

Paul A. Gottschalk

April 12, 1939 — June 11, 1977

When Paul A. Gottschalk died at the age of thirty-eight, he had been a member of the Department of English for twelve years. Except for a year of teaching at Chicago Teachers' College South while he was still a graduate student, he did all his teaching at Cornell. His devotion both to teaching and to Cornell seems almost to have been inevitable. He was born in Chicago, the younger son of Louis R. and Fruma Kasdan Gottschalk. His brother, Alexander, is a professor of nuclear medicine at Yale. His mother is a professor of Russian language and literature at the University of Chicago. His father, who was the Swift Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Chicago at his retirement in 1965 and who continued his teaching at the University of Illinois at Chicago until the year before his death in 1975, was an authority in the field of French history and a great scholar of the career of Lafayette. Louis Gottschalk was an eminent Cornellian, A.B., 1919; M.A., 1920; Ph.D., 1921-at the age of 22; visiting professor of history, 1961-62. He kept alive and transmitted to his students, his colleagues, and his sons the spirit of his teacher, Carl Becker.

Paul did not, however, get his formal education at Cornell. He did his undergraduate work at Harvard, where he studied with professors Douglas Bush and Alfred Harbage, among others, and where he took his A.B. degree *magna cum laude* in 1960 and was awarded the Winthrop Sargent Shakespeare Prize for his honors thesis. He received the M.A. in 1961 and the Ph.D. in 1965 from the University of Chicago; here he worked in the Renaissance with Professors R. C. Bald, William Ringler, and Ernest Sirluck. Professor Bald, who had spent the largest part of his own distinguished career at Cornell, became Paul's thesis adviser and supported his already strong desire to teach at Cornell.

Paul came to Cornell as an instructor in 1965; he became assistant professor in 1967 and associate professor in 1973. His contribution to the intellectual life of the Department of English was impressive. He loved books and ideas, and he loved talking about them. His scholarly interests were wide-ranging; colleagues respected his knowledge and trusted his undogmatic and responsible judgments. His teaching reflected his grasp of the greatest writers in both the English and Continental traditions. He was as much at home in the survey from Chaucer to Shaw as he was in the comparative literature survey from Petrarch, Erasmus, and Rabelais to Stendhal, Chekhov, and Ionesco. With a colleague in the Department of Philosophy he developed an innovative course in existentialism and literature that considered the major issues of a philosophy and their embodiment in aesthetic structures.

Most of all he enjoyed teaching Shakespeare, and he taught the plays at every level from freshman humanities seminar to graduate seminar. Always sensitive to the needs and capacities of his students, he was as effective in teaching Shakespeare to beginners as he was with honors students and with graduate students, and as resourceful in the dialogue of a seminar as he was in the lectures in his large undergraduate course. Young as he was, he had a firmly established reputation as a teacher for whom students willingly did their best work and as a thesis director whose advice and encouragement helped graduate students to develop their skills and to discover and exploit their strengths.

Paul's scholarship is distinguished by its literary sensitivity, fidelity to fact, and philosophic breadth and impartiality. To the vast and often tangled domain of Hamlet scholarship he brought acute intellectual analysis and scrupulous objectivity. As a result, his book *The Meanings of Hamlet* (1972), a study of modes of literary interpretation of Hamlet since A. C. Bradley, is the best of its kind; the integrity of Paul's style is as luminous as the integrity of his evidence and inferences. Paul's later essays, one of which, on Henry V, was written in the fall of 1976, when he was seriously ill, indicate that his premature death has deprived us of a major study of internal mimesis—the creation of fictive worlds within fictive worlds by such devices as the play-within-the-play and by such processes as the madness of King Lear. His essay on *Lear* (published in the *Bucknell Review* in 1971), one on Macbeth, and another that provided the theoretical justification for his ideas on the “world within the play” were to be part of this new study. But Paul was more than a specialist in Elizabethan drama. He published an essay on Dickens, was engaged in studies of his beloved Dostoevsky (he had learned Russian in recent years in order to interpret more accurately), and he had come to terms with such philosophers as Heidegger by mastering their works in the original languages. He was a sensitive reader of poetry in French and in Russian as well as in English. In everything he touched as a scholar or a critic he was original, cogent, and just.

Paul took special pride in being part of the Cornell community, and he served the University well and variously. He was a member of the University Committee on the Preparation of Teachers, directed for the Department of English its Master of Arts in Teaching Program, and taught the department's course in methodology for prospective secondary school teachers of English. For several years he was a member of the Admissions Selection Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences, and he served, too, on the committee that set policy on admissions. At the inception of Cornell's freshman summer start program, he served as director. He and his wife, Katherine, shared a particular interest in the musical life of Ithaca, and both contributed immensely to it. Paul was a member of the Faculty Committee on Music, and he chaired the committee in 1972-73. A great admirer of Russian liturgical

music, he was a cofounder of the Cornell Russian Choir. At his request, the choir sang at the memorial service for him Chesnokov's "Salvation" and his own composition, "Cherubic Hymn" (*Heruvimskaya Pesn'*). That he wanted the hymn's closing Alleluia to stand as his final declaration to his family and friends is the justest evidence of the magnanimity of his spirit.

In all his relations—with students, colleagues, and others—Paul endeared himself by his politeness and his gentleness, by his warmth and his tact. Only his lectures and publications reveal how tough-minded and rigorous he could be. Constantly he made demands on himself in order to make things easier for others.

Paul is survived by his mother and his brother; by his wife, Katherine Kiblinger Gottschalk; by his children, Sarah and Alexander; and by a host of friends who found in his short life a rare example of humane achievement and an equally rare example of courage and dignity in his death.

Ephim Fogel, Daniel R. Schwarz, David Novarr