



David L. Paletz, Unsigned contribution to Chanticleer, Duke University's Yearbook, 1970, pp. 168-

seemed he would go a long time and there were no thoughts in his mind, just the country he was in, with the pine needles under his feet and the swift stream with trout in the deep pools, and the tall trees with the sun breaking along behind them as he walked. He remembered other such trips but this was the best one. He forgot everything for a while and it was as if no one else existed except himself and he had accepted it all, in one of those rare moments of solitude when all of the worries were gone and maybe would stay gone. He did not think he would have to return. It was not one of those trips where you say, o.k. this is fine but I've got to go back. No, this was different and though he was unsure where he was going, he did not fear anything that was coming. There were none of the others here to complicate things with worthless thoughts and emotions; for now no one could protrude into his life and bother him. There were so many who seemed to exist with the sole purpose of confusing him. Well, they were not there and it was damn good. He was just winding along in his own time, in a new country, and there was a pleasantness about it he had not known in a long while. He did not reach out and grab; it was effortless just to let things pass, forgetting all that had gone before and moving along without illusions; what was to come was coming and he went to meet it, unhurriedly, with no fear and he was glad to breathe the clean cold mountain air . . .

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September, the halcyon days before school starts. Many of the books which piled up in my study are read. Articles have been written, typed, and dispatched to political science journals. A book manuscript is in preparation and publishers are interested. Course outlines are completed and the reading, so laboriously culled, seems both apt and worthwhile. How the students will relish Dooley, Mailer, McCloskey, Kaplan, De Toqueville, and Neustadt—a delicate blend of scholarship, jocularity, and commentary. In the introductory course we will sweep away high school shibboleths, explore the nature of the polity, and ask who governs. The interest group course will enthral students with details of pressure group organization and tactics and elaborate theoretical con-

structs. As I walk on the dulcet, verdant East campus my good intentions abound. We are far from Vietnam.

In all my courses, this coming year I intend to teach. Not for me the dispensing of information nuggets from urbane if somewhat worn lecture notes; that is instruction and I intend to teach. Teaching means helping the student develop his powers of critical analysis; equipping him with tools to facilitate understanding. Teaching spurs his imagination, stimulates his interest, challenges his assumptions, and provokes him to work beyond his capacities.

By mid-November, zest too often succumbs to enervation. There is the chill of winter. I have too many books to read, students to see, syllabi to prepare for the spring semester, papers to read and comment (why must I treat even the most casual student effort as a forum for elaborate exegesis?) There are exams to set and evaluate, meetings to attend, letters of recommendation to compose (how to tell the truth without jeopardizing the student's chance of admission to graduate or law school? And why do they all want to go to law school?), research to conduct, articles to write, rejection letters to burn, proofs to read, reprints to order, grants to apply for, and politics to try to negotiate. In Vietnam, the slaughter continues.

So besieged, I still set forth each day aspiring to teach. Unfortunately, effective teaching needs inspiration; and inspiration does not always arrive promptly on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:30 a.m. (it never arrives earlier). Moreover, I encounter obstacles. The classroom is too often barren, the chairs uncomfortable, the paint drab and peeling the room hot and stuffy with windows closed or freezing with them open. Surely classrooms are antithetical to teaching! A comfortable room replete with books, carpet, food and wine is more conducive. Did Socrates teach in a classroom?

Yet personal weariness and unpromising surroundings are not the most imposing obstacles. Classes can be moved, environments transcended, even rooms repainted; but students remain. Just as the *torero de salon* cannot perform his passes with the same elegance when confronted by the bull, so teach-aspirations are complicated by the presence of students. There are so many different kinds of students and, beneath the suburban airs, they

are positively protean. How difficult it is to teach them. I must retain my beliefs while encouraging them to develop and assert their convictions. I must try to exploit the histrionic and exhibitionist inclinations inherent in the teaching performance without degenerating into an entertainer. If I am too harsh in my attitudes (and grading), I deter and inhibit the more timid and insecure. If I am too generous and permissive, I vitiate the worth of my courses and earn justifiable contumely from the demanding students. As the class endeavors to "psyche" me out, I must evade categorization and predictability. I in turn should avoid categorizing the students. When I appraise them, it should be on the basis of their performance not personal compatability. Yet some are aggressive, others sycophantish, a few hostile, and many simply submissive. No wonder I often leave class meetings with a sense of frustration. Education is impossible, even instruction is difficult.

All of a sudden the autumn semester is over. The final examination was difficult, yet many students displayed extraordinary insight and understanding in their answers. Could they have learnt something? The burdens and frustrations of trying to teach fade; languors dissipate. Articles are completed and teaching, research, and publishing, seem almost compatible. I contemplate the spring semester.

I shall be teaching a new course on the American Presidency in which I hope to engage the entire class in an elaborate study of the rise of Richard M. Nixon. Politics and Mass Media will focus on authority. This coming semester I shall certainly teach. Teaching involves helping the student develop his powers of critical analysis; it equips him with tools which facilitate understanding. It spurs his imagination, stimulates his interest, challenges his assumptions, and provokes him to work beyond his capacities. Gladly would I teach and gladly learn. But the war in Vietnam persists.

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"You hand in your ticket
And you go watch **The Geek**,
Who immediately walks up to you
When he hears you speak
And says 'How does it feel

To be such a freak?"
And you say, 'Impossible!'
As he hands you a bone.
And something is happening here
But you don't know what it is,
Do you, Mr. Jones? . . ."
"Ballad of a Thin Man"
Bob Dylan

Characters

Main Character: A young man in his late twenties—preferably an arrogant person who appears at times confused to others, not himself.

Young Man

First Man

Second Man

Young Lady

Stage Crew

Audience

Note:

The term "the Geek", is an in-term of the 1960's, referring to a person who is asleep, or a New York cab-driver, or a person who doesn't give a tip to a New York cabbie. A most despicable character, the Geek is loved and feared by all. He has offices in the mind and in grave-yards.

It is up to whoever reads this or sees this collection of words performed to decide whether the Geek is the **Main Character**, the playwright, the Audience, or himself.

(A single room flat in a tenement. There is an inexpensive bed against the left wall, a bathtub against the rear wall, two chairs—one to the left and one to the right in front of the bed. A dresser is against the left wall and a cooking range without pots is next to the tub. The wallpaper and pictures are painted on the canvas and appear to be extremely artificial. There are no lamps or extraneous objects of clothing, books, etc., as one might expect within the room.

The set, itself, is placed somewhat within the arch so that one could easily walk around it, since the curtain is drawn open all the way. Various stage equipment is seen littered on the sides and the general appearance of the entire stage is that of lackadaisical effort at staging, and of artificiality.