

VI

A stíllarmi íl cervel sí líbrí sacrí

Zerbreche mir den Kopf über heilige Schriften

Racking my brains over sacred books

And now he thinks to honor the gods in earnest,

*In truth and reality all things must declare their glory.
Nothing dares see the light that does not please the High
Ones.*

The deities do not look kindly on frivolous play.

Therefore, to stand worthily in the presence of the Deities,

Peoples arise in their various grand orders

And build the beautiful temples and cities

Solid and sublime; they swell their banks.

*But where are they? where do the familiar festive crown
verb*

*Thebes has wilted, and Athens. Do the weapons
no longer roar in Olympia...?*

...Why, too, are the ancient sacred theaters quiet?

*Why does no God make the sign on the forehead of Man-
kind,*

Not leave his mark, as before, on the one he has touched?

*Or else He Himself came and, taking on human form, com-
pleted*

And then, consolingly, closed the divine celebration.

“Brod und Wein,” V-VI

MOONLIGHTING IN *TURANDOT*

pic after BW 6, before 6a



350Blum7 scholar – Beijing Producton



Aida_lounge_guy (loqual)



Aida_card_game loqual

Props; PPP

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Life Imitates Art

featured promotional slogan of Portland Opera,
2003-04 season

Closed dress rehearsals and then the big move to the public sphere, the open dress rehearsal, bring it all together. But that also means more waiting time, backstage ready to go on, or in the off-stage lounge with our books, pastimes and snacks. The lounge is a strange world, where reality is neither white nor black, just gray, mixed with the cloying shades of institutional wall paint under fluorescent lighting. But backstage is all business, or all art, or both melded together.

Backstage at our production really does look like backstage in A Night at the Opera, as far as the clutter of props and scenery pieces and all those cables and weights go (though in real productions it is an ordered clutter and auxiliary chorus people know, or are quickly told, to keep out of the way). But where the Marx Brothers wreak havoc and are pursued by their enemies, even while the opera cast still attempts to perform, to hilarious effect of course, we are an intense, cooperative dance of chorus, stagehands, performance supervisors, and offstage brass band. We fill crannies in the wings close to the stage and, when we have time to appreciate the art we are creating, we crane our necks to glimpse at least something of the big moments that we cannot see as the audience sees them (though we will hear them so very well).

In the chorus lounge further offstage our people watch TV, snack, read, chat, whatever. (The principals have their own retiring rooms, of course.) Seeing flabby late-middle-

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aged white guys of the '99 *Aida* chorus in full pseudo-Egyptian dress playing gin rummy should have cured me forever of giggling at the incongruity between appearance and reality that is opera. But still. Inside *Turandot*'s chorus I puzzle not the least at the heavy-set young fellow with the thimble-sized hollow earlobes who knits mufflers with giant needles and has something going with a woman chorister of similarly ample physique.

I read a lot during breaks, of course with special attention to Danto and to the biographies and critical studies of Puccini. But I also consume my usual summer-hammock and academic-year-lunch fare of science, technology, history of art, general history, software manuals, and politics – the last of these, in that year, when I could stomach the quotidian commentary. For me during my *Turandot* time that meant when I could find commentary about the situation in Iraq expressed from the rational, that is to say central, side of the left. My politics were not in harmony with those most openly expressed backstage but at least there was greater freedom of expression there than in a faculty senate.

But the less said openly about such thoughts the better at the time, in the *Turandot* sphere (and also at my university), if one wished to keep the peace about the war. The American Left does not peacefully welcome, much less celebrate, non-left diversity. I broke my silence once only, as we costumed for a dress rehearsal. The usual anti-war talk somehow lulled and a fellow chorister, who had joined loudly in that anti-war talk, told of the anti-Semitism he had experienced in the America of his youth. During sev-

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eral productions he and I had shared musical fellowship and the intimacy of a chorus dressing room. I felt I could venture to suggest that the American entry into WWII might have had the beneficial effect of preserving the lives of his relatives and perhaps even of his parents. Often, when the atomic bombing of Japan comes up, I have said similar things about my father's survival of WWII and thus my own subsequent existence. The angry rebuff I received – not a denial of the historical realities and the personal probabilities, but rather a refusal to allow that point to become part of the discussion – convinced me that an opera company is only slightly less unfavorable a setting than a university in which to intimate hypothetically that one's own country might perhaps on one occasion have gone to war with some at least some valid causes and beneficial consequences. To point out the beneficial effects of American-furthered "regime change" in post-WWII Japan and Germany would, however, be simply impossible.

I suspected that there lurked in the Turandot company, just as I knew there were concealed in my university, a few souls who, for whatever reasons (perhaps religion, which might also be why they were musicians), might have a sense that religion could be so powerful that it, rather than dislike of American imperialism or fast food, might help answer the big question of that time: "Why do they hate us?" This might be so particularly if the religion of the hater also dictated hatred of that "lifestyle" or "orientation" that is well-represented in any secular artistic company, and not a few Western religious congregations

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and denominations. The irony intensifies when one thinks how those same communities are often particularly concerned with advocating the causes of those who make so abundantly clear how they hate infidels and abominations far more than capitalism or technology, except when modern technology and its distribution system impose on them infuriating views of present Western culture and visions of what might be in store in their future.

While our cast practiced the climactic "kiss" scene of Turandot, another carefully staged event received far more attention: the Madonna-Britney Spears kiss, which was broadcast to the world and added to the eternal WWW archive – that's world-wide, including the Muslim world – just a few days before the second anniversary of 9/11. Bernard Lewis was a helpful guide here, but not much solace. At times I wondered why the political-religious-cultural matchmaking system did not still pair up, as it had a generation before, the American Left and the now even more secular Israel, adding to that a new contrast, that of an American right empathizing with the conservatism of Islam. But while the moral outlooks may be similar in the two cases, ideology seems to trump.

Among my ventures into the further reaches of non-fiction, away from my meat-and-potatoes books and journals, was Charles Gallenkamp's Dragon Hunter, a biography of one of my boyhood heroes, Roy Chapman Andrews, the paleontologist who later became the model for the Indiana Jones movies; I knew Andrews before he was a superstar. The illustrations included a macabre photo of Chinese rebels who were beheaded around 1912 in the cha-

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otic, vicious aftermath of the collapse of the Chinese empire. The Andrews photos are of Peking, of all places when you are staging, though only in an opera, another of what Andrews calls "those head-lobbing parties." The photo contributed a certain frisson of the neck and spine to our teasing of Nick. When I later on checked promotions and reviews of Turandot productions that were staged after the garish news of actual beheadings in Iraq, I found mention of its timeless timeliness, but there was no overt reference to the Middle East – perhaps so as not to affect ticket sales.

I had quickly come to value Turandot as an escape from my own troubles and failings and those of the world as well. By opening night, my life and thoughts were governed by the stuff and rhythms of the rehearsal schedule. But Turandot and my casual reading had come to feed voraciously on each other. I was reflecting that back onto the real world of empires and wars and anarchy and, though we could not yet know it, the gruesome real-world beheadings that soon thereafter were carried out and then offered on-line to a rapt audience. In my own city some "cutting edge" or "pushing the envelope" DJs were summarily fired after they mocked on air the dying cries of the Americans who were beheaded. ♪

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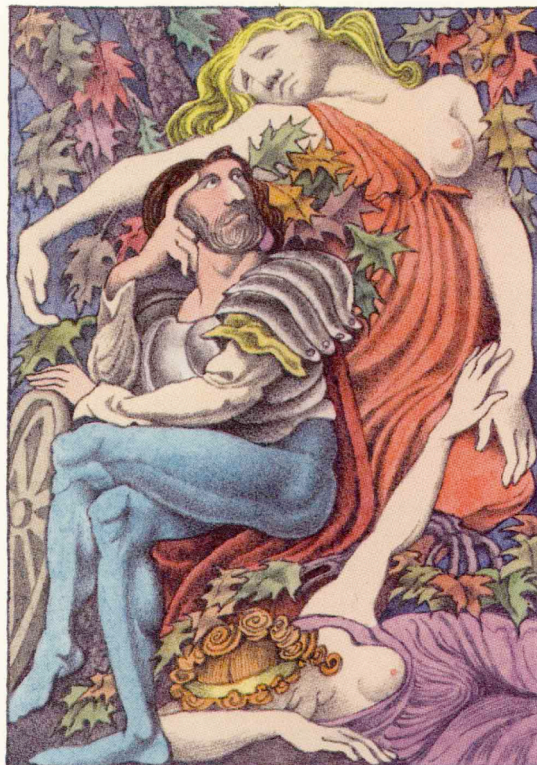
PIC OPPOSITE 6B



Faust accosts Gretchen (G_XLF_and_G) lo qual



Mephistofeles, Faust, Gretchen; G_Gal_F_and_G lo



Sendak 72

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Opera: exotick and irrational entertainment.

Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary*, 1755

Somewhere in The Grapes of Wrath an older man counsels or, as we say today, almost certainly with no consciousness of the classical heritage, “mentors” a younger man. He tells the young fellow a sort of low-brow animal fable: A puppy sitting near a railroad track with his rear end toward the rails is slightly injured by a passing train. He turns around to bite the train and is decapitated. The moral, so the Okie mentor grins, is, “Don’t lose your head over a little piece of tail.”

What this tall tale of tail says that the human male must learn in order to survive his necessary socialization, and do it perhaps even with some dignity intact, is also the advice Ping, Pang and Pong give to Calaf, although they express it even more crudely. The same conflict of desire and dignity, or at least self-preservation, underlies the grand divine-devilish wager in Goethe’s Faust. Faust, we might think initially, claims that he already is immune to little pieces of tail, or any other sort of pleasure in life, and therefore wages his soul on that immunity.

So far, so good. But, actually, the tests that Calaf and Faust undergo, and the function and meaning of women in them, are not at all identical, any more than are the penalties they will incur for defeat, at least if you believe there is a human soul and that it does not vanish or dissolve at death.

It’s not that Turandot is just “a piece of tail,” even though Calaf’s language, as he powers Turandot down from her high position, gets pretty earthy: “Your soul is up there, but your body is close beside me!” (It also gets pretty sappy, and the English translation, sometimes makes an infelicitous double-use of a key word: “My floweret, I drink in your perfume! Your lily-white

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breasts quiver on my breast!") But all except the direst harridan of feminism can regard Calaf's lusty but worshipful sexuality almost with adequate tolerance after having earlier heard Ping, Pang and Pong's dirty-old-men's nihilistic dismissal of women as almost filthy objects: "A princess? What is she? Take away her fine clothes ["strip her naked" is better for the original "ma se la spogli nuda"], and all you find is flesh. ["meat" is an equally accurate translation.] It's stuff that's not even good to eat!...Give up women, or marry a hundred of them" (followed by the hundred-fold body-part enumeration).

Not just Schiller and Kleist, but also the creators of the works of German culture that have achieved truly world-level status, specifically for their stories and themes of love and sexuality, tend to want to find profounder meaning in it all. They see love as stemming from causes deeper than the attraction between the sexes, though on occasion they then may turn it all around on a grand scale, as Goethe does at the end of Faust, Part II, and attribute everything Man does to the "the eternal feminine."

In the early years of my career as a graduate student and then a young professor who had found out that he would be teaching a lot of German language courses, I followed the conventional pedagogical practice: I alternated the grammar lessons (lectures and drills) with an attempt to use those "language" classes to introduce, as early as possible, the core texts of the conventional German literary canon. I have absolutely nothing against Faust. Quite the contrary, partly because all male Germanisten of my generation and the ones before it felt encouraged to see themselves as clones of Faust, with driving intellects and deep sensitivities, which in combination caused great agonies of the soul and intellect. It's an occupational risk, at least for the heterosex-

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ual male Germanist, and goes back to when Goethe died, which is also about when the profession began. Those days are over, at least for me. Long ago, too, though not early enough, I became ashamed of how we did a sort of “Classics Comics” trick of introducing a baby version of Faust into, typically, the second-year language course. We used a drastic reduction of the real Faust: just the “Gretchen-Tragödie,” a scarce one-sixth of the entire work, and less than half of the much shorter Part I of the entire piece.

Not coincidentally, I think, this is precisely the chunklet of Faust that Gounod turned into his opera. Both the “pony” version we used in our pathetic classes and the – rightfully treasured – classic of the operatic stage scant the ideas and ideals, the cosmic expanse of Goethe’s original, and zero in on the guy and the girl. Of course, that also removes the original motivation of the piece as an gigantic whole: the wagers between God and the Devil, and then between the Devil and Faust. Those are the equivalents of the ordeal by riddle that is the emotional and musical heart and soul of Turandot. Like Gounod’s piece, our aesthetically and philosophically and intellectually bowdlerized texts of the “Gretchen-Tragödie” included just enough of the wider context that our German students, as they slogged through the baby German text, could sort of sense how profound they were being, like Gounod’s audience as they simply enjoyed the music.

As an undergraduate German major I learned a lesson from precisely such a class, though I did not apply that lesson until a few years later. I was observing it as a fringe benefit of a road-trip I had undertaken, with motivations both Calafian and Faustian, to an expensive New England college for women. There it was proudly said (though actually only by the German teacher, who had a Yale Ph.D.) that no English was spoken in the

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class. But neither was any German, except by the teacher and one student. The simplest of questions about the baby-Faust reading would be posed, and a long silence would ensue. Then, at the prompting of the teacher, and perhaps to please me, that one young lady (whom I viewed as the Gretchen to my own Faust), would produce the briefest of answers in German. It was the godawfullest, shamefullest, time-wastingest German class I've ever seen.

“Verweile doch, du bist so schön. / Yet longer stay, you are so beautiful.” Faust’s wager with Mephistopheles is expressed in such beautiful language, the language of love, and it is quoted so often, that we may forget something. “Du bist so schön” is one of the two oldest seduction-lines in German language and probably every other language. The other is “Ich liebe dich” (“I love you”), which every would-be learner of German apparently learns about as soon as how to order a beer. But the “du” of Faust’s “Du bist so schön!” is not a person, not a woman. It is a moment: “Werd’ ich je dem Augenblicke sagen, ‘Verweile doch, du bist so schön.’“ / “If ever I say to the moment, ‘Yet longer stay, you are so beautiful,’ [I lose the wager and my soul].”

As for the directly sexual aspect of the wager, Mephistopheles gives Faust a potion that turns every woman into the most beautiful of all: “Soon you’ll see Helen in every woman.” Goethe uses not Frau or Dame, but Weib, which at the time could still mean “woman,” but was also probably well on the way to its present meaning of “chick” or “broad.” That is precisely the effect Ping, Pang and Pong intend with their remarks about “a hundred women” or their offers of ready and many replacements for Turandot. But Calaf’s constant reply is “No! No! No! I want Turandot!”

So in Faust, the woman and love are instances either of a much more abstract concept, or else made meaning-

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less by being reduced from the individual to the generic and anonymous. Even inside the work and its world, although a woman like Gretchen is real, her ultimate nature is that of a symbol or piece of tail-data that serves to settle a dispute about the meaning or goodness of life. Don Giovanni, making such a wager, would have phrased it thus: "I lose if I ever say to one special girl, 'but stay....'" Or, more precisely, that is what would be said by the Don Giovanni that the quasi-German Kierkegaard gives us; Mozart's figure is not so reflective. His attitude is, "Bring 'em on," the same as when he wants wine brought in his famous aria "Fin ch'han dal vino." Calaf is even less a thinker who makes a wager in order to probe the meaning of life. Nor is he interested in a supply of generic toys. He wants this woman, not just any woman, despite the lure of "cento dolci petti." Abstract concepts like "moments," or quite likely even Woman, are not part of his nature. He may objectify his woman, but he does not "abstractify" her.

There is another difference as well. Calaf's conquest of Turandot ends deaths, at least those of her suitors. (To speculate about an improvement in the life of the Chinese masses is a violation of both an ontological principle and of whatever realities of history Puccini's Ancient China allows us to consider, just as it is ontologically inane to speculate about Hamlet's life in Wittenberg.) Even beyond breaking the cycle of riddles and deaths, Calaf turns Turandot into a human being; Faust makes Gretchen into a casualty, along with her mother and child. They are the individual casualties of what Mephisto calls the "little world." In Part II, which he calls the "big world," Faust will come to take charge of the fate of masses of people, and many will suffer because he does.

Penthesilea, the bronze-class she-warrior, uses some pretty brazen language to make, from the perspective of at least some women, the same all-or-nothing point as

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she undertakes a struggle where the price of failure is death or, worse, submission. Seldom have Eros and Thanatos been so blatantly and closely associated: “Rather dust, than a woman who doesn’t turn ’em on!” Honie soie laquelle qui mal y pense. (Agee’s translation – “Let me be dust instead of a woman without charm.” – is too nice for Kleist’s blunt words, though I’ll admit “turn ‘em on” lacks that classic “tranquil grandeur”.) Kleist also makes it clear that Penthesilea, like Calaf, loves uniquely; the High Priestess condemns her for attempting to conquer Achilles specifically, since Amazon law demands that the women-warriors conquer their future momentary mates without regard to individual identity. (Another speculation we should repress here as a Darwinian anachronism is that mating with conquered males does not strengthen the Amazonian warrior gene pool nearly as much as would breeding with the more successful male warriors.)

We would have figured out the whole male-female issue in *Turandot* much more easily if we had just done the math, using the available figures. Except for the use of three, in the customary manner, to structure the parallel triads of riddles and gong-beats into suspense and resolution (“third time’s the charm”), *Turandot* uses numbers to deliver neat, even packages of much higher quantities: “10,000 years to our Emperor,” sing we the chorus. Ping, Pang and Pong reverence the “70,000 centuries” of Imperial China, a figure which long before Puccini’s time was known to be a huge exaggeration. They count women (“100”), apply simple arithmetic to inventory their body parts, and convert those figures into another unit of calculation, the “100 beds” on which will be distributed those 100 women; or, to read the text closely, the 100 *dolci petti* (English readers: remember to multiply by two). Here Salvador Dali comes to mind.

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The ultimate reduction of human reality to a number, though, comes when Ping, Pang and Pong start to enumerate the collection of failed suitors. There were six in the year of the Mouse, eight in the year of the Dog, thirteen in the “terrible” current year of the Tiger. The first two numbers are not culturally special, in the West at least, though thirteen certainly suggests an ominous trend. After that they are reduced to “plenty” (“*quanti*” – better rendered as “How many?” or just “however many”). At that point so many deaths mean only two things to the lesser functionary in a tyranny: “work” and – here we are getting quite close to the “banality of evil” – “boredom.” The meaninglessness of so many deaths makes the three silly; they mock the dead victims and play with literally outlandish rhymes, one of them about the prince of the Kirghiz, who got killed and lost the head that was his. (The Italian rhyme “*Kirghisi*” / “*Uccisi!*” – the latter meaning, literally, “killed.”) Then, warming up to the pleasures of the upcoming execution, or at least the excitement that there may be some uncertainty, however small, whether there might be a wedding instead, they completely lose track of meaningful numbers: Calaf’s is to be the “umpteenth” (“*l’ennesimo*”).

Occasionally in the world of Turandot one death can be, as Uncle Joe said, tragic – or at least to be mourned, as the chorus sees when the Prince of Persia and, later, Liù die; but umpteen or, as Uncle Joe said, a million (who can grasp a million of anything?) are just a statistic, or worse: a number that is not even a number. Ping, Pang and Pong are laughing Stalins or, rather, little Eichmanns. Not, certainly, that Stalin, much less Eichmann, was on Puccini’s mind in 1924, the year when both Puccini and Lenin died, Stalin moved toward power, and Hitler got out of prison, still but a provincial political thug but clearly someone to watch. So we cannot accuse Puc-

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cini of either prescience or poor taste. Some few years later, when the music of Puccini and the rest of Europe had been transplanted to Hollywood, Chaplin's Great Dictator made the connection clearer, and not just when Charlie, playing the little Jewish barber, shaves a man to the sounds of Brahms' Hungarian Dance 5. If Chaplin and his producers and audience, in 1940, could not really have known what Hitler would bring, they still could sense the comic monstrosity of the man. So the film could give the little Jewish barber as big a role as teh Führer got, just as Ping, Pang and Pong are given oversize roles in Turandot. I still cannot fathom how Mel Brooks and Zero Mostel could, after the basic horrendous facts of the Holocaust had been established, produce The Producers (1968), with its infinitely tasteless play-within-a-play, Springtime for Hitler. But perhaps creating art after Auschwitz requires, and justifies, extreme chutzpah: brass, the metal of which gongs are made, or the brazen assertion of life, and even art and even humor, in the face of death. One wonders what Mel Brooks and Groucho Marx, those two producers of mock drama and mock opera, could together make out of Turandot.

The significance of the numbers Leporello uses in his aria listing the statistics of Don Giovanni's conquests, along with their geographical distribution, has long been noted, above all by Kierkegaard in The Immediate Stages of the Erotic or the Musical Erotic (1843). The numbers (Turkey 91, France 100, Italy 640, Germany 231, Spain 1003) are a model of randomness (including the round number 100). We should resist drawing the inference that, among the various places where various women are to be had, if you're someone like the Don the ladies of Spain will adore you, whether or not you play the accordion.

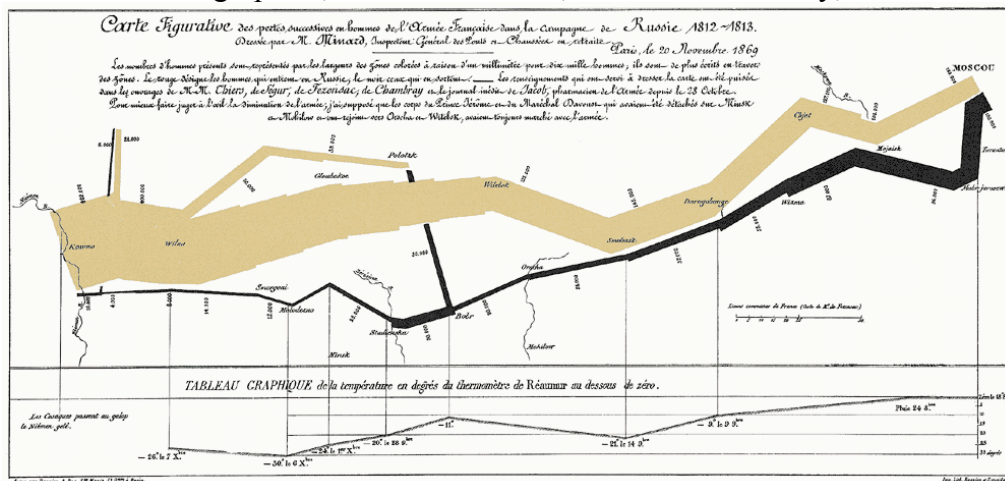
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Mephistopheles perpetrates a similar cruelty with numbers and seeks to turn it to jest. After the seduction of Gretchen leads to multiple catastrophes and the girl, now both a matricide and an infanticide, is awaiting execution (another beheading), Faust shows some remorse. The Devil dismisses it: “she’s not the first.” To him, the number of such women is simply not worth considering precisely; it’s at least “umpteens,” it’s far beyond the Don’s total of 2065, or any precise number that appears in Turandot (except perhaps for the “infinite” that Ping, Pang and Pong occasionally toss in). Faust is furious, and his reply shows a little more of Goethe’s Christian background than the scholars usually allow to come through: “‘Not the first one?’... the first one, in its writhing agony of death, before the eyes of the eternally forgiving One, paid for the guilt of all the rest!” German is a grammatically gendered language, so “the first one” (“die erste”) is definitely feminine. But the death of one as expiation for the sins of all certainly suggests the Christian element. Be that as it may. For Faust, Gretchen is no longer a generic toy or statistic. He is finally on his way to understanding and feeling that something – someone – is worth keeping for itself, for herself. That would mean a lost wager and supposedly a lost soul, but that is not how it comes out. Faust is saved and joins a transfigured Gretchen, though the play is not over until the fat book sings its final line, which is its amazing-boggling 12111th. }

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PIC BEFORE 6C

Gruesome mass graphics; WWI battlefields; Douaumont ossuary; Tufte



Minard's graphic representation of Napoleon's campaign in Russia



from the First World War ossuary at Douaumont (Ossuary: local-263)

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In one way postmodernism is marked by antifoundationalism.... “Western civilization is not the first civilization to turn around and question its own foundations,” [Clement] Greenberg wrote in 1960. “But it is the one that has gone furthest in doing so.” Greenberg sees “this self-critical tendency” as beginning with Kant.... And, faithful to the philosophy of symbolic forms, we will find expressions of the same underlying structure in everything that defines our culture: our science, our philosophy, our politics, our codes of moral conduct.

Danto, 67, 65

THE EXPRESSION “CULTURAL ICON” is a commonplace of our age. When it comes to cultural icons and the relentless march of deathly statistics about casualties caused by Causes, there is one modern icon that, as Marie Antoinette might put it, takes the cake: Charles Joseph Minard’s graphical representation of the destruction, in battle, by weather, or from disease, of Napoleon’s army during the Russian campaign of 1812. What made it into a modern cultural icon, at least in the intellectual world, was Edward Tufte’s book, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (1982), itself a minor cultural icon among academics. “Probably the best statistical graphic ever drawn,” Tufte calls Minard’s work, and that should say it all; if it doesn’t, one might think that Tolstoy would say the rest.

Yet neither source, I think, compares Napoleon’s casualties to the population of France at the time, and I suppose it would be asking too much of Minard’s graph that it tell us what, if anything, those casualties were worth. Tolstoy commanded a battery in the Crimean War, whose horrendous casualties brought about the Red Cross. But we cannot expect him to take upon himself what belongs to the French to do, which is to ask whether their casualties in whatever war have been worth incurring. It seems plausible, though, that Tolstoy regarded as worth the price the losses Russia incurred by resisting Napoleon,

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as apparently did Tchaikovsky as well, if we can tell from the *1812 Overture*. I suspect, however, that in a discussion of casualties in the Napoleonic Wars, what they may have bought, and whether that was worth it, even if that discussion were held within what is often the rather single-opinioned collectivity of the American academe, there would be nothing close to agreement about whether it would have been a good or bad thing for the French to have defeated Russia in 1812, much less whether it would have been worth the price they would have paid for victory. As Chou-En-Lai said when he was asked about the significance of the French Revolution, it is too early to know.

••,000 French soldiers (or at least soldiers in the French army, which enlisted men of many nationalities) died in the failed invasion of Russia. To that figure, if we want to total the bill in blood of that first of the ••bloody little corporals of modern European history – must be added the deaths in Napoleon’s other campaigns. Even with volunteer armies, the democracies of today – meaning after Vietnam –have so far been unable to maintain political support for wars that threaten more than a few hundred deaths of their own forces. The result has been the policy of “overwhelming force.” Anyone who reads European history is not surprised that the British, French and German populations are hesitant to incur casualties again, even though two generations have passed since WWII. Anyone, or at least many an American, who reads European history is also at least somewhat surprised that those same countries could have been led, or even driven, into WWII a single generation after WWI. Presumably, most of us are happy that Britons of the late 1930s by and large ignored the fashionable pacifism of their intelligentsia, expressed most notoriously in the resolution of the ••Oxford debating society that “we will not fight for king and country.” It was a near thing.

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A single ossuary at Douaumont, near Verdun, the Somme holds the bones of 300,000 unidentified dead, of the 1,000,000 who died in that one battle scene of a war that had several such. It is a figure to be kept in mind for what follows. Think of those unidentified dead – just the unidentified dead – as a hundred 9/11s or, to compare charnal war memorials, as 300 times the number of American dead entombed in the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor.

Each of the 10,000 mass graves at the Soviet War Memorial in former East Berlin holds the bodies of 10,000 soldiers. 100,000 more died in the final battle for Berlin, along with 100,000 German soldiers, for whom there are precious few memorials now, and were none in East Germany during the nearly half-century after the war. On a visit to East Berlin in 1986 I asked an apparently humane cultural representative of that country whether his society had encountered, among its huge population or WWII veterans, the equivalent of the delayed post-Vietnam stress syndrome that was becoming prevalent in America. He claimed that such did not exist, that those soldiers who had survived the war probably felt so fortunate to have survived that they felt no adverse symptoms. But we have also the scene in Günter Grass's *Tin Drum*, where prosperous West Germans in the time of the Wirtschaftswunder, the economic boom of the Sixties, went to the Onion night club and paid good money to buy a plate, an onion, and a knife, so that they could cut the onion and perhaps weep. While East Germans were forbidden by external stricture to mourn Germany's WWII casualties, in both Germanies the survivors of the war were told, by the societies around them, to suck it in; everyone had had to go through it, so no one was special and deserved extra attention or sympathy. Since then the Germans have faced their past, probably more earnestly than any nation has ever done, and know full well that some victims of the Nazis were special, having received a "special treatment"

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(*Sonderbehandlung*) from them. Still lagging behind this is the Japanese sense of their war guilt and responsibility, as well as the American Left's awareness of it. It is disturbing to note that recently some Germans, however, have seemed most eager to uncover American war crimes as a way to relative Germany's burden of guilt.

America's war casualties, in individual lives and in comparison to population, total far less than those sustained by other countries and peoples in other times and places. ••The one ossuary for the unidentified dead at the Somme would hold all of them / those of WWII, from Bunker Hill to Iraq, with room to spare. What our low casualty history means, whether on the Cosmic or Divine scale of human consequentiality and morality, or when judged from the close-up perspective of the politics and wars of our time, will have to wait for later, at the very least. As yet we probably have no real grasp of either the numbers themselves or what they mean to us now or what they once meant to others. Of course, any discussion of such matters itself has meaning only if we can entertain the notion that wars, battles, and individual acts, whether of the nameless or the greats of history, have any significance, rather than that no war has any value or that either history has no meaning or, if it has meaning, its course is determined by less evident events and factors.

••end section here, move next stuff (what's to be kept) to VIIc?

But it's not just a question of theories of history; there are dimensions that are more immediate. Some years ago, while there was still an East Germany, a European-born colleague and I were discussing what the pre-Hitler German Left might have thought had it been able to know the magnitude of the casualties Germany would suffer in part, at least, because the German Left chose not to ally itself with the German Center to oppose Hitler together, and instead went for broke for unshared dominance. My col-

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league suggested that perhaps the Left would have regarded, and after WWII did regard, the gain of a sizable part of Germany for Marxism, to be a base to aim for the rest, as being worth the price of the casualties. But he said that when there was still an East Germany, when some still believed that Marxism had more territory to conquer before history would then come to its end, and when some – though not my colleague himself, since he was Hungarian – still believed that that would be a good way for history to proceed and then end.

How to choose the wars to compare here, and how to sequence them, with their causes and casualties? For an appreciable number of people, there are some mass casualty figures (though, again, not always the same ones for the same people) that seem far too high a price to pay for whatever it is they may have bought. Yet, limiting oneself solely to Western Civilization, for the sake of more readily available statistics and more comprehensible concepts, there are some earth-shaking (read: Europe-shaking) events that exacted far fewer casualties. In some of them, it appears, those who directly risked becoming casualties assented to the risk, although many now would argue that the assent was produced by severe social conditioning. But these are times when we tend to dispute the maturity, rationality, morality, and free will of those who do not share our own causes. • • Barzun quote about 17th Century?

Thermopylae having been mentioned already, it can go first. (Never mind Troy, since it appears not to have been decisive of much of anything, even at the time.) It would appear that • •'s defeat of the Persians at Thermopylae, by itself or combined with the victory at Salamis, did change the course of Mediterranean and thus of European and ultimately Western history. If one cannot consider that worth the 300 memorialized by Simonides and then by Cicero, and then, even two thousand years later, by Schiller, the issue has been decided: the fundamental

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shape of our civilization, therefore, was not worth even the slightest of sacrifices. Even someone who wants to remind us of the unfavorable side of Greek and Latin civilization might pause at how different today's world might be, with far different alphabet and religions, and probably no Italian Grand Opera and thus no *Turandot* to perform, or to write about.

But then there is 1066 and all that. Or at least there was; the schools of today spend much less time on such events as the Battle of Hastings than when my mother was teaching in the one-room schools of rural Nebraska during the Great Depression. And perhaps the decreased emphasis is justified (as long as it has been replaced by *something* of significance). The ••000 dead on both sides at Hastings probably had little effect on the evolution of Anglo-American democracy, or European capitalism, or ••the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. Certainly the Norman Conquest did not keep English, rather than French, from becoming today's global *lingua franca*, although the infusion of Norman French into English has made the latter different enough from its pre-1066 self that I have been able to make a career teaching German.

So we have one famous battle, Thermopylae, whose small number of casualties that may well have been worth it, and not just at the time, and another famous one, at Hastings, where the relatively modest losses seem to have accomplished little, at least in subsequent history.

••Why is this still needed? Cut all the rest, including the overflow text I the separate file?? Or do we need to up the ante and consider events with much higher casualties? But it suffices to find one instance where a turn of history – again, assuming causality – is felt to be of sufficient value that the casualties which bought it were worth incurring

••replace the immediately above with a rant/lament that low and high casualty figures can be cited to prove

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almost anything; give a couple example; then move toward the main point: we're going to have casualties, and we have to make choices.

Offer potpourri of major events that were determined by minimal casualties, and trivial outcomes accompanied by enormous casualties (••but what is the point of doing that – need to get beyond adduction of casualties and prepare the point that we must choose, in two senses: choose what causes / directions we endorse, and choose someone to act for us, since we can't do it all ourselves).

There are big casualties that make no difference (CSA in Civil War), big casualties that make a big difference, small casualties that somehow make a big difference (Cortes!), and of course small casualties that make a small (or no) difference. Eventually none of this has any meaning, so does that mean that we should just sit back? Or are we such that we can't do that anyway?

Casualties: Inflict, incur, absorb, suffer, glorify

The inexplicability of casualties and the willingness – on the part of the individual, the family, the society, the government, the ruler, the autocrat - to absorb them; let it get gory here

Instances where small casualties caused big withdrawals: Teutoburger Wald – but who knows why the Romans gave up on the trans-Limes area

Italian commander at Lepanto / later: famed for getting himself skinned and stuffed, may even himself have regarded it – though maybe not at the absolute moment - as worthwhile (like a suicide bomber)

Does inflicting / incurring casualties always work?

Allied bombing, Schweinfurt ball-bearings, etc. – tolerance of casualties not just due to fear of Hitler, or fear of Russians, or loss of civilization, etc – also sure cussedness

Ordinary cholera epidemic killing off 5% or so of a society

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Arminius: on the surface, it appears the Romans lost a lot by their refusal to accept their casualties and then re-invest in the trans-Rhein(?) area. But was it that simple?

Lepanto – looked big to West, small to Ottomans; Vienna; Dieppe & Dunkirk vs D-DAY

German monuments / casual street memorials: “den OPfern” (pick your victim...)

So: was the death of MLK worth it?

The inevitability that today’s burning causes, and the honor we give to their martyrs, will eventually become immaterial.

But we can’t operate if we just think that eventually nothing will matter.

