

gretted that his classic statement cannot be reprinted here in full, but the two main points deserve repetition:

The teaching by the professor in his class room on the subjects within the scope of his chair ought to be absolutely free. He must teach the truth as he has found it and sees it. This is the primary condition of academic freedom, and any violation of it endangers intellectual progress.

On other questions and outside his class room the professor speaks as a citizen. Of the professor's rights as a citizen President Lowell says:

In spite, however, of the risk of injury to the institution, the objections to restraint upon what professors may say as citizens seem to me far greater than the harm done by leaving them free. In the first place, to impose upon the teacher in a university restrictions to which members of other professions . . . are not subjected, would produce a sense of irritation and humiliation. In accepting a chair under such conditions a man would surrender a part of his liberty; what he might say would be submitted to the censorship of a board of trustees, and he would cease to be a free citizen. . . Such a policy would tend seriously to discourage some of the best men from taking up the scholar's life. It

is not a question of academic freedom, but of personal liberty from constraint, yet it touches the dignity of the academic career. . . If a university or college censors what its professors may say, if it restrains them from uttering something which it does not approve, it thereby assumes responsibility for that which it permits them to say. This is logical and inevitable, but it is a responsibility which an institution of learning would be unwise in assuming.

There is no more to be said. A scholar and a gentleman, commanding the confidence of the best men and women in America, secure in his own position as an intellectual leader, secure in his social position, secure in the splendid traditions of his university, has spoken in language that cannot be misunderstood. His report for 1917 will be the Magna Carta to which universities in all times and in all countries may turn for guidance in sound principles. No nobler word has been spoken in the present crisis; no greater promise of the future in America has been given.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

On Creating a Usable Past

There is a kind of anarchy that fosters growth and there is another anarchy that prevents growth, because it lays too great a strain upon the individual—and all our contemporary literature in America cries out of this latter kind of anarchy. Now, anarchy is never the sheer wantonness of mind that academic people so often think it; it results from the sudden unbottling of elements that have had no opportunity to develop freely in the open; it signifies, among other things, the lack of any sense of inherited resources. English and French writers, European writers in general, never quite separate themselves from the family tree that nourishes and sustains them and assures their growth. Would American writers have done so, plainly against their best interests, if they had had any choice in the matter? I doubt it, and that is why it seems to me significant that our professors continue to pour out a stream of historical works repeating the same points of view to such an astonishing degree that they have placed a sort of Talmudic seal upon the American tradition. I suspect that the past experience of our

people is not so much without elements that might be made to contribute to some common understanding in the present, as that the interpreters of that past experience have put a gloss upon it which renders it sterile for the living mind.

I am aware, of course, that we have had no cumulative culture, and that consequently the professors who guard the past and the writers who voice the present inevitably have less in common in this country than anywhere in the Old World. The professors of American literature can, after all, offer very little to the creators of it. But there is a vendetta between the two generations, and the older generation seems to delight in cutting off the supplies of the younger. What actuates the old guard in our criticism and their energetic following in the university world is apparently no sort of desire to fertilize the present, but rather to shame the present with the example of the past. There is in their note an almost pathological vindictiveness when they compare the "poetasters of today" with certain august figures of the age of pioneering who have

long since fallen into oblivion in the minds of men and women of the world. Almost pathological, I say, their vindictiveness appears to be; but why not actually so? I think it is; and therefore it seems to me important, as a preliminary step to the reinterpretation of our literature, that we should have the reinterpretation of our professors that now goes merrily forward.

For the spiritual past has no objective reality; it yields only what we are able to look for in it. And what people find in literature corresponds precisely with what they find in life. Now it is obvious that professors who accommodate themselves without effort to an academic world based like ours upon the exigencies of the commercial mind cannot see anything in the past that conflicts with a commercial philosophy. Thanks to his training and environment and the typically non-creative habit of his mind, the American professor by instinct interprets his whole field of learning with reference to the ideal not of the creative, but of the practical life. He does this very often by default, but not less conclusively for that. The teaching of literature stimulates the creative faculty but it also and far more effectually thwarts it, so that the professor turns against himself. He passively plays into the hands that underfeed his own imaginative life and permits the whole weight of his meticulous knowledge of the past to tip the beam against the living present. He gradually comes to fulfill himself in the vicarious world of the dead and returns to the actual world of struggling and mis-educated mortals in the majestic raiment of borrowed immortalities. And he pours out upon that world his own contempt for the starveling poet in himself. That is why the histories of our literature so often end with a deprecating gesture at about the year 1890, why they stumble and hesitate when they discuss Whitman, why they disparage almost everything that comes out of the contemporary mind.

Now it is this that differentiates the accepted canon of American literature from those of the literatures of Europe, and invalidates it. The European professor is relatively free from these inhibitions; he views the past through the spectacles of his own intellectual freedom;

consequently the corpus of inherited experience which he lays before the practicing author is not only infinitely richer and more inspiring than ours, but also more usable. The European writer, whatever his personal education may be, has his racial past, in the first place, and then he has his racial past *made available* for him. The American writer, on the other hand, not only has the most meager of birthrights but is cheated out of that. For the professorial mind, as I have said, puts a gloss upon the past that renders it sterile for the living mind. Instead of reflecting the creative impulse in American history, it reaffirms the values established by the commercial tradition; it crowns everything that has passed the censorship of the commercial and moralistic mind. And it appears to be justified because, on the whole, only those American writers who have passed that censorship have undergone a reasonably complete development and in this way entered what is often considered the purview of literary criticism.

What kind of literature it is that has passed that censorship and "succeeded" in this bustling commercial democracy of ours, we all know very well. It has been chiefly a literature of exploitation, the counterpart of our American life. From Irving and Longfellow and Cooper and Bryant, who exploited the legendary and scenic environment of our grandfathers, through the local colorists, who dominated our fiction during the intermediate age and to whom the American people accounted for artistic righteousness their own provincial quaintnesses, down to such living authors, congenial to the academic mind, as Winston Churchill, who exploits one after another the "problems" of modern society, the literature that has been allowed to live in this country, that has been imaginatively nourished, has been not only a literature acceptable to the mind that is bent upon turning the tangible world to account but a literature produced by a cognate process. Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman—there you have the exceptions, the *successful* exceptions; but they have survived not because of what they still offer us, but because they were hybrids, with enough pioneer instinct to pay their way among their contemporaries.

There is nothing to resent in this; it has been a plain matter of historic destiny. And historically predestined also is the professorial mind of today. But so is the revolt of the younger generation against the professorial mind. Aside from any personal considerations, we have the clearest sort of evidence that exploitation is alien to the true method of literature, if only because it produces the most lamentable effect on the exploiter. Look at the local colorists! They have all come to a bad end, artistically speaking. Is it necessary to recall the later work of Bret Harte after he had squeezed the orange of California? Or the lachrymosity of Mr. James Lane Allen's ghost revisiting the Kentucky apple tree from which he shook down all the fruit a generation ago? That is the sort of spectacle you have to accept complacently if you take the word of the professors that the American tradition in literature is sound and true; and the public in general does accept it complacently, because it is not averse to lachrymosity and cares nothing about the ethics of personal growth. But the conscientious writer turns aside in disgust. Seeing nothing in the past but an oblivion of all things that have meaning to the creative mood, he decides to paddle his own course, even if it leads to shipwreck.

Unhappily, the spiritual welfare of this country depends altogether upon the fate of its creative minds. If they cannot grow and ripen, where are we going to get the new ideals, the finer attitudes, that we must get if we are ever to emerge from our existing travesty of a civilization? From this point of view our contemporary literature could hardly be in a graver state. We want bold ideas, and we have nuances. We want courage, and we have universal fear. We want individuality, and we have idiosyncrasy. We want vitality, and we have intellectualism. We want emblems of desire, and we have Niagaras of emotionality. We want expansion of soul, and we have an elephantiasis of the vocal organs. Why? Because we have no cultural economy, no abiding sense of spiritual values, no body of critical understanding? Of course; that is the burden of all our criticism. But these conditions result largely, I think, from another condi-

tion that is, in part at least, remediable. The present is a void, and the American writer floats in that void because the past that survives in the common mind of the present is a past without living value. But is this the only possible past? If we need another past so badly, is it inconceivable that we might discover one, that we might even invent one?

Discover, invent a usable past we certainly can, and that is what a vital criticism always does. The past that Carlyle put together for England would never have existed if Carlyle had been an American professor. And what about the past that Michelet, groping about in the depths of his own temperament, picked out for the France of his generation? We have had our historians, too, and they have held over the dark backward of time the divining-rods of their imagination and conjured out of it what they wanted and what their contemporaries wanted—Motley's great epic of the self-made man, for instance, which he called "The Rise of the Dutch Republic." The past is an inexhaustible storehouse of apt attitudes and adaptable ideals; it opens of itself at the touch of desire; it yields up, now this treasure, now that, to anyone who comes to it armed with a capacity for personal choices. If, then, we cannot use the past our professors offer us, is there any reason why we should not create others of our own? The grey conventional mind casts its shadow backward. But why should not the creative mind dispel that shadow with shafts of light?

So far as our literature is concerned, the slightest acquaintance with other national points of view than our own is enough to show how many conceptions of it are not only possible but already exist as commonplaces in the mind of the world. Every people selects from the experience of every other people whatever contributes most vitally to its own development. The history of France that survives in the mind of Italy is totally different from the history of France that survives in the mind of England, and from this point of view there are just as many histories of America as there are nations to possess them. Go to England and you will discover that in English eyes "American literature" has become, while quite as

complete an entity as it is with us, an altogether different one. You will find that an entire scheme of ideas and tendencies has survived there out of the American past to which the American academic point of view is wholly irrelevant. This, I say, is a commonplace to anyone whose mind has wandered even the shortest way from home, and to travel in one's imagination from country to country, from decade to decade, is to have this experience indefinitely multiplied. Englishmen will ask you why we Americans have so neglected Herman Melville that there is no biography of him. Russians will tell you that we never really understood the temperament of Jack London. And so on and so on, through all the ramifications of national psychology. By which I do not mean at all that we ought to cut our cloth to fit other people. I mean simply that we have every precedent for cutting it to fit ourselves. Presumably the orthodox interpreters of our literature imagine that they speak for the common reason of humankind. But evidently as regards modern literature that common reason is a very subtle and precarious thing, by no means in the possession of minds that consider it a moral duty to impose upon the world notions that have long since lost their sap. The world is far too rich to tolerate this. When Matthew Arnold once objected to Sainte-Beuve that he did not consider Lamartine an important writer, Sainte-Beuve replied, "Perhaps not, but he is important *for us*." Only by the exercise of a little pragmatism of that kind, I think, can the past experience of our people be placed at the service of the future.

What is important for us? What, out of all the multifarious achievements and impulses and desires of the American literary mind, ought we to elect to remember? The more personally we answer this question, it seems to me, the more likely we are to get a vital order out of the anarchy of the present. For the impersonal way of answering it has been at least in part responsible for this anarchy, by severing the warm artery that ought to lead from the present back into the past. To approach our literature from the point of view not of the successful fact but of the creative impulse, is to throw it

into an entirely new focus. What emerges then is the desire, the aspiration, the struggle, the tentative endeavor, and the appalling obstacles our life has placed before them. Which immediately casts over the spiritual history of America a significance that, for us, it has never had before.

Now it is impossible to make this approach without having some poignant experience of the shortcomings, the needs, and the difficulties of our literary life as it is now conditioned. Its anarchy is merely a compound of these, all of which are to be explained not so much by the absence of a cultural past as by the presence of a practical one. In particular, as I have said, this anarchy results from the sudden unbottling of elements that have had no opportunity to develop freely in the open. Why not trace those elements back, analyzing them on the way, and showing how they first manifested themselves, and why, and what repelled them? How many of Theodore Dreiser's defects, for example, are due to an environment that failed to produce the naturalistic mind until the rest of the world had outgrown it and given birth to a more advanced set of needs? And there is Vachel Lindsay. If he runs to sound and color in excess and for their sake voids himself within, how much is that because the life of a Middle Western town sets upon those things an altogether scandalous premium? Well, there you have two of the notorious difficulties of contemporary authorship; and for all that our successful tradition may say, difficulties like those have been the death of our creative life in the past. The point for us is that they have never prevented the creative impulse from being born. Look back and you will see, drifting in and out of the books of history, appearing and vanishing in the memoirs of more aggressive and more acceptable minds, all manner of queer geniuses, wraith-like personalities that have left behind them sometimes a fragment or so that has meaning for us now, more often a mere eccentric name. The creative past of this country is a limbo of the non-elect, the fathers and grandfathers of the talent of today. If they had had a little of the sun and rain that fell so abundantly upon the Goliaths of nineteenth-century philis-

tinism, how much better conditioned would their descendants be!

The real task for the American literary historian, then, is not to seek for masterpieces—the few masterpieces are all too obvious—but for tendencies. Why did Ambrose Bierce go wrong? Why did Stephen Crane fail to acclimatize the modern method in American fiction twenty years ago? What became of Herman Melville? How did it happen that a mind capable of writing "The Story of a Country Town" should have turned up thirty years later with a book like "Success Easier Than Failure"? If we were able to answer the hundred and one questions of this sort that present themselves to every curious

mind, we might throw an entirely new face not only over the past but over the present and the future also. Knowing that others have desired the things we desire and have encountered the same obstacles, and that in some degree time has begun to face those obstacles down and make the way straight for us, would not the creative forces of this country lose a little of the hectic individualism that keeps them from uniting against their common enemies? And would this not bring about, for the first time, that sense of brotherhood in effort and in aspiration which is the best promise of a national culture?

VAN WYCK BROOKS.

The Creative and Efficiency Concepts of Education

Since Germany has evolved the best known methods of attaining industrial efficiency, and since the German schools have played a leading part in that attainment, our own business men often argue that—for patriotic reasons—the German system of industrial education should be given a trial in the United States. If the system were introduced here it is, of course, not certain that it would be effective; we can by no means be sure that it would produce wage earners readier for service, more single purposed in their industrial activity than they now are. In Germany it was a comparatively simple matter for the schools to prepare the children for effective and efficient service. For when the modern system of industry, with its own characteristic enslavement, was imposed ready-made upon the German people their psychology was still a feudal psychology. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon, the German has not experienced the liberating effects of the political philosophy which developed along with modern technology in both England and America.

First, then, it is not certain that the system of German industrial education, if introduced into this country, would succeed. Second, if it did succeed, is it the sort of education that America wants? Let us see.

As a requisite of efficiency, Germany classified its people; gave them a definite

place in the scheme of things and rigidly held them there. By circumscribing the experiences of individuals and by producing specialists, the scheme both increased production and aided the dynastic purposes of the Empire. This classification and training of the people was naturally the work of the schools. The sorting begins in the elementary schools at the early age of ten. The child's social position is determined at that time. It is decided then whether the child shall enter the great army of wage earners or whether he shall be trained for one of the several vocations higher than that of the common laborer. This tolling off of children at the age of ten—the assigning of them to a place for life in the social scheme—is not American in spirit or purpose. To be sure, our habit of letting children escape into life with their places undetermined has made difficulties for our promoters of industry. These difficulties in Germany were avoided in exact proportion to the elimination of the workers' chances of escape from their predestined position. Avenues of escape from jobs because they are uncongenial are effectively denied, and apparently to the German they are acceptably denied. The German has no pressing sense of the need to experiment with life. Compulsory attendance at a continuation trade school is required of all German children between the ages of four-