

PRISM

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Grass

by Jack Cady

"A Child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands; How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

"I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven . . ."

And Walt Whitman also guesses the grass is a handkerchief of the Lord, or the grass is itself a child; it is a uniform hieroglyphic, and the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

What is the grass, that it can, like the natural force of sea and mountain range and tree, induce such meaning?

Chemical companies claim grass as one of the weedy pests controlled by use of their fine products. The claim is roughly equivalent to those small signs in cemeteries reading 'perpetual care' for perpetual is a fraudulent long time.

Seed companies furnish catalogs and instructions and balanced seed mixes which grow at least as well as unbalanced and uninstructed mixes.

In eastern Washington, Montana, and Wyoming grass means fat cattle and deer.

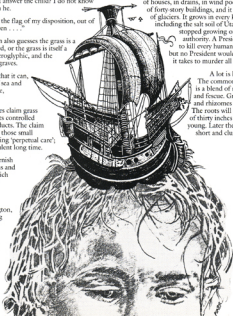
What is the grass?

It grows in lawns and the crevices of buildings, in gutters, sidewalks, parking lots, on perpetually cared-for graves, and in national forests. It grows in public parks and from cracks in creosoted utility poles. Grass grows in garbage dumps and in wrecked cars. It grows on the roofs of houses, in drains, in wind pockets on the top of forty-story buildings, and it follows the retreat of glaciers. It grows in every known kind of soil, including the salt soil of Utah; and it has never stopped growing on the order of authority. A President may threaten to kill every human in the world, but no President would have the nerve it takes to murder all the grass.

A lot is known about grass.

The common lawn variety is a blend of rye, Kentucky blue and fescue. Grass has blades and rhizomes and roots. The roots will delve to a depth of thirty inches when the grass is young. Later the roots get thicker, short and clumpy.

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T hrough The Prism

This spring issue completes Volume I of *Prism*. As in the inaugural issue, it offers a spectrum of faculty writing, illustrative of the scholarly, pedagogical, and imaginative interests found within the Division of Humanities. Although diverse in content, the articles share an intention to foster new ways of examining the world.

Philosopher Paul Menzel explores some of the moral choices generated by modern medical technology. The approaches he suggests may at first seem disconcerting, but his insistence that individuals routinely assign values to a range of quality of life matters forces us to rethink typical American assumptions about health care at any price. Writer Jack Cady draws upon the medium of the prose poem to elicit another sort of reexamination. A reading of Walt Whitman's classic, *Leaves of Grass* (1855), spawns a rumination on this sturdy and splendid plant. Not only do we pause to consider grass anew—at a time of year when lawn mowing reenters our routine—but we also encounter serious commentary on the relationship between human beings and nature. The shorter pieces that round out the issue report on several intriguing features of our cultural past: the Victorian toy theater; the political poetry of Ronsard; the creative language of Saul Bellow; and international students at PLU.

Reexamination marks the professional stance of the humanities just as it marks humanities scholarship. As a result of the recent attention given to the teaching profession, we are starting to see ourselves in a new light. Common practice has been for teachers at various levels—elementary, middle school, high school, and college—to work independently of each other. Now that approach has changed. The emerging focus is on ways and means of teacher collaboration.

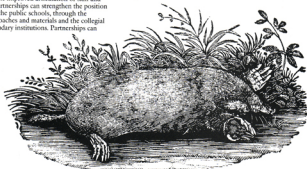
Within the Division of Humanities we are convinced that a partnership with public school teachers will enable us better to carry out our mission as college educators. Partnerships can smooth the transition from high school to college, through the improved articulation of skill and content standards. Partnerships can strengthen the position of the humanities in the public schools, through the infusion of new approaches and materials and the collegial support of post-secondary institutions. Partnerships can

result in enhanced undergraduate programs in teacher education. And they can provide us at Pacific Lutheran University with some of our most challenging teaching assignments.

Two years ago a grant from the U.S. Department of Education enabled the Department of Languages to mount a series of highly successful in-service workshops for foreign language teachers. Concurrently the departments of Philosophy and English began experimenting with summer workshops for teachers. Most recently, faculty members in the division have been meeting with local teachers to discuss ways and means of collaboration and to plan future activities. Humanities courses for teachers have since become an important part of our summer school curriculum; special mention may be made of the "Teaching Critical Thinking through Philosophy for Children" course, the "Advanced Placement Institute in English," and the "French Teacher Institute in Nantes." Teachers have been invited to bring their classes to campus for our monthly humanities film series and for special activities during foreign language week.

We hope to see develop a network of humanities teachers meeting regularly at PLU to discuss common concerns. With outside funding, more elaborate cooperative ventures may be realized. Please write if you have program ideas to share or wish to join our teacher partnership. ■

Janet E. Rasmussen
Dean



Grass is a leading producer of oxygen and chlorophyll. It leaves green stains on sidewalks when crunched underfoot. Grass may be woven into belts and baskets and welcome mats. It outlasts all plastic imitations, and will grow in the cracks of astro turf. When brown it is dormant, and not until gray is it dead. A bit of water will medicate the most ailing grass.

Banks do not like lawns, for bankers are not economically curious, desire no high maintenance plantings. You find as much grass around a bank as you find poetry; for T.S. Eliot and Charles Lamb aside, poets rarely frequent such places.

If a child said to me, What is the grass, fetching it with full hands, I should not be so wise as Walt Whitman. It is my nature to explain things. Whitman allows things to explain themselves. Thus is Whitman a poet, and I simple explainer:

Child, before there were people there was grass,
Before there were elephants, even, there was grass. I will
not frighten you Child (I would say to myself) but long
after the elephants and people are dust there will be grass.
Child, I would say, this is a serious matter and I have
thought about it. Let's pretend this is a bedtime story for
though you sleep it will not hurt the story, and there may
be some good dreams here. Settle in and I will tell of grass,
of people who once were, and who you may know; and say
things never to be understood by some people you don't
know. At least, I hope you do not know them.

Let's hush,
and we can hear the sounds behind the myths,
Lights down, America,
Token sophistication, self conscious, bailing whom
we please,
Let's roll some echoes past,
And pull the phallic keys from auto locks,
Sputter away the high compression, imitation horses,
And listen, listen, listen,
A few faint hoofbeats ride the wind,
This wind that speaks of grass.
And grocery carts may cease their ceaselessness of
banging,
Amid preservatives and terminatives,
While tired men and tired ladies
May shush tired children now
And quell the t.v.
Off Blender, off Sweeper, off Washer and Mixer,
Let alarming silence descend.
While we,
Adroit with tokes and easy jokes of grass,
Attend this common miracle.

Over the hills coming, like the timid opening
notes of a jr. high schooler's flute, light arrives on the fat
under of cloud, the beneathness of mist, as shadows of
animals hover in the hills. Cattle, deer, horses, antelope.
Heads rise, sniff the stir of morning and a butte hangs
silhouetted in the dawn like rock hewn by a cleaver of the
Gods.

Sounds beyond the myths arrive, and some are now
and some were then; across spring-washed grasslands of
Germany, Russia, China, Africa, or here in the short grass
prairie west where sounds the thump of rabbit, the cry of
red tailed hawk, the small movement of mice. Where
sounds the distant curse from me, hushed before the
power of dawn, or maybe the fact of broken harness.
Antique whispers spread above this miracle of grass where
once flew arrows and white ambitions (We'll build our
cabin here. We'll face it west. We'll not look back.)

This hallowed land, this land of rock, desert and rivers
thin enough to scoop with your hat. This land of crashing
glacial streams, rodents, fish and sky and interminable
winter cold. Of snow, tail-deep to the tallest elk. Of bear.
Of rattlesnake.

Oh, land, oh, land.

And the whirr of grasshopper, the snort from drafty
barns, the high-breathing work of whores and politicians;
and the hard whistle of wind in cracks of houses, barns,
across schoolyards, in hollows where hide wintering beasts
and reptiles. This scuffed land, hammer- and anvil-clouted,
spear-pointed, ancient.

A land, like all lands, that is a song of the grass, that
lives because of the grass, and the echoes trace here, as
everywhere, from nation to nation, calling back and forth
so that how much of what is now, really *u* now, no one can
tell - although poets sing from all nations - from Montana
to Africa; and here follows one song:

"There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the
hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are
lovely beyond any singing of it . . .

"The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil.
It holds the rain and the mist, and they seep into the
ground, feeding the streams in every kloof. It is well-
tended, and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many
fires burn it, laying bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for
the ground is holy, being even as it came from the creator.
Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men,
cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed."

Child, you are a child of this grass though you be of
father and mother born and though you live in Gary,
Indiana. Of this grass you are made.

This particular segment is called short-grass prairie. It
was first seen by the ancestry of your nation in 1804 when
explorers made their way in, followed by a few trappers,
followed by traders. Already this land was a legend on the
comfortable eastern seacoast. Before that it held legends at
least twelve thousand years, for life and men and grass are
long native.

Hear the sound of the wind in the grass. It is a swish, a shush, a furry mouth, a hiss. It is a tell-tale, a rumor that is vast, a murmur, a haurt, breathing and spinning seed. It is a dervish and it is fertile, pollenating, a pulse of life. It is a religion, a philosophy, a hunger. The mind rushes here, and antique voices ride on this low wind. The grass bends and whispers remembered names, names like Ephraim and Rueben and Faith. It whispers your name, Child, your name.

Strange things appear. Camleopards and elves are native to grass, but here are whitetail deer, creatures no less strange. It is all one and it is everything. There are big cats roaring, following the followers of grass.

What is that voice? Where?

Echoes chase back and forth, they tax each other. Beasts are pierced, by stone-tipped spear, by arrow, by 30-30 Winchester. Campfires and cooking fires and lodges warmed against the great whiteness of winter. Presto logs and buffalo chips. Not all bones are comfortably buried. They rise in the spring wash, thigh bones and skulls, prairie dogs and men.

In a fallow year the rains dwindle, hold off, overhead ride on puffs of cloud. The grass fades like dynasties, falters and stops like a species swept away by an evolutionary broom. Life changes, pants harder, ends quick. There is less cover. Rabbits and mice are as helpless and exposed as statesmen. Life struggles, chokes, soaks. The grass seeds faster, the processes reacting, automatic, casting seed into the wind. The seed bakes, is hidden in the thick mat, is foraged in its billions. In low spots there is a taste, a touch, a breath of moisture and the seed germinates, red to red-green, to death on the promise, the illusion of water. All is dormant, and when fires sweep the prairie, seed lies buried in the ash. Though it were not one, but seven lean years, the seed would still be there. Child, we have turned irrigation onto deserts that have lain dead through recorded history and the deserts came alive with grass.

When the rains come, rolling and sucking in from the western mountains, the land is lush. The moving miles are like an anthem. Wind passes over the miles making currents, eddies, waves as in an ocean. You could use a sextant here to navigate you home, but you already are home, waist-deep and mind-deep in grass. For here is life, life written in green and gold and water.

Life says, "Yes," and we answer, "Yes."

And the echoes answer, "Yes, yes, for that is what we were about, and maybe we didn't do it all wrong . . ."
And the echoes never die.

They are all around us, talking of now, and then, and what has been or will be. The press of life. Multiplicity.

Of error, and sometimes, almost vanishing and only felt, like the remembered sense of revelation from a dream, there is a hint, an echo of success.

"We raised five kids. They turned out good."

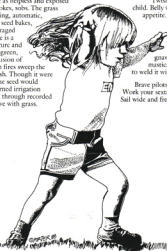
"Grandpa waited thirty years to build. Wouldn't drive a nail 'til he could clench her. Place been standing since 1910, and it's weathered pretty well."

"Sunny day like this. I like to see it when the irrigation shoots water way out into the wind like that."

I wish you sharp teeth and good hunger,
child. Belly wrench growl hunger. I wish you
appetite. Feast on meat, grain, life,
all given by the grass.

And the hunger of the lean
mind, eager, restless; chomping
idea and dream and vision,
gnawing at history,
masticating the future
to weld it with the spit of your vision.

Brave pilots have always sailed here, child.
Work your sextant, your sails.
Sail wide and free on this whispering sea of grass. ■





Strong Medicine

by Paul T. Menzel

Recently the Oregon legislature decided that the state's Medicaid program would no longer cover heart, liver, bone marrow, and pancreas transplants. Averaging over \$150,000 each for a projected 30 recipients, these expensive remedies were deemed unaffordable—unaffordable, at least, compared to the prenatal care of over 1500 women funded in the transplants' place.

One Oregon citizen tragically waiting for one of those transplants was a 36-year-old single mother in liver failure. Her 14-year-old son attended the hearings. He heard the lofty ideals cited in favor of the prenatal program and the denials that anyone here was "playing God"—they were only doing what had to be done for the public good. To him, however, the legislators must have seemed like God.

Interestingly, the president of the State Senate who led the fight to defend the expensive procedures was a practicing physician. "If we pay for transplants now," he said, "we will put a very small Bandaid on a very large iceberg" of people without care. His opponents called him "Doctor Death" and bitterly rejected "this abstract discussion" about saving more lives another way. But the state administrator who initially proposed cutting transplant funding and enhancing prenatal care is hardly insensitive; on her desk she keeps a picture of one of the potential recipients who died shortly after the legislature's decision (*Washington Post National Weekly*, February 18).

I. Loyalty to Patient-Persons

The essential dilemma here is classic: how can we treat with dignity and genuine moral respect the *individual* who gets really short-changed by a policy that seems to be for the public good? Medical professionals often have their own parochial way of avoiding its full force. U.S. physicians, for example, are likely just to cite the traditional ethical code of their profession, exclusive loyalty to their own patients, and ignore the larger effect on the resources of society. Thus it seems unthinkable to most American doctors to do what has been described as common, if disturbing, for their British counterparts: to tell a 70-year-old patient dying of kidney failure, for example, that there is little that can be done. (What actually happens in Britain is that \$25,000-a-year kidney dialysis is deliberately made scarce by the National Health Service and seldom prescribed for anyone over 65.) If doctors' ethical commitment is to serve exclusively their patients and not the commonweal, and if their patients each see it that way, too, then apparently doctors should do everything possible short of harming their patients and not worry about the drain they create on the public treasury or insurance pool.

Yet such resort to professional code can hardly provide a fundamental answer to the question. Doing always and only what is for the best of one's patients *now* to respect them as individuals, but does it *really*? Take the British case again. Their National Health Service's decision to keep dialysis in short supply and ration it tightly seems not about to be overturned by voters warning to throw out the bureaucrats responsible. Is a physician then violating her commitment to her patient if she doesn't go to every conceivable length to bend the *de facto* eligibility criteria and get him on dialysis? As a voter, in fact, he probably supported the government's policy—at least before his kidney failed, and in any case he almost certainly supports the political procedures by which those policies are made. Wouldn't this physician be insulting her citizen-patient if she threw scarcity considerations to the wind and got him on dialysis?

These questions show that at least it is possible to reconcile one's ethical commitment to the individual with acknowledging a larger, societal framework in which lives are knowingly forgone and resources saved for other uses. Cost-containment need not be just a cliché mouthed by budget-constrained administrators, heartless legislators, and narrow-minded economists. It can represent respect for the hard trade-off values of patients as full persons. If individual patients beforehand would have consented to policies of saying no to certain marginal procedures, the moral appeal of these policies will not rest on some fanatical attachment to the goal of overall aggregate welfare and "efficiency."



A module by Hans Holbein

Why isn't such a reconciliation of commitment to the individual patient with efficiency and the public good work in the American context as well as the British? If a patient has chosen a health care plan that makes no bones about the fact that times are tough and its staff will not prescribe every bit of beneficial care, wouldn't a doctor be shortsighted and parochial if she saw this *person* only as an immediate patient needing care? To be sure, some questions are more bothersome here than in the British context—has the person really faced an array of plans with any remotely sufficient information on the basis of which to choose? But some are less bothersome, except in Medicare and Medicaid, where the difficult questions of political authority do not arise. For either the NHS guideline-setting official or British or American physician the crucial question is the same: is there a prior point in time at which this patient person has consented, or would have, to the sort of policy restriction now imposed on him?

Take even that 36-year-old mother looking desperately for a liver transplant. What can we presume about her preferences had we confronted her about transplant coverage beforehand? "These are your resources—your earnings, plus so much public assistance. Would you prefer to buy relatively bare-bones health care coverage and have more left for other things, or would you prefer the more expensive state-of-the-art coverage and have less for your other needs?" I doubt if her answer would have favored transplant coverage; after all, many others in our society in much less financially strapped circumstances than hers have knowingly turned down this coverage to minimize their premiums.

The result? Her own hypothetical consent has justified the very policy that now leaves her dying. It would indeed be disingenuous of the society just to say it can't fund both the transplants and the prenatal program. Of course it can. But if she herself would have forgone the transplant coverage, we have taken her seriously, and not just held her life prisoner to our undoubtedly biased view of the commonweal. Rationing is always strong, distasteful medicine to swallow, but it may be just what we as well as the doctor ordered.

2. Life Insurance: An Interesting Historical Parallel

Moral scepticism about mixing the value of life with economic considerations is not new. In its beginnings in the first half of the 19th century,

life insurance was felt to be sacrilegious because its ultimate function was to compensate the loss of a father and husband with a check to his widow and orphans. Critics objected that this turned man's sacred life into an "article of merchandise" . . . Life insurance . . . became "dirty money" . . . (Zelizer, 1978)

Subsequently the marketers of life insurance sneaked in a very effective strategy: avoid any talk that smacked of insurance's "profitable investment" and speak only of its moral, altruistic value. Perfectly sensibly, these marketers noted that purchasing life insurance would be making a gift of some of one's own consumable income in order to care for dependents. By the 1860s sermons could really get carried away in this direction: Life insurance

can alleviate the pangs of the bereaved, cheer the heart of the widow, and dry the orphan's tears . . . It will shed the halo of glory around the memory of him who has been gathered to the bosom of his Father. (Talmadge, in Zelizer, 1978)

By the late 1880s, in fact, life insurance had so taken hold that its marketing could again be frankly couched in economic terms. Far from profaning life, it had taken on ritual and symbolic functions. What started out as "dirty money" had been sacralized by the compelling purpose it was seen to have.

The parallels to all this in contemporary health care are striking. If we derive our limits on what ought to be spent on saving life from the consent we give to taking certain risks too expensive to remove, have we profaned life? To be sure, anyone who greedily encourages us to run those risks is like the life insurance beneficiary encouraging us to take out insurance in anticipation of our death. But just as with life insurance, it does not take much to see things in almost the reverse image. Rationing health care on the basis of prior consent can become noble, moral behavior. It is refusing to let ourselves indulge in an insurance pool's resources merely because we aren't immediately paying out of pocket for them. We are leaving others as well as ourselves more to use on other things. Why not see this as sensitivity to others, or at least laudably honest assessment of our own lives and the real sources of our satisfaction?

3. Hip Replacements Before Dialysis?

How far can we carry this moral blessing of economic considerations? An increasingly popular view in the professional circles of health economics sees the goal of health care services to be the production of as many years of healthy life as possible. These are called "quality adjusted life years"—QALYs (pronounced "kwalies"). The view is driven by the unobjectionable-sounding premise that for all of us a year of healthy life is equally valuable. QALY reasoning enables us to deal with improvements in longevity and quality of life at one stroke—to combine them in a single scale so we can know what we may or may not be maximizing when we find them competing. The British National Health Service is increasingly using QALYs to analyze its trade-offs and make the most productive choices. We can expect some of the same here in the future.

Suppose we are operating with confined health care resources and wonder which we should devote resources to first, hip replacements or kidney dialysis. The former greatly improves quality of life but do little for longevity; the latter save years of life but at reduced quality. How much an improvement is a hip replacement that greatly improves life without prolonging it at all, compared with saving a person's very life with dialysis? If fully functional life with a hip replacement has for its recipient virtually the value of healthy life (1.0), then what proportionate value should we say that life has for the person on dialysis? Well, let's ask people. Suppose that dialysis patients themselves say 0.8. Suppose also that for arthritis patients 0.8 is the proportionate value of life without a replacement hip. (These are very close to the real ratios that such patients express.)

The artificial hip will then provide 0.2 improvement, say for 10 years—2.0 QALYs. Suppose it costs \$10,000; that's \$5000 per QALY. Dialysis, let us say, will provide 0.8 of the value of a healthy year of life for three years—2.4 QALYs, for \$75,000. But that money spent on hip replacements would produce many more QALYs. Now if a year of healthy life is equally valuable to everyone, it then only seems fair to do many more hip replacements before we do much dialysis at all. Note that such a recommendation is morally driven by the empirical claim that people themselves actually value their respective kinds of life at these trade-off ratios.

Challenges to this kind of quantification come naturally. How the people whose responses are solicited really sanctioned such a quality-life trade-off in their responses? If I judge that hip replacements would improve life from 0.8 to 1.0, I certainly mean to say that they should be done before things that improve life less. But do I say anything at all about the comparison between such an improvement (for 15 years, say, for 3.0 QALYs) and saving someone *else's* very life (of 0.8 quality for 3 years, say, for 2.7 QALYs)? Life itself looks so much different for people staring death in the face than quality enhancements usually look to people for whom less than life itself is at stake. May we really say that some multiple of quality enhancements is preferable to saving a life itself?

We could just directly put to respondents a potential "QALY bargain": what risk of turning out to be one of the kidney failure victims not saved by QALY-discouraged dialysis are you willing to take for the greater chance of getting a QALY-inspired hip replacement if you need one? That would seem to strengthen that argument that people's quality-of-life rankings legitimate trade-offs between quality improvement and lifesaving. But the danger is that nothing like this frank a trade-off question will get asked and understood in the basic ranking process on which the whole edifice of QALY estimates is actually based.

I am sure that people are willing to take chances with life itself in order to have significantly more resources for "other things." Why wouldn't those "other things" include medical items like hip replacements? But undoubtedly people are also more hesitant to let quality diminish the value of life for situations in which they face certain death than they are for other circumstances—that's the "life is all I've got, no matter what its quality" syndrome. Whether real people's knowledgeable trade-off responses support the relatively mechanical model of aggregated QALYs thus seems dubious.

Because they rest on inquiry into people's bite-the-bullet, hard-choice willingness to take risk, trying to give some rhyme and reason to health care rationing decisions by counting QALYs is on the right track. But the underlying crudity of QALY measurement may doom it to moral failure.

4. What If Smokers Save Us Money?

When people think about the scarcity of medical resources, one of the first things that comes to mind is that to be efficient we should favor preventive measures to keep us healthy over remedial treatment after we're ill. In particular we hear about the heavy load of costs that an unhealthy behavior like smoking creates: one group of economists put it at \$53.7 billion for 1984! This figure includes lost worktime from smoker's sicknesses and early mortality as well as the direct health care expenses of smoking-related diseases. Cut smoking in half and it looks like we'd have money leftover to defray a major part of our other health care costs. Here, at last, the concerns of medicine seem to run hand in hand with economic cost consciousness.

But such economic estimates may be misleading. Hidden in the case of smoking are two huge savings: the health care expenses of later life we won't incur if a smoker dies early, and the far lower pension payouts we will make in a smoker's likely shorter years of retirement. All this comes together to haunt the anti-tobacco lobby. Because smoking-related diseases tend to kill people near the end of their earning years, smokers' lost earnings from increased mortality are surprisingly modest. In addition non-smokers run up higher lifetime health care costs than smokers because they end up needing other care in their longer lives, and the Social Security fund saves over \$20,000 in lower net benefit payouts from the average male smoker. As Woody Allen has quipped in *Love and Death*, "death is a very good way to cut down on expenses."



Thus, anti-smoking measures like raising cigarette taxes probably turn from hoped-for money-saving devices into costly programs. Down the drain goes a major argument for cigarette excise taxes—that smokers must be made to pay their own way for their dirty habit. They are probably already paying their way. None of this means that we should abandon smoking-reduction programs; the QALYs saved may still be worth our investment. But these programs are thrown back into competition with the other costly lifesaving measures we find in medicine.

There are immense issues of moral and economic principle involved in all this. What sort of cost burden should lifesaving programs have to carry into our debates about them? Why should non-smokers' later, unrelated health care expenses due simply to living longer be counted against them? Do we count as a cost of extending a person's life other essentials like food and clothing? Furthermore, aren't the greater pension payouts in living longer only what economists call costless "transfer payments," not a real use of resources?

In fact I think these arguments against pinning extra costs on longer-living non-smokers are mistaken, but that is a longer story; just grant me the point for now. If we then do our economics carefully we may see that smokers already pay their own way without having to be excise-taxed at all. What individual respecting, non-paternalistic argument for imposing such taxes on them can thus remain? But then what in the world is the AMA doing recommending that the government *double* an already significant cigarette tax? Smoking's most vociferous critics may have to accept the fact that sometimes poorer health and shorter life can win critical arguments of fact and moral principle against indiscriminately health-promoting society.

In almost every case, controlling our penchant to do everything we can to promote and preserve life and health in order to save resources for other things will be strong medicine for someone to swallow. That does not mean it is cheap or callous. ■

[Readers interested in recent related books on rationing might consult D. Callahan, *Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society* (Simon and Schuster, 1987); N. Daniels, *Are I My Parents' Keeper?* (Oxford, 1988); and H. Aaron and W. Schwartz, *The Painful Prescription* (Brookings, 1984).]

*I*nternational Students Among Us Rodney Swenson

The PLU community first became aware of the presence of large numbers of international students in the early 1970's, when about eighty arrived from Hong Kong. Dr. K.T. Tang of our Physics Department had visited Hong Kong and personally encouraged them to study here. From 1978-80, many students from Arab countries came to the university; after 1980 Norwegian students began arriving, largely through the efforts of Registrar Charles Nelson. When government support for Arab students began to decline around 1980, the Malaysian government began sending ever increasing numbers of students. Just now, Malaysian students are decreasing, due primarily to a gradual reduction in government funding. We may, however, experience a rise in the numbers of students from Japan, thanks to Vice-President Don Sturgill, who has developed contacts with Japanese colleges and universities. The recruitment of students from Norway continues, and each year more come to PLU.

As international students have increased, so have the support programs of the university. Prior to her retirement in 1978, Margaret Wickstrom, then Dean of Women, had assumed the responsibility of international student concerns. Today the Office of International and Adult Student Programs, under the direction of Cristina del Rosario, is staffed by four part-time personnel. Cristina's obligations range from orientation and advising, to insuring compliance with immigration and student visa regulations, and reporting status and academic progress to foreign governments and/or sponsors. Since each government or sponsoring organization has differing rules of operation, accurate record keeping and reporting has become an absolute necessity. It is satisfying to note that faculty involvement in international student concerns has also grown, and several faculty members have expressed interest in advising international students.

An Advisory Committee for International Students, which consists of several faculty, administrative staff and students, meets regularly to address the concerns and needs of our international student population. There is also an international student organization, LIFE (Late International Friendship Exchange), which provides the opportunity for personal contacts and fellowship. LIFE has frequently presented food fairs, exhibits and folk dances for the entire PLU community.

International students experience problems of varying kinds in adjusting to life at PLU, the most obvious of which is the language barrier. All students must submit a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score before a student visa will be issued, but an acceptable score on the TOEFL, which is basically multiple choice, is not a guarantee that a student will be able to succeed academically. For several years the English Department scheduled special sections of English 101 which were reserved solely for international students; however, the special sections did

not fully address the needs of writing in an academic milieu, and starting with the 1988 fall semester, the Language Department will offer two sections of Language 100, which will be a prerequisite for English 101. Those students who write English well enough, as determined by a writing sample, will be exempt from Language 100. The IELI (Intensive English Language Institute), which is an affiliate of PLU, offers instruction in all levels of English, and students frequently come to PLU after completing a course of instruction there.

It is fascinating to observe the gradual unfolding of the language learning process; I can recall several occasions when international students picked up "dangerous" vocabulary from their friends, then unknowingly used it in another context. Why people laugh is also very difficult to understand in another language, for each culture develops its own reasons for laughing. Since much humor depends on words with double meanings, one needs a thorough knowledge of idioms to appreciate a different sense of humor.

Finding suitable and affordable housing is another critical problem for international students. The Office of International Students encourages them to live in one of the dormitories, even if only for a semester, as dormitory living provides direct participation in campus life. Most international students, however, are reluctant to do so, citing differences in age, cultural background and dietary regulations, particularly for Muslims. Instead they prefer to congregate in a rented house or apartment, which tends to inhibit mastery of English. The complexities of rental agreements—obligations, responsibilities, deposits, utilities, furnishings, and grocery shopping—present further anxieties for students from abroad.

International students are not allowed to work here except on campus, as accepting employment will jeopardize their status as non-resident students. They must also carry a minimum credit load each semester in order to be considered full-time students.

Most international students major in Computer Science or Business Administration, and are attracted to PLU by the quality of these programs. At present, these disciplines seem to be in the greatest demand in their home countries. Other areas currently of interest are Nursing and Communication Arts.

An investigation of other colleges in Tacoma revealed that international students constitute slightly less than 1% of the total enrollment at UPS, somewhat over 1% at Tacoma Community College and 0.6% at Pierce College. The current enrollment figure of international students at PLU is more than 6%. PLU's Dean of Admissions, James Van Beek, is pleased that so many foreign students are interested in coming here, and notes that the numbers continue to rise each year. "The cultural diversity that is present on our campus is a real asset," he adds, "yet regrettably not all members of the PLU community are aware of it."

International students have frequently expressed gratitude to faculty and staff for their support and understanding. Living and studying in another country is rewarding and satisfying, but it can also be lonely and even frustrating. Most students from abroad would genuinely welcome an opportunity to be invited into a private home, for it is in the home that one observes the values of any society.

Our interest and involvement in international students should continue to grow. It is not only the international students who benefit from an educational experience, but also our own, for an academic exchange is mutually beneficial. One can hardly remain provincial when participating in a discussion with students with differing viewpoints, customs and background. ■



Recent Humanities Publications

Roberta Brown:
"Madman in the Academy: Ronsard's
Political Poetry." In: Proceedings of the
Annual Meeting of the Western Society
for French History, 1987.

A familiar allegory of Christian Neoplatonism used in works of the Italian Renaissance represented the Fall of the human soul into the body, its loss of a unity once enjoyed in the Sovereign One, its subjection to drowsiness, disordered sensuality and self-interest. Four divine furies were enlisted to aid the souls in their re-ascent to the One: the Muses who bestowed poetic madness; Dionysus, who initiated candidates into the divine mysteries; Apollo, who prophesied; and Venus, who unified all Angelic understanding into One.

France's popular Renaissance poet, Pierre de Ronsard (1524-85), was one of the few Gauls to embrace this Neoplatonic scheme. He was very much aware of the dignity this theory gave to his vocation as poet of the courtly Academy of Music, and in unforgettable verse he described the experience of being seized by poetic madness and enlightened by prophesy. But just as he called upon Calliope, mother of Orpheus, to expound in alexandrines on the social and spiritual values of poetry, accusations of paganism hurled by the *rhéologues*, a largely Protestant school of poets, reached a level of vehemence he could not ignore. Elitist poetics were begrudgingly put aside for pamphlets of propaganda, written to arouse the masses to the bitter realities of the first Wars of Religion.

Ronsard's most vocal opponent was Theodore Beza, who also was the immanent leader of the Reformed Church. Armed with the Protestants' own weapon, the Bible, Ronsard countered Beza's attack with the terrifying allegory of the Hebrew prophet Joel, who had visualized a ravaging invasion of locusts as a symbol of the coming day of the Lord, "for a nation has come up against my land, powerful and without number, (. . .) it has laid waste my vines and splintered my fig trees." He compared the French Calvinists to these locusts and accused them of sacking villages, burning homes, brigandage and assassination. "Appelez-vous cela," Ronsard jestingly sneered, "Églises réformées!" Ronsard also denounced what he considered Protestant pride and accused Beza personally of preaching a gospel of arms.

After months of continued bloodshed, Ronsard again wielded a pen of steel in his *Romansisme au peuple de France* (1563), his most violent indictment yet against the "rebels." But this time, he also chastised the Catholic Church for its needed reform and for its mutual destruction of "la dolce France." This was Ronsard's final political statement. Deeply disenchanted, he returned to the divine furies of Antiquity. France had begun an age of skepticism. ■

Gregory Johnson:
"Bellow's Bellows."
In: Saul Bellow Journal, Summer 1987.

Arthur Miller's recent autobiography, *Timebends*, includes a notable recollection of Saul Bellow. In 1956 Miller and Bellow were living in Pyramid Lake, Nevada, where both men were establishing residency for a divorce in that state. Miller recalls that Bellow, who was writing *Henderson the Rain King*, "would sometimes spend half an hour up behind a hill a half mile from the cottages emptying his lungs roaring at the stillness, an exercise in self-contact, I supposed, and the day's biggest event" (378). At the time, Miller could not have realized the full import of Bellow's peculiar behavior. Now, thirty-two years and six novels later, it is apparent that roaring and, more generally, paralinguage in all its forms, is an especially significant act for some of Bellow's characters, as well as for Bellow himself.

In Bellow's fiction, paralinguage functions as more than a mode of "self-contact." It constitutes a code not of monologue, but of dialogue; it is a system of nonverbal communication that relates his characters to one another. Paralinguage includes all types of wordless utterances, such as screams, cries, coughs, and "bellows." Unlike words, of course, these utterances ordinarily do not refer to objects or ideas. This is not to say that paralinguage is meaningless, however. Indeed, Bellow hears in paralinguage some essential meaning—not the referential, ideational kind of meaning that words convey so well, but an emotive, effective kind of meaning that words cannot convey adequately.

In two of his best novels, *Henderson* and *Herozog*, Bellow encodes the emotive, affective meaning of paralinguage by playing on his own name. Whereas Moses Herzog, perhaps Bellow's most accomplished language user, unfortunately stifles his urge to "bellow," Eugene Henderson, the curiously reticent "Rain King," learns through lion therapy to roar authentically enough to save his soul.

Within the limits set by words, readers can decode paralinguage in *Henderson*, *Herozog*, and other novels at three different levels: the intratextual level, at which characters communicate with one another; the extratextual level, at which Bellow communicates with his readers; and the autobiographical level, at which Bellow communicates with himself. At first glance, *Henderson* seems one of the least autobiographical of the novels. Yet Bellow has said that, when he was writing it, he "imitated Henderson" and "went roaring at people." Although in his art he cannot cry except in words, it seems that Bellow's creativity springs from his urge to roar. ■

Suzanne Rahn:
Rediscovering the Toy Theater.
In: The Lion and the Unicorn,
Fall 1987.

A toy theater is a miniature theater, tabletop size, in which plays are produced for the amusement of one's friends and family. The actors are brightly painted cardboard figures; set in tin "slides"—stands to which long wires are attached—these figures are pushed from the wings into the stage area, where they can move back and forth and even duel with each other. In Victorian days, such theaters were favorite toys. Dickens, as a child, had a toy theater and loved it; so did John Gielgud, Lewis Carroll, Aubrey Beardsley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Winston Churchill.

Some children drew their own characters and even made up their own plays, but the common practice was to buy printed sheets of the characters, props, and scenery for each production; these were available in both "penny plain" and "twopence coloured" versions, along with specially adapted scripts. Most toy theater plays were based on real-life theatrical productions. Such full-sized successes as *The Miller and His Men*, *Gay Fawkes*, *Pizarro*, and *Timour the Tartar* were faithfully reproduced in miniature, with all their colorful costumes, lavish scenery, and spectacular stage effects. Those interested in the history of the stage will find the toy theater a rich source of material on the popular Romantic drama.



from *Timour the Tartar*

But what did the toy theater mean to children? What was its special appeal? Oddly enough, this seems to have had little to do with actually putting on a play—which was challenging even for a dextrous adult to master. Stevenson confesses in a famous essay on the toy theater that what he loved best was choosing a new play, fingering the printed sheets of characters; "it was like wallowing in the raw stuff of story-books." He never actually performed a play, or wanted to. For Stevenson, and for many children, the toy theater was primarily a stimulus to the creative imagination; as he studied play titles and sheets of characters, he invented wonderful stories of his own.

Some critics have suggested that children enjoy "formula fiction"—series books like "Nancy Drew" or "Choose Your Own Adventure"—differently from works of literary quality, using it as a basis for their own daydreams and imaginings. The toy theater may have worked in much the same way.

Yet the traditional toy theater also enlarges a child's experience in ways that Nancy Drew does not. It is a kind of elementary education in the Romantic view of nature and the supernatural, of love, heroism, and history. Its costumes and scenery are visually exciting in the Romantic style of stage art. Its plays, though much simplified, are based on the works of authors like Dumas, Shakespeare, Byron, Ossian, Ferriemore Cooper, and Sir Walter Scott, and they push gently and enticingly against the boundaries of what was (and is) considered appropriate for children. A plot to overthrow the government (as in *Gay Fawkes*), a villainous but fascinating king (*Richard III*), the downfall of the empire (*Pizarro*), revenge and erotic love (*Masoppe*)—these themes are not common in children's literature. As G.K. Chesterton pointed out, it is not small things, but large ones that work best in the toy theater.

A toy theater was about the size of a television set. But it was far from a passive entertainment for the lucky Victorian child. ■



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