racing page of the *Press* in his hand and he balanced on the crutches—he was mad about the horses. I used to salute him on my way in to open the shop. And then one

day he wasn't there, and he never came back. I never heard what happened to him.

Mr. Burke raised the glass to his lips and replaced it absently on the table, without drinking.

I says to myself, well, whatever happens, I'm better off than that poor fellow there. And that was just around the time that I met your mother.

Mr. Burke pushed back his chair and rose.

I'll only be a minute, he assured Martin. And then we'd better get a move on.

Martin watched him making his tentative way between the tables. At the door of the cafe he stepped aside to allow a waiter with a tray to pass. Martin turned to the square. The colored awnings and the bright dresses of the women gave a festive aspect to the scene. Only the cathedral seemed out of place.

He looked up and saw his father coming toward him. Mr. Burke's eyebrows were raised to his furrowed brow, as though in an attempt to dispel a thought that oppressed him, and his face wore an expression of mild hopefulness. Martin remembered his father kneeling in the cathedral and wondered if he would ever write about the windows.

Mr. Burke hailed him. Martin stood up quickly and went to meet him.

Patton

William R. Kanouse

I told him that the traffic wasn't moving, that there was a back-up ahead, but he went ahead anyway and now we're tied up too. He could have gotten off at South, but now he's beyond the ramp.

"What in the hell's goin' on up there?"

I once rode with somebody else that had a CB; thought I did anyway.

"Post office truck went over at University," that information breaking through the jumbled gabble on the CB. It was a fast response.

"How long before they get it out?" He's back on the CB.

"Tow truck's just pullin' up and here comes another one off University."

"We just dumped into it, how do you like that?" He turns off the CB, lights up a cigarette, and lowers his window. "Talk about luck, Teddy!"

I jump out and climb onto the bank where straight ahead I see the yellow lights of the two trucks crisscrossing in the night. We're approximately 25 cars back and I can't make much else out. A police car jockeys up and I get back into the old Buick, as I don't want to get crushed by any nervous driver scrambling to allow the police through. The cars are bunched together, like they're on a ferry, and the police don't have much room. The Schuylkill's that kind of highway—not much shoulder.

So, we're sitting in his old car and I don't know how we got talking about the war, World War II. Wait. I know. He started to tell me about his gun collection, how his son, my cousin, had taken up collecting too.

"The girl says that the first thing he'll have to do is get rid of that gun collection."

"The girl says that?"

"My son says that 'the first thing I have to do is get rid of you.' Well, I'll tell ya. He drops her like a hot potato, and then she's chasin' him all over the place. Hey, my son, he's a good catch. He's been buyin' a $50 Savings Bond every week at GE for 15 years. So somehow she gets the idea into her head that he's goin' to unload his gun collection. My son's 34, he doesn't go out with no virgins."

I failed to see the connection between the guns and the girl's virginal status and I didn't know how good a collection my cousin was developing, but this I did know: my uncle had a stupendous collection. I saw it once, a few years back. I was just out of the army and he thought I knew something about weapons. He didn't know that every time I fired my 45 on the range I barely survived the ricochet. I never threw a hand grenade after I left Benning and my last experience with the machine gun was also at Benning. In fact, I bluffed my way through the machine gun cleaning exercise all through training. I can still handle an M-14 and even a 16, or at least I think I can, but I haven't touched a weapon since I got out in 1969.

But anytime my uncle sees me, which isn't often, he starts talking about his latest acquisition.

"I just bought two German Lugers with the American Eagle on 'em. Ya see in 1938 the army's gittin' ready to ditch the 45, use the Luger. Hell, it's a better weapon by a mile, why not? But the war starts and that ends that." He knew what he was talking about, for he read an assortment of gun magazines and kept them stacked in his arsenal. (The arsenal is upstairs, across from the master bedroom and adjacent to the bathroom. It has three locks on the door.) "So get this! There are only 1,138 of these Lugers manufactured with the American Eagle on 'em and I got two of 'em, mint condition, still in the box. What a deal I make, like stealin' candy from a baby. Kid inherits 'em from his father, and this kid—he don't know the significance of the Eagle."

"You're telling me that you have two Lugers with the Eagle stamped on them?"

"Damn right I do and I picked 'em up for a song! Don't even want to inform ya on their worth, you'll go through the roof of the car."

I found his story fairly amazing, but then my uncle has a tale to tell about every gun he's got. There's a Barreta picked off a captured Italian officer in North Africa and a Mauser found on a dead German colonel at Bastogne. That's how it started, I think, his gun collecting. It started during the war.

"When we hit the ship they told us to sign over any enemy weapons and they'll give 'em back when we hit the States. I didn't fall for that baloney." I know: nobody puts anything over on Uncle Joe. "This's what I did: I take the Mauser and Barreta and bury 'em in my barracks bag." He's never mentioned this before, how he got the weapons over. " 'Got any weapons that bag, soldier?' 'No sir!' And know what? Nobody that gave up any weapons got 'em back when we docked in New York. The officers and first sergeants split up those weapons. Who were they tryin' to kid? I'm not born yesterday!"

My father didn't bring back any weapons. He told me that he never wanted to see a gun after he left Europe. And he even gave up hunting

after he got out. Two things stick in my mind from what my father said about the war. One's that when he went through Cologne there was nothing left. "It's like a ghosttown, son. About the only big building left standing is the Cathedral, as they had an agreement. The Allies bombed all around it, but never touched it."

And the other thing my dad always talked about was Patton. "If they had let Patton loose, the war would've been over a lot sooner. They took his fuel away and sent it up to the limeys."

My uncle had joined up long before my father. He told me that he was in seven battles: North Africa, Sicily, Anzio, Normandy, Bastogne, and two others that he momentarily couldn't remember. "Bastogne's the worst. The Germans had us hemmed in there for 28 days like chickens in a coop. Patton finally pulled us out. That's when my hearin' got damaged—Bastogne. The artillery never stopped." He's hard of hearing and wears a hearing aid, which doesn't always work.

"Bastogne was worse than Anzio?"

"Worse than Anzio, but we got chopped up there too."

"What division?"

"Patton's Third Army!"

"No, I mean division?"

"Hundred-and-Twenty-Eighth, The Pennsylvania division!"

"How did you survive that? I heard those National Guard divisions got butchered all through the war."

"I was always in reserve or in the second wave, otherwise I would never've made it back in one piece."

"Where did you think you were going to get it? Bastogne or Normandy?" I look into the rear view. Traffic's stacked up for a couple of miles but I don't hear any horns.

"Where do I think I'm gonna get it? I'll tell ya. Normandy, when I get there, they got it cleared, looks like Wildwood the middle of the summer. It's at the Remagen, that's where I think I'm a dead man." Real fast I'm thinking that he doesn't miss any of the battles, not any of the ones they make movies about with Robert Mitchum and George Segal and Henry Fonda. And my uncle never goes to the movies, they're a waste of time to him. So it's not like he's recharging his war experiences with an overdose of movies. "We're lookin' for a place to get across the river. This river's as wide as the Delaware. It's no easy river to cross."

"The Rhine! I crossed it a few times." Yes, it did remind me of the Delaware, except the Rhine was an ominous, sad river. At least in Germany it was. Perhaps in Switzerland it gave off a different effect.

"The Rhine—that's where I see Patton."

"You saw Patton?"

"He's ridin' along the river, standin' up in his Jeep, and I can see his two pistols. That's how close I get to him."

"My father saw him, but only from a distance."

"Well, I see him and it ain't no distance. I'm close enough to spit on him."

"What's he doing?"

"What's he doin'? I'll tell ya what he's doin', and ya won't believe it." Uncle Joe has his elbow out the window and intermittently a few ashes fly off his cigarette into the damp air.

"Well, tell me!"

"Patton's tellin' us to jump in the river!"

"He what?"

"Get in the water ya mother-fuckers, that's what he's screamin'! I heard him! This was before my ears went bad."

"He wanted you in the Rhine?"

"He wanted everybody in the Rhine! The whole army!"

"Why?"

"They can't find no bridge to cross and Patton thinks that if he can get 100,000 troops in the water, half of 'em will make it across, and the other 50,000—they'll drown."

"Did you get in?"

"I'm up to here, ain't I? Then an officer came around and said they'd found a bridge that the Germans hadn't blown."

"The Remagen?"

"No, it's before we crossed the Remagen. This bridge, the one they moved us down to, it was already blown. Somebody had fouled up and that saved me because I can't swim worth a lick. Patton, I can still see him today. He's racin' up-and-down the river like a maniac."

I look over at the Schuylkill and for a moment I imagine that it is the Rhine and that George Patton is standing in his jeep, pushing an army into the water.

"Patton! He's responsible for the death of a lot of men. We took many unnecessary deaths in Sicily."

"Did you see the movie?"

"Maybe I saw it on TV, maybe I didn't. He's a glory hunter Patton, he's out there for the glory."

They had cleared one lane around the truck, so we inch by it. The truck is plopped on its side like a horse waiting to be shot. I don't see any mail flapping around and it looks like the driver got out of his cabin.

I glance over at my uncle. He has taken it all in stride; the lost time doesn't bother him. He's wearing thick glasses and a Khrushchev hat. He always wore that black Khrushchev hat, except during the summer when he put on a blue baseball cap.

* * *

I have a mug of beer and a bag of beer nuts in front of me and I'm bending around a pole looking at the fuzzed TV but I'm not paying attention to the basketball game. Instead I'm thinking about what Uncle Joe said. I have many uncles on my mother's side and the viewing I attended that evening was for a great-uncle who came to America in 1899 and went back-and-forth until he got involved in a boxing fix in Milan and had to leave Italy for good. He lived way beyond his time and everybody forgot about him, forgot about him until he died. My mother called from Florida and told me to represent her at the viewing and if I hadn't gone to the viewing I would not have found out about Patton trying to force an army to swim across the Rhine. We had forced marches during training exercises, but never forced swims.

Patton interests me because my father used to talk about him, and, funny thing is, my father said he hated war but loved war movies. And I had my own army story that I wanted to tell my father and my Uncle Joe. But I didn't tell it to either one of them, although I would've told it to my father, told it to him if he hadn't died before the story exposed itself in November of '69.

This story, my army story, concerns that unfortunate officer, William Calley. I was at Benning with him and, though we were in different classes, I once found myself guarding him during a vigorous push-and-shove basketball game in one of the Benning gyms. Calley could barely dribble with his left hand, so I overplayed him right and if he went left I slapped the ball away and that opened up fast break opportunities for my team. Calley seldom penetrated and finally, in frustration, he bulled into me. I knew how to take a charge, having once spent a month at a Pocono basketball camp, and even before I was on the floor I was hollering "charge! charge!" Calley had turned the ball over again and in frustration he picked it up and drop-kicked it into the empty bleachers, the ball caroming about the stands. Everybody watched the ball's remarkable tap dance on the stands and followed its abrupt descent to the cavernous area beneath. We decided to put another ball into play rather than chase the first one. And I'm not sure anybody even bothered to retrieve that particular ball when the game was over, but I know that I observed the incident from a reclining position, for I saw an opportunity to take a breather. Everybody grinned except Calley, and when he caught my grin I thought he was going to jump down my throat.

I went on to Germany, where I had a good time with the women, stayed away from drugs, and only worked hard during maneuvers. Calley wound up with the embattled Americal Division in Nam. His complicity in the Mylai massacre screamed across the TV screens about two months after I left the service. It was then that I made the connection, piecing the

two Calleys together, hooking up the frustrated young man in the gym with the beleaguered officer on TV. Mylai dramatized to me what, at the time, I already well knew: that I had been very lucky. For I could have been sent to Nam and walked the tightrope of life and death on a daily basis; I could have broken, as Calley had broken. Calley violated every rule in the book, but I still grudgingly sympathized with him, for it was only the spin of the wheel that separated me from Mylai, or a Mylai type of situation.

When Mylai seized the nation's attention during the fall of 1969, I mentioned my Calley encounter to one friend, an ex-grunt, who had served with the First Cav. I told him that the Benning incident stuck in my mind because of Calley drop-kicking the ball into the stands. I have played in a thousand-and-one pickup basketball games. One time, during a scrimmage on a South Philadelphia playground, a taut muscled kid with thin red hair and a pockmarked face, angered at being continually hooked underneath, took out two opponents with two rapid-fire punches. Neither one of his victims got up too fast, and the game abruptly stopped—stopped on a dime. But despite all the games and all the fights, I never saw anybody drop-kick the ball into the stands. Kick it yes, but not drop-kick it.

I look down at the scarred bar and I see that although I have finished my beer, I have not opened my bag of nuts. I leave them unopened and outside the door of Hasting's Bar a teenager, four wrinkled dollars in his hand, asks me to buy him a six-pack. I ask him whether he ever heard of Patton or Calley. He doesn't think so and I don't buy him the beer.

I could have told my Calley story to Uncle Joe, but he talked mostly monologues and I didn't think he understood a damn thing about Vietnam. He had his war, had come out alive (and I think that amazed him), and that was it. My father would have understood but I never had the chance to tell him my Calley story. I had wanted to tell him the story because we had, at the time, a dialogue going on about the war, and I think Mylai summed up the maddening frustration of the American experience in Nam. It occurs to me that he never doubted the inevitability of America winning the war in Europe, although many times he must have thought he was going to die. And Uncle Joe never thought for one moment that America would lose, Bastogne having been no more than a spectacular scare. While in training at Dix and Jackson and Benning, I never thought we would win in Nam, and many officer candidates felt the same way: that we lacked the will to win. I had surely lacked the will and I had been content to coast out the Vietnam War in Europe. However, Uncle Joe, my dad, and especially Patton did not lack the will during World War II. For after all, didn't Patton, according to Uncle Joe, order an army to jump into the Rhine? And Uncle Joe couldn't swim, but he jumped in anyway.

The specter of Patton haunted me more than ever. It had started via my father when I was a kid and it had been intermittently refurbished and now there was Uncle Joe telling me about his own direct contact with Patton. I had, somehow, oddly juxtaposed Patton with Calley, and I didn't know what the sense of it was, other than they were extreme opposites. But I had the gut feeling that Mylai, like the Gulf of Tonkin and TET, would be an incident that would screech across the history books, capturing the essence of an American mistake.

I didn't want to break my trance on the subject and I saw the flickering lights of the Texas Bar dipping into the night. One more something would stimulate me even more. I ordered a stinger and Paul, the shaggy haired bartender, was surprised.

"A stinger? Ya got to be kiddin' me, Ted!"

"Watch me! I might drink two of them."

"What's the occasion?" He cuffed a cigarette low by his side.

"An old uncle of mine died."

"Were ya close to him?" He placed the drink in front of me.

"A little bit when I was a kid." It felt like my throat was on fire. I had not drunk any hard liquor in years.

"I see—sentimental like."

"He fixed the lightweight championship of Europe in 1923."

"A character, huh?" And Paul moved down the bar and I had them precariously balanced, like a juggler, both incidents: Patton on the Rhine and Calley at Mylai—and I was there.

POETRY

James Sutherland-Smith
from *Naming the Arrow*

The Feather Speaks

I was part of a greater thought
Fanned out in a climb or a glide,
Shaking over guano or sperm.
Sometimes a beak preened me for grit.

A snare jerked me out of a unity
Which quivered in midair until freed
From the twine and smacked against stone.

I was washed clean of dirt and blood,
My quill trimmed to a point, fitted,
Tail feather to another thought.

The sequence of poems from Naming the Arrow *was inspired by the memory of a recital of poems called Elegies by the Rumanian poet, Nikita Stanescu. He was trying to give an impression of life in a totalitarian regime with a persona that seems to speak from the middle of inanimate material without dimension; so that even the use of preposition becomes a kind of philosophical solecism.*

The Arrowshaft Speaks

Rumour of air reached me. To be certain
Was impossible when vision extended
Beyond no more than the grain of oneself;
Heartwood and bark, the pressure of sap.
My diversity allowed merely the cells'
Repetition flattening into leaf
For the alternations of light and dark.
Movement I knew when branches stretched
At their axils, movement not mine but the wind's
Stirring me when I least expected.

I lost innocence as other natures
Touched and altered me. A knife lopped and split me
For those feathers which do not speak to me
But dwell in me just as I inhabit
That barbed iron given its own essence
By the fire which charred my destiny
And cauterised my dangers of growth.
I was notched to a taut cord of sheep gut,
Drawn across two curved ox horns and let fly.

The wind could not oppose me. I was free
And moved through the insinuations of air
As logic proceeds cleaving dialectic.
I was almost air myself thrusting
Against air until the singing weakened me
Relating how much less I had, my texture
Darkened, sap vapourised to a memory,
My purpose trapped in a single arc of flight.

Other arrows listened and were persuaded
To return to their first being. They dropped
Breaking into bud, rooting where they fell.
But I continued knowing the air
Until I reached this difference
Which stopped me dead, which stains me and which
I cannot name in this utter silence.

The Arrowhead Protests

I have enjoyed three kinds of water.
None of them were my fault.
The first rained upon me
Always making me cool and shiny.

It was not my fault.
I was content to be myself.
A bird might perch on me.
A bud, then sapling,
Move me an inch or so.
There would be centuries
Between each event.

It was not my fault.
There was nothing special
About my dull gleam
To attract crime. Nearby
There were others exactly like me
Who might have been picked up instead.

It was not my fault.
I suffered. All that made me a stone
Was burnt off. I was beaten flat,
Made red hot and beaten again.
The only relief I had
Was water and even that
Reeked of charcoal and raw metal.

It was not my fault.
I was a prisoner filed sharp,
Jammed and bound in a spliced shaft.
My flight, the direction I took
Were not of my choice.
I didn't even know about flesh
Until I pierced it.

I admit that I enjoyed
The third water most of all.
But it was not my fault.

Hell

I have no body. I am a space
Which shifts through darkness
Thicker than matted feathers,
Air denser than deadwood,
Pressure heavier
Than layers of rock.

I do not know how long
I have been moving.
But the movement defines me
An area of friction
Which scrapes through the whole of me
Annealing me with pain.

I advance slowly
Taking so much time
To cross a distance
Less than the width of
The edges of a feather,
An iron tip, a bark strip.

Yet I progress.
The howling I rasp towards
Was once softer
And I do not think
Its source travels to me
Since my purpose is to kill it.

When I reach the howling
The noise will vibrate
Through me a pain worse
Than I suffer now
Which will be added to me
When I start this journey again.

Eurydice

I did not expect her to return from hell
Coarse and promiscuous, drinking too much,
Her hair hanging to her waist, her laughter harsh
Like ice on the road cracking beneath her feet.

I expected her to melt. She hardened
Saying my heart was a quiver of arrows
No gentleness of hers would disarm.
My crotch sprouted arrows in reply.

I expected her to desert me
In a winter landscape of stark contrasts
Her footsteps pointed in a straight line,
Her last words feathery and sentimental.

I did not expect her to go without saying
A single word. But she left taking
So many meanings from this warm abundance
Where her footsteps melt as they zig-zag, doubling back.

Purgatory

An arrow hurtles to make certain
And irredeemable. Words
Reverberate. Who will listen?
The innocent perhaps. I nock
Intentions in the clearest light
And speak. The words sussurate
And gather darkness, penumbrae
Of anger and desire. My words
Thicken. Wails of the damned reply.

I had a dream in which an arrow
Soared shedding its elements;
The shaft flaking into carbon
And nitrogen while from the feathers
Glided the recollection of wings.
Water slid along the arrowhead
Which in turn melted into water.
This rain I watched pattering
Upon a white stone step engraved with

"Cross and be silent except
For the words 'I', 'Love' and 'God.' "

Paradise

After you have reached enough mastery
To pass over, killed by the arrow
You cannot deflect, your blood will fall
As rain upon a white stone step
The first of many you must cross.

You will find they make a path through water
Pricked by drizzle. While you travel
You must consider the three words
Given to you and repeat them
Learning their correct inflection.

When you have forgotten all language
Except these words you will arrive
At a thicket of feathers taller
Than yourself and curved to points like poplars.
Each quill is crowded with birds singing.

Their eyes regard, their beaks stab at you.
If you try to imitate their song
Your tongue will split and warble blood.
If you beat them off your spine will swell
With air, your hands fledge into eyes and beaks.

A narrow wooden road extends
Beyond the feathers. It is overgrown
With thorns which will flick back to cut you
To the bone. If you avoid their wounds
You will be grafted to the road

Becoming flexible and dumb.
The road reaches a desert of iron.
If you flinch as you scorch and blister,
The soles of your feet sticking to
The glowing metal which ripples with heat,

You will wither into the white hot
Mirror of paradise. When you go on
Into nothing your flesh will swirl in plumes
Of black smoke. Your bones will flake like charcoal.
Meanings will melt and fly from you.

Carolyn Grassi

Music Room at Santa Clara University and Petit Trianon, Versailles

sister in the garden where berries are heavy in the colors of Fall
and in your body the juices impatient under the breath's tempo
so it's impossible to ignore the late afternoon piano music
reminding me of ballet classes when I was a child
as you easily open one arm wide followed by the other
music thickening the air with grace intelligence charm realizing
from signs in Nature such beauty's transient fading at the finger-tips
so I promise to etch your features in poems on paper
allowing me comparison with the peony's temperament
in the defiant brightness young girls give
in the sound of silk apparent in arabesques
suggested by the rustle of cotton organza satin linen
as the imagination dances in the fragile substantial embrace
roses give without calling attention to themselves
leaving us free as you without confessions to offer
no diaries on the shelf no poems with your signature
innocent of ambition you bleed from harsh words cold glances
burning incandescent at night for one man
as your green terraces mark out a forest of pines and poplars
violets hide on the edge of the path before pink begonias
in your eyes flashes of amber dance on blue
as the sun touches the pavillon's pink marble star
drawn to its topaz center as lilies rise white and yellow from water
swans push off in paired sequences from the shore
as gold embraces pine-wood in raised roses bluebirds grapes pears
as trees by the door taste in their roots the first spring waters

The Kiwi Torte

(Boulangerie, Patisserie, Rue du Parchemin, Strasbourg)

the lime kiwi with her dark flecked freckles
blond hair spiralled 'round her
on the bed of the tan floured torte
wearing her heart exposed wanting to be tasted and known
to be remembered not only for her fine flavor slightly tart
but for her crystal covered sweet glazed gown
that domesticates her island freedom
into a proper place on the glass shelf of Grauffel's bakery
beside the traditional apple and restrained pear
whose appearances also are lovely transparent and glowing
elegant for the eyes inviting for the tongue

as with certain women who want their appearance as enough for a man's eyes
yet feel their emotions leaning into their figure dress manners speech
as if their clothes were only containers for something better
beneath the wrapper promising taste enjoyment and more
offering a fine fruit enjoyed best when taken home to bed
similar to the kiwi apple pear whose green red or pale blond color
shape size texture taste's best discovered in leisure
intensified by a fine restaurant linen napkins wine a secluded table
as with special ways of making love on a vacation in France
flowered curtains the red fleurs-de-lis wall-paper white percale sheets
the bedding making her body more beautiful as she lounges not unlike a fancy bakery

ARTICLES

The Folly of the Body

Harold J. DeBey

WHETHER the human body is wise or foolish, corrupt or the temple of God, has been a subject for discussion down through the centuries. Although there are probably better translations for the words, "corruption" and "corruptible," their use in the Bible and in Aristotle to describe the human body certainly influenced attitudes during the Middle Ages. However, with increasing understanding of the intricacies of the internal workings of the human, with a major stimulation by the discovery of the circulation of the blood, a case was built for the wisdom inherent in the internal processes of the body. Perhaps the culmination of this point of view was expressed in *The Wisdom of the Body* by the noted physiologist Walter B. Cannon in 1932.[1] In this book, Cannon cites many examples of the near perfection in body functions due to the control of the internal environment of the cells of the body with respect to sugar, salt, and water concentrations and the control of the reactions that occur. Although most of the exact reactions involved were not understood at that time, Cannon's thesis was widely accepted.

The description of reaction sequences generally known as metabolism is somewhat analogous to the workings of a fine watch. Study of these reactions in which a product of digestion is degraded, its energy tapped and stored, while some bits and pieces are reassembled into larger molecules, has advanced knowledge of how the body's internal processes proceed. While students usually grumble about having to memorize reaction sequences, by the time they become professors, the intricacy and wisdom of the Krebs cycle, the scheme for protein synthesis, allosteric control of reactions, and detoxification of foreign substances have become deeply ingrained in their thinking. Except for a few doubts about the use of the word detoxification, it is generally established (but rarely explicitly expressed) as a paradigm of biochemistry that the body is wise and any seeming aberration is probably due to a failure of a reaction, a disease, bacteria, or a virus, or something else we don't really understand. Certainly the evidence contrary to this paradigm is not taught to

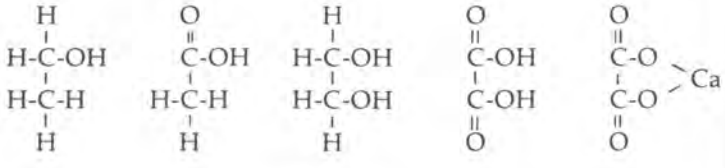
most students. But at least one major tragic episode and the accumulation of observations and interpretations in what is now the discipline of toxicology provide overwhelming evidence opposing a naive belief in the wisdom of the body.

The tragic episode involves the death of more than a hundred people, mostly children, who were given a medication called "Elixir of Sulfanilamide" in 1937. The details of the effects of the medication are reported in the *Journal of American Medical Association* for November 6, 1937.[2] At this time sulfanilamide, one of the first wonder drugs effective against bacteria, was revolutionizing medical treatment. Apparently in an attempt to make the medication palatable to children, it was dissolved in the sweet-tasting solvent, diethylene glycol, and some flavoring and coloring were added. The manufacturers of the medication had apparently not tested the solvent and were unaware that it might be toxic.

As we now know, the solvent itself was not toxic, but it was first broken into ethylene glycol (the substance widely used in automobile antifreeze solutions) by body processes, and enzymes in the body then proceeded to oxidize the ethylene glycol to oxalic acid which was the actual toxic substance that caused the deaths. (See Figure 1 for formulas of these compounds). Oxalic acid has a strong affinity for calcium ions that are found in all body fluids and it immediately forms insoluble calcium oxalate. If only small amounts of oxalate are formed, a kidney stone may be the only result. But larger amounts interfere with the function of the cells in the kidneys which then stop producing urine. Liver cells are also affected, and calcium oxalate has even been found in brain cells.

The enzyme, alcohol dehydrogenase, responsible for the first step of the oxidation of ethylene glycol, is the same one that is responsible for the oxidation of ethyl alcohol and other chemically related substances. Ethyl alcohol is toxic in large amounts, and an excess of its oxidation product,

Figure 1. Formulas of Ethyl Alcohol, Ethylene Glycol, and Their Metabolic Products.



acetic acid, may produce an imbalance known as acidosis. But acetic acid is capable of further metabolism—in that marvelous series of reactions known as the Krebs cycle—where it is converted to carbon dioxide and water and serves as a source of energy. Excessive amounts of ethyl alcohol can be excreted readily since it is soluble in water.

The conclusion is obvious. While ethylene glycol itself is not toxic and can be easily excreted via the urine, a normal enzyme that detoxifies ethyl alcohol (and some other substances) is responsible for a "toxification." Thus the tendency of the human body, which is a general one, to oxidize foreign substances (known as xenobiotics) with a subsequent release of energy is generally, but not always, wise.

There are two fascinating sidelights to this story. The first is that cases of poisoning due to ethylene glycol, often as the result of suicide attempts, are now treated with intravenous infusions of ethyl alcohol. The enzyme binds the ethyl alcohol in preference to the ethylene glycol and the ethylene glycol is excreted in the urine *per se* with only small percentages being converted to oxalic acid. There is some conversion to oxalic acid and an acidosis results, probably due to excessive ingestion and oxidation of ethyl alcohol, but this condition can usually be treated successfully. Warren Wacker, *et al.*,[3] report such treatment for two patients who had ingested large amounts of ethylene glycol but recovered with no lasting serious effects. A positive result generally attributed to the poisoning by Elixir of Sulfanilamide was that it gave a great stimulus to the passage of the 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, which had been stalled in the U.S. Congress.

A second major line of evidence that reactions of the body can be foolish and probably even fatal comes from the study of those substances that cause cancer, the carcinogens. Although the story didn't first develop this way, it can best be told in terms of the testing of various substances for carcinogenicity. While animals tests provide the best evaluation of whether a substance will cause cancer, they are expensive and generally require one to two years to produce results. The Ames test, developed by Dr. Bruce Ames of the Biochemistry Department at the University of California, Berkeley, uses bacteria. This test, which measures the ability of substances to produce mutations in bacteria, can be done in a short time with a minimum of expense. The Ames test really detects "mutagens" and not carcinogens, and there seemed at first to be a definite, but not perfect, correlation between mutagens and carcinogens. One disturbing result, however, was that a large group of substances, including those in the "tars" from tobacco smoke which were known carcinogens, did not test as mutagens.

It had been proposed as early as 1950 (before the Ames test was developed) that a group of substances known generally as the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, such as the benzanthracenes and benzpyrenes

which were in tobacco "tars," were oxidized before they were really carcinogenic. Since it was known that liver cells, and particularly a certain fraction of these cells, the microsomes, could bring about such oxidative reactions, the Ames test was modified to include an incubation of the chemical substance to be tested with a microsomal preparation from liver cells before exposure to the bacteria and determination of its status as a mutagen. Under these conditions, the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons were found to be mutagens, and the correlation between mutagens and carcinogens rose to nearly 90 per cent.

Once again, the conclusion was inescapable. The human body was converting a nontoxic substance to one that was toxic, from a procarcinogen to a carcinogen. Authorities[4] now believe that most chemical carcinogens that come from the environment require biochemical activation in order to become true carcinogens. Not all of the reactions classified as activations are oxidations, but all of them are part of the normal metabolism of xenobiotic substances by the human body.

The conversion of the hydrocarbons into the active substances that are known as electrophiles or electrophilic agents greatly increases their reactivity. The substances with which they react to produce the most devastating results are the nucleic acids, RNA and DNA. Since DNA is the major hereditary substance, any change in it produces a mutation, and mutations are probably responsible for cancers.

This conversion of a procarcinogen into a carcinogen is especially dangerous because it occurs within cells. Carcinogens in the diet or inhaled air may react with proteins or other body constituents less vital than DNA, but the formation of carcinogens within the cell, in propinquity to the DNA, makes the possibility of mutations and cancer much greater. The cells that have the ability to activate procarcinogens are the ones in which there is a high incidence of cancers. Thus, lung cells exposed to procarcinogens in air polluted by tobacco smoke or other substances are likely to become cancerous, with the possibility that the failure of some people to develop such cancers may be due to a relative deficiency of the enzyme (sometimes known as AHH or aryl hydrocarbon hydroxylase) in their lungs.

Are we to believe then that the body is essentially foolish, that its metabolism creates toxins? The answer, of course, is that there are many more instances that could be cited to support the thesis of wisdom in metabolic reactions. Oxidation of foods is a major source of energy for all living organisms. Most of the reactions that xenobiotics undergo make them more water soluble and easier to excrete. Cannon's book is still valid, but perhaps its title is not.

The human body is the product of eons of evolution; the reactions that have persisted are those that conferred positive survival value. These reactions are neither wise nor foolish, only survivors, while harmful reac-

tions have negative survival value and tend to be eliminated, since those in whom these reactions occur die before they have the chance to pass them (or more precisely the DNA that has the information for these reactions) along to their offspring. However, there is little negative survival value in reactions that produce damage (as cancers usually do) long after the reproductive age has passed, and the genes that code for the enzymes that catalyze the reactions have already been transmitted to offspring. Reactions to rarely encountered substances such as ethylene glycol would have little effect on survival, although a technological society that exposes children to a variety of xenobiotic substances might serve to screen out reactions that produce toxic substances.

Other reactions, such as those of the immune system involved in producing allergies and those conditions which are being classified as autoimmune diseases, indicate that there are more complex ways in which the truly remarkable human body can go wrong apparently without the intervention of bacteria or viruses. A real understanding of how we function must involve a view that is more sophisticated than assuming that the body is always wise, a perfectly functioning machine. A realistic view that recognizes the body as neither wise nor foolish provides a basis for much more rational therapy for people exposed to toxic substances. Such views may lead to prevention or better treatment of allergies, autoimmune diseases, and perhaps even of cancers.

A rational, informed view of the nature of the human should be a part of everyone's education. The realization that we are neither perfectly made nor totally corrupt should lead to a rejection of naive philosophical and religious notions based on misconceptions or misinterpretations of science. A balanced perspective is invaluable for understanding how our bodies function as physiological entities.

As a frivolous footnote, it might be added that the addition of ethylene glycol to Austrian and Italian wines reported in the summer of 1985 indicates that some people may know that it can add "body" and some sweetness but still don't know about its toxicity; or conversely they may believe that the alcohol in the wine will counter the effects of the glycol.

Notes

[1] Cannon, Walter B., *The Wisdom of the Body,* New York, Norton and Company (1963), originally published in 1932.

[2] Leech, Paul N. *et al.,* "Special Article from the American Medical Association Chemical Laboratory," and other reports. *Journal of the American Medical Association,* 109(2), 1531–1539, 1937.

[3] Wacker, Warren E. C., *et al.,* "Treatment of Ethylene Glycol Poisoning With Ethyl Alcohol," *Journal of the American Medical Association,* 194, 1231–1233, 1965.

[4] Doull, John, *et al., Toxicology,* Second Edition, New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1980.

Evaluating Fitness Programs

Carol C. Christensen

JANE Fonda, Bruce Jenner, Richard Simmons, Debbie Reynolds, and Raquel Welch are among the many celebrities who have written a fitness book and/or produced an exercise video tape. Often such fitness programs are connected with commercial health clubs and spas, such as the Family Fitness Center, 24-hour Nautilus, and Continental Lady Spas. Often, too, these programs promise, as several of their titles state, "Total Fitness in 30 Minutes a Week" and "No Sweat Exercises." And they are part of a billion-dollar a year industry. (Rogers, 1984) In the early 1980's Americans were spending more than $30 billion a year on fitness programs and products; health clubs accounted for $3 billion; and diet/exercise books brought in an estimated $50 million. (Reed, 1981)

Much of this money, however, is wasted, whether on equipment, diet supplements, or participation in exercise regimens, because the measures involved are ineffective. Yet how are consumers to know which programs are good and which pose hazards, which effective and which ineffective, and, most of all, which program is uniquely suited for a particular individual? This article is meant to serve as a guide for those who want a fitness/exercise program that is effective, safe, and appropriate. The author, director of a university employee fitness program since its beginning in 1983, also draws on an academic background in exercise physiology and physical education, as well as on experience as organizer and instructor of courses on physical fitness and exercise physiology.

Consumer Research

When preparing to start an exercise regimen, consumers should evaluate a program in terms of its appropriateness for both their physical

condition and their personal goals. An exercise program designed for an active, healthy 22-year old may not be appropriate or safe for a 44-year-old sedentary worker. If one program appears to be unsatisfactory, another program should be evaluated and yet another, until one is found that is tailored for the needs, abilities, and desires of the person concerned. While time-consuming, such study can prevent serious injury and financial loss and can result in the selection of a sound, efficient, well designed individualized program.

When people decide to increase the amount of exercise they do, they usually intend to "get fit." But what exactly is physical fitness? Although lack of physical activity has been associated with hypokinetic diseases, including coronary heart disease and obesity, fitness is more than the absence of disease. It is a state of well-being in which an individual has "the ability to carry out daily tasks with vigor and alertness, without undue fatigue, and with ample energy to enjoy leisure-time pursuits and to meet the above-average physical stresses encountered in emergency situations." (Marley, 1982, p. 162) In other words, a fit person does not become unduly fatigued from ordinary work effort and is capable of pursuing and enjoying physical leisure-time activities.

The components of physical fitness include cardiovascular efficiency, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. Fitness in all these aspects is desirable, but maintaining cardiovascular fitness and body composition are most important from a health standpoint. (Kuntzleman, 1978) The most important benefits of better-than-average physical fitness are many, including decreases in joint stiffness, body weight and percentage of body fat, risk of coronary heart disease, depression, and anxiety; and increases in cardiovascular efficiency, muscular strength and endurance, self-esteem, and energy for leisure activities. There are, however, some things that exercise will not do. It will not increase an individual's life span nor will it make a person immune to heart disease—or any other disease. Nor will it increase the appetite; in fact, research suggests that people who exercise regularly eat less than their inactive counterparts.

Guidelines

The following questions can serve as a check-list for selecting an exercise program that is right for an individual. If the answer to all the questions is "Yes," then undoubtedly the program is a good one. But a single "No" answer suggests that the program may be unsuitable.

1. Does the program recommend activities that are aerobic in nature?

Aerobic activities are those that are performed using the oxygen or aerobic system for energy production, which means that, while exer-

cising, a person is taking in sufficient oxygen to supply virtually all the energy necessary to perform the activity. Aerobic activities are those that: (a) use large muscles, such as the muscles of the legs; (b) involve dynamic movement as opposed to static exercises where movement is limited; (c) can be performed continuously for at least 15 minutes without resting; and (d) generally are rhythmic in nature. (American College of Sports Medicine [ACSM], 1978) Examples of aerobic activities are walking, jumping rope, stair climbing, swimming, bicycling, jogging/running, and aerobic dance. Examples of non-aerobic activities are volleyball, tennis, and softball.

Some type of aerobic activity should be a part of every exercise program. Kuntzleman (1978) states that aerobic or cardiorespiratory exercise is the "most important component of overall fitness." These activities are essential for promoting cardiovascular health or increasing the efficiency and endurance capacity of the heart and circulatory system. Adequate amounts of regular aerobic exercise can also reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and can help control high blood pressure. (ACSM, 1978) It is important to note, though, that regular aerobic exercise does not provide immunity to the number one cause of death in the United States, coronary heart disease. This point was all too clearly made by the recent and sudden death of Jim Fixx, a noted author on running. The 52-year-old Fixx, who reported usually running 80 miles each week, was found dead after experiencing a heart attack during an afternoon run. In an analysis of the tragedy, Steven Van Camp (1984) suggests that "Fixx's death was not so much a matter of a neurotic attachment to running as it was his refusal to submit himself to periodic medical evaluations." (p. 153) Exercise is not a panacea. Everyone should be aware of the symptoms of heart disease and should seek a medical evaluation when they occur.

Aerobics are the best type of activity for people concerned about weight and/or fat loss. (ACSM, 1983; Cooper, 1982) Because of the relatively long duration and low intensity of aerobic exercise, many calories are utilized in an exercise session, and fat is the primary source of these calories. By contrast, in short duration or intermittent high intensity exercise, such as tennis, basketball, and weight lifting, fewer calories are used and energy is derived primarily from carbohydrates rather than fat. However, those starting an exercise program in anticipation of a weight loss may be disappointed when they step on the scale day after day and see no change in the reading. For example, a person who starts an exercise program to lose weight may be ready to give up after about five weeks of no change in weight. But he or she might notice that his or her clothes fit more loosely since starting to exercise; this person should realize that fat has been lost and muscle mass gained. Fat tissue is less dense than muscle and pound for pound occupies more space; thus,

while body weight may not change, circumference measurements may be reduced. Excessive body fat is associated with medical problems such as coronary heart disease and diabetes, and increased muscle mass is beneficial in reducing risk of injuries and low back pain.

Aerobic exercise also tends to have a beneficial effect on the psyche. It can relieve symptoms of minor anxiety and depression, has been used to reduce stress, and can result in increases in self-confidence and self-esteem. Herbert deVries, a physiologist at the University of Southern California, has completed research that suggests that a 15-minute walk lowers muscular tension levels. (deVries, 1975) The rhythmic and continuous nature of the activity may cause the release of endorphins, often called the body's own tranquilizer, or it may be that the epinephrine and norepinephrine released during exercise act as mood elevators. Although individuals may not be interested in the scientific theory about the cause of the positive change in the psyche, the effect of aerobic exercise is positive because it may relieve stress and provide a sense of well-being and emotional balance.

2. Are the recommended aerobic activities adequate?

Three factors interact to provide adequate aerobic conditioning: frequency of exercise (number of days each week), intensity (usually monitored using heart rate), and duration (time spent exercising during each session). For changes in cardiovascular conditioning and body composition to occur, aerobic activities should be performed for 15 to 60 minutes, three to five days each week, at a heart rate between 60 and 90 per cent of heart rate range. (ACSM, 1978 and 1986) Laboratory evidence supports the above standards, so that a program is suspect if it suggests that fitness can be obtained with less activity. Exercising for fewer than 15 minutes is not optimal for promoting positive changes, while exercising for more than 60 minutes triggers the law of diminishing returns. Therefore, the optimal benefits will be obtained by performing aerobic activities for 15 to 60 minutes. Persons training for competition will work out harder, longer, and more often than suggested by these guidelines, but they desire something more than fitness. Working out more than five days a week is not recommended because it may pose health hazards to the beginner. Chronic fatigue and injuries are most apt to occur when workouts are more frequent than five days a week. On the other hand, exercising fewer than two days a week poses more hazards than not exercising at all.

An example of the hazards than can befall the arm-chair athlete who rarely exercises during the week and does so infrequently on the weekends is seen in the case of the man who decides that, rather than watching his children play touch football, he will join in the fun. After an hour, a pulled muscle in the shoulder and a throbbing ache in one knee bring an

end to his play. He has to seek medical help for his injuries, which cause him to miss two or more days of work. Aged 35 and relatively sedentary, he should have known better.

The body will adapt when exercise is done regularly. Typical adaptations include improved cardiovascular efficiency, increased muscular strength and joint stability, and increased flexibility. If done infrequently, imprudent amounts of exercise will cause soreness and tiredness but no adaptations, so that the soreness and fatigue and perhaps injuries will reoccur with each infrequent exercise session.

3. Are warm-up and cool-down periods included in each session?

Warm-up and cool-down periods are recommended for safety reasons. Cold muscles do not respond to exercise well and they are more apt to be injured than warm muscles. (Jensen, 1977) Therefore, a five minute period of light exercise should precede and follow the aerobic exercise, especially if high intensity exercise is to be performed. The type of activity done in a warm-up period will depend on the type of aerobic activity to be performed. Walking or light calisthenics such as jumping jacks and sit-ups might be sufficient. An individual might want to include some stretching; this should come at the end of the warm-up period. Skills practice, such as shooting baskets, might also be part of a warm-up. In other words, a person should warm-up the muscles that will be used in the activity: leg muscles if running or cycling, arm muscles if swimming, etc.

Cool-down is also important in the prevention of injury. (Zohman, 1981) It allows the body to return gradually to its resting state, which helps remove any metabolic waste products that may have formed and thus helps prevent soreness and stiffness following exercise. In addition, a cool-down period prevents the blood from pooling in the large vessels of the legs and exercised muscles; this blood pooling, especially in hot weather, can be severe enough to cause fainting. Cool-down and warm-up periods are good times to perform stretching exercises, which should be slow and sustained for at least 20 seconds.

4. Are any signs of excess and distress explained? Are you told what to do about them when and if they occur?

The saying "no pain, no gain" is simply not true. Pain is the body's warning system: it tells a person when something is wrong. Anyone who suffers pain during exercise is being given a warning to stop exercise, at least temporarily, before a serious injury occurs. (Zohman, 1981) A local newspaper ran a story several years ago about a runner who was so committed to running that he ignored a severe pain in his achilles tendon. The pain increased, but, fearing that the doctor would tell him to stop running, he ignored it and continued running for distances up to 20 miles a

day. Finally, a heel injury forced the man to a doctor; the diagnosis was a ruptured achilles tendon. Following an operation, in which the tendon was shortened considerably, the man could walk fairly easily but running was impossible. An early visit to a doctor might have changed the ending to this story. Certainly an earlier heeding of the message sent by pain could have begun a range of preventive measures far short of surgery.

If during exercise, a person feels any chest pain, abnormal heart rhythms, or unusual dizziness, she or he should not only stop exercise but should consult a physician before the next session. Further, if one suffers from unusual breathlessness, nausea, excessive sweating, muscle cramps, or shin splints, the imperative is to stop exercising immediately. These conditions may occur when the exercise is of an unusually high intensity, suggesting the remedy of exercising at a lower intensity or pace.

When people's heart rates take an unusually long time to recover—if the rate remains 20 beats above resting for ten or more minutes following an exercise session—the intensity of the next exercise session should be reduced. In one to three weeks, after one has adapted to the lower level of exercise, the intensity of exercise should be slightly increased.

5. Does the program provide a logical and realistic progression?

People just starting an exercise program may see benefits quickly—in three to four weeks—if the program is adequate. However, to continue to increase benefits or show physiological changes, the program must contain some type of progression; this is called progressive overload. Intensity, duration, and/or frequency of the exercise sessions may be changed in the progression; a safe program will change these factors gradually and usually one at a time. Without continued progressive overload, a person will not show improvement, which can be discouraging unless the level of conditioning reached is satisfactory to the person involved.

Each individual should be self-competitive, because people respond to exercise training at differing rates. Physiological change occurs more rapidly in some and more slowly in others, so it is necessary to set goals and progressions individually. Injury or frustration can result from competing with others and attempting an intensity or duration of exercise for which one is not ready.

6. Does the program avoid potentially harmful exercises?

In general, exercise is not hazardous, but some specific exercises may be harmful. (Corbin & Lindsey, 1985) Calisthenic exercises that may be dangerous to persons with prior back problems include straight leg sit-ups, toe touches, straight leg lifts, back hyperextensions, and extreme back flexions. These commonly performed exercises place undue

pressure on the lower back; a back that has been weakened by prior injury cannot withstand such pressure.

Persons with any type of knee problem should avoid deep knee bends or a hurdle sit position; these exercises place severe pressure on the knee joint. Ballistic or bouncing type of stretches should also be avoided; muscles can be stretched beyond a safe limit by bouncing too fast or too hard and muscle injuries may occur. A number of the exercise video tapes use ballistic stretching during the warm-up phase—a hazardous practice. If done at all, ballistic stretches should be done slowly and easily.

People who are overweight may want to avoid weight-bearing activities such as jogging and basketball until they have lost some pounds. In all persons, the joints of the lower body are placed under extreme stress when landing during jogging or from a jump; the joints of persons with excess body weight receive greater stress and can be easily injured. The best activities for overweight persons are those in which their body weight is supported, such as swimming, cycling, and rowing.

7. Does the program recommend a medical check-up (including an exercise electrocardiogram) for persons who are over age 35 and are sedentary, obese, smokers, or have a family history of coronary heart disease or of diabetes?

Most health clubs and spas take participants on the basis of their ability to pay, not their ability to exercise, and do not screen out high risk individuals. Yet persons with any of the above conditions may be at high risk of a heart attack or injury during exercise. Those who have been sedentary for a long period of time should be screened prior to entering an exercise program. (Cooper & Collingwood, 1984) Virtually all exercise video tapes begin with a disclaimer that individuals engaging in the exercises do so at their own risk. The implication is that that particular exercise program is not for everyone. This implication is true.

As noted previously, a high intensity exercise program can be hazardous to persons not accustomed to activity. Problems that may arise include cardiovascular problems (specifically, cardiac arrhythmias, heart attacks, or strokes) and orthopedic problems (injuries to bones, joints, or muscles). While cardiovascular problems during exercise are relatively rare (Thompson, 1982), orthopedic injuries, especially in joggers, are common. (Franklin, Lussier, & Buskirk, 1979; Gottlieb & White, 1980) Some type of screening is essential for older persons. Medical and activity histories will provide useful information and can be used to identify persons who are at high risk during exercise. But such histories are not fail-safe, so persons with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, cigarette smoking, and family history of heart disease should have a medical check-up to ascertain the safety of exercising. If no medical check-up is

sought, these persons should start with a low intensity program such as walking.

8. Does the program recommend taking exercise heart rate to monitor intensity of exercise?

Heart rate (HR) is easy to take and can serve as an indicator of how one's body is responding to exercise. The person should calculate her or his own exercise heart rate and exercise at an intensity that keeps the heart rate at the calculated level. The person needs to slow down if HR is too high and work a bit harder if HR is too low. Monitoring HR will ensure that a person is exercising at high enough intensity to force physiological changes or adaptations and will also help ensure that the workout is not too hard. As a person begins an exercise program, HR should be checked frequently, perhaps each ten minutes or so. After learning to "feel" how hard to work, HR checks can be less frequent. Some experts think that too much emphasis is placed on taking heart rate, but there seems to be no safe replacement.

To calculate the range (highest and lowest) for exercise heart rate (EHR) use the following formula, working it through from left to right:

Exercise heart rate range = maximum EHR minus minimum EHR

minimum EHR = (220 minus age in years) − resting HR × .6 + resting HR

maximum EHR = (220 minus age in years) − resting HR × .9 + resting HR

Calculating a minimum and maximum EHR will give a person the lowest and highest HR that should be achieved during exercise. For example, a 40-year-old individual with a resting heart rate of 75 would have a minimum EHR of 138 and a maximum EHR of 170. When starting an exercise program, HR should be kept near the minimum EHR; this is sufficient to force physiological adaptation, yet low enough to be safe. As fitness level increases, the minimum EHR should be increased; this can be done by multiplying by .7 or .75 instead of .6.

Of course, just as there are no benefits from exercise if people hire a mercenary to do their jogging, the gimmicks of a number of commercial products are worth little in promoting fitness. Americans spend billions of dollars each year on exercise equipment that gathers dust in the garage or is sold at a yard sale so it can sit in someone else's garage. A stationary bicycle is a good investment for a person who lacks time to exercise out-of-doors during daylight hours; however, spending over $100 to buy a heart rate monitor, regardless of how accurate it is, is not necessary. This monitoring can be done easily with a stopwatch and the index finger of one hand.

9. Is a low intensity program recommended for sedentary persons?

At the start of an exercise program, the intensity should be low (60 per cent of work capacity) to moderate (70 per cent of work capacity),

depending on the intensity and activity the individual's job requires. (ACSM, 1986) For people who have sedentary jobs, a low intensity program is recommended. A low intensity beginning program is safer than a high intensity program, in that the former will help prevent cardiac problems and musculoskeletal soreness and injury. As the person's body becomes accustomed to the exercise, however, the intensity of the exercise should be increased. Some persons may need to start with interval or intermittent exercise, such as walk-rest, walk-rest, walk-rest, etc. While such a regimen is not optimal, it helps reduce the risk of injury and can be done until muscles and joints adapt to the exercise stress. People beginning with interval exercise should gradually increase the exercise time and reduce the rest periods until they can perform 15 minutes of continuous exercise.

10. Does the program explain that improvement requires time and effort, rather than promising quick results in return for little effort on the part of the exerciser?

Just like diets that promise quick weight loss with no difficulty, exercise programs that promise fitness with little effort and in a short period of time are not worth much. They cannot deliver one these promises. Improvement of fitness requires time and effort. Individuals should keep in mind that they did not get out of shape overnight and that they cannot, therefore, regain fitness overnight. Following a program of regular exercise—three to five days a week for 15–60 minutes at one's individualized exercise heart rate—will usually produce changes in fitness in three to four weeks. Change cannot occur more quickly. Exercising too much or too often can be hazardous. Many beginners, especially joggers, suffer temporary injuries because they exercise (a) too frequently each week, (b) too long during each session, or (c) at too high an intensity. The body's systems will adapt to regular exercise, but they need time to change.

11. Is the program convenient? Can it be easily followed? Does it suit the purpose for which exercise is sought, whether losing body weight, or increasing cardiovascular fitness, strength, or flexibility?

These questions must be answered affirmatively, a "No" answer to any of these should disqualify the program, which ought to be, first of all, convenient for the person's schedule. Some people enjoy an early morning swim at a local gym, others do not and will only drop out of such a program eventually. For them an evening schedule may be best, for then they do not have to choose between sleeping and exercising. Second, before entering a program, people should examine their goals to answer the question: why start a program? For example, if the aim is to lose weight, aerobics should be chosen over yoga; if increased flexibility is desired, yoga is better than weight training.

12. Does the program seem virtually certain to be enjoyable?

While this is one of the last on the list, it is not the least important guideline. In fact, it may be the most important question, because people must enjoy the programs they sign up for or they will stop going. People start exercise programs for a variety of reasons, such as social interaction, weight loss, increased strength, and improved endurance. They continue in programs they enjoy and drop out of ones they do not enjoy. Fitness can be gained through a variety of activities and programs.

If people tire of an activity or dislike one, they can and should find a new program, for many of the physiological adaptations, such as changes in the cardiovascular system and body composition, can be secured via various activities.

13. Is the program consistent with established knowledge and is the person promoting the program well respected and knowledgeable in the field of physical education and/or exercise physiology?

The only way to improve one's fitness level is to exercise regularly for the specified time and intensity suggested above. Any program is suspect that claims fitness gains with small effort for only a few minutes a day. The science of exercise physiology has demonstrated that fitness will not result from meager effort at irregular and short intervals. (ACSM, 1978 and 1986) Directors of exercise programs ought to be aware of new developments in this field and should be able to explain the physiological bases of the expected outcomes of their program. If no one connected with the program can explain its physiological bases, it probably cannot deliver fitness as promised. Information on these matters can be obtained from professionals at the YWCA, YMCA, or any university's physical education or human performance department.

Before starting in a program, consumers should ask about the credentials of those offering it. Certainly if the program is not consistent with established knowledge, the ability and knowledge of the person conducting the program or class require further evaluation. Exercise leaders do not need a formal education in exercise physiology and kinesiology or biomechanics, but they must have the knowledge about fitness and the physiological responses to exercise. Professional organizations like the ACSM, National Strength and Conditioning Association, and Aerobics and Fitness Association of America offer certification seminars and examinations for persons who want to lead exercise classes. Selected universities also offer professional certification programs in exercise leadership and health management. Participants learn the essentials of exercise physiology, exercise leadership, nutrition, and relaxation; those who successfully complete the course of study receive certification. If the exercise leader has a record of attendance at such programs, almost regardless of the certifying agency, the consumer then has

some assurance that the leader has at least a basic knowledge of the scientific aspects of fitness activities.

Even though having an expert or health professional write the program or book is not a guarantee that it is a good program, the chances are better if the leader or writer has been trained in the field of fitness. L. E. Morehouse, an exercise physiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, generated great controversy when he co-authored *Total Fitness in 30-Minutes a Week.* Many negative letters about this book were published and later rebutted by Morehouse in the professional journal of the American College of Sports Medicine. His thesis was, and still is, contrary to current scientific knowledge in the field. Despite this example, however, most books by experts are more accurate, although they sell less well, than books by celebrities because of the interplay between the marketing efforts of publishers and the sales appeal of the celebrity's name. (Rogers, 1984) Because, as Rogers suggests, getting a reliable fitness book is difficult, in that stores carry only the highly publicized but less useful books, a list of recommended books follows to aid readers who wish to contact publishers or book services.

Books on Fitness

These books are among those with which the author is familiar, but it is by no means a complete listing of all the fitness books on the market.

For accurate, easily assimilated information, these are *recommended:*

B. Anderson. *Stretching.* Bolinas, CA: Shelter Publications, 1980.

K. Cooper. *The Aerobics Program for Total Well-being.* New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

K. Cooper. *Aerobics.* New York: M. Evans and Co., Inc., 1978.

M. Cooper and K. Cooper. *Aerobics for Women.* New York: M. Evans and Co., Inc., 1978.

J. Fixx. *The Complete Book of Running.* New York: Random House, 1977.

B. Getchell. *Physical Fitness: A Way of Life.* New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983.

K. Sprague. *The Gold's Gym Book of Strength Training for Athletes.* Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1979.

M. H. Williams. *Nutrition for Fitness and Sport.* Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, Company Publishers, 1983.

L. R. Zohman. *Beyond Diet: Exercise Your Way to Fitness and Heart Health.* Englewood Cliffs: Best Foods, CPC International Inc., 1981.

For an informative and interesting article on books by experts and "so-called experts" see "Books by Exercise Experts: Why Aren't They Working Out?" by Cindy Rogers, *The Physician and Sportsmedicine,* March 1984, 143–150.

The following books are *not recommended* because they either make

claims for fitness and exercise that are not supported by research data or suggest exercises that may be hazardous. Furthermore, in simplifying technical research information for the public, the authors of these books have often presented inaccurate information.

C. Bailey. *Fit or Fat.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977.

A. Dugan. *No Sweat Exercise Program.* New York: Beekam House, 1980.

J. Fonda. *Jane Fonda's Workout Book.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981.

L. E. Morehouse and L. Gross. *Total Fitness in 30 Minutes a Week.* New York: Pocket Books, 1976.

J. Percival, et. al. *The Complete Guide to Total Fitness.* Ontario: Prentice Hall of Canada, 1977.

Conclusion

It is crucial to exercise regularly at an appropriate exercise heart rate. By putting the above series of questions to any sponsor of an exercise program, people seeking to change from a sedentary to a more active life or from one exercise program to another will be helped to find a way to fitness that will be both safe and effective.

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Kuntzleman, C. T. (Ed.) (1978). *Rating the Exercises.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
Marley, W. P. (1982). *Health and Physical Fitness: Taking Charge of Your Health.* Philadelphia: Saunders College Publishing.
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Vitamin A and Cancer: Another Lost Hope?

Paul M. Gahlinger

The possibility that certain diets lessen the risk of cancer is attracting considerable attention. Of the proposed anticarcinogenic nutritional factors, vitamin A has received the most current interest and engendered the greatest hope for use in therapy. It is not new to find expectations of protective influence from dietary constituents if taken in more than traditionally adequate amounts. Similar claims have been made for fiber, vitamin C, vitamin E, and selenium; and other compounds in food—such as glutathione, purines, and phenols—present antioxidant activity and therefore anticarcinogenic potential.[1] What is new about the focus on vitamin A is that it is based on far greater evidence, including epidemiologic studies of human populations as well as laboratory studies. Yet vitamin A research faces many of the same problems that beset earlier studies of the role of nutrition in cancer.

A review of the literature reveals a guarded enthusiasm in initial reports, followed by acknowledged contradictions in subsequent investigations, and finally, in the most recent studies, giving way to skepticism. Following an extensive review of diet and cancer research, Walter Willet of the Harvard Medical School recently concluded, "There is no basis now for supposing that vitamin A protects against human cancer and there is almost zero evidence to justify taking vitamin A."[2] In this paper, I will discuss the major published scientific investigations of vitamin A as a cancer-protective nutrient and argue that methodological problems in these studies invalidate many of the stated or implied conclusions about their results.

"Cancer," in the popular sense, is used as a broad term to indicate the 130 or so varieties of neoplasia—tissue composed of "new" cells which no longer carry out their original function and multiply in a life-threatening and haphazard fashion. Because different types of cancer

affect different age, sex, occupational, and ethnic groups and appear to be associated with different environmental exposures, these types are often considered to be distinctive diseases. Vitamin A researchers have considered a wide range of cancers in their studies, with the type not always specified.

Nutrition and Neoplasia

Awareness of the marked geographical differences in the incidence of various types of cancer long ago prompted interest in the possible role of diet in the risk of these cancers. Despite the unpromising and generally inconclusive results of early studies examining the association of cancer with individual dietary components,[3,4] interest has continued and drawn increasing support from the major cancer research institutes. To a large degree, this trend is due to improvements in the sensitivity and specificity of nutritional status assessment, in particular the recently developed methods of rapid quantification of trace nutrients in the body, with a level of precision scarcely imaginable a decade or two earlier. A second, perhaps more portentous, reason for the persistence of efforts to establish links between diet and cancer is the widely perceived failure of cancer research programs to identify the principal attributable risks of cancer.[5] After established risk factors, essentially toxic chemical and radiation exposures, have been accounted for, the focus of attention returns to the unexplained majority of cancer cases. These cases do not appear to share any particular characteristics, yet there is a marked disparity in cancer incidence observed in different populations.

How do age, ethnic, and geographic groups differ? Dietary behavior appears to be an obvious possible agent. In particular, potentially toxic food components are suspect as cancer-promoting agents. Even if neoplasia is an ultimately inevitable process, as many researchers believe, the quest becomes one of a search for *protective* factors that will explain this disparity; again, dietary components are the most likely candidates for the relative freedom from cancer found in some populations.

Much less attention has been given to possible cancer-causing properties of foods in comparison to this potential in other chemicals and materials. Yet, Ames has suggested that some naturally occurring compounds in foods have far greater carcinogenic effect than do the identified carcinogenic synthetic compounds. Most of these toxic compounds are common in foods and are eaten both as purposely selected and as inadvertent constituents of the diet. For example, some apparently carcinogenic spices, such as black pepper or sassafras, are intentionally added to food, while mold containing aflatoxin, which ranks with the most toxic of the synthetic carcinogens, is common on peanuts and may

account for the extremely high prevalence of liver cancer among West Africans for whom this food is a staple.

On the other hand, Ames also points out that foods contain a plethora of anticarcinogenic properties, many of which have shown an ability to prevent the neoplastic process in laboratory cell cultures that is superior to synthetic compounds devised for this purpose. An avoidance of dietary carcinogens and increased intake of foods or food supplements containing anticarcinogens therefore would provide a prudent means of cancer risk reduction.

Doll and Peto[6] have estimated the proportion of U.S. cancers attributable to diet at 35 per cent, with a range of 10 to 70 per cent, suggesting that dietary measures alone would have a tremendous impact on cancer incidence.

The turning of attention to diet and nutrition in cancer research seems appropriate, therefore, and appears to be justified by the initial results of studies undertaken. There is a further reason for this research. If foods have both cancer-causing and cancer-protective compounds, then the identification of anticancer substances that may be prescribed is certainly a much more attractive proposition than the identification of a long list of possibly carcinogenic foods which must be avoided.[7] Of these protective substances, vitamin A appears to be the most promising candidate.

Vitamin A, Retinol, and the Carotenoids

Knowledge of the value of certain foods in preventing night blindness and skin disorders has existed since ancient times and was recorded in the Ebers papyrus of Egypt. In 1913, the essential substance was identified and termed "Fat Soluble A," to be differentiated from other necessary nutrients termed "Water Soluble B."[8] A few years later these, together with ascorbic acid, cholecalciferol, and others, were termed "vitamins."

The class of compounds now referred to as vitamin A includes two groups of dietary factors, "preformed vitamin A," which is found in fish, meats, eggs, and dairy products, and "provitamin A," which includes a number of plant pigments, or carotenoids, and for that reason is found in dark green, yellow, and red vegetables. (It is this pigment that is responsible for the colorful autumn foliage in trees, revealed when the green chlorophyll production has ceased.)

In the body, preformed vitamin A is efficiently converted to retinol, the active form of the vitamin. The various types of provitamin A have a much lower retinol conversion. About 30 of the more than 400 different carotenoids have some provitamin A activity.[9] And all forms exist in *cis-trans* isomers, with the *cis* form of lower biopotency.[10] Cancer research

efforts have generally considered only the most active of these: all-*trans* b-carotene. Absorption is hindered by low fat intake and is most effective when accompanied by short-chain fatty acids. Once absorbed, vitamin A, or retinol, is transported to the liver and stored with a well regulated amount released into circulation coupled with retinol binding protein (RBP). Plasma retinol values are independent of intake, or liver stores which may last for a year before exhaustion.[11] A study to determine the effect of dietary intake revealed no change in plasma retinol with a high intake of vitamin A or carotenoids, though plasma carotene levels were tripled with a b-carotene supplement.[12] Plasma retinol values appear to be influenced by hormonal levels and are elevated with pregnancy, oral contraceptive use, and diseases of the kidney, thyroid and pancreas,[7] while values tend to be lower with other diseases.[13]

Although loss of visual dark adaptation is among the first symptoms of deficiency, the major biological activity of vitamin A appears to involve the maintenance of epithelial tissue, particularly in the regulation of cellular regeneration.[14] It is abnormalities in this process that are believed to be responsible for the development of cancer. The anticarcinogenic effects of vitamin A have been demonstrated *in vitro*[15] in laboratory cell cultures, and by *in vivo* studies of live experimental animals.[16,17] Other studies have indicated an enhancement of the immune response,[18] as well as inhibition of free-radical-induced and singlet oxygen-induced lipid peroxidation,[19] both of which are widely assumed to initiate the cancer process. In rats, retinoids appear to be potent controlling agents of cellular differentiation and cellular proliferation.[20,21] More recently, this claim has been made for carotenes as well.[22] On a biochemical level, therefore, there is sufficient indication that both vitamin A and carotenoids may have anticarcinogenic properties.

Epidemiologic Studies

Laboratory studies serve to delineate the biochemical mechanism of a cause of a disease, leading to an understanding of the points of intervention in the disease process. In order to demonstrate that a hypothetical cause is indeed responsible for the disease, however, it is necessary to carry out studies in actual populations in which the disease occurs. These epidemiologic studies employ statistical analyses to determine the likelihood that a given disease has resulted from a specific kind of experience, behavior, or other characteristic, generally termed "exposure."

Of the various research designs employed, the most common fall under one of two basic study types. "Case-control" studies are those in which persons with the disease (cases) are compared with otherwise similar persons without the disease (controls) to identify other differences linked to their disease status. These tend to be "retrospective,"

beginning with knowledge of the person's condition and then proceeding to investigate earlier exposures. "Cohort" studies are those in which a group of individuals with known characteristics is followed through time to determine when disease occurs and with which exposure it is associated. These are usually "prospective," beginning with knowledge of exposures and proceeding to record subsequent disease as it occurs among those with and without the exposure of interest.

Case-control studies are relatively undemanding of time or expense and are particularly suited to rare diseases. For these reasons, they tend to be the first choice in the investigation of the cause of a disease. Using existing data from an earlier program, researchers at a major U.S. cancer treatment center showed that cancer was associated with a diet low in vitamin A.[23] In that program, all patients admitted to the Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo, New York, from 1957 to 1965, completed an extensive questionnaire and dietary interview. After smoking, previous occupation, age, and other risk factors were taken into account, a higher risk of cancer of the bladder, esophagus, and larynx was evident in those whose diets were low in vitamin A contained in foods such as milk and carrots. A further association was found with cruciferous vegetables (cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts, turnips, parsnips, and cauliflower), but without the dose-response relationship expected if the relationship were causal. Although these vegetables contain considerable provitamin A, they are also known to contain substances with possible anticarcinogenic effects. In another study, the dietary history of 120 black men in Washington, D.C., who died of esophageal cancer was compared with that of 250 randomly selected controls who died of other causes.[24] Again, the direction of the relative risks indicated that vitamin A intake was negatively associated with cancer, but the values were weak and inconsistent. People who developed cancer not only ate fewer carotene containing vegetables but more nitrite containing bacon, frankfurters, lunch meats, and canned meats, than did controls. This exposure to nitrites and the possible ensuing formation of N-nitroso compounds may have increased cancer risk more than the relative lack of vitamin A.

Other studies comparing cancer with reported diets in Hawaii, Israel, France, Iran, India, and Singapore[25] have found variable associations: generally slightly higher cancer risks correlated with a diet poor in green leafy vegetables, but only for some types of cancer and with many complicating characteristics. In the U.S., very small differences were found with breast cancer[26] and lung cancer,[27] and in Hawaii, the difference held up only for males.[28] Using a different approach, researchers in the U.S. conducted interviews or mailed questionnaires to the next of kin of persons who died of stomach cancer in rural Pennsylvania in 1978 and 1979. They carried out the same procedure to obtain dietary information about persons of the same age, sex, race, and county of residence, who died of

arteriosclerotic heart disease in the same year as the cancer case. They found that the persons who died of cancer were 70 per cent more likely to have a low vitamin A intake.[29]

While these studies showed some inconsistency in their reports of the benefits of vitamin A intake, they did provide enough evidence to justify the undertaking of prospective, cohort studies that are the hallmark of epidemiologic investigation. In 1967, an extensive dietary questionnaire was mailed to adult men in Norway. Among the 8,278 who replied, there were 36 cases of lung cancer in the following five years. Analysis revealed that persons who had reported a low vitamin A intake were three times as likely to get lung cancer, after other variables were taken into account.[30]

A ten-year follow-up analysis of this group, however, found a smaller relative risk, and for only the very low intake group compared to the very high intake group.[31] During the same time period, an extensive dietary questionnaire was distributed in an administrative district of Japan, with 265,118 completed. In the course of the following decade, 807 males and females died of lung cancer. Questionnaire respondents of lower calculated vitamin A intakes were about 50% more likely to get lung cancer.[32]

Interest in the results of these follow-up studies also prompted a re-examination of earlier data from other research. In 1957 and again in 1958, 2,107 randomly selected male employees age 40–55, of the Western Electric plant in Chicago, were interviewed to determine their dietary patterns over a 28-day period. Nineteen years later, the vital status of these men was obtained and death certificates for those who had died. A lower risk of lung cancer was found with provitamin A though not with vitamin A.[33]

In the last few years, a novel method has been used of obtaining the benefits of a prospective study without the usual time and cost.[34] Blood samples are routinely drawn for most diseases. Occasionally, the serum portion is frozen and stored, providing an excellent data base for future studies. In Evans County, Georgia, a community cardiovascular research program collected blood samples of 92 per cent of the eligible adult population from 1960 to 1962. The 3,102 blood samples were analyzed for the study purposes and the remaining sera were stored. Serum vitamin A (retinol) levels were measured in 1976. Vitamin A values for the 85 persons who developed cancer in the intervening period were significantly lower than those of controls.[35]

More recent studies of frozen sera have produced inconsistent results. A determination of serum retinol, RBP, and carotenoids, was done on sera from 111 participants in a hypertension study of 1973 who subsequently developed cancer, with matched controls taken from the other 10,829 participants. Mean values were similar for cases and controls from all three vitamin A indicators.[36] In an analogous study in England of about

16,000 men whose blood was taken in the course of a medical examination between 1975 and 1978, cancer was associated for only the very lowest retinol values when compared with the very highest.[37] A study of serum retinol levels in Germany found no association between these levels and the risk of lung cancer.[38] Finally, a subsequent secondary analysis of the Evans County data failed to confirm the original results.[39]

The reluctant summary conclusion of this spate of epidemiologic studies is that a poor or negligible association has been found in most attempts to link vitamin A intake or nutritional status with the risk of cancer. Yet *in vitro* and experimental animal studies suggest that vitamin A has anticarcinogenic effects. Such a situation warrants a critical analysis of the epidemiologic methodology that has been employed in order to assess whether the hypothesis has truly been tested. A review of the studies cited reveals three major methodological problems.

Inadequate Methods, Inconclusive Results

Nutritional epidemiologic studies are among the most complex to design and carry out. The basic difficulties involve the need for an accurate determination of which foods were eaten, the ability to isolate the influence of the food component of interest, and the determination of the precise amount of this food component that is biologically active in the body.

With a disease such as cancer, for which the onset may be very gradual, dietary questionnaires must determine food intake over a duration of a decade or more while being specific enough to include hundreds of foods and supplements that contain different amounts of a nutrient such as vitamin A. Problems of recall suggest that data collected from such surveys may be of questionable accuracy, therefore, and of limited use in determining risk.

The second major difficulty with research involving the tabulation of vitamin A containing foods is the displacement effect of these foods. If a person consumes large quantities of carotene containing foods, other more "carcinogenic" foods will likely be less frequently consumed. It is difficult to isolate a single food group and add or subtract it from the diet without affecting the rest of the diet. For example, persons with a diet high in grains and vegetables, known to contain many healthful nutrients, will likely consume less saturated fat, which has been implicated in the risk of cancer. In the laboratory settings it is possible to isolate these foods to determine their influence, but in observations of human populations this influence is much more speculative.

Finally, the principal difficulty of any study of nutrition and disease interaction involves the determination of nutritional status—the precise

assessment of how much of a nutrient, such as a particular vitamin, enters the body and is biologically available for utilization. In practice, this problem is reduced to a number of secondary problems:

(a) A determination of the amount ingested of the nutrient, either as a component of the diet or as a supplement. Since foods equivalent in bulk and weight vary as much as ten-fold in their nutrient composition, because of soil type, harvesting, storage, preparation, and cooking and because different amounts are eaten by individuals at a sitting, the estimated amount ingested is at best imprecise.[40]

(b) The amount available for absorption in the body. The combination of foods in a meal affects the absorbability of the constituent nutrients. As noted earlier, vitamin A absorption in the intestine is affected by many factors.

(c) The amount actually absorbed. The absorption process takes place in the intestinal mucosal wall and involves a complex reaction of hormones and locally produced enzymes, with varying efficiency and a number of different outcomes, all dependent on other physiological conditions.

(d) The bioavailability of the absorbed portion. Once absorbed, the nutrient must become "available" for use by the cells of the body. This process normally involves some transformation of the nutrient—vitamin A is largely changed to retinol—and coupling with a carrier protein or other molecule for transportation to the storage or utilization site. A percentage of retinol is bound to RBP, which therefore serves as an indicator of blood vitamin A levels.

(e) The bioactivity of the absorbed portion. Once vitamin A is made available for use by the cells of the body, additional biochemical processes determine the efficiency with which this use may take place. This depends on the form of the retinol, whether *cis* or *trans*, and on the presence of the necessary enzymes.

(f) The requirements of the particular person. Given a specific amount of a nutrient ingested, absorbed, available, and active, the nutritional *status* of a person still depends on the satisfaction of that person's requirement for the nutrient. Requirements vary, among individuals and in the same individual from time to time. Some people will suffer night blindness earlier than others given identical limited amounts of active vitamin A.

A survey of the epidemiologic literature regarding vitamin A and cancer suggests too little concern with these issues. Dietary intake, as reported by these studies, is considered prima facie evidence of vitamin A intake, once nutritional composition tables are consulted, despite the numerous intervening variables mentioned above. Assuming that the variation in intake is balanced out in large sample studies, variation in the absorbed moiety of the ingested amount provides an additional problem.

None of the cited studies has reported estimates of this absorbed portion based on dietary component interaction or health status, nor the relative absorption of *cis* and *trans* forms. As studies are now carried out, dietary surveys have little value in indicating the vitamin A status of an individual.

Serum retinol or RBP values, as indicated earlier, are unassociated with vitamin A intake of any form and consequently are of virtually no use in determining vitamin A stores or intake. Since 90 per cent of vitamin A in the body is stored in the liver, and blood levels are held relatively constant until these stores are drastically depleted, the examination of these blood levels is of little use in the assessment of body stores in the general population and also gives no indication of the bioactivity of the vitamin. These values appear to have little utility in epidemiologic studies other than to attempt to create an impression of methodological exactitude. Plasma carotene values are of some interest but should not be relied upon for intake values, since the absorbed carotene fraction varies.

In summary, epidemiologic studies have not satisfactorily measured vitamin A intake or nutritional status and therefore have provided only limited and questionable data to test for an association between vitamin A nutriture and the risk of cancer. However, the evidence that does survive critical scrutiny tends to be positive, which is an indication that the lack of consistent results may be due to methodological shortcomings rather than untenable theory.

Conclusion

The major difficulties in design of an appropriate epidemiologic study of a possible association of vitamin A and cancer are the problematic determination of vitamin A status, the long incubation period of most cancers, and the relatively rare incidence of cancer. While the hypothesis, and hope, that vitamin A is to some extent protective against cancer is both intuitively plausible and suggested by laboratory research, epidemiologic studies have failed to provide convincing evidence that this is so. I have argued that this failure may be due to inappropriate and inadequate methods.

A major effort is currently under way to address this problem. The Physician's Health Study was inaugurated in 1983 as the largest, most precise, rigorous, and—at a cost of tens of millions of dollars—most expensive study ever carried out on the question. Twenty-two thousand male physicians in the U.S., aged 40–75 years, will be given a variety of vitamin A or placebo supplements and followed over a number of years to determine their incidence of cancer.[41] This study has been designed to avoid most of the methodologic flaws of earlier research and will probably serve as the definitive evidence for or against the hypothesis.

Meanwhile, the tide of enthusiasm is already turning away from vitamin A as a chemopreventive agent. The large number of studies that fail to confirm reported associations and the critical re-examination of earlier study data and results have promoted a general skepticism with the entire hypothesis. If the Physician's Health Study does not provide persuasive positive results, vitamin A as an anticancer nutrient may well prove to be another lost hope.

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