

Rowan Greer, clergyman and professor at the Yale Divinity School, who planted the Class Ivy in the Sterling Memorial Library Courtyard twenty-five years ago and then baptized it with a Latin ode, is the only member of our class to have remained at Yale virtually ever since—perhaps with the intent of looking after our collective vine. Recently, the Editors assigned Rowan the task of checking on the ancient tendril and reporting on its condition; he was also asked to give his impression of a quarter century at Yale.

It was with some reluctance that I acquiesced in The Editors' request that I reflect upon the past twenty-five years in New Haven. While it may seem that since I have been in residence for most of that time deep insights into the changes the years have brought must be mine, I suspect the reverse is the case. Precisely because one is present to all the changes taking place, they are rendered slow and even imperceptible. True, the freshmen—or freshpersons—do grow younger each year. And by dint of a certain concentration it is possible to remember that Liggett's is now Brooke's and Howard Johnson's, Toad's Place. But it seems as if the new colleges have always been there, and it is impossible to credit a time when Yale was not co-educational.

I suppose these lapses and the failure to perceive that changes have taken place spring from the delusion that we are ourselves the same. The afternoon game of squash, the conversation about the senior essay on Thucydides, the chill in the air at the Harvard game, the Greek battlefield affect of the quadrangles in the spring—it all seems the same now as then. Nor, when one has been perpetually resident, are these sounds and sights necessarily tinged with nostalgia. It is just the way it was and is. Yale remains a place where worlds continually open, where much that is important and much that is merely pleasant may be found, and where, as well, the petty boredoms, failures, and provocations of human life abound.

A certain anti-apocalyptic bias doubtless disposes me to blink at the changes. It explains my astonishment at the question asked me the other day by the clerk in the Mellon Center Cheese Shop. Having been told by six different people in the course of a week that the world was about to come to an end, and having been somewhat alarmed, she asked me my opinion. I suppose she mistakenly believed that a clergyman had information not privy to ordinary mortals. At least she did seem relieved when I recovered enough from my astonishment to reassure her that people had been thinking that for at least two thousand years, and nothing had happened yet. Or perhaps she was reassured when I pointed out there was nothing we could do about it, if the world did come to an end. But this encounter did provoke me to a realization that there have been many changes in New Haven despite what seem to me underlying continuities. In fact, I discovered that the ivy we planted twenty-five years ago is either gone or obscured by the ivy planted by succeeding classes in the library courtyard.

There is, moreover, one rather major hiatus in the

continuity of the past quarter century at Yale. May Day 1970 virtually coincided with the Cambodian bombings and the Kent State shootings. And I remember it seemed ominous to hear the church bells of New Haven ringing not for the death of a president but for what was beginning to look like the death of a social system. That reaction was over-dramatic, but it made some sense at a time when shop windows in New Haven were boarded, the manhole covers welded to the streets, and the flagpole on the Green greased so that no one could take down the American flag. The perplexity is that I do not know what this hiatus means. Sometimes it seems to me that it was the apogee of a barbarism on all sides and that since then Yale has gradually become a school again. In other moods, I have wondered whether it may not have represented, however crudely, a hope that war and injustice might be eradicated. And, on this side of the gap, there would then be a despair that began in silent classrooms and sullen study and is now turning into an acceptance of that despair through the belief that survival is possible and all that matters.

These two ways of looking at 1970 infect my reaction to what seem the major changes evident in the the Yale of 1980-81. Is it the old order changing, yielding place to new, and God fulfilling Himself in many ways? Or is the change a decay in all around? In all likelihood it is both. And I confess myself incompetent to sort out the good from the bad. Perhaps I should make an exception of co-education. Despite the initial difficulties, co-education seems to me to have been entirely successful. The obvious benefits at a social level are outweighed by the intellectual stimulation and enthusiasm women have brought to Yale. Somehow Yale seems a more adult place now than in 1956—whether this is partly a delusion or not. Apart from co-education, the most obvious change is produced by new buildings. Downtown New Haven has, after a fashion, been rebuilt. There are numerous new university buildings, including the unintended demonstration plaza created by the Beinecke library. The ambiguity of what looks like progress is evident here. The expansion of the university in the '50s and '60s is partly to blame for the financial problems of the '70s and '80s. One has only to look at the older buildings to realize that deferred maintenance is beginning to take its toll. The plumbing in the gym is gradually being replaced, though the showers have been put on half speed to save water. We do not seem much ahead of the game. Energy economies sometimes have expensive side effects; cooler rooms carry with them the inevitable burst water pipe.

A change at once more subtle and more obvious than the ones I have mentioned is the university's relationship to the surrounding society. On the positive side, Yale is much more conscious of social problems and opportunities than it was in our day. An openness to and interest in society and politics runs through the consciousness of contemporary students and faculty. On the other hand, and from a different point of view, the university has been reduced to the necessity of becoming barricaded against New Haven. Locks are everywhere, as are the explanations for them. Signs abound warning the unwary not to jog alone or in Grove Street Cemetery. Muggings, rapes, and robberies are reported in a matter of fact way in the weekly bulletin of the university. Everyone knows a horror story. I know a woman graduate student who was attacked not for rape or robbery but for sheer hatred on, of all places, St. Ronan Street. She was lucky to escape alive and without obvious disfigurement. Yet despite a sense that we are not far from the jungle, there seems to be a mood that all this is more the symptom than the cause of a problem, and that life can go on even though people must be more conscious of the whole of our society than we needed to be.

A final change worth mentioning is economic. There can be no doubt that the university's belt-tightening is already having a serious effect on its life. The more obvious of those effects have to do with diminishing amenities, dwindling faculties, and the erosion of a dedicated and competent junior faculty. The issues are

complex, and it is difficult to change a mentality that bigger is better into one that seeks to do better with less. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that imaginative changes in the deployment of resources may take place in adversity in ways impossible to imagine in prosperity. For students, as well, money is important. It strikes me as odd that we had low expectations and vast opportunities, while today students often seem to have lofty expectations and highly limited opportunities. However that may be, increasingly the pressures of the future weigh upon the present. A preprofessionalism has set in together with the instinct for survival. Perhaps there are benefits. I suspect more serious work is done than in our time, and this is often accompanied by real enthusiasm and interest. On the other hand, the energy and competition can sometimes be self-serving.

Let me conclude by confessing that these impressions are entirely personal and reflect the confusion of middle age. It no longer seems terribly important to me to decide whether things are getting better or worse. For the most part they are doing both. I should be reluctant to give up some dream of a renewed Yale contributing to a renewed society. At the same time, the only way I can see that concretely is at the level of renewed people who have their contributions to make. The privilege of being here is that it is possible to see instances of those who benefit by Yale and who, because they have benefitted themselves, will benefit others.