

Chester Kallman

Atavisms

So lass' mich scheinen bis ich werde . . .

I

*A hospital below-ground for the one-lunged
And the relatives one never sees: I have
Been here before before before among
The scaffolding and rules against the use
Of nicotine. The relatives forgive
One wryly, "but of course a letter would
Have helped us" still, still the close
Rooms tremble like an ocean liner,
For building cannot cease
Where the world remains to be
burrowed
And death is far from final.*

*Visitor, inmate or mere observer was
I then? Two balding women in their crippled
chairs
Give suck to air and turn away their eyes
To watch how death, distempered, from each wall
Fades off into the air; and I, of this air,
Pool of swan-songs, air used by the sea,
Partook, I know, once, who now with all,
Gasping, smoke, nor fear a scolding:
Diapers, at lunch, boil
On the kitchen stove; all the
Food in the ice-box is moldy.*

*Relate then how to our train the alpine green
After green, marking its time, attends
Above and the onion towers spin by in the noon;
How letters mail themselves and cures arrive
By mail; and how, if the light, as the day ends,
Stretches beneath the shadow-flinging trees,
It is tired as a whip lies, waiting. But throbbing on
Below the lovers in their blissful boskage, and the winds
Of midnight, sobbing like Ceres in the autumn dawn,
But always, echoes explore the cells where love
Consults the diet, comfort licks its wounds,
Death runs in its sleep and pain lies
Curled in a corner measuring life
With liquid eyes, and the barred and spiky
Protective beds can have
No time for hurry, and what is
More we may get to like it.*

II

*As I lay dreaming, on my back lay, a dove rose
Ravishing from my groin, two olives hung well from its beak,
Was simply peace.*

*And the dove begot begot begot as to it I spoke
In the enchanting tongue of the doves: having tasted blood,
It understood.*

O to its tune I followed, my eyes ever fixed ahead,
 Though the hands of a woman pleaded at my feet and a god it was
 Who to us prayed.

On the flat of a saucer valley I stood, where the hidden grass
 Jostled with doves, and my cry that rose, that halloo'd back,
 Could not reawake

The awake, the already awake, the always and crying awake.

III

Imagine that they speak:
 It has been done before.
 They have their midnight still,
 The one star moving near
 And all the midnight wide awake,
 Brighter with one belief than one will
 Ever imagine. Imagine:
 "Believe Believe Believe"
 To the trot and the champ and the shuffle,
 The scratch, the wag, the shove,
 Is all their beastly message,
 Is all their naked love.

Believe then as the sheep
 Veer as the dog believes
 The shepherd's senseless Chook
 Chook, as the pigs in troughs
 And the colt to a dancing whip,
 Keep faith, as the cat pursues its luck
 In a thorny second over
 And over and again;
 As, in even the concert of panic
 Or torn or caged alone,
 Their fear assumes a motive
 As flesh assures the bone.

I want. To simplify
 My want in Circe's house,
 Shrink to a humour yet
 Support my human size,
 Give credit gracefully, to be
 At ease well, amply to cultivate
 The uncultivated season
 Before the awkward fall,
 When the apple appealed to the palate
 Alone, I want, and still
 Upon myself to witness
 Unseen over the wall.

Soot in their fleece and mud
 Caking their fringes, past
 Greed calm in appetite,
 Wilfully the spook-faced
 Sheep mince like victims of a mode,
 Rocking their wiggly saddles, and eat;
 The colt's mouth, creased at the corners,
 Fumbles its natural feed;
 The paired cats that appeal to the midnight
 With more than infant need,
 Keen over all the still-born;
 And hobbling down the road,

Hindlegs akimbo with
 A white arc stretched between,
 Full to themselves, the pigs
 Are classical old men
 In long drawers who account for death
 At four in the morning on thin legs,
 Checking each lamp twice and winding
 Every clock up tight. Fall
 Of the rain, as its ranks take the railings
 Like innocence, at will,
 Makes us one for a second
 Of its reminding chill;

But I, quicker than thought,
 Am safe at home, the price
 Of comfort simply paid,
 Where food shall, with my ties,
 Loved well, be tried for taste and wait
 My becoming judgement; while outside,
 Bunched under an eave, the oral
 Herd stirs loosely to wreak
 Its domestic revenges. The naked
 Dog at my feet, whose weak
 Warm eyes want a redeemer,
 Imagines it can speak.

Golo Mann

The Intellectuals

3. Germany

IN a short story by the German romantic poet, Clemens Bretano, the narrator (who is Bretano himself) is asked about his profession. For some reason, unclear even to himself, he cannot bring himself to say that he is a writer. And so, after some hesitation, he answers: Scribe. . . . That was around 1800. Some one hundred and thirty years later a German professor was challenged in his seminar to say what he thought of Ludwig Klages, a then well-known philosopher. "Klages," he answered, "I consider a genuine thinker, especially in his early writings. But why not be frank about it? Klages is on his own, a free-lance, without office, without secure income. So, in order to win his bread, he must create all kinds of sensations and write books which are sheer nonsense. If he were protected by a university, he would not have to write such stuff; besides, his colleagues would make life hard for him if he did. . . ."

How often have I heard similar views expressed—and frequently with less sympathy! There was nothing more respectable than the university professor; nothing more dubious, economically and morally, than the "intellectual," the "writer," the "man of letters." In Germany, to be taken seriously, one had to have an office, a rank, a title. That may be due, in part, to the Lutheran notion of a "calling"; in part to the fact that the country had a capital city only at rare moments of its history, so that a metropolitan public was lacking and the writer had to seek princely patronage, together with the office of librarian, preacher,

tutor, theatre-manager, and the like. A free-lance publicist could hardly exist until late in the 19th century. When he finally emerged, the public looked at him as something foreign, bohemian, and probably subversive. Every *Studienrat* (teacher in a secondary school) felt superior to a Maximilian Harden or indeed, in retrospect, to a Heinrich Heine.

In contrast, the university professor was very near the top of the social pyramid even when he dealt with subjects—historical or literary criticism, social theory and general philosophy—which were not so far from the "intellectual's" fields of endeavour. He was a high servant of the State or, until the early 20th century, of his Prince; in old Austria he held the honorary rank of, I believe, colonel in the imperial army. Apart from his social rank, he has held a central place in the history of his country—which cannot be said of the free-lance writer. When, towards the end of the 18th century, there happened that expansion of intellectual forces on which the German mind has lived ever since, it was largely—not entirely—guided into academic channels. Kant in East Prussia, then Schelling in Bavaria, Fichte in Berlin, Hegel in Heidelberg and Berlin, all became immeasurable influences. Ever since, great professors have been intellectual leaders. They were the conservatives of the late Metternich period (Niebuhr, Ranke), the liberals of the eighteen-forties (Uhland, Dahlmann, Droysen), the Bismarckians (Treitschke, Sybel), the Wilhelminians (Harnack,