

hours, daily meetings of three hours were held. Although the history and the literature of the period constituted the heart of the course, guest lecturers on the music and the furniture of the Renaissance provided an enjoyable variation in the students' concentration on the subject matter. Two volumes donated by the cultural attaché served a similar purpose; *L'Art monumental* and the fascinating engravings of *L'Ecole de Fontainebleau* afforded visual proof of the classical heritage and the brilliant luxury of the French courts. A book by the distinguished sixteenth century French humanist, Adrien Turnèbe's *Philosophiae et Graecarum literarum regii professoris . . .* (Paris, 1580), was also examined by the students so that they might perceive at first hand something of the nature of French printing and binding of the late Renaissance period. Other visual studies were facilitated by still more gifts and loans from the French Cultural Services: posters illustrating Renaissance *châteaux* and several slide series on the art, scientific discoveries, architecture, and even handicraft of the time.²

In spite of the effort required before and during such a course, the experience was a rewarding one, for a number of the students found the experiment as stimulating as it was demanding. The instructors as well found it a challenge to present the complex interrelationships of political, social, and cultural life which provided the foundations for the growth of one of the great nations of Western Europe.

²We wish to express our deep gratitude to Monsieur Gérard Roubichou, Cultural Attaché at New Orleans, whose immediate response and generosity contributed to the success of the course.

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POEMS

by J. AQUILINA

DYING

Dying must be an extraordinary experience,
 A sort of examination one sits for only once
 And can't afford to fail.
 I wonder what it is like?
 Do you know?
 Can you tell?
 Ever tried to find out?
 Have you the feel of it
 As one has the feel of ice or fire?
 (No need to run away from what is as real as life).
 You are not a coward, are you?
 I imagine dying to be something like slipping
 From one cocoon dream into another –
 Or slimy slug zigzagging between two unrealities,
 Perpetual cycle of life,
 Tinsel and gossamer –
 Wet, sticky eel that slips from between your fingers,
 Or like falling off the arms of Mother Earth
 To lie flat on the hard ground
 Face upwards, eyes staring into a vacuum
 Till you are covered over with dust –
 Black dust, white dust, choking dust –
 Metamorphosized
 Into something different,
 Perhaps rejuvenation
 Of all dead bones and withered nerves,
 Or like the scattering of seeds on a patch
 Of barren soil
 From season to season,
 For ever and ever,
 As we say in our prayers.
 Really, I am at a loss for the right image.
 But if you think this is not the right figure of speech,
 See if you can find a better image yourself
 To express the extraordinary experience of dying.

I prefer to compare it to
 Falling off the arms of Mother Earth
 Sixty, seventy years after birth
 (The Earth is a woman with a big belly, protracted
 parturition and hanging breasts,
 That is why she has always been considered our ancient Mother)
 Come on, you must agree that
 Dying can be fun –
 The flight of the butterfly
 From the husk of the cocoon:
 Do not be afraid to die.

20.vii.74

THE BONDSMEN

We have been given a Hobson's Choice
 – A very fine strait jacket and a gag,
 Or a pistol shot in the back;
 And because we do not want to be shot
 Like dogs
 (Could we but live twice over again!)
 We accept the gag
 And the strait jacket
 With a grin,
 A salaam and a hurrah, pain in the belly
 As we wave the Flag
 (*Achtung*, bloody fools, Superman's Fools!)
 And salute
 The Brute
 Praying inaudibly for the gale that will wash away
 The hovels of the pigs
 (Grunting, dirty pigs!).
 By this hope, only by this hope
 We put up with the bite of the gag
 And wave the Flag
 As we stand to attention
 (Ashen hatred burning dry hearts)
 To salute
 The Brute.

20.vii.74

EPITAPH ON A FANATIC POLITICIAN

Here lies one who died of a mysterious disease;
 Doctors have diagnosed it as a kind of obsession,
Morbus politicus, something like palsy of the knees,
 A tumour of the brain, diabolic possession.
 He lived for party politics, by party politics, all his life.
 Truly, *Signora Politica* was his only wife.

Pray for the repose of his soul in which he did not believe,
 But pity him – Wherever he is, he must neither fret nor grieve.
 After all, politics are a terrible obsession,
 Really a diabolic possession.
 A disorder of the mind: forget, be kind!

31.x.74

BURIAL

They slipped him down the grave, how quickly he went down,
 Adolph the politician who was also a clown!

31.x.74

POLITICAL POWER

A philosopher speaking in parables compared
 Political Power to an outsize cake,
 With arty icing, Yellow, Black, or Red,
 Marketed on the principle of give and take.
 How it makes your mouth water for a slice:
 Adolph, the Cook, obliges for a price.

31.x.74

LES BETES

The Adolfs and the Benitos continued the breeds
 Of the dastardly tyrants who rob us of our rights;
 Add Stalin to the *pot-pourri* and others of his ilk,
 And you'll get the sum of the Beasts that blew out the lights.
 Whilst the Beasts trample on corpses in concentration camps,
 What else is left for us to do but mend the broken lamps?

GLORIA MUNDI

Here lies one who in his long career won distinctions galore,
 Who, being very ambitions and always hungry, like Oliver Twist,
 asked for more:
 And when, alas, he reached the end of his adventurous career,
 And had nothing more to look forward to except the sexton
 and the bier,
 Found comfort in the thought that at least his funeral would be
 A Grand State Funeral different from the plebeian funeral of
 you and me.
 The glory of the world (tremendous spur!) was his sole
 passion and lust
 Till Death, that has a very wry sense of humour, struck him
 down and reduced him to dust.
 Be not hard in your judgement on the man who chased this
 ambitious dream;
 Are we not all of us, in one way or another, chasing the
 some elusive gleam?
 'The Glory of the World' – its Power and Wealth is what most
 of us live for:
 The Golden Calf that foolish mortals cheat for, kill for,
 hug and adore.

18.xii.74

EPITAPH

Here lie the bones of a distinguished civil servant
 Who climbed up the ladder obeying his master's orders
 Faithfully and uncritically, till Master Death
 Jealous of the bloated hero of personal cult,
 Bade him stop the nonsense, pack up and cross the borders.

5.vi.1975

FACES

Millions of faces that were
 Beautiful faces everywhere
 Faces dark faces fair
 Millions of faces that will be
 All these and more
 Flotsam on the sea
 Of eternity

29.vi.75

LOVE'S MISTAKE

He sat beside her
 Remembering the time
 When he had sat beside another girl
 Of flowing hair and laughing eyes
 Forty years before
 Imagining the sudden return
 Of his fair lady,
 Beloved girl
 Sitting beside him again
 Shoulder to shoulder
 Face to face
 His arms round her waist
 His fingers in her hair.
 Closing his eyes
 He whispered the lost tune
 Of a romantic song of love
 Till the girl beside him –
 The girl in flesh and blood
 Forty years younger – nudged him.
 Mumbling his words, he apologised
 For a silly mistake:
 'Sorry', he told her,
 'I mistook you for another girl.
 Please, excuse me.
 I had an appointment with her
 forty years ago.
 Good Lord!
 I must not forget.
 I must hurry to join her –
 See you again, forty years hence.'

29.vi.75