

# Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan

... have in the past three years set up at Annapolis the only liberal arts college in the United States. This book describes what they have done; it is a tribute to what they are.

MR. Barr and Mr. Buchanan came to St. John's College in the summer of 1937 to put into effect their answer to one of the major problems in liberal education today—the problem of how so many people can go to college for four years, become bachelors of arts, and still be uneducated. Their answer is the now famous St. John's Program, which consists principally in the study and discussion of the works of about one hundred and seventy authors in the Western tradition.

From the beginning one of Mr. Barr's chief functions as President of the college has been to explain the St. John's Program to the general public. He has made innumerable speeches to assorted Rotary clubs, chambers of commerce, groups of educators, and domestic clubs; has written magazine articles, has started and carried on a series of radio programs describing activities at the college, and in general has played the role of public spokesman for the college—a role to which his congenial and somewhat spectacular personality is well fitted. Just as important has been his work to keep the college from falling off the financial brink it has been teetering on for the past several years. Yet even though he is kept very busy performing as college politician and master of money matters, Mr. Barr still finds time to conduct a lively sophomore seminar in the New Program and to teach History 26, the most popular course in the Old Program. Perhaps his most engaging characteristic from the student point of view is the fact that he knows most of them well enough to address them by their first names.

Mr. Buchanan as Dean of the college has necessarily had to concern himself with the internal affairs of the college. His main task has been to arrange the actual working structure of the curriculum, to determine the subject matter and schedule of classes, to provide the order and locus in which the various parts of the program function—in short to guide and co-ordinate the work actually done on the great books. Besides his work on the curriculum he serves as a reference point for disciplinary matters, and, in conference with members of the administration, faculty, and student body, determines the great policies on which St. John's operates. Aside from his administrative duties Mr. Buchanan acts as the leader of the Junior seminar.

Even though separately they have different functions as administrative men, both Mr. Barr and Mr. Buchanan are essentially teachers, are working for the same end, and as a team are making St. John's a liberal arts college which, oddly enough, teaches and practices the liberal arts.

## Editor's Note

With the Winter 1982 issue the *St. John's Review* began to charge new subscribers. Old subscribers, *St. John's* alumni and friends, students and their families will continue to receive the magazine without charge. My desire to turn the *St. John's Review* into an unambiguously public magazine and to win an additional audience prompted this decision. The *St. John's Review* will appear three times a year, in the fall, winter, and summer—L.R.

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## FROM OUR READERS

### ON " 'SEXISM' IS MEANINGLESS"

To the Editor of the *St. John's Review*:

After reading Mr. Duskow's letter answering Michael Levin (" 'Sexism' is Meaningless" *St. John's Review Autumn 1981*), I decided to abandon temporarily my subjugation as housewife and respond to Mr. Duskow's myopic view of human nature. In his letter Mr. Duskow accuses Mr. Levin of various "prejudices" concerning women. In so doing he examines the condition of women, past and present, under two false assumptions. The first false assumption is that women have been forced by men to stay at home and rear children. The second is that women are *still* being forced by men to stay at home and rear children. Underlying both assumptions and embedded in the fabric of his letter (though nowhere stated explicitly) is the further assumption that the habit of centuries has no connection with and is a violation of the laws of nature. (It is, however, open to question whether or not Mr. Duskow accepts the existence of permanent standards which dictate certain modes of human behavior.) In answer to Mr. Duskow's first assumption, I must cite a book by George Gilder called *Sexual Suicide* in which Gilder claims that men never forced women to stay at home and rear children. In fact, *women*, because of the nature of female sexuality (which includes the processes of pregnancy and childbirth) have traditionally required *men* to marry them and provide for the upkeep of the resulting children. Male sexuality, according to Gilder, is characterized by indiscriminate and temporary liaisons, and only the necessity of fathering a woman's children causes men to embrace monogamy. If Mr. Duskow would pause in his ruminations on the plight of women and read the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, he would see there a clear demonstration of the necessity, imposed by women upon men, that men marry in order to establish themselves in civilized society. The second assumption is false because women are now encouraged to play more roles in society than we ever have in human history. The present education of women encourages masculine, not feminine qualities.

Mr. Duskow assumes that the "environmental differences boys and girls are subjected to" are responsible for different forms of behavior in boys and girls and hence the "subjugation" of the latter. (I would like to know what the term "environmental differences" signifies—barometric pressure, or humidity???) I can't disagree with the claim that girls have usually been educated with their feminine characteristics in mind—receptivity, for example—until now. Mr. Duskow does not bother to address himself to the question of whether or not it is proper to prepare girls for motherhood, and I tend to think that he considers motherhood such a casual affair that education regarding it is unnecessary. The modern liberal has placed himself in the uneasy position of asserting the primacy of early childhood development in the correct functioning of society, while maintaining all along that *anyone*—mother, father, daycare worker, psychologist, teacher—

(continued on page 2)

# THE ST. JOHN'S REVIEW SUMMER 1982

- 3 St. John's under Barr and Buchanan: the Fight with the Navy  
and the Departure of the Founders *J. Winfree Smith*
- 20 Schiller's Drama—Fulfillment of History and Philosophy in  
Poetry *Gisela Berns*
- 31 Some Chinese Poems translated by *Julie Landau*
- 39 That Graver Fire Bell: A Reconsideration of the Debate over  
Slavery from the Standpoint of Lincoln *Robert J. Loewenberg*
- 51 Sophocles' *Ajax* and the Ajax Myth *Philip Holt*
- 62 Toward Reading Thomas Aquinas *Thomas J. Slakey*
- REVIEW ESSAY
- 68 Updike and Roth: Are They Writers? John Updike's *Rabbit  
Is Rich*, and Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Unbound* review  
essay by *Lev Navrozov*

can assist in said development equipped with nothing more than a brief course of training. Motherhood involves much more than a course in applied social sciences, however. For one thing, only a mother can do it: that is, a woman who has given birth to or accepted as her own through adoption an utterly dependent human person. The commitment made is physical, emotional, and instinctive. It is the most powerful bond between two people in nature. The idea that "mothering" can be accomplished by anyone but a mother is analogous to the suggestion that the function of husband or wife could be performed by someone hired for the purpose: the essential personal involvement which constitutes a marriage would be absent. Motherhood, then, is a role which demands a participation which is intrinsically connected with the very soul of the mother; a participation which never ceases to exist and never ceases to demand the selfless cooperation of the mother in a natural process which entails the separation of the beloved (the child) from the lover (the mother) with the cooperation and encouragement of the lover. In this way the natural order *provides* for the existence of society. It is only the personal element in motherhood—"my child" vs. "the child" which ensures the possibility of moral education; moral actions are, fundamentally, *not* performed out of self-interest. If I die for my country it is not because in doing so I consider myself to be performing a rational act, but because it is *my* country and I love it. If this personal element, that is, the task of "mothering" as performed by a mother, is absent in child-rearing, then the soundest basis for moral actions is removed from society. Given, then, the importance of the position of a mother to a society, one must surely admit the necessity of preparing potential mothers for such a role.

Mr. Doskow seems to believe that nature makes no significant distinction between men and women. He also claims, implicitly, that habit must *necessarily* be a perversion of political and social truth. That nature and convention, or habit, are *distinct* is not to say that they are *opposed*, and it is here that Mr. Doskow makes his mistake. That education is purposive (which it necessarily is) does not mean that it is a violation of nature, and Mr. Doskow assumes that

throughout his letter without bothering to substantiate his claim. In this he seems to fall prey to a vice common to those who assume that human nature is malleable or nonexistent: he neglects the problem of necessity. Although political society is an institution, that is, it is made by men, it must do more than provide us with the opportunity for happiness. It must be able to withstand the vicissitudes of fortune; it must *last*. Although my tutors at St. John's succeeded in giving me a phobia of secondary sources, I must cite a story I have had occasion to read many times since I graduated. It is about three pigs and their varying abilities to survive in the "wide world" after they leave home. The smart pig, of course, worked hard at building a brick house while the other pigs played. The practical pig survived and protected his brothers because he was able to provide for protection against the gluttonous wolf. Mr. Doskow's sentiments about the "rights" of women reflect the finer sensibilities of the less sensible pigs—it would be nice if society were constructed in such a way that everyone could do what he wanted. Yesterday my son brought home a social studies newsletter his kindergarten class reads. This particular issue featured the story of a female coalminer. In fact, every newsletter he brings home features a woman doing a job *other* than rearing children and keeping house. I have not yet seen an elementary school textbook describe child-rearing as a job particularly suited to women (so much for evidence in favor of the "subjugation of women" theory). What these newsletters (and I think Mr. Doskow) forget to take into consideration is the fact that *someone* has to raise the children and women usually do a better job of it than men. But like every other job one must be trained to perform it, and habit serves to reinforce aspects of motherhood which would otherwise be difficult to endure.

Men perfect themselves in political society. That perfection rests on the qualities of each man and is accomplished by means of his nature and not by its subjugation. Education is the means by which common and permanent standards are communicated to individuals in such a way that each man participates, often unknowingly, in the propagation of aims which are intellectually accessible to only a few men.

It is this unthinking participation in the preservation of the moral health of society by means of the family (which is the first and most effective school) which Mr. Doskow calls "prejudice". We must consider men and women not as interchangeable parts in a machine, units possessing "rights", but as members of mankind, working in cooperation for the greatest good possible. Men are such that the greatness of one man shines on all of us, just as the infamy committed by one man calls the rest of us into question. When Father Brown, of the Chesterton stories, explained the method he used to discover the identity of a murderer he said that he "became" the murderer and hence could imagine the circumstances of the crime and identify the culprit. Father Brown understood that what connects us to each other is not a superficial similarity of abilities or sympathies but a common fate. This unity shows itself, strangely, in our ability to perform the various and separate functions necessary to the well-being of a political society. In a stable society these accomplishments—the different kinds of work done by its members—will benefit *both* the fathers and mothers who perform their work and the society as a whole. Just as a mother raises her child knowing that he will, if all goes well, cease his dependence on her and become a father or mother in his own right, our satisfaction at being citizens rests to some extent on our capacity for selflessness.

The success of work depends on its being performed in a political framework, and upon this political nature of work depends the stability of society. Those who complain of "prejudice," when differences between men and women are recognized by a society in the education of its children are apparently unable to make the essential connection between human nature as expressed in habit and the higher aims of society, which utilizes habit to further its own aims and protect itself from decay. To disregard the primacy of motherhood both in a woman's life and in the larger context of society is to disregard the fundamental basis for moral education and the place nature holds in our society. If Mr. Doskow's objections to "prejudice" lie in a fundamental difference between his opinions and the aims of this regime, then he should

(continued on inside back cover)

# St. John's College under Barr and Buchanan: the Fight with the Navy and the Departure of the Founders

J. Winfree Smith

## Public Interest and Internal Changes under Barr and Buchanan

The St. John's curriculum, differing so radically from the curriculums of most American colleges, evoked widespread interest as soon as it was inaugurated. In December 1938 Walter Lippmann wrote a column that appeared in many newspapers in which he praised the St. John's way. He praised it primarily because it promised a recovery of an understanding of the principles on which the American Republic was founded, the understanding that the founding fathers had because of their own study of the classics. "I do know," he wrote, "that in this country and abroad there are men who see that the onset of barbarism must be met not only by programs of rearmament, but by another revival of learning. It is the fact, moreover, that after tentative beginnings in several of the American universities, Columbia, Virginia, and Chicago, a revival is actually begun—is not merely desired, talked about, and projected, but is in operation with teachers and students and a carefully planned course of study." He concluded with the prophecy: "I venture to believe that . . . in the fu-

ture men will point to St. John's College and say that there was the seed-bed of the American Renaissance."<sup>1</sup>

There were many who wanted to know about the revival as it was in operation. A series of articles in the *Baltimore Sun* in January 1939 gave vignettes of what was going on in the tutorials.<sup>2</sup> The freshmen in their mathematics tutorial were wrestling with some of the most fundamental questions in mathematics raised by their investigation of Book 5 of Euclid in the context of the discovery of incommensurable magnitudes. The same freshmen in their language tutorial were making careful analyses of Greek sentences and were translating Plato's *Meno*, using the Greek they were learning to try to find out what was happening in that dialogue, why Socrates said what he said, or asked what he asked, and what Meno's answers might mean in the development of the dialogue. The sophomores were enthusiastically engaged with Apollonius' *Conics*, being in a position to contemplate the beautiful logical and analogical structure of the first book of that work, which they had recently finished reading. In their language tutorial they were translating from a chapter of Augustine's *Confessions*, and producing the following: "They [Augustine's friends who wanted him to write the book] are desirous to hear me confess what I am within; whither neither eye, nor ear, nor understanding is able to dive; they desire it as ready to believe me; but will they know me?" This led to a lively discussion of Augustine's effort at self-knowledge and of whether one can know oneself thoroughly.

About a year later *Life* magazine sent to the college Gerard Piel, who later became the founder and publisher of *Scientific American*.<sup>3</sup> Piel brought with him an excel-

These pages are taken from Chapters IV, V, and VI of J. Winfree Smith's history of St. John's College from 1937 to 1958, which the St. John's College Press will publish in 1983. The work draws on many unpublished sources in the St. John's College Archives, in the Buchanan Files at Houghton Library, Harvard, and elsewhere.

J. Winfree Smith has been a tutor at St. John's College since 1941.

lent photographer and together they produced with words and pictures a quite accurate and attractive account of St. John's with the new program in operation. There was a picture of Buchanan leading a seminar, of a student, Francis Mason, in rapt contemplation of one of Euclid's regular solids, of a group of students in the snow using an instrument with which Aristarchus (third century B.C.) made measurements from which to calculate the sizes and distances of the sun and moon. A two-page spread showed a shelf of the great books with those translated by St. John's faculty clearly marked. These pictures and the accompanying story, both concise and complete, gave a great boost to the enrollment. In the fall of 1940 ninety-three freshmen enrolled as contrasted with forty in 1938 and fifty-four in 1939. People sometimes referred to the class of 1944 as the "Life class." . . .

### Criticism from Outside and Inside and Effect of World War II

Hutchins, Adler, and Barr were not simply advocates of a different kind of college education from what was to be found in American colleges and universities generally. They were constantly attacking college education in institutions other than St. John's. Barr in a public address would say such things as: "Modern college education is being conducted in a new tower of Babel staffed by professors often proud of their own ignorance, its corridors crammed with bewildered students learning a hodgepodge of useless skills and becoming increasingly unintelligible to one another and to the world they face." Hutchins and Barr were devastatingly witty, and this made their attacks all the more effective and provocative. Hutchins and Adler tended to blame John Dewey and his followers for much that they considered wrong with American college education.

It was understandable, then, that there were various counterattacks and especially from the followers of Dewey. Dewey himself in August 1944 published an article in *Fortune* called "A Challenge to Liberal Thought." The article did not refer by name to any of the challengers except Robert Hutchins. It did mention Hutchins's "theological fellow travelers." It did not mention St. John's, but it was generally taken to be directed at St. John's because of such sentences as: "The idea that an adequate education can be obtained by means of a miscellaneous assortment of a hundred books, more or less, is laughable when viewed practically."<sup>1</sup> Dewey concluded from Hutchins's claim that human nature is everywhere and always the same that Hutchins must also think that the principles governing human conduct are unchangeable, that they are to be found not by experimental inquiry or direct observation, but in books. He saw this partly as a reversion to antiquity but even more as a reversion to what he considered to be

the anti-scientific dogmatism of the Middle Ages. Dewey himself was, of course, particularly concerned that education should follow the way of experiment and observation as much in the study of man and society as in the study of non-human things. He saw this way as closely linked with freedom of inquiry made possible by democracy and with the technological control of nature. Hutchins and his friends were, in his opinion, anti-scientific, anti-democratic dogmatists, mindful only of the past and oblivious to the present.

In the issue of *Fortune* for January 1945 Alexander Meiklejohn had "A Reply to John Dewey." Meiklejohn quite naturally supposed that Dewey was attacking the St. John's curriculum, and his reply was largely a defense of that curriculum.

Against the charge that the St. John's way of studying the past led to dogmatism, to the acceptance of some set of beliefs held by somebody in the past, he pointed out that in reading and discussing the great books a St. John's student meets not just one set of beliefs, but many conflicting sets; that he "will find Protagoras at war with Plato, Kant at war with Hume, Rousseau at war with Locke, Veblen at war with Adam Smith, and he must try to understand both sides of these controversies."<sup>2</sup> To the charge that reading a miscellaneous collection of great books in the four college years is laughable as a way of education, when viewed practically, he replied that, for all the startling audacity of having college students read many such very difficult books, the studying of these books was not irresponsibly done, being subject through careful discussion to guidance, correction, and criticism. Against the charge that St. John's ignores the way of experimental inquiry and observation, he pointed out that every student at St. John's was required to devote half of his course of study to the learning of science and of mathematics as the 'language' upon which scientific achievement depends.

In regard to this disagreement between Dewey and Meiklejohn, it should be noted that they both assumed that the St. John's kind of education involved an interest in the past as such. That was, and still is, incorrect. Teachers and students have no interest in studying the past as past. They have an interest in reading certain books that were written in the past because those books raise important perennial questions, questions which are always live and present questions if we let our thought get hold of them. Moreover, St. John's was and is perhaps more radical than either Dewey or Meiklejohn was. For Dewey, while acknowledging that a study of the past is necessary for understanding the present, was quite sure that modern thought represents a tremendous gain over ancient and medieval thought. Meiklejohn, though quite clear about such thinkers as Hume and Kant, nonetheless thought and supposed it to be a basic postulate of St. John's that "from the time of the Greeks until the present the knowledge and wisdom of men have been growing." Actually, at St. John's it would be a question whether there has been

such growth, a question not so easily answered if by wisdom is meant the wisdom about the whole of things. While one could hardly deny that there has been a tremendous growth of 'knowledge' in the modern natural sciences, of which St. John's tries to take sufficient cognizance, it is not easy to decide whether Plato or Hegel were closer to the knowledge of the whole of things.

Dewey's response to Meiklejohn was a letter to *Fortune* in which he said that he had not been referring to St. John's at all in his "A Challenge to Liberal Thought."

The philosophy I criticized [he wrote] is so current and so much more influential than is the work of St. John's, there are only a few sentences in my article even indirectly referring to St. John's. Rightly or wrongly, I had not supposed that the program and work of St. John's was of such importance as to justify my use of the pages of *Fortune* in extended criticism of it, especially as a number of effective criticisms of it had already been made.<sup>3</sup>

The criticisms to which he was referring were principally those of Sidney Hook, which had appeared in the *New Leader* of May 26, 1944, and June 3, 1944, and were later included in a book entitled *Education for Modern Man* under the title "A Critical Appraisal of the St. John's College Curriculum." Some of Hook's criticisms were the same that Dewey had made of Hutchins and Hutchins's "fellow travelers." He claimed that the people at St. John's thought that man has an essential unchangeable nature and that the unchangeable truth about man's nature and about all things can be learned because it is written down in ancient and medieval books, that to possess these truths all one has to do is to read those books. He mentioned that it was the hidden assumption in the philosophy underlying St. John's that "the true answers to our problems can be found by assaying the heritage of antiquity and the Middle Ages."<sup>4</sup> He recognized that in studying books written in ancient Greece the St. John's people were not seeking to know Greek man but to know about human nature, but he seemed to think that what one learns directly from a Greek book is only something about Greek man. He raised the question others have raised through the years, of why there are no Chinese or Hindu books in the St. John's list, why, granted that the reading of ancient literature develops the imagination, the reading of ancient oriental literature might not produce an imaginative sympathy with the problems and experience of those Eastern people with whom we have to deal and will have to deal. He attacked what he considered to be the St. John's doctrine that there is "transfer of learning." Presumably he was referring, for example, to the assumption that in studying the grammar of one language one can learn certain things that appear universally in language, the knowledge of which will be profitable in learning any language and in learning how language may be a means of inquiry or may convey truth about things. He also attacked the view that a good way to learn mathematics and science is through

the reading of classical works in those areas, and he invoked the formidable names of Richard Courant, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Einstein in support of his attack, all of whom in letters from which he quoted supposed that what was in question was a study of the historical development of mathematics and science rather than an understanding of what is fundamental in them through sharing and exploring the thought of the original discoverers. Those responsible for the St. John's curriculum never supposed that it would always be the case that the original discoverer of a science or a scientific theory would make a more intelligible presentation of it than someone else. That it is usually the case is not something known *a priori*, but is a matter of the long experience of both ways of presentation.

Some of Sidney Hook's criticisms were justified. Barr's harsh judgments of other colleges went too far. Barr had no doubt made exaggerated claims when he said that the St. John's students were going to read every one of the books on the list in its entirety. It was certainly debatable whether the whole St. John's curriculum were suitable, as Barr maintained, for all students of college age. It was certainly conceivable that a college student might learn as much from analyzing a bad book such as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as from reading a good or a great book. All of these were points that Hook made. But on the whole his "critical appraisal" was based on misconceptions. One reason that he had so many misconceptions was that he assumed that anything Hutchins or Adler said St. John's would endorse. This illusion on his part was understandable in view of Hutchins's loose connection with the college, first as a member, and then as chairman, of the board, and also in view of Adler's position as lecturer at the college and his constant support of it in public utterances. Hook referred to Adler both as Hutchins's mentor and as the "mentor of the St. John's educators."<sup>5</sup>

Hook should nonetheless have known better, since before writing his articles for the *New Leader* he had had several letters from Buchanan that attempted to limit and define their differences. These letters indeed affirmed "the rational scientific nature" of metaphysics, politics, and religion. Buchanan could hardly expect Hook to agree that metaphysics and religion were scientific. At the same time, he explicitly refused to deny "the rational scientific nature" of social studies, which he knew Hook would strongly affirm. He vigorously resisted the charge of indoctrination, insisting that he would "defend the freedom of the intellect and the will in considering them [the studies mentioned, especially metaphysics and theology] in such a way as to show that indoctrination in them is impossible."<sup>6</sup> Later on he wrote urging Hook to come to the college and lecture; he mentioned several possible topics: "Karl Marx," "The St. John's Brand of 'Indoctrination'" (as Hook saw it), "The Scientific Method, Intelligence and Society."<sup>7</sup> He suggested that such a lecture would be of great aid in the lively controversies that had been going on within the college now that there were faculty and stu-



dents who had read the whole list of books, were caught up in the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, and had engaged in considerable debate about Marx.

It was not possible for Hook to visit St. John's at that time, and by the time he published the *New Leader* articles the character of the exchange of correspondence that he had with Buchanan made the visit increasingly unlikely. It became clearer and clearer that his principal target was Adler, but Hook could never come to terms with Buchanan as long as Buchanan failed to repudiate publicly those statements or positions of Adler with which Buchanan disagreed. On January 26, 1943, Hook wrote to Buchanan:

I am glad to learn that you haven't joined the neo-Thomist "gang." I don't recall using the word, but now that you have used it I think it quite apt. A "gang" is a group of people who are unalterably committed to a vested interest or doctrine, even if truth, honor, and justice be elsewhere. . . . A large number of people, however, believe, apparently on insufficient evidence, that doctrinally you are approaching the neo-Thomists more closely than one would expect on the basis of your personal outlook and better knowledge of your earlier philosophical position. As the leading spirit of an important educational enterprise I think you should be concerned about the generality of this impression. I am taking the liberty of suggesting that it would be helpful if you found an opportunity to state publicly what you thought about the doctrine of neo-Thomism from its sacred theology to its educational philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of disagreements with Adler, Buchanan could not repudiate him in any way that would be satisfactory to Hook. With his view that metaphysics and theology, even if not wholly identical with any metaphysics and theology of the past, were the sciences that would give unity to all knowledge, Buchanan could not well repudiate the neo-Thomists in a way that would be satisfactory to Hook.

After the *New Leader* articles severely critical of Barr as well as of Adler, the exchange between Hook and Buchanan became more and more acrimonious. Buchanan kept inviting Hook to come to St. John's, spend a while, and see for himself. Hook refused to come on the ground that, if he came and found that things were just as he expected, Buchanan would discover one reason after another to explain why he had not been able to put his ideas into execution.

Buchanan did not in any of his letters to Hook reply to the question about oriental classics. His position on the subject was, however, made clear in a reply that he wrote in the spring of 1940 to a letter that made a plea for the inclusion of such classics in the list of great books:

Four years [he wrote] is a short time for reading the books we already have on the list. If I did not think people would go on gradually studying the books these lead to I should think we were a complete fake. We are doing the first reading of the few books which will initiate us to the study of all the things

we should know, including other books. I think the great books of the Orient are included in that perspective.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, Chinese and Hindu books were not in principle excluded from the St. John's curriculum.

The students at St. John's have, on the whole, not been critical of the conception and plan of the curriculum. Perhaps in many cases their decision to attend St. John's rather than some other college has meant an acceptance of that conception and that plan. Most of the students' criticism has been to the effect that the college, while being right and quite articulate about its aims, did not in performance live up to its aims. Not much of this criticism was expressed until the program had been in operation for a few years. Many of the first new programmers within a very short time began to look back on their student days as a "golden age."

The golden age probably never existed. There was indeed a certain excitement among the first new programmers which arose not simply because significant learning is exciting but also because of their belonging to a group who were engaged not in an experiment, but in something new in relation to the conventionalities of other colleges.

One record of student commentary and criticism was the college yearbook, the student editors of which, during the Barr-Buchanan era, were exceptionally intelligent and perceptive. The nineteen forty *Yearbook* mentions what are called "difficulties" encountered in the first year of the program, difficulties that were said to have been overcome or to be in process of being overcome. The difficulties seem to have been caused by the demands on the students' time that went beyond those of the officially announced curriculum. There were lectures for all students twice a week, each of which lasted from two to two and one-half hours. There were, in addition, supplementary lectures on Platonic dialogues. There was a special tutorial for practice in writing in addition to the language tutorial. To discuss the dialogues of Plato in seminar fashion was no doubt a more Socratic way of getting into them than by listening to lectures. In any case, the supplementary lectures were soon eliminated, practice in writing was assigned to the language tutorial, and the number of lectures reduced to one a week with an hour and a half as the time limit. "The greatest difficulty this class [the first new program class] has met so far in connection with the curriculum," the nineteen forty *Yearbook* reported, "has been the laboratory. After the class had roamed aimlessly for a year or so in its lab work a method of instruction has been developed that runs much more smoothly and is better correlated with the rest of the Program."<sup>10</sup>

The entry of the United States into World War II brought many changes in the college. In October 1939 the *St. John's Collegian* took a poll among the students to get their opinion about United States policy in relation to the war which had clearly begun in Europe. Eighty-one students responded to the five questions that were asked. The questions and the results of the poll were as follows:<sup>11</sup>



1. Should the United States give immediate armed support to the European democracies?

Yes	No	No opinion
8	72	1

2. Should this country assist England and France by filling, as far as possible, their demands for munitions and commodities such as food, raw materials, and manufactured goods?

Yes	No	No opinion
34	42	5

3. Should America pursue a policy of strict isolationism concerning European affairs?

Yes	No	No opinion
38	41	2

4. Do you think Britain and France should attempt to make peace with Germany at this stage of the war?

Yes	No	No opinion
21	55	5

5. In case of this country's engaging in the present war in Europe, would you volunteer before a draft were effected?

Yes	No	No opinion
27	55	4

In over a hundred colleges throughout the country similar polls were taken and with similar results. At that time American college students were strongly opposed to sending American troops to support England and France but a larger percentage (42 per cent) than was the case at St. John's were willing to volunteer if England and France were in danger of defeat.

Student opinion at St. John's seems to have changed by the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. When the news of Pearl Harbor came, there was, according to the nineteen forty-two *Yearbook*, much talk among the students about enlistment. A college meeting was called the day after and the students expected Barr and Buchanan to plead with them to stay at least until June 1942. Barr did not plead with them to stay. Having made the point that only a few ever take part in what the young might consider the romantic adventures of war, he suggested a definite choice either to enlist or to stay and work at studies. He even suggested that it might be their duty to stay; he believed that it was of the utmost importance that good thinking about war and peace should go on while the country was at war, and that colleges, especially St. John's College, should not close, but stay open and think about war and peace. Buchanan at the same college meeting spoke of the problems that would arise in the relation of the college to the townspeople who, as the country became more and more involved in the war, would judge and condemn those young men who were studying God

knows what when they ought to be fighting in defense of their country. The editor of the *Yearbook*, John Louis Hedeman, ended his account of this meeting with the report that "for the most part, students, thinking things over, found that a year or even two or three in the army did not appeal to them and went back to their seminars to discuss the same problems in the light of ages past."<sup>12</sup>

The college administration took various steps to prepare the students in what they thought might be useful in the war. There was a three-hour course once a week in radio. There was a course in navigation. Franz Plunder, a sculptor and boat-builder, who also possessed many other skills, taught a group of about sixty persons the intricacies of the gasoline engine, for, as the nineteen forty-two *Yearbook* put it, "no one knew which St. Johnnie might be stranded in a tank somewhere on the battlefield, where there would be no hardware store and mechanics for him to turn to."<sup>13</sup> The press poked a certain amount of fun at the "great books" college for this course in the gasoline engine. Actually the course was in line with Buchanan's view that there is a training of the intellect that happens in the learning and practice of the manual arts as well as the liberal arts. Also, Buchanan knew that one learns quite a bit of physics if one acquires a full understanding of all the transformations of energy that take place in the internal combustion engine.

Whether these courses were in fact useful to many of the students when later they were in military service is doubtful. But at the time they helped them to feel that they were not just engaged in talk about the war but were doing something. In spite of the talk that went on in meetings to discuss the war, and in spite of the activities just mentioned, the war did not have a great impact upon the college during the session of 1941-42. Many students, through joining the reserves, were able to finish the year. All students, not just the reservists, were required to take part in military drill, which all accepted, though some found it irksome. It was in the following session that the war really began to have a big effect. At the beginning of that session there were 173 students enrolled. By the end of the year there were fewer than a hundred. When the next session began, there were only forty-two in the three upper classes. Only seven of the ninety-three in the "Life class" remained to receive degrees in 1944. Not only were students leaving in droves for military service, but faculty were leaving too, among them some who had contributed most to get the program established and to make it go: George Comenetz, Catesby Taliaferro, John Neustadt, and Raymond Wilburn. There were also very promising newcomers on the faculty who had hardly been at the college a year before having to leave for military service or for some employment related to the war effort.

The president and the dean thought that it would be fitting to mark with a ceremony the departure of students for the war. During the 1942-43 session there were two occasions when a solemn ceremony was held in the college's Great Hall, and all those leaving for the war took the

Ephebic oath administered by Barr. This oath was once taken by Athenian youth as they were going off to war:

I will not disgrace the name of my country and I will not desert my comrades in the ranks. By myself and with my fellows I will defend what is sacred, whether private or public. I will hand on my country not lessened but greater and nobler than it was handed down to me. I will hearken diligently to those duly charged with judging, and I will obey the established laws and whatever others the people with common consent establish. And if anyone attempts to overthrow the laws, or not obey them, I will not stand idly by but by myself and with all my comrades I will defend the law. And I will honor the religion of my fathers. The gods be witness of these things.<sup>14</sup>

There were some who wondered how American youth could honor the religion of their fathers and at the same time call upon the Greek gods to witness their oath. But everyone felt the seriousness of the occasion. Some of the young men who took the oath were to give their lives in combat. Many were to follow Barr's admonition, given on that occasion, not to forget in the midst of all the irrationality of war that there is still such a thing as human reason. Many, too, would return when the war was over.

Obviously, the college had to take some drastic steps if it were not to close its doors. It was decided to admit as freshmen at the beginning of every term fifteen-year-olds who had not finished high school,<sup>15</sup> and also to add a summer term to the three terms already current. In this way a fifteen-year-old could complete his college course in three years and do so before being subject to the draft. With the admission of freshmen in June and September 1943 the total enrollment went up to 138, and it never again fell as low as it did in the spring of 1943. In the fall of 1946, when the accelerated schedule had already been abandoned, the return of veterans shot the enrollment up to 253.

The yearbooks for 1944 and for 1945-46, edited by Robert Campbell and Eugene Thaw, reflect a considerable amount of self-criticism on the part of students and also criticism of the college. The loss of such a large portion of the students in 1942-43 was very depressing for those who remained, who, if they were not wondering when they themselves might have to leave, were agonizingly asking themselves whether staying in college and studying were the best thing to be doing when their friends were engaged in a war, the outcome of which was so important for human life on this planet. "We neglected our studies," Campbell wrote in the nineteen forty-four *Yearbook*, "and sought diversion. . . . We became adept and ingenious at excusing our own vices and our facility in this respect usually manifested itself in criticism, not of the Program itself (for we knew too well its necessity, goodness, and consequences) but of the way in which it was being applied."<sup>16</sup> The students do not seem to have shared Buchanan's opinion that the books are the teachers and that the faculty are decidedly of minor importance. The loss not only of some of the best students, but also of

outstanding faculty was considered a serious injury to successful study within the program. Said Campbell,

The advent of the war, although unable to affect the Program, certainly introduced deficiencies into the teaching of it. A good faculty is absolutely essential to good participation in the program by the student body. It may be argued that the books are, after all, the teachers, and that the student learns from them rather than from the faculty, the latter being only the means leading the students to the end, but from this it would be difficult to conclude that the quality of the means is unimportant.<sup>17</sup>

He found the faculty who had come to replace those who had left definitely inferior.

Also the great number of young freshmen and the small number of upperclassmen, so Campbell thought, destroyed the learning community as a community, even if individually some students were doing better work than they had done before. The juniors and seniors, instead of communicating to the freshmen customs and habits conducive to the kind of study most suitable for success within the program, retired into small groups and left the freshmen to produce, or not to produce, their own traditions.

"The Iron Age" was the title given to the next yearbook, edited by Eugene Thaw, which was a two-year book since the drafting of two editors into military service had prevented the production of a yearbook in 1945. The title indicated that the two years covered were being thought of as a period of decline from an earlier 'golden age', but also along with the dedication to Virgil it indicated a hope for a golden age to come. The yearbook spoke of a "trend of decline" in all sections of the program except the formal lectures. It complained of student lethargy and of inadequate preparation for tutorials with the result that much routine work which should have been done outside of class had to be done in class. The claim was made that the seminars had suffered as a consequence. The tutorials were called the "mainstay of the program" as the place for the acquisition of skills to be exhibited and tested in the seminar. "The seminar," it was said, "is the finished product of the program, accomplished and consummate, however, only to the degree of success in tutorial."<sup>18</sup>

In the fall of 1945 there was a change in schedule from five one-hour tutorial classes a week to three classes with normal length of an hour-and-a-half. This was thought to have produced improvement in the quality of the tutorials. But it was set down as a disadvantage that the new scheduling had made it impossible for a student to attend a language or mathematics tutorial other than the one to which he had been assigned. The mere fact that a student might want to attend another such class with the expectation of getting a better understanding than he had got in his assigned class pointed to the strong student opinion that it mattered very much that the tutors were unequal in teaching ability and in their grasp of what they were teaching.

As Campbell had done in the nineteen forty-four *Year-*

book, Thaw made a plea for a place for the fine arts within the curriculum. Music as a fine art has, since the time of Barr and Buchanan, had some place in the curriculum. Concerts have been given on certain Friday evenings instead of lectures. Herbert Swartz in 1938, Elliott Carter in 1940, and Nicholas Nabokov in 1941 were all added to the faculty in large part because of their musical knowledge which, it was expected, would enable them to suggest how music as a fine art might fit into the curriculum and also to sponsor and supervise music as an extracurricular activity. None of them remained very long and little came of their efforts. When Carter and Nabokov were at the college there were seminars on musical compositions, but the musicians were at odds with Buchanan, who thought that one should study the scores without listening to and without ever having listened to the sounds represented by the staves with their whole notes, half notes and quarter notes, etc., and without even knowing that those marks might refer to sounds.

In August 1937 Buchanan had written on the subject of the college and the fine arts to an inquirer:

In our study of liberal college education, we have been forced to consider the bookish classics as the basic medium of our teaching. There is a sense in which great books are works of fine art; on the other hand, we realize very vividly that we are ignoring, or seeming to ignore, the classics in the fine arts proper. When we have consolidated our program, we shall turn very definitely to the problem of teaching the fine arts as well as the liberal arts. In the meantime we shall proceed tentatively with extracurricular activities in the fine arts.<sup>19</sup>

Buchanan had a theory about the fine arts, namely that at the Renaissance they had become substitutes for the sacraments. He no doubt would have liked to have St. John's discover the right way of combining divine arts, liberal arts, fine arts, and manual arts. During the Barr-Buchanan era, however, little was done to encourage the study of works of fine art besides musical works. Edgar Wind of the Warburg Institute gave some excellent lectures on the School of Athens, the frescoes of the Sistine ceiling, and Hogarth, but that was about all. When later Jacob Klein became dean, he even called in question the meaningfulness of the term "fine arts" as applied in common to music and the visual arts. Herbert Swartz, in a radio talk in 1939, explaining the place of music in a liberal college program, argued that what music, painting, and sculpture have in common is that they are *end* arts rather than useful arts, arts the products of which are to be understood and enjoyed for their own sake rather than arts the products of which are to be used. In any case, whether works of music, painting, and sculpture are all of the same kind or not, Eugene Thaw in the nineteen forty-five-forty-six *Yearbook* wrote convincingly, "It seems not too much to ask an undergraduate college concerned with producing well-educated men to take notice of Michelangelo and Pheidias."<sup>20</sup>

## The Fight with the Navy in War Time and the Departure of Barr and Buchanan

This is a strange, and perhaps incomprehensible, story. The struggle over the possible acquisition by the Navy of the St. John's campus had three distinct episodes. Its outcome was favorable to St. John's in the judgement of nearly everyone except Barr and Buchanan, whose departure shortly thereafter astonished nearly everyone. The first of these episodes began in 1940. It was announced to the faculty in September of that year that there was a rumor that the United States Naval Academy, whose grounds are separated from the St. John's campus only by a street,<sup>1</sup> wished to acquire the campus. Admiral Wilson Brown, then Superintendent of the Naval Academy, and Stringfellow Barr, who had very amicable relations with each other, went together to Washington on October first to appear before the Senate Appropriations Committee who were considering the question of the acquisition of the campus by the Navy for the expansion of the Academy. An exchange of correspondence between Barr and Brown occurred shortly after that. Barr wrote, "It seems to me desirable that I should repeat to you in writing what I then stated to the Committee. You will recall that I was asked by Senator Byrnes [James Byrnes, later Secretary of State] what would be my attitude as President of St. John's College towards a proposal by the Navy Department to purchase the College in order to expand the present facilities of the Naval Academy. You will also doubtless recall my reply that as President of the College I would urgently recommend to the trustees that they reject such a proposal unless it could be clearly demonstrated that the exigencies of the national defense program required the Naval Academy to secure our property rather than other available land."<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after that the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, stated that the Navy would make no attempt to take the St. John's campus provided that St. John's agree to two conditions laid down by President Franklin Roosevelt: (1) that the college not dispose of her property without first notifying the Navy and giving the Navy a chance to purchase it; (2) that the land not be used for any other purpose than that of the college and that no other than college buildings be erected upon it. Agreement on the second condition put an end to an attempt by the Annapolis Housing Authority to take by condemnation one and a third acres of the campus as a site for low cost housing for white people of moderate income. Barr was only too glad to assent to these conditions and by January 31, 1941, he was able to report to the St. John's board that "the question of the Naval Academy's acquiring the property of the College was now definitely settled."<sup>3</sup>

The second episode was very brief. It occurred in July 1942 when the United States was already at war, and the Navy was faced with the necessity of expanding its facili-

ties for the training of officers. On July 15, Barr wrote to Knox reminding him of positions taken by St. John's and the Navy when Wilson Brown had been Superintendent of the Academy, and reporting that an aide to the then superintendent had appeared on the campus to look it over to see whether it could be used as an indoctrination school for Naval Reserve officers. He went on to say, "It is most doubtful whether the College could survive transplanting," but continued, "I am certain you will not construe this letter as an objection to the Navy's defense [presumably of the country]." The secretary replied that such surveys as the aide was making were being made at institutions in many places and that there was no specific proposal about the St. John's campus.<sup>4</sup>

The third episode, the dramatic culmination, began early in 1945. On February 28 of that year, Barr reported to the board as follows:

Because of persistent and increasing rumors that the Navy Department is about to seize St. John's College or that the State of Maryland might 'acquire' the College (possibly in order later to 'decide' to hand it over to the Navy Department) I ought to report to you what facts I possess.

On February 13, 1945, Delegate Bertram L. Boone (D. 5th, Baltimore) introduced a bill in the Maryland House of Delegates calling for appointment of a commission to examine the possibility of the State's taking over St. John's. In presenting the bill, Mr. Boone announced, 'The thing is going to pot.'

The next day I stated in the press that 'St. John's College is not for sale,' and a 'spokesman' for the Navy Department said, 'The Navy has no present plans for the acquisition of St. John's College.'

Meanwhile, Mrs. Douglas Howard, widow of Captain Howard, once Dean of St. John's College, had written Admiral Ernest King, who is an intimate friend of hers, urging that the Navy Department disassociate itself from the Navy-Realtor clique, a clique that has now resorted to defamation of the College in order to squeeze it out of town. Mrs. Howard showed me Ernie's reply which was to the effect that the rumor has substantial basis in fact, that the Academy was to be approximately double its size and that the most available land for this expansion was our campus and the three blocks of residence property between the Academy and King George St. Admiral King stated that the matter would be decided by the President at the end of this month. I have since learned that Admiral Wilson Brown, formerly Superintendent of the Academy and most friendly to the College, now once more Naval Aide to the President, has several times blocked seizure.

I am personally disinclined to pull wires to prevent seizure. The Navy, it should be reported, feels more threatened than we do—by the California delegation in Congress, which is working to get a part of their establishment here moved to the Coast. This fact is known to the business element of Annapolis, who therefore feel the College is standing between them and their bread and butter. The College's relations with the town have, therefore, never been more painful during my administration.<sup>5</sup>

On March 9, James V. Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, and Admiral Chester Nimitz had lunch with President Roosevelt and, as Forrestal reports in his Diary:<sup>6</sup>

I told him [Roosevelt] of Senator Tydings' inquiry regarding St. John's College. He said he thought it was desirable to acquire the St. John's grounds and buildings but would like to see the buildings preserved. I told him I shared his feeling and reported Admiral King's suggestion that we grasp the nettle firmly and go across the river to acquire land for expansion of the Academy. The general conclusion was:

- a) Acquire St. John's
- b) Keep the buildings and grounds intact
- c) Proceed with acquisition of land across the river for further additions to the Academy.

This entry in Forrestal's diary supports Admiral King's statement to Mrs. Howard that the rumor had "substantial basis in fact." No one connected with St. John's knew of this meeting with Roosevelt, but, because the persistent rumor did appear to have a basis in fact, the Board, no doubt with the approval, if not under the prompting of Barr and Buchanan, on April 21, 1945, formulated the following statement of policy to be sent to Secretary Forrestal:

(1) The present uncertainty, aggravated by irresponsible rumors of imminent condemnation of the College's property, is harmful to the morale of the College, to its relations with the Annapolis community, and to the College Administration's ability to exercise its function wisely or to plan intelligently for future building now in prospect. An immediate understanding with the Navy Department is accordingly imperative.

(2) This Board is entrusted with and proposes to fulfill the continuing responsibility of carrying on vigorously the function of the College, and cannot deal with its property as mere real estate and buildings. The Board believes that this function could be carried on elsewhere, in spite of obvious problems and difficulties, if an adequate site and the means of acquiring it could be made available. The Board, however, feels that it cannot properly or intelligently consider removing the College from its historic site in Annapolis unless the Navy Department formally represents to the Board that acquisition of the College property is required in the national interest. The Board, obviously, could not undertake to pass judgment on the decision of the Navy Department. Nor does the Board propose to interpose any objection to such acquisition, provided that the arrangements permit the Board, in its judgment, to continue to carry on the work of the College, and to discharge its legal and moral obligations to its college community, including faculty, students, alumni, the benefactors, creditors, and the State of Maryland.

(3) The Board respectfully records its conviction that the Navy Department has a genuine responsibility in the premises to dispose of the present damaging impasse by plainly advising the Board at this time whether or not it now requires the College property for the national welfare; and furthermore, whether or not present plans for the future will require it. [Statement of Policy, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library, Harvard University.]

This statement of policy was the crucial document in the whole affair. Whereas Barr's letter to Knox four years earlier had said, "It's doubtful whether the College could

survive transplanting" this statement says "The Board believes this function [the function of educating] could be carried on elsewhere in spite of obvious problems and difficulties, if an adequate site and the means of acquiring it could be made available." Also, whereas in 1940 Barr had said that he would recommend that the trustees reject the proposal for acquisition unless it could be *clearly demonstrated* that the exigencies of the national defense program required the Naval Academy to secure the College property, etc., this statement makes no mention of clear demonstration but asks that the Navy Department *formally represent* to the board that "acquisition of the College property is required in the national interest." It goes on to say that the board "could not undertake to pass judgment on the decision of the Navy Department," that the board does not "propose to interpose any objection to such acquisition whether by formal condemnation or negotiation, provided that the arrangements permit the Board, in its judgment, to continue to carry on the work of the College," etc.

The admirals and the Secretary of the Navy little knew what this statement of policy was going to get them into. They understood it as tantamount to an offer. That this was the Navy's interpretation is clear from the subsequent testimony of Admiral Moreell, Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee. Admiral Moreell stated, "The acquisition of the adjoining property [the St. John's campus] has been under consideration for a number of years, but the Department has not advanced this project due to the reluctance of the board of governors and visitors of the college to dispose of this property. The college authorities, however, have recently expressed a willingness to dispose of the property to the Navy Department in the event that it is needed in connection with the Naval Academy."<sup>7</sup> It certainly appeared to the admirals that St. John's was ready to let the Navy have the campus provided the Navy did no more than declare the acquisition necessary in the national interest and provided that the college receive sufficient compensation to enable it to continue elsewhere as the distinguished liberal arts college it had become.

The board's action, interpreted as it was by the Navy, precipitated the Navy's final and most serious attempt to acquire the St. John's campus. On April 27, 1945, Secretary Forrestal wrote to Thomas Parran, chairman of the St. John's board and at that time Surgeon General of the United States: "It now appears that the expansion of the Naval Academy will require the acquisition of the present property belonging to St. John's College." But he had not declared that the acquisition was necessary in the national interest. On May 5 Dr. Parran, in a letter to Secretary Forrestal, inquired when the Navy would acquire the campus since plans for the removal of the college would require more definite knowledge. A month later Forrestal replied that negotiations would begin immediately.<sup>8</sup> The Naval Affairs committees of the Senate and the House still had to approve the acquisition, but the Secretary of the Navy

seems to have had little doubt that they would. On May 7 Buchanan wrote to Robert Hutchins:

Perhaps you ought to know my opinion of certain events here. You will have seen our communication with James Forrestal. You may not have heard the reply. It is that the expansion of the Naval Academy will require the acquisition of the St. John's campus. Action waits on Congressional appropriation. What had appeared in prospect as a desirable event is, because of numerous circumstances, becoming a crisis. Where do we go and how? Do we go or not?<sup>9</sup>

Hutchins replied, "You really say something when you say the Naval Academy requires the campus and is merely waiting for an appropriation. This sounds to me like an Opportunity."<sup>10</sup>

What was the event desirable in prospect? Was it the acquisition of the campus by the Navy? And was the "Opportunity" that of moving the St. John's program from a place where, as Buchanan thought, the Navy was always making it difficult to pursue the program? A letter of about the same time from Buchanan to Senator Wayne Morse claimed that the Naval Academy dominated Annapolis commercially, was pandered to by the city and county governments, and that the state government paid more attention to the Navy than to the public welfare.<sup>11</sup> He clearly thought that the mere presence of the Navy was damaging not only to the college, but to the town and to the state and to the citizens of the town and of the state.

As early as June 1944 he had written in a letter to his son Douglas,

Winkie and I have today been wondering again how to extricate the program from this place. It is now quite clear that the academy is what has kept this poor little college sick for almost a century. We can't see how we move alive but we can see that we ought to have done so a year ago last January when we had to decide whether we would suspend operations or take youngsters. We should have suspended; a great deal of damage to the idea itself has resulted from our noble decision to carry on.

A year later he wrote, "The Navy has turned the town into a little Fascist community governed by greed and fear."

What caused the event desirable in prospect to become a crisis? For one thing, alumni tend not to think of the college they have attended as an invisible chartered entity which might exist on other land and in other buildings than those in which they used to eat, sleep, study, and learn. So it was with St. John's alumni. The president of the Alumni Association, William Lentz, a Baltimore lawyer, wrote Senator Radcliffe on behalf of the association, protesting the annexation of the campus by the Academy. He stated that the alumni "feel that it is detrimental to the national interest to emasculate a college of liberal arts unless the most pressing and urgent national necessity requires it," and expressed the opinion of the alumni that

"it should not be left solely to the Navy to determine whether that existed."<sup>12</sup>

The public generally seemed to view what was happening as a fight between the Navy with the power of the big federal government behind it and little St. John's. Almost immediately the people of Annapolis and people all over the country took sides. The *Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun* in editorials opposed the Navy's taking the campus.<sup>13</sup> The *Post* proposed in a front page editorial that, because of the importance for national security of the naval and air bases in the Pacific, there should be established a second naval academy on the Pacific coast. Several senators from western states were in support of that proposal. Josephus Daniels, who had been Secretary of the Navy under Woodrow Wilson, in a letter to the *Post* supported a Pacific coast Academy as opposed to expanding the Academy in Annapolis. The businessmen of Annapolis became alarmed. They wanted the business that would necessarily result from doubling the brigade of midshipmen and hence greatly increasing the payroll of the Academy. They were fearful that Annapolis might lose the Naval Academy, and their fear was strengthened by a statement from Lansdale Sasscer, the Congressman for the Congressional district in which Annapolis lies, to the effect that, if a second academy were established on the west coast, "The education of midshipmen will be rapidly transferred to the West Coast Academy and Annapolis will become only a specialist or post graduate school. . . . we have got to either press for the expansion program at the Naval Academy which includes the taking of St. John's . . . or else lose the Academy." The mayor of Annapolis, William U. McCready, reminded his fellow Annapolitans that the Naval Academy brought to the community \$17.5 million in annual payroll.

In the meantime Buchanan had discovered the Dartmouth College case. Dartmouth College was incorporated by royal charter in 1769. After the American Revolution and in the course of a controversy between the Republicans and the Federalists of that time, the New Hampshire legislature changed the college charter in such a way as to replace the self-perpetuating body of trustees with a state-appointed body of trustees and a board of overseers. This would have transformed what had been a private college into a public one directly under the control of the state government. The state court of New Hampshire upheld the act of the legislature, but the Supreme Court of the United States reversed the decision. Chief Justice John Marshall, delivering the opinion of the Court, argued that the acts of the legislature were unconstitutional because they were in violation of Article I, Section 10 of the Constitution which declares that "no State shall . . . pass any bill . . . impairing the obligation of contracts." The royal charter was regarded as a contract establishing a corporation and therefore not subject to change by the legislature.

There is perhaps a superficial resemblance between the New Hampshire government's attempt to change the institutional character of Dartmouth and the attempt by

the Navy in 1945 to acquire the St. John's campus. In each case there was an action on the part of government against a liberal arts college. But the federal government in 1945, unlike the New Hampshire government in 1816, was not attempting to alter the terms of the charter with which the state legislature had incorporated St. John's in 1784 and hence was not "impairing the obligation of a contract." Moreover, the Naval Affairs Committees were concerned that St. John's receive adequate compensation for the campus and buildings so that the College could continue as the same incorporated entity on another site.

Buchanan, however, saw St. John's as leading a fight on behalf of all liberal arts colleges as the old trustees of Dartmouth had fought and won a fight that had implications for all liberal arts colleges in America. It was his ambition to get the United States government to abjure the exercise against liberal arts colleges of the power of eminent domain. As he wrote to his son Douglas on July 9, 1945, "The big question is whether the right of eminent domain could be challenged under the Dartmouth case. I think it could be if one wanted to build a case." Recalling that it was St. John's that in April 1945 had first suggested negotiations with the Navy, he said in a statement to the Board on July 31, 1946,

We were important members, albeit revolutionary members, of the great liberal arts college family. We were ready to take on the responsibilities of leaders in that family, and to fight our own battle without their help if necessary or to fight their battle for them if it could be seen that way.<sup>14</sup>

It is a recognized principle that the federal government may exercise the power of eminent domain and acquire property whenever it is "necessary and proper" for it to do so in order to carry out any of the powers conferred on it by the Constitution,<sup>15</sup> and it may do that by condemnation proceedings if no other way is open. It would seem that no exception could be made in the case of liberal arts colleges. The question, however, of the necessity and propriety of the Navy's taking the St. John's campus remained.

No one voiced any desire to destroy St. John's as an invisible chartered entity or as such an entity embodied in persons and buildings. For many Annapolitans it was just a question of money. If the Academy were expanded in Annapolis, that would mean more money for the town. If the federal government compensated St. John's financially in a way that would make it possible for it to continue with its liberal arts program elsewhere, why should reasonable persons object? The editor of the *Annapolis Evening Capital* did go so far as to say,

In cold logical fact, Annapolis has been given the choice between allowing the expansion of a great national institution, the only one of its kind in the United States and one which guards the safety of the people and a college which is but one of many similar educational institutions.<sup>16</sup>

On June 27, 1945, a five-man House Naval Affairs subcommittee, of which Congressman Sasscer was a member,

visited Annapolis to inspect possible sites for the expansion of the Academy. They also interviewed two Annapolis real estate men to inquire about possible sites for the relocation of St. John's. The realtors suggested two sites near Annapolis. One was at Holly Beach farm, the Labrot estate at Sandy Point, nine miles away. The other was at Hillsmere on the South River, five miles away. A Baltimore architect, James R. Edmunds, who was then president of the American Institute of Architects, after studying the situation, indicated several other possibilities for the expansion of the Academy than the purchase of the St. John's campus.<sup>17</sup>

The St. John's board, including Barr and Buchanan, were indeed concerned, as the statement of policy of April 21, 1945, shows, with having the wherewithal to continue the function of the college on another site in the event that the Navy were to take the campus. But they meant what they said when they made removal of the college conditional upon the Navy's representing to the Board that acquisition of the college property was necessary in the national interest. They may have come to mean a little more than they said, since Buchanan was soon to talk about requiring the Navy not simply to "declare" but to "find" national interest. Neither the House committee nor the Senate committee on naval affairs had up to this point made any formal declaration. Nor had the Secretary of the Navy. There were hearings before the committees during June 1945. Richard Cleveland, then secretary of the board, appearing before the Senate Committee on June 20, attempted to make sure that the committee understood what importance the board attached to the declaration of necessity:

First, the Board makes clear that it will cheerfully accede to genuine national necessity if such necessity, as distinguished from convenience, is formally declared by the Navy. We now assume that the function of making such a determination and declaration of national necessity has been transferred from the Navy Department to the Congress [i.e. the Congressional committees]. The Board waives the privilege of arguing national necessity, but waives this privilege on condition that the terms of acquisition permit the Board, in its judgment, to continue to do its duty to the college community. While waiving conditionally the right for itself to argue the issue of necessity, the Board would be disappointed if the Congress did not exhaustively explore that issue. We respectfully suggest that in the distinction between necessity and convenience there is an issue much more significant in America's future than the continued life of this little college. . . .

If this Committee should determine that acquisition of the College property is not in the national interest, we respectfully urge that the basis of that determination be made so explicit and so decisive that no rational persons can ever again raise the issue. We would first prefer to stay in Annapolis under conditions which would guarantee our future security. If that security is compromised, we would prefer to move to a site where no overshadowing neighbor holds the power of eminent domain. . . . If the air is once cleared, we have no fear of our ability to live near the Naval Academy in harmony and mutual respect.

Perhaps this is no Dartmouth College case. But it is being watched all over this nation by citizens who hope that this war has not been fought in vain.<sup>18</sup>

It seems that the committees and the Navy Department still did not grasp what St. John's was after in asking for a declaration of national necessity.<sup>19</sup> At a meeting in Secretary Forrestal's office on July 20, 1945, at which Senator Walsh, Chairman of the Senate Committee and Congressman Vinson, Chairman of the House Committee and various naval officers were present, and after they had agreed on the project of expanding the Academy by acquiring the St. John's campus, "the Secretary suggested (and it was adopted as the course of action to be pursued) that Admiral Jacobs prepare a letter for the signature of the Secretary to the Trustees of the College outlining the results of this meeting—i.e., that because of the needs of the post-war Navy the Academy must be expanded, that the Navy intends to acquire the property by negotiation if possible, or by condemnation if necessary."<sup>20</sup>

I think it unlikely that the Board had received or knew of this letter when they met the following day.<sup>21</sup> Buchanan was obviously disappointed with what had, or had not, happened at the board meeting. For the day after in a lengthy statement to the board, after referring to "eight years of startling success of the St. John's program," he berated the members for not pressing hard enough for a declaration about national interest. He said,

The Statement of Policy of April 21st recognizes and embraces our highest duty as trustees in the present situation, namely to 'find' national interest. It does this by refusing to give or sell the campus or discuss damages until national interest is 'found' by due process of law. . . . finding national interest allows of two courses, negotiation and condemnation. The Navy has chosen the former. On a previous occasion [probably in 1942] we chose condemnation and the Navy withdrew.

He went on to say, "This campus is essential to this College and its defence is therefore a part of the essential obligation of its trustees." He tried to frighten the board by saying that they could possibly be indicted for not fulfilling their function as trustees, and threatened to resign from the board as a vote of lack of confidence in them.<sup>22</sup>

Whether there was some communication with the Navy Department or the committees during the following week is not clear. On July 27, probably as a consequence of the July 20 meeting in Forrestal's office, Senator Walsh (D. Mass.), the chairman of the Senate committee, was writing a letter to Talbot Speer, president and publisher of the *Evening Capital*. He wrote that the Senate committee had taken no action except to authorize the Navy Department to enter into negotiations with the authorities at St. John's to see if an agreement on price could be reached.<sup>23</sup> He affirmed his understanding that the college would remain in possession of the campus for the next academic session. A postscript shows that, no sooner had he dictated the letter, than it was brought to his attention that this would not



satisfy the St. John's board. He was given the impression that what the board wanted was simply action by the two congressional committees to authorize the Navy Department to acquire the campus as distinguished from negotiation with a view to agreeing on a price. This authorization he proceeded to obtain from House Committee and a majority of the Senate Committee by the next day.

On August 4 a special committee of the St. John's board meeting in Baltimore decided on the basis of published reports that the congressional committees had not met the first of the board's conditions. They agreed that they should not at this point compromise their position by entering into any negotiation; and they requested Cleveland to seek a personal talk with Senator Walsh.

Cleveland met with Walsh on August 15 at the senator's office and, while he was trying once more to make the college's position clear, Vinson walked in. So he got to talk with the chairmen of both committees. Apparently, almost up to this point they had believed, perhaps because of the Statement of Policy of April 21, that St. John's wanted to sell the campus without any fuss. They had now begun to understand that this was not the case. According to Cleveland, Senator Walsh seemed to get the point about the declaration of national necessity, though Congressman Vinson did not. Vinson "stated emphatically that he thought his committee would find national interest if that was what we wanted."<sup>24</sup> Both chairmen declared that the action of their committees up to that time had not authorized condemnation but only negotiation and agreed that nothing would be done until the Congress reconvened on September 5, after which hearings would be held. At a hearing in the fall on October 2, the Board stated flatly that they "would not willingly sell the historic campus at any price."<sup>25</sup>

About this time Buchanan used the *Collegian*, the student newspaper, to report to the college as follows: "With the help of Mr. Edmunds the College was resting its whole case on the architectural problem and alternative solutions [for the expansion of the Academy] instead of the campus. It should be noted that the full force of the attack [St. John's attack on the Navy] was actually Socratic irony, tending to make the Navy produce its windegg. . . ."

"October 24th has been set as the day for the formal decision by the House Committee. Will the College celebrate with hemlock or a feast in the Mess Hall in Bancroft? We shall discuss immortality<sup>26</sup> while the ship returns from Aegina.

"Proposed toast in case it is drunk in hemlock:

Here stood  
St. John's College  
The first liberal arts college  
To be condemned by  
The United States Government  
1784-1946  
They knew not what they did."<sup>27</sup>

October 24 came and went and there was no announcement from Washington. In a new formal statement of policy dated November 21, 1945, the board reviewed the events since April and asserted that it was unfortunate that the project had proceeded so far before the record could be set straight on this simple but vital point. They expressed their belief that the Navy had not proved that the acquisition of the St. John's campus was necessary in the national interest. "It is now clear," they said, "that the extensive testimony before the Committees fell far short of establishing national necessity for this unprecedented use of the power of eminent domain; that failure of the Committees to act after their long and exhaustive inquiry is in itself evidence that no such necessity exists. In the light of these developments in the long interval since the Board's statement of policy, made on April 21, 1945, that statement is no longer a realistic or relevant statement of the Board's duty as trustees, and is hereby withdrawn. The Board therefore regard the unfortunate episode as concluded, and trust that the Naval Academy and St. John's are now free to proceed in mutual respect and harmony, as neighbors, to get on with their respective functions." They urged the congressional committees to declare the acquisition not necessary in the national interest and urged the Secretary of the Navy to withdraw the project, stating their belief that the government should make a public declaration that "the Government does not intend to acquire in any manner, the campus of St. John's College."<sup>28</sup>

Nothing conclusive was heard from the Naval Affairs Committees or the Navy Department until well into the next year. In the meantime Paul Mellon, who had been a student at St. John's in 1940-41 and who had, by generous contributions over the years, kept the college going on a year-to-year basis, wrote to Stringfellow Barr,

Ever since last June I have been interested in setting up an initial endowment for the St. John's Program. I have been deterred from action by doubts as to whether St. John's College could keep its campus. I have felt that if it could not, it might be more in the interest of American education to find a stronger institutional vehicle to develop the education program which you initiated at St. John's.

I am therefore placing at the disposal of the Old Dominion Foundation securities currently producing an income of \$125,000 per annum, which may be used for the purpose of developing the type of education now carried on at St. John's College and for other similar purposes. I am instructing the Trustees of the Foundation that they may rely on your personal judgment as to whether St. John's can be expected to preserve the campus or whether some other college you may designate will better carry out my intention and thereby become the beneficiary of these funds.<sup>29</sup>

When later Mellon agreed to contribute a total endowment of \$4.5 million, it looked as if St. John's College might for the first time in its history become financially secure. But the question whether it would or not depended on the outcome of the Navy affair. At the same

faculty meeting at which Barr announced Mellon's intention to endow the program, whether at St. John's or elsewhere, he also announced that "the Chairman and the Secretary of the Board were requested to visit the Senate and House Committees on Naval Affairs in an attempt to clarify the relation of the College with the Navy." Evidently the committees had still not formally declared that the only possible way for the Navy to expand its facilities for training officers (it being assumed that such expansion was necessary for the security of the United States) was by acquiring the land and buildings of the college.

On June 8, 1946, Thomas Parran, the chairman of the St. John's Board, received a letter from Secretary Forrestal which read as follows:

I have recently been informed by the Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee that his Committee on May 22, 1946, adopted the following resolution regarding the utilization of St. John's College Property for expansion of the Naval Academy:

'Whereas, a proposal has been made that the expanding program of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, requires the acquisition of the adjoining site of St. John's College,

'Whereas the Naval Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives has held long and exhaustive hearings thereon, and

'Whereas upon careful consideration it is the sense of this committee that the National Emergency neither justifies nor warrants the proposed acquisition of St. John's campus. Now, therefore, be it resolved

'That said proposed acquisition officially known as Project No. 460C of the Real Estate Division, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Navy Department, is hereby disapproved.'

I am happy to advise you that the Navy Department acquiesces in this action of the House Naval Affairs Committee. The Department was most reluctant to undertake the acquisition of the college property for the required expansion of the Naval Academy in Annapolis since the Department recognizes that only considerations of extreme national necessity would justify the taking of the campus of a liberal arts college. . . .

It is believed that the present considerations of the House Naval Affairs Committee and the Department . . . coupled with the fact that the Department has other plans for the expansion of the Academy in Annapolis, makes it possible for the college to pursue its plans with assurance that it will be secure on its historic site for the foreseeable future. . . .

A few days after Forrestal's letter the Senate Naval Affairs Committee followed the example of the House Committee. Dr. Parran observed that this action consequent upon the House Committee resolution and the secretary's letter, drove "the third nail in the coffin" of the project to take the campus.

Cleveland, who knew that Barr and Buchanan wanted from the Congressional committees a strong statement that it was not the policy of the United States government to use the power of eminent domain against liberal arts colleges, had been engaged in some activity behind the

scenes to get from the House committee a statement that would satisfy them and keep them with the program at St. John's in Annapolis. He even persuaded Carl Vinson, chairman of the House Committee, who had already written a letter saying that the committee's resolution wrote "Finis" to the project, to write a second stronger letter. But in spite of the death and burial of the project, and in spite of this stronger letter, and in spite of Forrestal's declaration that only extreme national necessity would warrant the government's taking the property of a liberal arts college, and in spite of the assurance given about the foreseeable future, Barr, after consulting with Buchanan, decided that the securities promised by Mellon should not come to St. John's. He suggested to the board that the St. John's campus be turned over to the State of Maryland to provide educational facilities for the state since the state would be better able to protect the campus and that the board should seek a safe place for the college. In the event that the board did not accept his suggestion he would resign and "seek another college for the program." Buchanan had said the year before that the campus was essential to the college, and Barr had said that it was doubtful whether the college could "survive transplanting." Now they were saying something else.

Barr has always maintained that he was not satisfied that the Navy had given any substantial assurance that there would not be another attempt to take the campus.<sup>30</sup> But that was not his only reason, and probably not his principal reason, for taking the money elsewhere. He thought that he could not dispense with the help of Buchanan in continuing the program on another site under the charter of St. John's or in establishing the program at another college.<sup>31</sup> Buchanan would probably have left St. John's even if the fray with the Navy had not occurred. In early January 1945 he was already beginning to withdraw from the full exercise of the office of dean. At the first faculty meeting of that year he reported that new adult education duties he had taken on in the District of Columbia would necessitate the reduction of his decanal duties. On January 18, 1945, Barr sent a memorandum to the treasurer instructing him that the dean's salary had, at the dean's request, been reduced by the board from \$5,500 a year to \$3,000 a year in view of other salaried employment undertaken in Washington. He would continue as "the officer of instruction," i.e., as chairman of the Instruction Committee, and as adviser to students in relation to their studies. Buchanan himself in a letter to Cleveland about two years later wrote: "If things had gone as usual, I would have resigned during this year [1945-46] to go into adult education or something else. I never was made for an administrator." On June 1, 1946, he announced that he would take a year's leave of absence. It seemed clear to everyone that the unique role he had played for the eight years that he had portrayed as "eight years of startling success" was coming to an end. In addition to that, as Barr describes it, while he himself was exhausted from the fight with the Navy, Buchanan was both tired and sick.<sup>32</sup>

The board had, since 1937, been guided in practically everything by Barr and Buchanan. They failed, however, to concur in the opinion that there was just as much danger as ever that the Navy would soon again seek possession of the St. John's campus. They were unwilling to abandon the campus and move the college and the program, and they were also unwilling to resign as trustees of St. John's and become trustees of some other college yet to be chartered in Maryland or some other state. They had been convinced by Barr and Buchanan of the worth of the program, and they were resolved to continue it at St. John's and in Annapolis. They tried, but failed, to persuade Barr and Buchanan to reconsider.

Buchanan professed surprise at the board's decision. In fact, in a memorandum of July 31, 1946, addressed to them he declared that it was "surprising to all" that the board had decided to continue the St. John's program in Annapolis "even when it was clear that the original pilots could not honestly take the risk as they saw it and weighed it."<sup>33</sup> He, nevertheless, spoke of the ready respect commanded by the board's insight and courage, but also asserted that the board's action did not "convince the ex-pilots that their return would be safe or wise." He already had plans for a larger enterprise which would grow from the cooperation of St. John's and the new college. The aim was the eventual establishment of a university which would be composed of (1) a graduate school for research in the "liberal arts and philosophy," (2) an adult school with many communities, and (3) several undergraduate colleges. For the immediate future the new college somewhere other than at Annapolis would, with the Mellon gift as endowment, be a "small model of the whole." In addition to a small undergraduate school, it would include a committee on the liberal arts to become a nucleus of the graduate school, "and it would be situated in a place suitable for cooperation with a lively industrial community in adult education." He even suggested that for a certain period of transition there be one board and one president for St. John's and the new institution.

Looking back over the nine years, he commented on the successes and failures of the program. While denying once more that the program was an experiment designed to prove or disprove an hypothesis, he affirmed that there had been a common search for a true liberal arts college and that the search was based on guiding principles and a common comprehensive sphere for exploration. There had been found a pattern of the liberal arts as embodied in the great books and it had proved to be "workable, versatile, instructive, fruitful, and heuristic." He spoke of the "high level of teaching and learning we had already achieved before the war" as well as of serious sickness caused by the war. The case for the endowment could now be based, he maintained, on achievement rather than "mere paper promises."

The Navy affair itself he cited as evidence of the college's growth and strength. He assigned as a reason for the college's suggesting negotiations with the Navy in the

statement of April 21, 1945, the desire to "discover and clarify the foundations of our own existence." He meant more than the particular and local factors affecting the existence of St. John's. He meant, as he had said earlier, that St. John's had been leading a fight on behalf of all liberal arts colleges insofar as their existence depends upon the policies of the federal government.

A few days after this memorandum of Buchanan's the board made public the following announcement:

The Board wishes to record publicly its deep satisfaction at the favorable termination of the Navy Department's proposal to acquire the campus of St. John's College and joins heartily in the gratification expressed by Secretary Forrestal that this solution will make it possible for the College and Naval Academy to continue their long history as friendly neighbors. . . .

The Board believes that this solution . . . places the College in a stronger position than it has been in its long history to press forward with plans for the future. . . .

The firm foundation now achieved in Annapolis also makes it possible sometime in the near future, to further the establishment elsewhere of an additional college to carry on the program developed and now secure in Annapolis. Fortunately a generous gift for this purpose makes it practicable. . . .

In furtherance of this project the Board has agreed to release Mr. Barr from the presidency of St. John's College as of July 1, 1947, or such other date as may be determined, in order that he may take over the leadership of the proposed new college.<sup>34</sup>

Buchanan in a letter to Adler gave his own very different account of what had happened:

The Board, primarily Dick Cleveland, had not earlier imagined, say nothing of believed, that Winkie was actually thinking of weighing old St. John's and making an objective decision on his findings. They therefore had thought only of their and his efforts to set things straight in Annapolis and were themselves ready to settle for anything that the Navy and the Congressional Committees would do; no one in his right mind will refuse four and a half million dollars because of an uncertain future.<sup>35</sup>

He proceeded to describe a meeting in Paul Mellon's office in Washington at which he and Barr were present together with Mellon, Adolph Schmidt, and Thomas Parran. Parran spoke for the Board. Buchanan's version of what he said is as follows:

First the Board was determined to continue the St. John's Program in Annapolis; I am sure this implied that the program, like the library for instance, was the property of the Board, copyrighted and patented in the name of the College. We would be stealing if we took it elsewhere and taught it, and they would tell the public so. Second, Winkie was tired and probably sick like me, and he ought to take a leave of absence this year to recover his right mind and allow the decision to be postponed. Third, if Winkie insisted on accepting the endowment to go elsewhere, he should give it to some institution with which he would have no personal connection. Parran delivered these threats in the presence of Mellon and

Schmidt. They behaved admirably... Mellon and Schmidt were very clear about their original intention and their full confidence in Winkie.

At the November faculty meeting in 1946, Barr announced the formation of a foundation to be known as Liberal Arts Incorporated to be a formal instrument for acquiring property for the new college.<sup>36</sup> He further stated that Liberal Arts Incorporated might eventually become a "higher governing board for both colleges." At the December meeting he informed the faculty that the site of the new college would be the Hanna estate in the Stockbridge Bowl in western Massachusetts, that his resignation would take effect on December 31, 1946, and that John S. Kieffer had been appointed acting president by the board.

By this time Buchanan had left and was living in Richmond, Massachusetts, not far from Stockbridge. In a letter to Richard Cleveland in late November he made as a tentative proposal that Liberal Arts Incorporated take over the financial and educational direction of St. John's from the trustees "exactly as Winkie and I had taken it in 1937 except that this time we would recommend other personnel to do the job on the spot."<sup>37</sup> He added, "I wish with all my heart that the Board had had confidence in Winkie and me and had wished to come with us. . . . The new enterprise has lost immeasurably by the Board's refusal to come with us. We have some money but we have lost a college. I saw that this was so and that it was intended to be so when you read your announcement to us. Winkie and I have lost nine years of work unless you and the Board relent and give us some help. I am not regretting our decision but I am suggesting that you are making the cost maximum." The board of St. John's made no response to the proposal that Liberal Arts Incorporated be given responsibilities that were not properly theirs.

Shortly thereafter, in a letter to Hutchins, Buchanan recorded his reflections about what had happened at St. John's.<sup>38</sup> He claimed that a controlled search for a liberal college had been started, that some liberal arts had been set into motion within a framework of great books, that there was enough initial success to justify that kind of practice and that certain things had to be added, such as the graduate school to sharpen the focus on subject matter, and full commitment to adult education. "It is also clear," he went on, "that the next thirty or forty years offer a desperately receptive world for us to bring light to. As I have said in print, this is the day of the liberal college which has been waiting for twenty-four hundred years to be born." In the same letter he says "we don't know what we have been studying and teaching, and we ought to find out."

The inconsistencies in Buchanan's statements make it difficult to know what he was thinking. On the one hand, he had reported to the board that the first eight years of the program were "eight years of startling success." On the other hand, he says that he and Barr will have "lost

nine years of work" if the board don't follow in his footsteps. On the one hand he says he doesn't know what he's been studying and teaching. But on the other, he thinks that he and his associates will bring light not just to a few who might be interested in "the liberal college," but to the world. Presumably he means more than a little light, since it is something that the world has been waiting for since the time of Plato and Aristotle.

Buchanan tried to get his old friends, Adler and McKeon, to join him and Barr in Massachusetts. He also tried to get Hutchins, Van Doren, and Meiklejohn to leave what they were doing and join the new enterprise. All refused. A few of the St. John's faculty were invited; they too refused, believing that the outcome of the contest with the Navy was decisive and that there was much more uncertainty about the new college than about the future of St. John's in Annapolis. Liberal Arts Incorporated, as Acting President Kieffer announced to the faculty on January 11, 1947, would contribute \$150,000 to meet the operating deficit that year at St. John's. It was understood that this would fulfill the intention of Liberal Arts Incorporated to cause as few difficulties as possible for St. John's, and that by the summer of 1948 the two colleges would be independent but free to enter into any form of cooperation that might at the time seem wise.

It became clear early in 1947, less than a month after Barr's departure from St. John's, that he was running into difficulties in founding the new college. On January 25 he wrote to Paul Mellon, "The size of the endowment was measured to fit an entirely different problem from the new one we now face. It would have run St. John's well. But St. John's already had a campus, a plant in good order, and equipment." Around the middle of the year he requested Mellon to release the entire benefits of the endowment fund to Liberal Arts Incorporated for other use than the establishment of an undergraduate college. Mellon refused to do so on the ground that it had been his intention only to endow a "college for undergraduates similar in size and curriculum to St. John's." He noted in a letter to Barr of June 24, 1947, "Through circumstances beyond your control that project now appears unfeasible, if not impossible, within any reasonable amount of time, chiefly due to lack of qualified teachers and adequate building funds."<sup>39</sup> Barr, however, has claimed that the whole effort was sabotaged by Donald Shepard, who, as vice-president of Mellon's Old Dominion Foundation, had a good deal to do with the terms of the disposal of the funds.<sup>40</sup> It was announced to the St. John's faculty at the first fall meeting in 1947 that on August 1 Liberal Arts Incorporated had met in Stockbridge and decided to abandon the project of a new college. "Unpropitiousness of building," it was said, "and difficulties of cooperating with the Old Dominion Foundation were the chief reasons for the decision."<sup>41</sup> The endowment fund reverted to the Old Dominion Foundation.

Thus ended the last attempt of Barr and Buchanan to form an institution which would be a beacon for colleges

and universities to follow. They did not in the succeeding years keep in close touch with St. John's College and knew very little about what was happening at St. John's. There were a few times when they returned, upon invitation, to lecture or to speak at Class Day or Commencement. One such occasion was Class Day in 1948 when both Barr and Buchanan spoke. Buchanan in his speech urged that the liberal arts should have a subject matter and that the core of the St. John's curriculum should be, not meta-physical (which had earlier been his constant theme), but political. A few days later, when he had returned to Massachusetts, he wrote President Kieffer a letter in which he told him that the decision that Kieffer and the board made to continue the program in Annapolis was "stupid and blind and therefore highly irresponsible to the vision, highly misleading to the community, and disloyal to whatever leadership Winkie and I provided."<sup>42</sup> He claimed that the original program was "a revolutionary blueprint, an attempt to subvert and rebuild education," that it was a bull-dozer "inside a Trojan horse which was to be let loose once the walls of the sacred city were passed and left behind." He said, "I fought the Navy fight, with the few who cared, out of piety to the sacred city" . . . There were no reinforcements, and there was no outside recognition of the sacred city, only a faint sentimental wish to live in the ruins." He maintained, presumably referring to the agreement that St. John's should have the income from the Mellon endowment until July 1, 1948, that he and Barr had a fit of personal generosity which did not blind them but blurred their vision, and that out of their clear vision of what was the only hope for the program together with their blurred vision produced by the board's bad decision had come "the ordeal of Stockbridge which could only commit suicide because of its high courage and generosity to St. John's." He said that "the program should be laid on the shelf and forgotten," that it was "not even a pattern to be laid up in heaven and beheld, but a poison corrupting a household at St. John's" and that because of its being at St. John's it "would become a poison wherever it was tried." He asserted that he and Barr had in 1937 made "a mistaken historical judgment and a bad educational prediction" and that they should be counted out of any plans that Kieffer and the people at St. John's might make.

Scott Buchanan had over a period of twenty years invested an enormous amount of love and work in formulating, planning, and trying to bring into being, whether at St. John's or elsewhere, what had come to be called the St. John's program. At this point it seemed to him that it had all come to nothing. The tragedy, if it is to be dignified by that name, is not that he had failed, or that the program had failed, or that others had failed him, but rather that he could not question the wisdom of actions that by denying the college the endowment it otherwise would have had, jeopardized the existence of the only college where had been established, however precariously, the program for which he more than anyone was responsible, and fur-

thermore that he never knew to what extent he had laid the foundations for a building that through many vicissitudes, was to increase in worth.

Barr, reflecting upon these events many years later, could say of his decision to leave St. John's and to use the Mellon money to start another college, "I don't claim for a second I made a wise choice."<sup>43</sup>

*Unless otherwise indicated, all records of meetings of the faculty and of the Board of Visitors and Governors are located in the archives of St. John's College in Annapolis.*

#### Chapter IV

1. Walter Lippman, "Today and Tomorrow," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 27, 1938.
2. *Baltimore Evening Sun*, January 23, 24, 25, 1939.
3. *Life* magazine, February 5, 1940.

#### Chapter V

1. John Dewey, "Challenge to Liberal Thought," *Fortune*, August 1944.
2. Alexander Meiklejohn, "A Reply to John Dewey," *Fortune*, January 1945.
3. John Dewey, Letter to the Editors, *Fortune*, March 1945.
4. Sidney Hook, *Education for Modern Man*, New York 1946, 209.
5. Hook, 21, 213.
6. Buchanan to Hook, November 10, 1938, St. John's College Archives.
7. Buchanan to Hook, December 15, 1942, St. John's College Archives.
8. Hook to Buchanan, January 26, 1943, St. John's College Archives.
9. Buchanan to Emily S. Hamblen, April 27, 1940, St. John's College Archives.
10. *Nineteen Forty Yearbook*, 15.
11. *St. John's Collegian*, October 27, 1939, 1.
12. *Nineteen Forty-two Yearbook*, 14.
13. *Nineteen Forty-two Yearbook*, 25.
14. *Nineteen Forty-three Yearbook*, 20.
15. Robert Hutchins thought this a good idea anyway, believing that the last two years of high school were usually wasted.
16. *Nineteen Forty-four Yearbook*, 7.
17. *Nineteen Forty-four Yearbook*, 8.
18. *Nineteen Forty-five-Forty-six Yearbook*, 11.
19. Buchanan to H. G. Cayley, August 25, 1937, St. John's College Archives.
20. *Nineteen Forty-five-Forty-six Yearbook*, 13.

#### Chapter VI

1. In 1868 the Naval Academy had purchased from St. John's a triangular piece of land of which a part of King George Street is one side.
2. St. John's Faculty Minutes, September 1940.
3. St. John's Board Minutes, January 13, 1941.
4. Buchanan Files, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
5. St. John's Board Minutes, February 25, 1945.
6. Diary of James V. Forrestal, Copy in the Navy Operational Archives, Naval History Center, Washington, D.C.
7. Record of the hearing before the Committee on Naval Affairs of the U.S. Senate (June 20, 1945), Navy Library, Washington, D.C. Cf. the testimony of Captain T. R. Wirth, representing the Superintendent of the Academy, at the same hearing.
8. Copies of letters in Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
9. Buchanan to Hutchins, May 7, 1945, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
10. Hutchins to Buchanan, May 9, 1945, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.

11. Buchanan to Senator Wayne Morse, undated, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
12. *Baltimore Sun*, April 1945.
13. *Baltimore Sun*, July 3, 1945; *Washington Post*, July 30, 1945.
14. Dean's Nine Year Report (1946), St. John's College Archives.
15. Cf. the Supreme Court decision in *Kohl v. United States* (1875).
16. *Evening Capital*, October 22, 1945.
17. Testimony before the House Naval Affairs Committee, October 9, 1945.
18. Statement of Richard Cleveland before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, June 20, 1945.
19. Captain T. R. Wirth indeed stated at the Senate Committee hearing of June 20, "Acquisition of the St. John's property is urgently required in the national interest to provide the area determined to be essential to the continuance of the Naval Academy mission: the fundamental education and training of the number of young men required for the commissioned personnel of the United States Navy." This, of course, was not an official declaration of policy by the Navy Department or the Committees.
20. Diary of James V. Forrestal, copy in the Operational Archives, Naval History Center, Washington, D.C., 403-4.
21. Minutes of the Board for 1944-47 are missing.
22. Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
23. *Evening Capital*, August 1, 1945.
24. Memorandum by Richard Cleveland to the St. John's College Board, St. John's College Archives.
25. Statement of Policy by the Board of Visitors and Governors of St. John's College, with reference on Navy Department proposal to acquire the St. John's campus (November 21, 1945), St. John's College Archives.
26. Buchanan had discovered from studying the Dartmouth case that the charter of a college confers upon it immortality.
27. Dean's Report, *St. John's Collegian*, October 19, 1945.
28. Statement of Policy, November 21, 1945.
29. Mellon to Barr, appended to the St. John's Faculty Minutes for April 27, 1946.
30. Transcript of a recorded conversation with Allan Hoffman, July 27, 1975: "I thought, why not put an end to it by putting the College where the huge beast couldn't suddenly attack again? And it was clear that a lot of people in the Navy were damned determined to attack again." Since 1946 there has been no attempt by the Navy to take the campus. St. John's College Archives.
31. Hoffman conversation.
32. Hoffman conversation.
33. Memorandum to the Board of Visitors and Governors, July 31, 1946, St. John's College Archives.
34. Announcement by the Board of St. John's College, August 3, 1946, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
35. Buchanan to Adler, August 14, 1946, Adler Files, Institute for Philosophical Research, Chicago.
36. St. John's Faculty Minutes, November 2, 1946.
37. Buchanan to Cleveland, November 20, 1946, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
38. Buchanan to Hutchins, December 5, 1946, Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
39. Buchanan Files, Houghton Library.
40. Hoffman conversation.
41. St. John's Faculty Minutes, September 15, 1947.
42. Buchanan to Kieffer, June 8, 1948, St. John's College Archives.
43. Hoffman conversation.

# Schiller's Drama—Fulfillment of History and Philosophy in Poetry

Gisela Berns

Friedrich Schiller, the great German dramatist at the end of the eighteenth century, was not only a great poet, but also a great historical and philosophical thinker. A contemporary of the Founding Fathers of this country and akin to them in thoughts and feelings about the political issues of the time, Schiller was inspired by the ideas of the ancients in their striving for human excellence, but committed to the ideals of a modern world in its fight for the rule of law, based on the recognition of human freedom. At a time of social and political revolutions, Schiller believed that art, and only art, through its mediation between the senses and reason, might be able to prepare man for the difficult task of governing himself. Schiller's drama—from *The Robbers* (started at the time of the *Declaration of Independence*) to *William Tell* (finished at the time of Jefferson's first presidency)—deals with one theme: the problematic relationship between freedom and rule. Focusing on great revolutionary *ideas* like the conflict between nature and convention, explored in *The Robbers* and in *Intrigue and Love*, or on great revolutionary *figures* of history like *Fiesco*, *Don Carlos*, *Wallenstein*, *Mary Stuart*, *The Maid of Orleans*, and *William Tell*, all of

Schiller's plays, even *The Bride of Messina*, modeled on the Oedipus story, wrestle with the problem of freedom. In recognition of this historical role, Schiller was awarded honorary citizenship of the French Revolution (that the document, issued in 1793, did not reach him till 1798, long after the revolution vanquished its signer, Danton, Schiller always considered an ironic reminder of the problematic nature of freedom).

An account of Schiller's life<sup>1</sup> and work,<sup>2</sup> culminating in a discussion of *Wallenstein*, his highest artistic achievement, shall show in what sense he understood poetry to be a fulfillment of history and philosophy.

Schiller's life, from 1759 to 1805, was, except for his early childhood and the beginning years of his marriage, a never ending struggle. First against a tyrannical ruler, later against poverty and prejudice, finally against a fatal illness which racked the last fifteen years of his short life. A struggle it was, this life of Schiller's, but what a glorious struggle! A testimony to man's ability to overcome or, in *Wallenstein's* proud words, to the conviction that "it is the mind which builds itself the body."<sup>3</sup> Schiller's father, by his own report, offered a prayer at Schiller's birth:

And you, Being of all beings! You I begged, after the birth of my only son, that you would add to his strength of mind what I, for want of education, could not reach.<sup>4</sup>

Schiller's early plans of studying theology were rudely shattered by the interference of the Duke of Württem-

Gisela Berns, a Tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis, delivered the original version of this essay as a lecture in Annapolis on February 26, 1982. Its main theme is the subject of her forthcoming book, *Schiller's Wallenstein—Fulfillment of History and Philosophy in Poetry*.



berg in whose newly established military academy the promising sons of the country were educated towards various professions. Separated from his family, Schiller spent his young years, from age thirteen to twenty-one, in an atmosphere of oppressive regimentation. After a year of broad general education in sciences and humanities, with strong emphasis on philosophy, Schiller, at first, studied law, later, because "bolder" and "more akin to poetry," medicine. A cross between medicine and philosophy, his dissertation *On the Connection between Man's Animal and Spiritual Nature* for the first time explores a theme to surface again and again in Schiller's poetry.

The great breakthrough of his passion for poetry came after Schiller, at sixteen, had been introduced to Shakespeare. Emboldened by his love for Shakespeare, he was obsessed with the idea of writing a play that would expose all the evils of conventional society. Full of admiration for the ancient heroes of Plutarch and the modern sentiments of Rousseau, Schiller, for years, feverishly and passionately worked on his *Robbers*. Forbidden to read or write poetry, he risked life and liberty in the production of this first play of his. With the performance of *The Robbers*, in 1782, at the famous theater of Mannheim, Schiller gained immortal fame and lost his homeland. Hailed by one reviewer as the coming "German Shakespeare,"<sup>5</sup> he was ordered by the Duke, under penalty of arrest, to stop writing anything but medical works. With the help of a young musician, Schiller, in disguise, fled to Mannheim where he hoped to find support for his life as a poet. Even there he had to spend months in hiding, at work on his *Fiesco* and *Intrigue and Love*, before the authorities accepted him. In a letter of 1783, possibly meant to hide his whereabouts from the Duke, Schiller toyed with the idea of emigrating to America. Undecided among medicine, philosophy, or politics, he envisioned a life in the New World that, above all, would allow him to be a poet:

But tragedies, for that matter, I shall never cease to write—you know my whole being hangs on it.<sup>6</sup>

A contemporary of the Founding Fathers of this country, inspired by the ideal of human freedom, and set on writing tragedies (no matter what profession he would have taken up in this New World), Schiller might have given us that sorely missing drama on the American Revolution. Such a drama (as Harold Jantz, in his article *William Tell and the American Revolution*, suggests<sup>7</sup>) could have been written either from the British point of view (something like Aeschylus' *Persians*) or from the American point of view (something like Schiller's *William Tell*).

In the spirit of revolution, *Intrigue and Love*, a "Bourgeois Tragedy," scourges the nobility's injustices against the lower classes, most poignantly in the heartrending account of the forced recruitment of German troops to be sold to the British for the Revolutionary War in America.<sup>8</sup> With *The Conspiracy of Fiesco at Genoa*, a "Republican Tragedy," Schiller, for the first time, strikes a theme

found, in one form or another, in all his subsequent plays: the tragedy of the great political hero who, for the sake of his vision of a more perfect world, destroys the existing world, including himself.

After the "Storm and Stress" of *The Robbers*, *Fiesco*, and *Intrigue and Love*, Schiller, in 1787, reached a first classical height with *Don Carlos*—not only because of his change from rhythmic prose to verse, but even more because of his sovereign treatment of the theme, the conflict between revolutionary idealism and imperialistic realism. The stark contrast between good and evil of Schiller's earlier plays turns to a dark and haunting complexity in *Don Carlos*. The tragic beauty of *Don Carlos* has moved more than one great writer after Schiller to integrate parts of it into their own work: Dostoyevsky, the theme and setting of the "Grand Inquisitor" story in *The Brothers Karamazov*; Thomas Mann, the burning admiration of Tonio Kröger for the breathtaking scene in *Don Carlos*, where the king, the absolute ruler of the catholic world, is said to have wept—a scene to which Mann, in his late *Essay on Schiller*, confesses to have "early given his homage."<sup>9</sup> Apart from its literary influence, Schiller's *Don Carlos* always had a political voice and was felt to be a threat to tyrants. During Hitler's Third Reich, both *William Tell* and *Don Carlos* disappeared from the German theater. As Oscar Seidlin, in his article *Schiller: Poet of Politics*, reports:

A quarter of a century ago, when darkness descended upon Schiller's native country, a darkness that was to engulf all of mankind in the shortest possible time, a theater in Hamburg produced one of Schiller's great dramatic works, *Don Carlos*. It is the play which culminates in the stirring climax of its third act, the confrontation scene between King Philip of Spain and the Marquis Posa, the powerful verbal and intellectual battle between the rigid and autocratic monarch, contemptuous of mankind and gloomily convinced that only harsh and tyrannical suppression can preserve peace and order in his vast empire, and the young, enthusiastic advocate of revolutionary principles, who demands for his fellow citizens the untrammelled right to happiness, the possibility of unhampered self-development and self-realization of every individual. The scene rises to its pitch with Marquis Posa's brave challenge flung into the king's face: "Geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit!—Do give freedom of thought!" When this line, one of the most famous in all German dramatic literature, resounded from the Hamburg stage in the early years of Hitler's terror, the audience under the friendly protection of darkness burst out, night after night, into tumultuous applause. So dangerous and embarrassing to the new rulers proved a single verse of the greatest German playwright, who by then had been dead for fully a hundred and thirty years, that the management of the theater was forced to cut out the scandalous line. But the audience, knowing their classic well enough even if it was fed to them in an emasculated version, reacted quickwittedly: from that evening on they interrupted the performance by thunderous applause at the moment when Marquis Posa should have uttered his famous plea on the stage—and did not. After these incidents the play was withdrawn from the repertoire altogether.<sup>10</sup>

In preparation for *Don Carlos*, Schiller had occupied himself more and more with historical studies and, finally, published a *History of the Revolt of the United Netherlands from the Spanish Rule*. This comprehensive, dramatically written work, in 1789, won him a professorship at the University of Jena. Besides lecturing on Universal History and Aesthetics, Schiller devoted himself to his second major historical work, the *History of the Thirty Years War*, later to become the basis for his monumental trilogy on Wallenstein, the imperial general of the Thirty Years War.

The summer before settling in Jena, Schiller had met Charlotte v. Lengefeld, his future wife, in whose circle of family and friends the young poet, every evening, read from Homer and the Greek tragedians. Filled with a kind of Grecomania, Schiller threw himself into translating Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, an activity he hoped would give him classical purity and simplicity. In a letter to the sisters v. Lengefeld Schiller writes:

My Euripides still gives me much pleasure, and a great deal of it also stems from its antiquity. To find man so eternally remaining the same, the same passions, the same collisions of passions, the same language of passions. With this infinite multiplicity always though this unity of the same human form.<sup>11</sup>

In the spirit of those days, Schiller composed a long melancholy poem, *The Gods of Greece*, that laments the disappearance of beauty and nobility from the modern world:

"Als die Götter menschlicher noch waren,  
Waren Menschen göttlicher.  
When the gods still were more human,  
Men were more godlike.

This immersion in Greek antiquity—and the study of Kant that followed—became crucial for Schiller's aesthetic writings.

A terrible illness of Schiller's, in 1791, stirred rumors of his death. At the discovery that Schiller was still alive, months later, a circle of admirers in Denmark prevailed upon the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg to ease the burden of the poet's daily existence and, for a few years, bestow a pension on him. Schiller accepted, full of joy over the unexpected freedom to devote himself to the "formation of his ideas":

Serenely I look to the future—and if the expectations of myself should prove to have been nothing but sweet illusions with which my oppressed pride took revenge on fate, I for one shall not lack the determination to justify the hopes two excellent citizens of our century have placed in me. Since my lot does not allow me to act as benefactor in their way, I shall, nevertheless, attempt it in the only way that is given to me—and may the seed they have spread unfold in me into a beautiful blossom for mankind.<sup>12</sup>

With the same mail, Schiller ordered Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Earlier that year, in the throes of his illness, reading the *Critique of Judgement* had convinced him that nothing short of a thorough understanding of Kant's philosophical system would satisfy him. For three years, a long time in so short a life as Schiller's, he studied Kant and wrote his own philosophical essays: *On Tragic Art*, *On Grace and Dignity*, *On the Sublime*, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, and *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. On the *Aesthetic Education of Man* he wrote, as a gesture of gratitude, in the form of letters to the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg.

Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* sketches out a history of mankind from a state of nature to a state of civilization, where the progress of the species towards a fulfillment of human nature depends on the fragmentation of nature in the individual. Schiller complements this view of history, reminiscent in part of Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, with the hope that a higher art might restore the totality of nature, destroyed by art in the process of civilization. Far from romantic longing for a "Golden Age" of nature, Schiller exclaims:

I would not like to live in a different century and have worked for a different one. One is as much a citizen of one's time as one is a citizen of one's country.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of his poem *The Artists*, a panoramic history of mankind, written in 1789, Schiller speaks of man as "the ripest son of time, free through reason, strong through laws," standing "at the close of the century" in "noble, proud manliness":

Wie schön, o Mensch, mit deinem Palmenzweige  
Stehst du an des Jahrhunderts Neige,  
In edler stolzer Männlichkeit,  
Mit aufgeschlossnem Sinn, mit Geistesfülle,  
Voll milden Ernsts, in tatenreicher Stille,  
Der reifste Sohn der Zeit,  
Frei durch Vernunft, stark durch Gesetze,  
Durch Sanftmut gross, und reich durch Schätze,  
Die lange Zeit dein Busen dir verschwieg,  
Herr der Natur, die deine Fesseln liebet,  
Die deine Kraft in tausend Kämpfen übet  
Und prangend unter dir aus der Verwirrung stieg!

Like Hamilton, in *Federalist* One, and Madison, in *Federalist* Fourteen, Schiller calls his contemporaries to the task of deciding the fate of mankind:

Der Menschheit Würde ist in eure Hand gegeben,  
Bewahret sie!  
Sie sinkt mit euch! Mit euch wird sie sich heben!  
The dignity of mankind is in your hands,  
Preserve it!  
It sinks with you! With you uplifts itself!<sup>14</sup>

Both Hamilton and Madison speak of the people as the ones to decide the case:

Is it not the glory of the people of America, that, whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situation, and the lessons of their own experience? To this manly spirit, posterity will be indebted for the possession, and the world for the example, of the numerous innovations displayed on the American theater, in favor of private rights and public happiness.

Schiller, however, as in the Prologue to *Wallenstein*, judges the artists to be responsible for the legacy of mankind:

Und jetzt an des Jahrhunderts ernstem Ende,  
Wo selbst die Wirklichkeit zur Dichtung wird,  
Wo wir den Kampf gewaltiger Naturen  
Und ein bedeutend Ziel vor Augen sehn,  
Und um der Menschheit grosse Gegenstände,  
Um Herrschaft und um Knechtschaft wird gerungen,  
Jetzt darf die Kunst auf ihrer Schattenbühne  
Auch höhern Flug versuchen, ja sie muss,  
Soll nicht des Lebens Bühne sie beschämen.

Now at this century's impressive close,  
As actuality itself is turned  
To art, as we see mighty natures locked  
In struggle for a goal of lofty import,  
As conflict rages for the great objectives  
Of man, for masterdom, for freedom, now  
Art is allowed assay of higher flight  
Upon its shadow stage; indeed it must be,  
Lest it be put to shame by life's own stage.<sup>15</sup>

Anticipating an objection to his concern about aesthetic education in a time of social and political revolutions, Schiller claims that the "path to freedom" leads through "the land of beauty."<sup>16</sup> The contemplation of beauty, because of its mediation between the senses and reason, might be able to prepare man for the challenge of freedom. Looking back to the beginnings of civilization, Schiller states:

Nature does not make a better start with man than with the rest of her works: she acts for him, where he cannot yet act himself as free intelligence. But it is just this which makes him human that he does not stop at what mere nature made him to be, but possesses the power through reason to retrace the steps which she anticipated with him, to transform the work of compulsion into a work of free choice and to elevate the physical necessity to a moral one.

Deeply conscious of the challenge,

that the physical society, in time, may not cease for a moment, while the moral one, in the idea, forms itself, that for the sake of man's dignity his existence may not be endangered,<sup>17</sup>

Schiller strives for a model of humanity that combines the natural beauty of the Greeks with the historical self-

consciousness of the Moderns. Anticipating much of Hegel's philosophy of history, both in perspective and in formulation, Schiller portrays man's historical development as progress from a naturally to a rationally given form of humanity.<sup>18</sup> In homage to this kinship of thought, Hegel chooses two lines from Schiller's early poem *Friendship* as Finale of his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. The slight change he makes in speaking of "Geisterreich" ("realm of spirits") rather than "Seelenreich" ("realm of the soul") points, I think, to a crucial difference between Hegel and Schiller. The fragmentation of human nature in the individual for the sake of greater differentiation in the species moves the tragic poet more than the philosopher:

But can it be that man should be fated to neglect himself for any end? Should nature, through her ends, be able to rob us of a perfection which reason, through hers, prescribes for us? It, therefore, must be false that the development of the single faculties necessitates the sacrifice of their totality; or even if the law of nature tended there ever so much, it must be up to us to restore, by a higher art, this totality of our nature which art has destroyed.<sup>19</sup>

Aiming at a balance between reason and the senses, Schiller (who, in 1793, was rereading both Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and Homer's *Iliad*) uses a Homeric simile:

Reason herself will not battle directly with this savage force that resists her weapons and, as little as the son of Saturn in the *Iliad*, descend, acting herself, to the gloomy theater. But from the midst of the fighters she chooses the most worthy, attires him, as Zeus did his grandson, with divine weapons and, through his victorious power, effects the great decision.<sup>20</sup>

This use of Achilles as symbol of noble, and sometimes tragic, beauty is only one of many in Schiller's work. In his poem *The Gifts of Fortune*, Schiller extols the honor the gods bestow on Achilles, in his poem *Nenia*, their lament over him at his death. The idea, symbolized by Achilles, of truth manifesting itself in beauty, and therefore speaking to us through the senses as well as reason, implies a new appreciation of the senses:

The path to divinity, if one can call a path what never leads to its destination, is opened up for man in his senses.<sup>21</sup>

Clearly in answer to Plato's *Republic*, Schiller considers "the priority of the sensuous drive" in man's experience "the clue to the whole history of human freedom."<sup>22</sup>

In a highly dialectical sequence of steps, Schiller presents first the synthesis of the senses and reason in man's *contemplation of beauty*, then the synthesis of the material and the formal drive in man's *play drive*, and finally the synthesis of the physical and the moral necessity in man's *aesthetic freedom*. Aware that aesthetic freedom, as a state of being, is only an ideal, but that, as momentary balance between the senses and reason, it is part of our human experience, Schiller proclaims one of the most provocative sentences of his work:

Man plays only where, in the full sense of the word, he is man; and he is fully man only where he plays.<sup>23</sup>

The freedom of the aesthetic state that results from a balance between the necessity of the moral as well as the physical state Schiller considers the "highest of all legacies, the legacy of humanity":

It, therefore, is not only poetically permitted, but philosophically right, if one calls beauty our second creator. For although she only makes our humanity possible and, for the rest, leaves it up to our free will how far we want to actualize it, she shares this trait with our original creator, nature, who likewise provided us with only the capacity for humanity, but left the use of it to our own determination of will.<sup>24</sup>

Like Plato and Hegel, before and after him, Schiller understands man's development from a natural to a moral being in terms of an analogy between the individual and the species. But where Plato and Hegel insist on the sovereignty of reason over the senses, Schiller claims that "the path to the head has to be opened through the heart," for the species as well as for the individual:<sup>25</sup>

The dynamic state can only make society *possible* by overcoming nature through nature; the ethical state can only make society (morally) *necessary* by subjecting the single to the general will; the aesthetic state alone can make society *actual* because it consummates the will of the whole through the nature of the individual.<sup>26</sup>

In explanation, Schiller maintains that "beauty alone we enjoy, at the same time, as individuals and as species, that is, as *representatives* of the species."

Interpreters of Schiller's aesthetic theories have always wondered whether, for Schiller, the aesthetic or the moral state is finally the highest form of humanity. Like Meno's opening question about virtue, this dilemma has no direct answer. In terms of actual achievement, the moral state presents the height of human perfection, the aesthetic state an ideal comparable only to the life of the Olympian gods:

But does such a state of beautiful semblance exist, and where is it to be found? As *need*, it exists in every finely tuned soul, as *reality*, one might find it, like the pure church and the pure republic, only in a few select circles, where not mindless imitation of the ways of others, but inherent beautiful nature guides human behavior, where man goes through the most complex situations with bold simplicity and calm innocence, and neither finds it necessary to offend another's freedom in order to assert his own, nor to throw away his *dignity* in order to exhibit *grace*.<sup>27</sup>

This combination of Grace (*Anmut*) and Dignity (*Würde*), an ideal realized among the Greeks but lost in modern times, Schiller sees preserved in Greek works of art:

Mankind has lost its dignity, but art has saved and preserved it in significant stones; truth (*Wahrheit*) lives on in semblance (*Täuschung*), and from the copy (*Nachbild*) the original (*Urbild*) shall be reconstituted.<sup>28</sup>

This perspective, for Schiller, defines the artist's relationship to his time:

The artist certainly is the son of his time, but woe to him if, at the same time, he is its pupil or even its favorite. Let a beneficent deity snatch the suckling betimes from his mother's breast, nourish him with the milk of a better age and allow him to reach maturity under a far-off Grecian sky. Then, when he has become a man, let him return, a stranger, to his own century; yet, not in order to please it with his appearance, but terrible as Agamemnon's son, in order to purify it. The material he certainly will take from the present, but the form from a nobler time, yes, from beyond all time, borrowed from the absolute unchangeable unity of his being.<sup>29</sup>

This comprehensive task of the artist, to span the whole history of human civilization in an attempt to give mankind its fullest possible expression, Schiller discusses more specifically in *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*. Understanding the poets as "preservers and avengers of nature," he distinguishes between two types, the Naive poet as "being nature," the Sentimental poet as "seeking nature." Expressive of two states of mankind, Naive poetry of a union, Sentimental poetry of a separation between man and nature, both forms of poetry, in different ways, show a perfection of art: Naive poetry, as "imitation of reality," by fulfilling a finite goal, Sentimental poetry, as "presentation of the ideal," by striving for an infinite goal.

Schiller's terms Naive and Sentimental might sound confusing at first. They certainly do *not* mean what they mean today. The Naive poet, like a god behind his work, lets the world speak for itself. In this sense, Schiller considers not only Homer, but also Shakespeare and Goethe,<sup>30</sup> Naive poets. The Sentimental poet, on the other hand, an intellectual presence in his work, reflects on the world he portrays. In this sense, Schiller considers most modern poets, including himself, Sentimental poets.

Striving for an ideal of poetry, Schiller wonders whether and how far a work of art might combine classical individuality and modern ideality. To "individualize the ideal" and "idealize the individual," in Schiller's eyes, would not only constitute "the highest peak of all art," but also serve as that "higher art," expected to restore the totality of human nature which art had destroyed in the process of civilization.

Understanding *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* "so to speak" as "a bridge to poetic production"<sup>31</sup> Schiller, again, begins to write poetry—first philosophical poems, later ballads and historical dramas:

I have, at the same time, the intention, in this way to reconcile myself with the poetic Muse whom, through my falling away

to the historic Muse (a fall indeed) I have grossly offended. If I should succeed in regaining the favor of the god of poetry, I hope to hang up in his temple the spoils which I have labored to obtain in the realm of philosophy and history, and to dedicate myself to his service forever.<sup>32</sup>

In 1795, Schiller writes to Countess v. Schimmelmann:

You wish, in your letter, that I continue in the poetic path which I have entered. Why should I not, if you find it worth your while to encourage me in it. Also by heeding your advice I only follow the inclination of my heart. From the beginning, poetry was the highest concern of my soul, and I only left it for a time in order to return to it richer and worthier.<sup>33</sup>

Encouraged by his friendship with Goethe, Schiller lived the last ten years of his life for poetry. A constant source of inspiration for both of them, this friendship had started with a famous conversation in July of 1794. On the way home from a meeting of the Society for Natural Science in Jena, Goethe had outlined his *Metamorphosis of Plants* to Schiller who, still a Kantian, had retorted: "This is no experience! This is an ideal!" To which Goethe, with courteous irony, had replied: "I certainly should be glad to have ideas without my knowing and even to see them with my eyes." In a letter following this conversation, Schiller sums up the difference between them:

Your spirit, to an extraordinary degree, works intuitively, and all your thinking powers seem to have compromised on the imagination, so to speak, as their common representative. . . . My mind works really more in a symbolizing way, and thus I am suspended, as a kind of hybrid, between concept and imagination, between rule and feeling, between technical head and genius. This, especially in former years, has given me a rather awkward appearance, in the field of speculation as well as in the art of poetry; for, usually, the poet overtook me where I was supposed to philosophize, and the philosophical spirit where I wanted to write poetry. Even now, it happens to me often enough that imagination disturbs my abstractions and cold reason my poetry. If I can master these two forces to the point that, through my freedom, I can assign each one its limits, a beautiful fate shall still await me. . . .<sup>34</sup>

Another friendship, with Wilhelm von Humboldt, the great scholar in classical languages and literatures, was crucial for Schiller's understanding of his relation to the Ancients. In a letter of 1795, Humboldt writes:

I believe I can justify this seemingly paradoxical sentence that you, on the one hand, are the direct opposite of the Greeks, since your products exhibit the very character of autonomy; and that, at the same time, you, among the moderns, again are closest to them, since your products, after Greek ones, express necessity of form; only that you draw it from yourself, while the Greeks take it from the aspect of external nature, which is likewise necessary in its form. Wherefore also, Greek form resembles more the object of the senses, yours more the object of reason, even though the former, finally, also rests on a necessity of reason, and yours, of course, also speaks to the senses.<sup>35</sup>

After the completion of his *Bride of Messina*, in 1803, Schiller reminds Humboldt of this earlier exchange of theirs:

My first attempt at a tragedy in strict form will give you pleasure; you will be able to judge from it, whether as contemporary of Sophocles I might have been able to carry off a prize. I have not forgotten that you called me the most modern of all newer poets and, therefore, thought me in opposition to everything that could be called ancient.<sup>36</sup>

In an introduction to the publication of their correspondence, twenty-five years after Schiller's death, Humboldt reminisces:

What every observer had to notice in Schiller, as characteristically defining, was that, in a higher and more pregnant sense than perhaps ever in anyone else, thought was the element of his life. Continual authentic intellectual activity almost never left him, and only yielded to the more violent attacks of his bodily illness. It seemed to him relaxation, not strain. This showed itself especially in conversation for which Schiller seemed most truly born. He never sought for a significant topic of discourse, he left it more to chance to bring up the subject matter, but from each he led the conversation to a more general perspective, and after a few exchanges one found oneself in the middle of a mind-provoking discussion. He always treated the thought as a result to be reached together, always seemed to need the interlocutor, even if one remained conscious of receiving the idea merely from him. . . . Moving above his subject matter with perfect freedom, he used every sideline which offered itself, and so his conversation was rich in words that carry the feature of happy creations of the moment. The freedom, however, did not curtail the investigation. Schiller always held on to the thread which had to lead to its end.<sup>37</sup>

Schiller's gift for friendship which, throughout his life, moved him, whether face to face or in letters, to engage in conversation, found its early expression in a letter of April 1783:

In this wonderful breath of the morning, I think of you, friend—and of my Carlos. . . . I imagine—Every poetic work is nothing but an enthusiastic friendship or Platonic love for a creation of our head. . . . If we can ardently feel the state of a friend, we will also be able to glow for our poetic heroes. Not that the capacity for friendship and Platonic love would simply entail the capacity for great poetry—for I might be very able to feel a great character without being able to create it. But it should be clear that a great poet has to have, at least, the capacity for the highest friendship, even if he has not always expressed it.<sup>38</sup>

Schiller's return to poetry, and to dramatic poetry in particular, begins with a work which stands out in many ways. In the center between his four earlier and four later plays, Schiller's *Wallenstein*, his only trilogy, surpasses the

others both in subject matter and in poetic form. Like the *Republic* among Plato's Dialogues, *Wallenstein*, among Schiller's plays, in one dramatic poem of epic dimensions, encompasses all the earlier and later themes.

Alternating between a stricter and looser dramatic form, Schiller, in the last five years of his life, completed *Mary Stuart*, a "Tragedy" about the Scottish queen and Elizabeth I; *The Maid of Orleans*, a "Romantic Tragedy" about Joan of Arc and her mysterious fight for France; *The Bride of Messina*, a "Tragedy with Choruses," modeled on the Oedipus story; and finally *William Tell*, a "Drama" about the Swiss fight for independent unity. Of these later four plays only *William Tell*, Schiller's last finished play (1805), is not a tragedy. Different from Schiller's other heroes, Tell avoids the abyss of tragedy because he does not presume any power beyond the limits of republican government.

The translations of such diametrically opposed works as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1801) and Racine's *Phèdre*, (1805) reveal the range of Schiller's dramatic sensibility as much as his own poetic work.

The summit of that work, both in content and form, is Schiller's *Wallenstein*, a modern historical drama about the imperial general of the Thirty Years War. An account of the last few days of his life that ends with his treason and his assassination, *Wallenstein* confronts us with the issue of war and peace as an expression of the tragic situation of man. Disregarding religious and political interests, *Wallenstein*, a new Caesar, claims to be the only one able to unify Europe. This ideal, though noble in itself, turns into a treacherous weapon in the hands of lesser men and thus, indirectly, is responsible for *Wallenstein's* tragic fall. As Lincoln, later, formulated it in his *Perpetuation* speech:

Many great and good men sufficiently qualified for any task they should undertake, may ever be found, whose ambition would aspire to nothing beyond a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair; but such belong not to the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle. What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon?—Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored.—It sees no distinction in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It denies that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It scorns to tread in the footsteps of any predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen.<sup>39</sup>

Like the Divided Line in Plato's *Republic*, Schiller's *Wallenstein*, divided into the poet's Prologue and three plays, leads from the realm of the visible to the realm of the intelligible, from the realm of imagination and opinion to the realm of understanding and thought. Preceded by a Prologue about the intricate relationship of life and history to art and nature, the *Wallenstein* trilogy confronts us first with *Wallenstein's* "shadow image," emerging from the opinions of his soldiers, then with his "public

self," surrounded by his family and his generals, and finally with his "private self," suspended between the freedom of his heavenbound reflections and the necessity of his earthbound actions.

The first dramatic poem after many years of historical and philosophical studies, *Wallenstein* presents a fulfillment of Schiller's poetic ideal. As Hebbel's *Schiller in his Aesthetic Writings* claims:

Unter den Richtern der Form bist du der erste, der einz'ge,  
Der das Gesetz, das er gibt, gleich schon im Geben erfüllt.

Among the judges of form, you are the first one, the only  
Who, in the giving, fulfills already the law that he gives.

Schiller's "law" of aesthetic form, more than anything else, implies a union between the natural grace and dignity of the Ancients and the historical self-consciousness of the Moderns.

Even in Schiller's historical narrative of the confrontation between the Emperor, defending Catholicism, and Gustav Adolf of Sweden, fighting for Protestantism, the rise and fall of *Wallenstein* in the service of the Emperor strangely suggests the story of Achilles. The historical figures and events of the Thirty Years War seem to fit the poetic panorama of Homer's *Iliad*, where the natural enmity between Agamemnon, the ruler, and Achilles, the hero, almost outweighs their national enmity against Hector, whose humanity encompasses both their natures. At the end of his account of *Wallenstein's* role in the Thirty Years War, Schiller writes:

Thus *Wallenstein*, at the age of fifty, ended his action-filled and extraordinary life; raised by love of honor, felled by lust for honor, with all his failings still great and admirable, unsurpassable if he had kept within bounds. The virtues of the ruler and hero, prudence, justice, firmness and courage, tower in his character colossally; but he lacked the gentler virtues of the man, which grace the hero and gain love for the ruler.<sup>40</sup>

In answer to this Epilogue of the historian, the Prologue of the poet promises:

Von der Parteien Gunst und Hass verwirrt  
Schwankt sein Charakterbild in der Geschichte,  
Doch euren Augen soll ihn jetzt die Kunst,  
Auch eurem Herzen, menschlich näherbringen.  
Denn jedes Äusserste führt sie, die alles  
Begrenzt und bindet, zur Natur zurück.

Blurred by the favor and the hate of parties  
His image wavers within history.  
But art shall now bring him more humanly  
And closer to your eyes and to your heart.  
For art, which binds and limits everything,  
Brings all extremes back to the sphere of nature.<sup>41</sup>

In the Preface to his *Bride of Messina*, Schiller speaks of the relationship of historical truth to poetic truth or, as he calls it in *On Tragic Art*, to the truth of nature:

Nature itself is only a spiritual idea, which never falls into the senses. Under the cover of the appearances it lies, but it itself never rises to appearance. Only the art of the ideal is favored, or rather shouldered with the task to grasp this spirit of the whole and to bind it into bodily form. Though never before the senses, this [type of art], because of its creative power, can bring it [the spirit of the whole] before the imagination and thus be more true than all actuality and more real than all experience. From this it follows by itself that the artist cannot use a single element from actuality as he finds it, that his work must be ideal in *all* its parts, if it is supposed to have reality as a whole and agree with nature.

Striving for a form of art that would be true both to historical reality and to nature, Schiller, in his *Wallenstein*, surrounds the modern world of the Thirty Years War with a mythical horizon of Homeric overtones. In a letter of 1794, in which he tells Körner of "writing his treatise on the Naive and, at the same time, thinking about the plan for *Wallenstein*," Schiller confesses:

In the true sense of the word, I enter a path wholly unknown to me, a path certainly untried, for in poetic matters, dating back three, four years, I have put on a completely new man.<sup>42</sup>

Reaching for the truth of nature by combining Naive and Sentimental poetry, Schiller integrates Homer's "imitation of nature" into his own "presentation of the ideal." In his advice to Goethe who, at the time of Schiller's work on *Wallenstein*, was engaged in his *Achilleis*, an epic poem about the death of Achilles, Schiller suggests:

Since it is certainly right that no *Iliad* is possible after the *Iliad*, even if there were again a Homer and again a Greece, I believe I can wish you nothing better than that you compare your *Achilleis*, as it exists now in your imagination, only with itself, and in Homer only seek the mood, without really comparing your task with his. . . . For it is as impossible as thankless for the poet, if he should leave his homeland altogether and actually oppose himself to his time. It is your beautiful vocation to be a contemporary and citizen of both poetic worlds, and exactly because of this higher advantage you will belong to neither exclusively.<sup>43</sup>

Like catalysts in the process of establishing an ideal mode of poetic expression, the echoes of Homer's *Iliad* in Schiller's *Wallenstein* accentuate its modernity.

In a major change from the *History of the Thirty Years War*, Schiller's *Wallenstein*, like Homer's *Iliad*, begins in the middle of the war. But where Homer, in the first seven lines of the *Iliad*, describes the wrath of Achilles, and the fateful clash between Achilles and Agamemnon, Schiller, in the Prologue to *Wallenstein*, discusses the role of art, and art's relationship to history and nature. Befitting the ancient epic poem, Homer's *description* centers on Zeus and the fulfillment of his will; befitting the modern dramatic poem, Schiller's *discussion* centers on the phenomenon of the great historical personality.

Both Homer's *Iliad* and Schiller's *Wallenstein*, with the Catalogue of Ships and the first play of the trilogy, exhibit the army and its various elements in a set picture. But where the Catalogue of Ships, preceded by an invocation to the Muse, merely lists the leaders of the Trojan war, *Wallenstein's Camp* (the model for Brecht's *Mother Courage*), depicts the dissolution of life in the state of war which, as a state of nature in the midst of the state of society, perverts all human values.

Both Homer's *Iliad*, in the center of its first half, and Schiller's *Wallenstein*, in the center of its central play, *The Piccolomini*, show the most tender human relationship exposed to the harsh reality of war. But where Homer, in the parting of Hector from wife and child on the wall of Troy, focuses on the conflict between *family* and society, Schiller, in the love scenes between Max and Thekla, focuses on the conflict between *individuals* and society. A poetic expression of Kant's Moral Law, founded on nothing but their hearts, love creates an island of freedom in the sea of historical necessity.

Both Homer and Schiller, with the Shield of Achilles and the chalice of the banquet at Pilsen, use the detailed description of an artifact to highlight the world view implicit in each poem. But where the scenes on the shield depict human life within the timeless order of nature and, therefore, are self-explanatory, the scenes on the chalice require an explanation not only for their reference to a specific moment in human history, but also for their use of allegory in portraying that moment.

Where Homer, in the First Book of the *Iliad*, tells of Achilles' meeting with Thetis, and of her visit to Zeus on Olympus, Schiller, in the opening scene of *Wallenstein's Death*, the last play of the trilogy, shows Wallenstein concentrating on the long expected moment of the conjunction between the planets Venus and Jupiter. The change of perspective, from trusting in divine powers that are moved by will and fate to relying on heavenly bodies that move in accordance with universal laws, does not affect the hopes and the despair that either of them occasion.

Both Homer and Schiller, with dramatic suspense, portray their heroes in thoughtful solitude. But where Homer paints the rich scene of Achilles sitting before his tent, in the company of Patroclus, and singing about the glory of men to the sound of his lyre, Schiller presents Wallenstein absorbed in a monologue, reflecting on the relationship of freedom and necessity in human nature. Unlike Achilles' song which, in the creative process, unites freedom and necessity, Wallenstein's reflection, in the form of a syllogism with invalid premises, denies such a union and is left with the fragments of abstract thought. Achilles' restful repose conveys the harmony of his song as much as Wallenstein's restless stopping and starting the disharmony of his reflection.

In striking change from the *History of the Thirty Years War* Schiller models the friendship between Wallenstein and Max, the only non-historical character in the play, on



the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad*. Both Homer and Schiller, in the poetic constellation of their characters and plots, make friendship, a middle ground between a natural and a conventional bond, the turning point for tragedy. Like the death of Patroclus for Achilles, the death of Max brings Wallenstein closer to realizing the tragic connection between freedom and necessity, borne out in the problematic relationship of nature and convention.

The modern complexity of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, over and against the relative simplicity of Homer's *Iliad*, shows itself in content as well as in form. Expressive of the fragmentation of human nature in the course of history, Schiller's abstract language lends itself to portraying characters that are torn between action and reflection. Striving for a new totality of human nature, some of Schiller's characters parallel more than one of Homer's characters: Max, both Patroclus and Hector; Thekla, both Briseis and Andromache. This double role of the modern characters is the more significant, as it obliterates the enmity between Greeks and Trojans and thus points to an individuality which, viable or not, transcends the political nature of man. Complementary to the parallels of characters, parallels of plots create a maze of poetic affinities between the ancient epic and the modern tragic poem. Discontinuous and staggered, the parallels of plots seem to point not only to the fragmentation of human nature in modern times, but also to a new totality made possible through history.

Intent on exploring the way in which time and timelessness complement each other in the work of art, Schiller and Goethe, in their letters during the years of Schiller's work on *Wallenstein*, discuss the relationship of tragic to epic poetry. Perceiving them as complementary art forms, the one under the category of causality, the other under the category of substantiality, Schiller defines tragedy as the capture of "singular extraordinary moments," and epic poetry as the depiction of "the permanent, persistent whole of mankind."<sup>44</sup> In agreement with Aristotle's notion of tragedy as the more comprehensive art form of the two,<sup>45</sup> Schiller changes his early plans for an epic poem about the Thirty Years War, centering on Gustav Adolf, to his final ones for a dramatic poem, centering on Wallenstein. Immersed in his task of translating Euripides, in Schiller's eyes a poet on the way from Naïve to Sentimental poetry, Schiller, in 1789, had written to Körner:

Let me add further that in getting better acquainted with Greek plays I, in the end, abstract from them what is true, beautiful and effective and, by leaving out what is defective, I therefrom shape a certain ideal through which my present way shall be corrected and wholly founded.<sup>46</sup>

In a letter to Goethe, in which he speaks of "sketching out a detailed scenario for *Wallenstein*," Schiller remarks:

I find the more I think about my own task and about the way the Greeks dealt with tragedy that everything hinges on the art of inventing a poetic fable.<sup>47</sup>

Schiller's *Wallenstein* and Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, which Schiller had translated in 1788, apparently follow the same poetic fable. In both dramas, the leader of the army orders members of his family to join him at his camp. In both, the political reasons for this move are disguised as personal reasons. In both, the heroic action of a youth close to the leader interferes with his plans and finally causes tragedy and death. In the comparison with Homer's *Iliad*, the main parallels were drawn between the Emperor and Agamemnon, Wallenstein and Achilles, and Max and Patroclus. In the comparison with Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, however, the main parallels would have to be drawn between Wallenstein and Agamemnon, Max and Achilles, and Thekla and Iphigeneia. The fundamental theme of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, the necessary connection between nature and convention, emerges in the "living shape"<sup>48</sup> of Wallenstein, presenting, in one modern historical figure, Achilles, the archetype of the natural hero, and Agamemnon, the archetype of the conventional ruler.

In the 26th letter *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller comments on the sovereign power of the artist:

With unlimited freedom he can fit together what nature separated, as long as he can somehow think it together, and separate what nature connected, as long as he can only detach it in his mind. Here nothing ought to be sacred to him but his own law, as long as he only watches the marking which divides his province from the existence of things or realm of nature.

True to the reality of history, Schiller presents Wallenstein in a modern historical drama, set in the world of the Thirty Years War. Separating what nature connected, Schiller omits those features of the historical Wallenstein that would disqualify him for being a tragic hero. True to the reality of poetry, where the historical characters, as poetic figures, become symbolic beings, Schiller presents Wallenstein in a dramatic poem, surrounded by a mythical horizon. Fitting together what nature separated, Schiller strikes parallels, respectively, between one historical and more than one mythical character, and between one historical and more than one mythical plot. The fact that the poetic figure of Wallenstein reflects the archetypes from Homer and Euripides in a cross between naturally opposed, but artistically complementary, characters demonstrates both the fragmentation and the striving for a new totality of human nature in the course of history. By reflecting the *Iliad* as well as the pregnant moment before the *Iliad*, Schiller's *Wallenstein*, a living example of the unity of time and timelessness, opens up a perspective from history to epic as well as tragic poetry. With his integration of Greek "imitation of nature" into his own "presentation of the ideal," Schiller seems to point to the fulfillment of an ideal in which art and nature would meet again.

To a letter in which Körner had suggested a few changes in the plot of *Wallenstein*, Schiller replies with unusual sharpness:

A product of art, insofar as it has been designed with artistic sense, is a living work, where everything hangs together with everything, where nothing can be moved without moving everything from its place.<sup>49</sup>

Correlation of everything with everything can be detected in more than one element of Schiller's dramatic poem: the polarity of characters sustains the symmetry of plots which, in concentric circles of scenes and acts, form the whole of the trilogy. Corresponding to the three parts of the Prologue, the three plays of *Wallenstein* explore the relationship between nature and art, portrayed in the life of individuals, representative of the life of mankind. Schiller's integration of characters and plots from Greek epic and tragic poetry into his modern historical drama contributes to the symbolic nature of his poetic figures and poses the question of the relationship between Ancients and Moderns, fully discussed in his philosophical writings. The correspondence between dramatic characters and aesthetic principles ties together life and art by interpreting them in terms of history, understood in the light of nature.

The evidence of such complex relationships between the various elements of Schiller's *Wallenstein* certainly proves it to be a "product of art," but does it prove it to be a "living work?" In a long, painstaking letter about *Wallenstein*, Humboldt writes to his friend:

We often talked with each other about this poem, when it was scarcely more than sketched out. You considered it the touchstone with which to test your poetic capacity. With admiration, but also with apprehension, I saw how much you bound up in this task. . . . Such masses no one ever has set in motion; such a comprehensive subject matter no one ever has chosen; an action, the motivating springs and consequences of which, like the roots and branches of a tremendous tree-trunk, lie so far spread out and dispersed in such diverse forms, no one ever has presented in one tragedy.<sup>50</sup>

In a letter to Körner, Schiller confesses:

None of my old plays has as much purpose and form as my *Wallenstein* already has; but, by now, I know too well what I want and what I have to do that I could make the task so easy for myself.<sup>51</sup>

In the light of his notion of the poets as "preservers" and "avengers" of nature, Schiller, in the letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, compares the artist to Agamemnon's son who returns to the house of his fathers in order to avenge the past on the present. Understanding him as a contemporary and citizen of more than one world, Schiller advises the artist to take the material for his work from the present, but the form from "a nobler time, yes, from beyond all time, borrowed from the absolute, unchange-

able unity of his being." In compliance with his own advice, Schiller takes the material for his *Wallenstein* from modern history, but the form from a blend of Naive and Sentimental poetry, explicated in the aesthetic theories of his philosophical writings. Fully aware of the artificial nature of such a process, Schiller, nevertheless, expects to achieve an ideal of poetry in which history and philosophy would contribute to the vindication of nature. The fact that no one, for now almost two hundred years, has seen that Schiller's *Wallenstein*, in appearance the most modern of his dramas, in substance is also the one where Naive and Sentimental poetry blend most completely, should be enough of an indication that history and philosophy, though indispensable for Schiller's work, are only means towards a higher goal: their fulfillment in poetry. To end with Schiller's own words:

All paths of the human spirit end in poetry, and the worse for it if it lacks the courage to lead them there. The highest philosophy ends in a poetic idea, so the highest morality, the highest politics. It is the poetic spirit that, for all three of them, delineates their ideal which to approximate is their highest perfection.<sup>52</sup>

1. The main sources for my account of Schiller's life are: F. Burschell, *F. Schiller, In Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg 1958; G.v. Wilpert, *Schiller-Chronik, Sein Leben und Schaffen*, Stuttgart 1958. With a few exceptions, references to secondary literature have been kept out of the account.
2. Translations of dramatic works, C.E. Passage, *Wallenstein*, 1958; *Don Carlos*, 1959; *Mary Stuart, The Maid of Orleans*, 1961; *The Bride of Messina, William Tell, Demetrius*, 1962; *Intrigue and Love*, 1971, New York; F.J. Lampert, *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, London 1979. Translations of philosophical works, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, R. Snell, New York 1954; E.M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, dual language edition with extensive introduction and commentary, Oxford 1967; *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* and *On the Sublime*, J.A. Elias, New York 1966.
3. *Wallenstein's Death*, III, 13, 1813.
4. F. Burschell, *F. Schiller*, 7.
5. G.v. Wilpert, *Schiller-Chronik*, 41.
6. To Lempp (?), Jun. 19, 1783.
7. In *A Schiller Symposium*, ed. L. Willson, Austin, Texas 1960, 65-81.
8. See. T. Sowell, *Ethnic America, A History*, New York 1981, 54: "The British brought nearly 30,000 German mercenary soldiers to the colonies to try to put down the American rebellion. These were not individual volunteers but soldiers sold or rented to the British by the rulers of various German principalities."
9. Th. Mann, *Versuch über Schiller*, Frankfurt a.M. 1955, 35 (*Last Essays*: translation R. and C. Winston, New York 1966, 29, but without this personal reference).
10. In *A Schiller Symposium*, Austin 1960, 31-48.
11. Dec. 4, 1788.
12. To Baggesen, Dec. 16, 1791.
13. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Letter 2.
14. *The Artists*, 443-445.
15. *Wallenstein*, Prol. 61-69 (translation C.E. Passage; "great objectives," my correction).
16. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 2.
17. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 3.
18. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 6.

19. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 6.
20. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 8.
21. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 11.
22. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 20.
23. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 15.
24. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 21.
25. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 8.
26. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 27.
27. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 27.
28. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 9.
29. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 9.
30. Note that Schiller's judgment (1794/95) dates from long before even the First Part of Goethe's *Faust* (1806).
31. To Körner, Sep. 12, 1794.
32. To E.v. Schimmelfmann, Jul. 13, 1793.
33. To C.v. Schimmelfmann, Nov. 4, 1795.
34. To Goethe, Aug. 31, 1794.
35. To Schiller, Nov. 6, 1795.
36. To Humboldt, Feb. 17, 1803.
37. *Über Schiller und den Gang seiner Geistesentwicklung*, 1830, in *Werke*, II, ed. A. Flitner/K. Giel, Darmstadt 1969, 361-362.
38. To Reinwald, Apr. 14, 1783, quoted in F. Burschell, *F. Schiller*, 47-48.
39. A. Lincoln, "The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions," Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, Jan. 27, 1838.
40. *History of the Thirty Years War*, End of IV.
41. *Wallenstein*, Prol. 102-107 (translation C.E. Passage; "within", "heart", my corrections).
42. To Körner, Sep. 4, 1794.
43. To Goethe, May 18, 1798; in his earlier work *Hermann and Dorothea* Goethe closely imitates Homer. Under the names of the nine Muses, starting with Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, and ending with Urania, the Muse of philosophical poetry, the nine Cantos of *Hermann and Dorothea* present the whole realm of poetic expression. Set against the historical background of the French Revolution, the story of Hermann and Dorothea, together with the different modes of poetry evolving from each other, seems to be a modern version of Homer's Shield of Achilles. The Muse of epic poetry, however, not only governs the First Canto, but her spirit prevades the poem as a whole: Homeric meter, Homeric diction, Homeric epithets and episodes, though softened from heroic to idyllic tone, echo *Iliad* as well as *Odyssey* in every line of Goethe's poem. As Goethe, in his elegy "Hermann and Dorothea," states it: "Doch Homeride zu sein, auch nur als letzter, ist schön" ("Yet, to be a *Homeride*, even if only the last one, is beautiful").
44. To Goethe, Apr. 25, 1797; Aug. 24, 1798.
45. To Goethe, May 5, 1797.
46. Mar. 9, 1789.
47. Apr. 4, 1797.
48. *Aesthetic Education*, Letter 15.
49. Mar. 24, 1800.
50. To Schiller, Sep. 1800.
51. Nov. 28, 1796.
52. To C.v. Schimmelfmann, Nov. 4, 1795.

# Some Chinese Poems

Translated by Julie Landau

## *Six Dynasties Period (317–588)*

### Anonymous

#### TZU-YEH SONGS

#### Three Selections

##### I

When first I knew him,  
I thought two hearts could be as one  
My thread hung on a broken loom,  
How could it make good cloth?

##### II

Through the long night, I can not sleep,  
How dazzling the moon!  
I think I hear someone calling—  
And sigh 'yes' to the emptiness

##### III

I am as the morning star,  
Fixed for a thousand years.  
Your fickle heart goes with the sun,  
Rising in the east, while it sets in the west!

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Julie Landau has studied Chinese at Columbia University and for a year (1967–1968) in Hong Kong. Her translations of Chinese poems have appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *Renditions* (Hong Kong), and in the anthology, *Song without Music: Chinese Tzu Poetry*, edited by Stephen C. Soong, (University of Washington Press, 1980).

## T'ao Ch'ien (365-427)

### RETURNING TO THE FARM TO LIVE

#### I

I never had a taste for men's affairs  
Mountains and hills are what I love  
Stupidly, I was drawn in  
Once snared, thirty years went by  
The fettered bird longs for the forest  
The fish in the pool thinks of the lake  
To clear some land in the wilderness  
The foolishness I held to, and came back to farm.  
Ten acres and a place to live  
A thatched hut, a few rooms  
Elm and willow shade the back  
Peach and plum grace the front  
A village in the distance  
Sends up light smoke  
Far down the lane, a dog barks  
A cock crows atop the mulberry—  
My door is far from the world's muddle  
I've room enough and time  
Caged for so long  
At last I am myself again

#### II

The wilderness is out of reach of men's intrigues  
An alley leading nowhere attracts few wheels and reins  
All day the bramble gate stays closed  
In bare rooms, where are worldly thoughts to settle  
From time to time, winding through rough country  
Others too part the grass to come and go  
We meet—no time for idle talk—  
Mulberry and hemp is all we think about  
Mulberry and hemp are bigger day by day  
And day by day I open up more land  
We live in fear that frost and hail  
Will kill the crop and scatter it like straw

---

These are from a series of five poems on the same theme.

#### IMITATION OF OLD POEM

A riot of orchids under the window  
Dense, dense the willow by the hall—  
When first we parted  
You did not say it would be long  
Once out the door, you went ten thousand miles  
And on the way met others.  
Hearts drunk before we spoke  
What need then for wine?  
But orchids fade, willows wither  
Promises are broken.  
Go, tell the young  
To love and not be true  
Rashly destroys a life—  
For parted, what is left?

### *T'ang Dynasty (618–907)*

#### **Tu Fu (712–770)**

##### A LONGING LOOK IN SPRING

The country's in pieces, the river flows on  
The capital, trees and grass, in full spring—  
Afflicted by the times, flowers cry  
Birds grow restive in the air of partings  
Warning beacons have burned three months  
Letters from home are worth ten thousand in gold  
White hair grows so thin  
It can not bear a pin

MOONLIGHT NIGHT REMEMBERING  
MY YOUNGER BROTHER

The drums of battle interrupt my journey  
The front in autumn, lonely as the wild goose cry  
Dew from tonight: white  
The moon, bright as at home  
My brother and I, now parted  
Without a home to send us word, who lives, who died  
Our letters, forever on the way,  
And war, and war, and war

THE GUEST ARRIVES

North of the cottage and south, spring floods,  
Day in day out, my only guests are gulls.  
The path has not been swept of petals  
When I make wide the bramble gate for you.  
Only a simple supper—the market is so far,  
Even the wine is rough—  
If you'd care to drink with my old neighbor,  
I'll call across the bamboo fence that we've a cup for him.

CLIMBING

Impatient wind, high sky, baboons shrilly lamenting,  
Shoal in clear water, white sand, birds slowly circling  
Space without bounds, the whisper of falling leaves,  
River without end, rushing and tumbling.  
Ten thousand miles I travelled in autumn,  
Full of years, sick and alone, I climb.  
Hardship, suffering, regret, frost my temples.  
New misfortunes keep me even from my muddy wine



## Li Po (701–762)

### BRING WINE!

Don't you see the waters of the Yellow River come from the sky  
Flow out to sea and never return?  
Don't you see in bright mirrors of high rooms, white hair lamented  
Black silk in the morning, by evening pure snow?  
Of life and happiness, drain the cup,  
Don't leave the gold bottle in the moonlight in vain,  
Use the talent heaven bestowed,  
Squander a thousand in gold, it can come back,  
Roast a lamb, slaughter a cow, enjoy life,  
In company you must drink three hundred cups!  
Honored Ts'en,  
Tan-ch'iu, good sir,  
Bring wine!  
Give the cup no rest  
I'll sing you a song . . .  
Lend an ear . . .  
The bell, the drum and all life's luxuries are not enough  
Stay drunk, and never come to  
History is full of saints and sages, lonely and forgotten  
Only the drinkers leave their mark  
Prince Chen, in his day, feasted at Ping Le  
Spent thousands on a measure of wine, the price of laughter  
When buying, don't say you can't afford it  
Just buy and drink and pour  
The dappled horse,  
The fine fur coat,  
Let's trade them for a splendid wine  
Dissolve ten thousand ancient sorrows

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Ts'en and Tan-ch'iu are names. Ts'en is thought to be the poet, Ts'en Ts'an.

## Kao Shih (702?-765)

### SONG OF YEN (written to music)

In the twenty-sixth year of K'ai Yüan, an officer  
who returned from having served at the border  
showed me "The Song of Yen." Affected by  
thoughts of the campaign, I wrote this to the  
same rhyme.

Lured northeast by the smoke of Han victories  
Generals leave home to wipe out straggling opposition  
A man by nature likes to use his power  
And the emperor is pleased.  
Brass and drums echo along Yü Pass,  
Banners serpentine through rock  
Battle orders fly over the desert  
The fires of the khans light up Lang Shan  
Mountain and river: bleak and chill  
Wind and rain: allies to the Tartar horsemen.  
Up front, half our troops are dead  
In camp, girls still sing and dance.  
Deep in the desert, autumn withers grass and trees  
Few men are left to see the sunset at the lonely fort.  
The privileged were intrepid  
Strength spent, the pass still under siege,  
Those in armor diligently endure, cut off.  
Jade tears are shed at home  
Young girls, south of the wall, despair  
Soldiers, north of the front, look back in vain  
They're out of reach  
In that forsaken place what is there  
But the stench of death, all day, rising in clouds?  
Chill battle sounds fill the night  
And everywhere white steel and blood,  
Valor and death without reward.  
Can't you see the misery of it all  
That even now, it's only victory that counts?

---

The twenty-sixth year of K'ai Yüan is A.D. 738. Yen is a state in north China. "Song of Yen" belongs to a genre of ballad called yüeh-fu, folk ballads collected in the Han Dynasty and their later imitations. The imitations, of which this is one, usually follow the original theme, and retain the title, but describe current ills or events. "White Snow Song" and "Bring Wine" are also yüeh-fu.

## Ts'en Ts'an (715–770)

### WHITE SNOW SONG

*Sending Field Clerk Mou Back to the Capital*

A north wind snaps the frosted grass  
Under the Tartar sky, snow in August  
Everything suddenly transformed as by the first spring breeze  
That in one night  
Opens ten thousand pear blossoms

Snow sprinkles bead curtains, wets silk screens,  
Fox furs aren't warm enough, silk quilts seem thin  
The general can not arch his horn tipped bow,  
Frontier guards' coats of mail, frozen, but still worn.  
On tangled, jagged desert, a sea of ice,  
Sad clouds, frozen, stiff, gloomy, extend ten thousand leagues

The garrison commander toasts the the departing guest,  
Tartar instruments—lute, mandolin and reed pipe, play . . .  
Flake upon flake, the evening snow piles up against the gate;  
Vainly, the wind rips the red banner, stiff with cold

Lun T'ai East Gate, I see you off  
You go by the snow filled T'ien Shan pass  
The road curves, you're out of sight,  
You leave nothing here but the marks of your horse on the snow

---

Lun T'ai is a place on the northern border, outside the Great Wall.

## Liu Tsung-yüan (773–819)

### OLD MAN FISHING

An old fisherman passes the night beside the western cliff  
At dawn, scoops clear water from the Hsiang, kindles bamboo  
The mist clears, the sun comes out—not a soul in sight  
The long oar whispers in the water; green hills, green water  
Turn back and see the river flow from heaven  
Above the cliff, clouds idly play tag.

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The Hsiang is a river.

### Afternote

These selections represent two disparate periods of Chinese history: one of disunity, political instability, and confusion; one of empire. After the Han Dynasty disintegrated in the third century, attempts to reunify China failed. The north fell to barbarians and was ruled successively by a variety of foreign dynasties; the south, by a succession of weak, regional, native dynasties. Among the intelligentsia—China's traditional bureaucracy—many retreated from political life rather than take the risks of aligning themselves with the wrong usurping family. Confucianism, which had adapted itself to the exigencies of an orderly, unified empire, declined in importance. The more mystical ideas of Buddhism and Taoism were in the ascendant. Many poets sought nature, wine, and seclusion. One of the greatest of the recluse poets of the Six Dynasties period was Tao Ch'ien.

Folk poetry, especially love poetry, constrained by the Confucian morality of the Han, re-emerged in this period of dis-

unity—free, suggestive, and amoral. Tzu-yeh (Midnight) is thought to have been a singing girl of the fourth century. Tzu-yeh songs, some of which she may have written, are uninhibited love songs whose simplicity and frankness are their charm.

China, north and south, was reunited by the Sui Dynasty (581–618). During the T'ang Dynasty (618–907) China was, once more, strong and expansionist. Confucian values again prevailed. Most poets chose to serve the state in China's vast bureaucracy. Rarely in favor at court for long, many passed much of their lives as minor officials in remote, often disease-ridden, outposts of empire. Kao Shih and Ts'en Ts'an wrote of life and war at the frontier in the far west and northwest. Liu Tsung-yüan wrote from exile in the south. Tu Fu's war poems describe the chaos around the capital at the time of the An Lu-shan rebellion (755), an uprising which the dynasty survived, but from which it never really recovered—J. L.

# That Graver Fire Bell: A Reconsideration of the Debate over Slavery from the Standpoint of Lincoln

Robert Loewenberg

It was George Fitzhugh, the nation's most profound defender of slavery and the man who proposed to enslave whites as well as blacks, who was the first to make the point that the proslavery position and abolitionism do not represent two opposite extremes but two sides of a single extreme. Considering his own position in support of slavery a form of socialism, a view not disputed by Marxist or radical historians now, Fitzhugh insisted that abolitionism was akin to slavery in principle and in ultimate tendency.<sup>1</sup> He contended that abolitionism was a malevolent brand of socialism, however, while the slavery he defended was benevolent.

But if the ideas at the root of both proslavery and abolition were alike, are we to suppose that the Civil War was a gigantic hoax, each side fighting benightedly for the same bad cause? Or is it more likely that the people of those times had some reasonably clear understanding of what issues were at stake, while it is we who have been misled by extremists? In fact, our present view of the period and all that is connected to it is influenced by the assumption, virtually universal and unquestioned, that the proslavery and abolitionist extremes were opposed in theory because they were opposed regarding the Southern slave. But contemporary Americans were not confronted with a choice between abolitionism as pure freedom on one side, and

some brand of slavery on the other. The real extremes were these: slavery and freedom, not proslavery and abolition.

It would seem that no opposition could be clearer than slavery and freedom. The difference is commonsensical; any slave or free man could tell the difference. But we are accustomed to uses of language which convey more confusion than common sense regarding freedom or regarding most political terms. For example, are men free when they are equal before the law, an ancient ideal which Lincoln cherished; or does freedom require an equality that rejects law as a disguise for power, a bourgeois convention, as the abolitionists and their defenders claimed?

The antebellum debate over slavery was a struggle for control of the terms of public debate. The struggle regarding words has, in the main, been won by abolitionism. Today we see the Civil War, and much else, in abolitionist terms. How ironic then that George Fitzhugh, slavery's great advocate, should now provide us with the means to develop a more correct and historically accurate understanding of freedom. Fitzhugh demythologized abolition. But, inadvertently, he did more than this. In identifying abolition with his own proslavery position, Fitzhugh did not explain its opposite, or freedom.

Fitzhugh's demonstration—and it was devastating—that the abolitionists were the ones, even more than he, who called for an end to free society as the source of all enslavements, including wage slavery, child abuse, intemperance, and female political disabilities, amounted to this: freedom as such did not exist except in a negative sense as an absence of slavery. In other words, Fitzhugh, agreeing that abolition was pure freedom while also insisting that abolitionism was reducible to slavery, seemed to imply

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there could be no such thing as freedom at all. Unless common sense and philosophy both fail us, however, there must be an opposite to slavery. Freedom is the opposite of slavery.

In his critique of abolition, Fitzhugh unwittingly showed that Lincoln was the real champion of the principle of freedom in those times. Lincoln was, if anything, even more alive to the character of abolition than Fitzhugh.

Not in the middle between the opposites of abolition and proslavery, Lincoln, in fact, spoke for freedom as the opposite of slavery. Lincoln, not William Lloyd Garrison, Elijah P. Lovejoy, Horace Greeley, or Thaddeus Stevens, is properly contrasted with Fitzhugh, the South's most complete defender of slavery. And, if this is a proper pairing, we might anticipate a certain congruence between the analyses of Lincoln and Fitzhugh. As a matter of fact, they made the same discoveries from opposite sides of the debate about slavery and freedom. Fitzhugh detected sameness where a difference had been supposed to reside. Lincoln discovered that two things that seemed the same, freedom and abolition of slavery, were really different. Fitzhugh exposed the kinship of slavery and abolitionist doctrines; Lincoln showed that his own defense of freedom, based upon the principle of consent of the governed, was different from, actually antithetical to, Stephen A. Douglas's supposed defense of freedom, which was also based upon the principle of consent of the governed.

Lincoln called Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty, according to which voters living in the territories would decide the question of slavery prior to statehood, a "covert . . . zeal for . . . slavery."<sup>2</sup> Douglas said that a majority had the right to do whatever it wished, that is, to be free, even to vote others into slavery and to deprive them of the consent of the governed. Douglas opposed slavery, but would not, he said, intolerantly impose his personal view on others. He did not care whether slavery were voted up or down so long as people voted and the majority governed. The good and bad of slavery for Douglas was a matter of votes and personal conviction, "conscience" as it was sometimes called.

Lincoln argued that Douglas's version of consent of the governed subverted freedom in the moment it professed to uphold it. The themes of reversal and betrayal are central ones in Lincoln's thought during the years 1838 to 1865. Popular sovereignty twisted the principles of American government and made the Declaration of Independence the foundation for slavery, just as the Dred Scott Decision of 1857 misinterpreted the Constitution, making it an instrument for slavery and force instead of an instrument of law and right.<sup>3</sup> Lincoln saw at the root of Douglas's idea the reversal of the principle of consent of the governed as found in the Declaration and the betrayal of law and the Constitution. Fitzhugh also contemplated a reversal of law and right, but from the opposite perspective. Slavery, he said, is the "inalienable right" of everyone.<sup>4</sup> He dismissed as irrelevant the then common defenses of slav-

ery based upon biblical and racial grounds and proclaimed that slavery was suitable and just. Slavery was the higher law.

The higher law doctrine was, of course, not Fitzhugh's slogan but William Seward's. Seward proclaimed it in 1850 during the debates that preceded the famous Compromise of 1850 which men hoped would extinguish all debate about the slavery question. This was more than ten years before Seward became Lincoln's Secretary of State. Actually, Fitzhugh loathed every kind of law and politics—like the abolitionists. In fact, the debate over slavery and freedom focussed on just the point the abolitionists and Fitzhugh wished away: It was a debate about law.

From the standpoint of the abolitionist identification of abolition and freedom, the measure of Lincoln and the nation turns upon the correct relation of law to the higher law. From this point of view Lincoln is seen to have sacrificed the Declaration to the Constitution, principle to expedience. In particular, Lincoln failed to make emancipation the aim of the Civil War rather than simply the restoration of the Union. Those who take this view also think that Lincoln preferred property rights and states' rights to human rights. This group, which contains most writers, includes those whom C. Vann Woodward has called "liberal and radical historians who identify with abolition."<sup>5</sup> These historians are divided between those who despise Lincoln as morally obtuse and others who credit him with prudence. But the important point is granted by all, namely that the abolitionist rhetoric, with its conflicts between the Declaration and the Constitution, the Union and emancipation, human rights and property rights, is true. Lincoln denied this. The abolitionist context and the several sets of opposites that are part of it is exactly what Lincoln did not grant as properly framing the issues or dividing the people in the years before or during the Civil War. Above all, Lincoln did not regard law or the Constitution as inferior to any "higher law," whether in the consciences of abolitionists and transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, or in Douglas's law of the majority.

It is taken for granted that Lincoln, however great a man, was a "moderate," in the sense of one who stands against pure good in favor of expedience. Not Lincoln's version of freedom but Emerson's or Thoreau's is the one that post-Civil War Americans have been taught in schools, in colleges, and from the pulpit, where Lincoln called for freedom to be taught. Moreover, freedom emphasizing, in Thoreau's words, that "it is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right," is contrary to Lincoln's teaching.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln denied the conflict of right and law, as Thoreau posed it, because he denied the elevation of what Thoreau and the abolitionists called "conscience" to a level transcending law and government. Abolitionist ideals which were articulated best by Emerson and Thoreau, who were not active abolitionists, are

part of a tradition that is hostile to Lincoln as are those related versions of American history we know as liberal and radical. The "radical vein which the conservative and reactionary of Christendom had for centuries endeavored to keep submerged," and that Perry Miller finds in Jonathan Edwards, is the vein that also nourished nineteenth century abolition.<sup>7</sup> What Miller calls reactionary and conservative, however, Christendom called heretical—in particular, gnosticism. Abolitionism proper had its beginnings in the sixteenth century among the followers of Thomas Münzter. Although historian David B. Davis calls the Münzterites the "first abolitionists" in order to praise them, he is not wrong as to fact.<sup>8</sup> But Münzter's and Jonathan Edwards's vision of freedom is the one Lincoln instructed Americans to reject.

In the decade of the 1850s, when George Fitzhugh was at the peak of his powers, producing in his two books the most important defense of slavery ever made by an American up to that time, Lincoln was embarking on the early stages of a second career in national politics. The cornerstone of this effort, like the first, was his conviction that slavery was wrong and freedom was right. As Lincoln said in a speech at Peoria, Illinois, in October 1854, "I say this is the leading principle—the sheet anchor of American republicanism. . . this [is] our ancient faith. . . Now the relation of masters and slaves is, *pro tanto*, a total violation of this principle."<sup>9</sup> As a practical matter, Lincoln's position committed him to opposing the extension of slavery into territories acquired from Mexico in 1848. One could, as Lincoln often said, compromise about the existence of slavery as a fact only if one did not compromise with the fact of slavery as evil. The great point of difference between Lincoln and some contemporaries (as well as later critics) is that they compromised in the other direction. They would not give ground on the existence of slavery, but they compromised, unknowingly, with freedom itself. This was Lincoln's quarrel with abolition as well as with Douglas. Freedom and slavery for Lincoln were absolutely opposed: the house divided.

By freedom Lincoln meant nothing outwardly complex or unfamiliar to the men of his day. Those who heard his speeches, beginning with his first major address in 1838, the Lyceum Address, or who listened to his debates with Douglas two decades later, understood that when Lincoln said "freedom" he had something clearly in mind. By freedom Lincoln meant this: law. By law Lincoln did not mean what is sometimes called positive or public law, or any other historical or relativistic idea. Rather, Lincoln understood by law transcendence, which is the opposite of relativism. The law is lawful because it transcends times and places as well as majorities and the higher law of individual consciences. Lincoln saw that law is the "sheet anchor" of American republicanism; in his words, "No man is good enough to govern another man *without that other's consent*."<sup>10</sup> To this proposition Lincoln opposed popular sovereignty. The fight against Douglas occupied Lincoln

until 1860. After that time he defended his position against the Radicals in Congress who said with Thoreau that "my only obligation. . . is to do at any time what I think right [or]. . . conscience."<sup>11</sup> But both periods and both fights show the same understanding of the law and freedom. Law and freedom, as they are found in the Constitution and the Declaration, are alike a unity or a whole in Lincoln's thought. These two documents were related, he said in January 1861, as an apple of gold to a frame of silver: "The picture was made, not to *conceal* or *destroy* the apple; but to *adorn*, and *preserve* it."<sup>12</sup>

The physical Union that Lincoln wanted to save, embodying the union of the Declaration and the Constitution, included other unions. Among these is the union of the politic and the ethical. Lincoln did not suppose this an impossible union as later Max Weber, the founder of modern social science, would do. Lincoln was certainly an idealist. By idealism Lincoln understood the ongoing struggle of men, of talented men especially, to meet the challenges to virtuous and civil dealings posed by an opposite idealism which holds that men should compel reality to fit their ideals of it. This second kind of idealism, the source of modern fanaticism, has its roots in a view of politics and of words that Lincoln instinctively deplored. At the root of Lincoln's union was a relationship of Christianity and law, properly understood. He called this union "political religion."

Political religion was Lincoln's answer to the question which he himself raised in 1838 in the Lyceum Address about how best to secure that "government. . . conducting more essentially to the ends of civil and religious liberty than any of which the history of former times tells us," i.e., American republicanism. He says:

The answer is simple. Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration . . . so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor. . . . Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe. . . let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges. . . let it be preached from the pulpit. . . in short, let it become the political religion of the nation.<sup>13</sup>

This unity of Christianity and law, this political religion, is what prompted Lincoln to call American republicanism the second greatest institution in the world after Christianity. Let it be clear what political religion was not. Lincoln did not regard Christianity as a thing merely useful to order. He also did not understand by political religion any substitution of religion for politics. This substitution, especially in its insidious modern form, was the fanaticism that threatened America. By political religion Lincoln understood a certain connection of the human to the divine,

the connection that had long sustained Western political thought about freedom.

Lincoln understood, as Aristotle before him, that all political life has as its condition the principle that "the mind is moved by the mover."<sup>14</sup> In other words, man is free because he is related to the divine; he is, as Plato put it in a pertinent observation on suicide, the possession of the gods.<sup>15</sup> It is not coincidental that the present expression of the abolitionist position as elaborated by Alexandre Kojève (whose doctrines influence such important studies of American slavery as David B. Davis's) is opposite to this. "Death and freedom," Kojève has written, "are but two . . . aspects of one and the same thing." Kojève's understanding of freedom stands on suicide which, in its turn, reflects and requires atheism. "If Man lived eternally and could not die, he could not render himself immune to god's omnipotence either. But if he can kill himself . . .," then he is free. That is to say, freedom rests upon "a complete atheistic philosophy."<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, these two extremes regarding freedom partake of related extremes in politics. The practical aspect of Lincolnian freedom is that human government is not a meaningless and irrational undertaking, rather, government is essential to humans. If this is so, then questions of good and evil regarding governments cannot be reduced merely to the pleasurable. The good and the pleasurable are not the same. Then freedom cannot be identified simply with desire, but must instead be identified with something outside a selfish will. Reason and not passion, the good and not pleasure, constitute human freedom. All of this together Lincoln signified by the word "law." It signifies transcendence. The substance of this view is the one expressed by Aristotle that "men should not think it slavery to live according to the rule of the constitution; for it is their salvation."<sup>17</sup> The implication of this doctrine is that self-government demands self-control, not "popular sovereignty" or "conscience." But we know that abolitionists looked at law and salvation, as well as constitutions, in a different light.

Abolitionists considered constitutions and laws to be enslavements. Garrison's famous public burning of the Constitution in 1854 is the essential symbol of the abolitionist movement. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 symbolizes Lincoln's answer to it. Against the Promethean symbolism of Garrison, Lincoln emphasized Christian symbols. Lincoln's use of religious symbols, as they apply to law and freedom, is part of the rhetoric of his political religion.

Lincoln's understanding of the American republic and his assessment of its destiny turn upon his view that freedom provides for man's political "salvation." Constitutions, in other words, are not the means of enslavement but of freedom. Lincoln's meaning is that law is man's salvation, his assurance of a humane, civilized life in this world.

American republicanism was to man's political salva-

tion what Christianity was to the salvation of man's soul. The two salvations for Lincoln were connected. As Jesus made the family a sacramental union so as to provide a metaphorical basis for knowledge of God (called Father and bridegroom), so Lincoln, immersed in these same meanings and their purposes, sought to make the Union sacramental by posing the Declaration and the Constitution as a metaphorical basis for knowledge of the self (called ruler and ruled). Moreover, because the divine or transcendence is necessarily connected to or unified with the human by means of reason or the soul, the relationship between the political and the religious realms is not simply a metaphorical one. Christianity is marked by universality; it promises salvation to all men. The law of the republic is both a replica of this universality as well as an effect of all transcendence. Governments, that is, are natural to man, or, as the ancients put it, governments are "divine." For good and evil to be possible, there must be transcendence. Man is not just another kind of animal for whom speech, as among bees, is solely a behavioral instrument. Hence time and place cannot be the determinants of good and evil. But the truth about the political sphere, though it hinges on the truth of the religious sphere, is always different and in some sense opposed. Lincoln did not call for religious politics but for political religion. Accordingly, Lincoln contrasted Europe, or the old world as Americans of that day called it, with the new, passion with reason, and otherworldly with worldly aspirations. As Christianity rests upon the crucifixion of a savior, the republic rests upon resistance to what Lincoln calls "suicide" in the Lyceum Address. Political salvation is not the work of one man for all others, but the work of each man through self-control. Political salvation is the Constitution and the Union because the sovereignty of majorities (what Douglas advocated) or the sovereignty of conscience (what abolition advocated) are alike against the Union and unconstitutional in a moral and human sense as well as in a legal one.

What do Lincoln's life and writings teach of political religion? The outward form of Lincoln's political life, like his own outward form, is simple and inelegant. It was bound at both ends, from 1838 to 1865, by the principles already noted and by his consistent opposition in practice to the extension of slavery. In 1847, during his sole term in Congress, Lincoln voted for the Wilmot Proviso, stipulating that any territories acquired from Mexico must be closed to slavery, "at least forty times" by his count.<sup>18</sup> Years later in 1861 Lincoln made the principle of nonextension of slavery the basis for his opposition to the Crittenden Compromise, which would have extended the superseded Missouri Compromise of 1820 to the Pacific. The event that brought his life and thought into focus, and from which comes our own understanding of political religion as he practiced it, was the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

It was the passage of this bill for the settlement of Kansas and Nebraska on the principle of popular sovereignty



that brought Lincoln to the center of public controversy. Douglas's bill repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820. That famous piece of legislation stilled, at least for a time, what Thomas Jefferson had called a fire bell in the night, the slavery question.

Jefferson's anxieties in 1820 about slavery in the lands of Kansas, lands he purchased from France in 1803 with anxieties touching the constitutionality of his right to make the purchase, took on a new urgency during Lincoln's day. This is because the politicians of the 1820s led by Martin Van Buren had thought to use the conflict over slavery, the fire bell in the night, as the means to build a new party coalition that would keep the slavery issue out of national politics. Lincoln's election in 1860, by shattering that coalition of Northern farmers and Southern yeomen, undid Van Buren's political work, forcing men once more to consider Jefferson's warning. Van Buren's idea had been to keep the country half slave and half free *in fact*. The result of his effort turned out to be that the country became half slave and half free *in principle*. It was this dreadful consequence that Lincoln spelled out to Alexander Stephens in December 1860, two days after South Carolina seceded.

You think slavery is *right* and ought to be extended; while we think it is *wrong* and ought to be restricted. That I suppose is the rub. It certainly is the only substantial difference between us.<sup>19</sup>

Stephens, who was to become the vice president of the Confederacy, had asked Lincoln, who was already president-elect of the Union, "to save our common country" and to recognize that he and the Southerners were not Lincoln's personal enemies.

But Lincoln had always recognized this. The distinction between right and wrong, liberty and slavery, was superior to all things because things perish. This was the rub. Liberty was above the "common country" and above Lincoln and Stephens. The physical union, an object of emotion, was destined to perish. But the union sustained by political religion would, as Lincoln said in 1838, "live through all time."<sup>20</sup> The wishes and desires of men, even men who wished for emancipation, would have to yield to the law. Lincoln made this point to Horace Greeley on August 22, 1862, in response to his Prayer of Twenty Millions, written to Lincoln three days before. Lincoln explained that his policy would be to free slaves or not to free them "if it would save the Union" quite regardless of his "oft-expressed *personal* wish that all men, everywhere, could be free."<sup>21</sup>

The prudence suggested in this observation by Lincoln is not mainly expressive of expedience or trimming. Lincoln's prudence relates instead to self-control and to forbearance indicative of constitutional rigor in the personal and legal realms. The Constitution did not permit Lincoln to make emancipation the purpose of the war as Greeley demanded. Lincoln's personal wish to emancipate the

slaves did not overcome an inner law of reason and an outer law, the Constitution, that salvation of all reason and law, *viz.*, no man has the right to rule another without that other's consent. Lincoln understood he could not fulfill the law by breaking the law as some messianic abolitionist would do. To proceed in that way Lincoln considered tyrannical and un-Christian. A grant of freedom to the slaves, at that point, however desirable or possible, would have been an even graver fire bell in the night than the one Jefferson warned about in 1820. It would have signaled that a new enslavement was about to begin.

What was this new enslavement, how and why was it new? That Lincoln knew the answers to these questions emerges from his struggle with the Radicals. With the secession of South Carolina in midwinter of 1860, the focus but not the substance of Lincoln's quarrel with the ideals of popular sovereignty shifted from Douglas to the Radicals. This new struggle began when Lincoln took office. The main question was how to deal with the eight slave states remaining in the Union after February 1861. Although both Garrison on the abolitionist Left and Greeley on the abolitionist Right hailed the Southern departures, they would soon be calling upon Lincoln to give no quarter to the South once the war started. Most people, however, looked for some way to save the situation. Congress considered a host of plans and ideas for restoring the Union. The end result was a cruel caricature of "compromise." The eight wavering states split their loyalty, four to the North, four to the South. And, as if to mimic those trying times, fifty-five counties in western Virginia seceded from the state of Virginia in May 1861. Adopting a new constitution for itself, with slavery, West Virginia joined the Union to the delight, not only of Lincoln, but of Thaddeus Stevens, who was the Robespierre of Radicals. What this meant was obvious to Lincoln: the war to come would not be about slavery as a practical matter, however much slavery had been its cause. Even so, the question of the war's aim became the subject of contention between Lincoln and the Radicals. For Lincoln the seceded states were not a nation, and consequently constitutional provisions applicable to them remained intact. The Radicals, for their part, were openly contemptuous of the Constitution. They were also much less agitated than Lincoln about the practical consequences to the Union where the five Union slave states were concerned. For Lincoln the triumph of the Union, that is, the defeat of the eleven slave states, required the support of the five Union slave states. And the triumph of the Union would also be the resolution of the intolerable condition of the house divided; it would be the triumph of freedom.

Lincoln's position was that the aim of the war should be the perpetuation of the Union, so that the result of the war would be the "ultimate extinction" of slavery. This result, as Lincoln had always insisted, at no time more importantly than during the secession crisis of 1860, could be accomplished without war and without the violation of

either the Constitution or the rights of the Southern states. Essential to this result was obedience to the law and the recognition of "our ancient faith" that slavery was the soul of lawlessness. The South well understood, rather better than some Radicals, that an end to the fact and the principle of slavery extension meant the ultimate extinction of slavery. This is why the South seceded. It is why Lincoln refused to give his support to the Crittenden Compromise in 1861.

The Republican leaders in Congress took a different view of things. Falling under the skillful and often ruthless leadership of men who called themselves Radicals, in particular Senators Zachariah Chandler, Benjamin Wade, Charles Sumner, and in the House, Thaddeus Stevens, James Ashley, George Julian, and H. Winter Davis, Congress relished a power unknown to American institutions to that time. The Radicals' outward objective, resisted by Lincoln, was to make emancipation the aim of the war. The struggle, as Lincoln saw it, however, was between political religion and its opposite, religious politics.

On its practical side this contest centered in the Radical Committee on the Conduct of the War chaired by Ben Wade. The Committee's main goal, whether in investigating generals or in cashiering them, was to make Lincoln revise the purpose of the war. And the Radicals also promoted the fortunes of their favorite generals, especially General John C. Fremont. He had proclaimed martial law in Missouri, declaring that all slaves were confiscated property, thus free. Although Lincoln had countermanded his order, other Radical generals imitated Fremont. Congressional Radicals also tried to force the President's hand by legislative means. They passed confiscation acts in the summers of 1861 and 1862. The differences between Lincoln and the Radicals are clearest, however, in the contest over the Emancipation Proclamation. This episode, one of the most famous in American history, was also the great "passion play" of political religion.

Much has been said about the Emancipation Proclamation. There is now a strong tendency to think that only the naive could credit the "stereotyped picture of the emancipator suddenly striking the shackles from millions of slaves by one stroke of the presidential pen."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the document is considered deficient in grandeur. It resembles a "bill of lading" in the view of historian Richard Hofstadter.<sup>23</sup>

It is also widely believed that the famous Proclamation came about as a result of the President being forced onto higher moral ground by the importuning Radicals. But this view of events, like the wider abolitionist context it sustains and reflects, does not square with the facts. That Lincoln was forced to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, in the sense that he was also forced to conciliate the South before the war or to hang Union deserters during the war, is likely true enough. But the complaints of the Radicals, who called the Proclamation "futile" and "ridiculous," as well as the comments of historians in later

times, would indicate that Lincoln did not do what he was supposedly pressured into doing.

Lincoln was a master of the politician's art. What he did in this case, as he so frequently did in others, was to make the best of difficult circumstances. He served his own purpose, which was to salvage the Union as a physical and constitutional entity, and he tied even tighter the principles of emancipation and constitutionality. The Proclamation distinctly subordinated emancipation to the overriding purpose of the war, reunion. Lincoln beat back the demand for emancipation on Radical terms, which demanded the unconditional liberation of the slaves regardless of any constitutional or military considerations. Regarding such terms as the instruments of tyranny, Lincoln understood what most of his contemporaries only glimpsed, as when Henry Wilson, himself a Radical, discovered with shock that radical emancipator Ben Wade, chairman of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, had all the earmarks of the slaveholder. "I thought the old slave-masters had come back again," said Wilson, speaking of Wade's behavior in Congress in 1865.<sup>24</sup>

The Radicals lost the fight with Lincoln over the Emancipation Proclamation and most of them knew it. Those who were satisfied that the Proclamation had raised Lincoln to their level failed to see that Lincoln had raised them to his. They conceded what Lincoln wanted from the start, that only lawful emancipation was true emancipation. They conceded, in other words, the necessity for a constitutional amendment, the 13th. Later no one worked harder for it than Lincoln. The Proclamation did not strike off the slaves' chains because only a constitutional amendment could do that. As a military measure that made the continuation of rebellion the justification for freeing slaves, the Proclamation only applied in the rebellious states, and there, as the Radicals loudly complained, it could not free a single slave because Union authority had been usurped by the rebels.

The Proclamation was, as it says, a war measure. It was written as a war measure and not as a grander measure might have been. Yet in the subtlety of its ultimate purposes, both its political purpose toward the Radicals and its moral purpose toward the slaves and the aim of the war, the Emancipation Proclamation must surely qualify as one of the more remarkable bills of lading ever written.

Perhaps Hofstadter was more apt than he knew. Lincoln's political religion charged him with the delivery of the Constitution to a recipient, the slaves. Lincoln at least considered his agency essential to the wholeness of the nation and to the warrantability of the product, freedom. Compare the Proclamation as a symbol of Lincoln the man and the principle of self-government with Garrison's Promethean gesture, his burning of the Constitution in 1854. The contrast becomes sharper still as the elements of Lincoln's political religion unfold. Lincoln's goal of self-government for the republic was also his personal goal.

My paramount object [Lincoln said in 1862] . . . is to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or destroy Slavery. . . . [W]hat I do about Slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do *not* believe it would help to save the Union.<sup>25</sup>

Forbearance is in truth the soul of what Lincoln called "political religion." In this connection, and in other startling ways, the contrast between Lincoln and abolition shows most clearly. At the level of personalities, the contrast between Lincoln and William Lloyd Garrison is especially obvious. Garrison was the nation's high priest of religious politics. He was no doubt America's nineteenth century Münzter. He regarded "politicians and philosophers [who] . . . sometimes foolishly speculate . . . about the best forms of government" as idle men.<sup>26</sup> When men were "perfect," that is, beyond good and evil, they would have true government, which is to say no government. Thus Garrison said, as did Lincoln, that America would be "immortal," but their meanings were perfectly opposite. Lincoln understood America's immortality in the sense supplied by political religion. Garrison, on the other hand, meant that America was to become a heaven on earth, a New Jerusalem.

Garrison, like Münzter and the first abolitionists before him, understood human life and history to be in the grip of immanent eschatological purposes: history had meaning and America was history. Counting all men as potential Christs, Garrison regarded religious salvation as measured by one's willingness to sacrifice and martyr himself for the heavenly realm of freedom in this world. Slavery was for Garrison the sum of all villainies because the freedom he craved was literally not of this world. This seemingly absurd vision is the apocalyptic one that Münzter also held when he directed all European princes to submit to him as the risen Christ. Looking upon this world as the field of man's salvation, the reformer proposes to escape the conditions of human reality by insisting that these conditions are actually impediments to true humanity, hence the work of some devil, for example, class, race, sex. Once the devil is exorcised, man will be free in the radical sense once reserved to religion, i.e., man will be liberated from the conditions of human being. Thus was America immortal in Garrison's mind.

There are several other instances in which antebellum reformers considered this release from the conditions of being human to include actual immortality. The case of John Humphrey Noyes, the famous founder of the Oneida commune in 1840, where free love, eugenics, and birth control methods were used to create what Noyes called the We spirit that would liberate men from all possessions, is the best known. But Lincoln understood that abolition offered in truth a kind of religion. Garrison's "idealism," which left "every man to decide, according to the dictates of his conscience," promised as a matter of political doctrine that good and bad were only names.<sup>27</sup> This vision of

man, which is loosely called relativism and egalitarianism today, was a promise of immortality and certainty in this world for those who had rejected Christianity's promise of immortality in the next world. Garrison's cry for men to become free by being "crucified with Christ" comprised the betrayal of Christianity, as well as the reversal of Lincoln's political religion.<sup>28</sup> Men who seek to be crucified with Christ in order to bring about political salvation in reality commit suicide. They subvert political religion by turning politics into religion and religion into lawlessness.

Lincoln said the conflict with the abolitionists was a struggle to maintain freedom by means of political religion, a struggle against any form of religious politics. The contest was made more dangerous since both sides used the language of freedom and the language of religion. Although there was not a group in America that more often sought to connect Christian and political symbols than the abolitionists, there were others who did it better and who knew better what they were doing. America's poet of freedom delighted most in braiding political and religious meanings. The contrast of Lincoln with Emerson, who compared John Brown to Christ, best reveals differences between political religion and the ideals of abolition.<sup>29</sup> Where Lincoln's free man is marked by restraint and forbearance, Emerson's free man or Man Thinking is the model of unrestraint. Man Thinking is radically free.

In 1836, two years before Lincoln made the Lyceum Address, Emerson marked himself out as one of America's outstanding spokesmen for freedom. Like Lincoln, Emerson spoke of freedom as a sacred thing. It was, however, the will of man and not the law that Emerson considered sacred. "Nothing," wrote Emerson in 1841, "is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." If so, is the law profane? Emerson supposed it was. "No law," he insisted, "can be sacred to me but that of my nature."<sup>30</sup> What then of morality or transcendence as the foundation of law? For Lincoln the sanctity of the Constitution was its transcendence of individual minds and natures, singly or as majorities. This transcendence, relying upon reason in individuals as the means to discern law, demonstrates that good and evil are truths beyond time and place, beyond the consciences of individuals. Supporting law is the divine. As Lincoln suggested, Christianity is the greatest institution. Emerson was a transcendentalist of quite an opposite kind.

Precisely, it was law that free men were to transcend; they were to transcend transcendence. Emerson said "good and bad are but names. . . the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it."<sup>31</sup> Here was a very different constitution than the one Lincoln had in mind. If Emerson was right, then Garrison was justified in burning the Constitution and in calling it "a covenant with death and a league with hell."<sup>32</sup> Whereas Lincoln's prescription of political religion evoked Aristotle's praise of constitutions as the source of freedom and therein sal-

vation, Emerson's doctrine encouraged men to burn constitutions as the means of salvation. Freedom is the release from covenants. But covenants of one type or another are the web of a man's life. How would ordinary people know to burn covenants? Emerson, aware of the question, as was Lincoln, had the answer. The gift of freedom must be the work of great men. Great men, not covenants, shall be the liberators. And the means to greatness is no other than the destruction of all covenants, or freedom. Thus will the great man "have no covenant but proximities," no covenants that outlast whim, thus the renunciation of all covenants. Emerson anticipates here the disclosure of his most shocking teaching that true liberation is the release from an egoistic self, to be replaced by a godlike unity that is not an "I" but a "We." This was his ideal "ever new and sublime, that here is One Man."<sup>33</sup> Emerson really meant all covenants, even a man's relation to himself. This is why he counted the human memory a hindrance to freedom. Lincoln noticed this version of freedom and emphasized antidotes to it. He especially nurtured memory, because it would help to preserve covenants. Lincoln urged men to consider the Declaration a covenant "undecayed by the lapse of time," a means to knit together all customary and personal covenants which depended on memory.<sup>34</sup>

We need not look far for the opposition of Lincoln and Emerson on the subject of the sacredness of freedom. Emerson rests freedom in the sacred recesses of man's passion, in "unhandselled savage nature."<sup>35</sup> It is sacred because it is screened, as Emerson put it, from natural law, from society, and from books and the past. But Lincoln believed that only reason could sustain law. Moreover, reason must overcome passion if good and evil are to be more than names. For the ancients, and for Lincoln, slavery was the spontaneous submission to the will without the mediation of reason, but this is what Emerson called freedom. The source of this difference lies in what each side considered reason to be.

For Emerson, reason is an instrument, at once the product and the producer of nature. Lincoln understood reason as the ancients understood it. He considered it, along with those whom Perry Miller called the conservative and reactionary of Christendom, the sensorium of transcendence. The ultimate imperative of Emersonian freedom says, "do not choose."<sup>36</sup> In other words, let your will subdue all choices and all anxiety regarding them. Simply do. This understanding of freedom and the will is the one that Miller found so affecting in Jonathan Edwards. Moreover, where Edwards named this necessitous or enslaving will God, Emerson identified it as "Man Thinking." Freedom is oneness with "God," or nature; the creation of human constitutions is mere whim. A man is liberated in this way from every interference. He is a new Adam, a veritable Christ. This is the "reason and faith" that Emerson sought in the woods where "all mean egotism vanishes."<sup>37</sup>

But how perfectly does this Emersonian ideal of free-

dom recall the worldly freedom of slavemasters. Emerson's freedom, which does not wittingly or outwardly envision slaves and masters, was this: complete liberation requires the liberation of passion from the internal conflict of desires within one's self. This is the basis of that affirmation of "man's freedom" celebrated now by writers on the subject of freedom such as David Brion Davis. Davis, perhaps the most highly regarded student of American abolition, counts the Münzterites and their like as the West's "first abolitionists" as we have already seen. If sin "was not a reality," says Davis, characterizing the first abolitionists, "but only a name that could be made meaningless by an act of will [Emerson's position], there could be no justification for inequalities of sex and property which violated the law of spontaneous love." Above all, the law of spontaneous love would overcome that most unconscionable property and possession, the self, or what Emerson called "mean egotism." Freedom from the ego is the red heart of abolitionism that Fitzhugh, too, discovered. It supplies as well those veins of radical, actually heretical, Christianity that historian Miller found beating as a "mighty engine of revolution" in Jonathan Edwards.<sup>38</sup>

Lincoln linked memory of the Revolution to the Bible. His purpose was to show that truth or transcendence partakes of the sources of all transcendence, hence of its sanctity. Indeed, Lincoln goes far beyond Washington, whose own linking of religion and the political is not without a pragmatic aspect. The parallel that Lincoln proposes between American republicanism and Christianity is, for him, the source of all salvation in this world. Lincoln invests religious and Christian principles and their symbols with political ends. He counts the reverse, the investing of politics with religious ends, as of the essence of reversal and betrayal; the reversal of the two realms, religion and politics, and the betrayal of the separate purposes of each. Abolitionism is religious politics.

American republicanism, compared by Lincoln to "that only greater institution," Christianity, is, like Christianity, a "rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail."<sup>39</sup> Lincoln did not invoke the words of the Christian savior Jesus to his chief apostle Peter without purpose. Let us explore this comparison of Christianity with republicanism. It contains within it the essential elements of Lincoln's teaching on abolition. What is it, we must ask of *Matthew* 16:18, the Christian source Lincoln drew from for use in the Lyceum Address, that *does* prevail against Christianity? The answer is "suicide": the danger to republicanism, like the danger to Christianity according to Scripture, comes from within.

The rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail is the Church, actually Peter himself. In *Matthew* the gates of hell shall not prevail against Christianity or against the salvation provided to men by Jesus. But the danger to Christianity is that Peter as a man and the Church as a body will behave falsely, suicidally. As the Church must keep the teaching of Jesus, so Peter must be loyal to Jesus.

If these loyalties are kept, Matthew teaches, spiritual salvation is assured. These relations found in Matthew regarding man's spiritual salvation and the only institution greater than republicanism are duplicated in the Lyceum Address in which republicanism itself and political salvation are at issue.

The relationships of Peter to Jesus and of the Church to the teachings of Jesus compel us to consider the parallel that Lincoln makes between the first and second greatest institutions. In the Lyceum Address abolitionism (the real subject of the address) stands in relation to freedom as Peter stands in relation to Jesus. Abolition as a movement favoring freedom for the slave is an "apostle" of the savior, freedom. If abolitionism is a faithful apostle the republic will be saved. If it is false—as Peter was at one crucial point—then "as a nation of free men we must . . . die by suicide." The relationship of the Constitution to the Declaration also expresses the relationship of the church to the teaching of Jesus. Specifically, the survival of freedom calls for each American "to . . . support the Constitution and Laws [with] . . . his life, his property and his sacred honor," just as the "patriots of seventy-six [supported] . . . the Declaration of Independence."<sup>40</sup> But just as the Southern slaveholders hoped to see the Constitution upheld at the expense of the Declaration, so the abolitionists and the advocates of popular sovereignty thought they could bypass the Constitution, the one by majority rule, the other by individual conscience, in favor of the Declaration.

All three groups would deprive political life of content, none more so than abolitionism. Abolitionists were explicit in regarding all political things with contempt. To the abolitionist, the occupation of political man, called upon to rank goods and evils in light of the vast complexities of civil life, was an evil enterprise. Where freedom of conscience is the highest good, either all men think alike, in which case no government is necessary, or each man thinks and acts differently, in which case no government is possible and certainly none is legitimate. Politics, in this view, is a game at best. At worst it is the sign of man's degradation. This is how abolitionists most often saw government and political life. Accordingly, the abolitionist John Humphrey Noyes said to Garrison in the year of Elijah P. Lovejoy's murder, that he would "nominate Jesus Christ for the Presidency" as the best means to "overthrow . . . the nations."<sup>41</sup> Thus abolitionist relativism disguised a dogmatic absolutism.

In the history of American abolitionism there is no more perfect example of the fanaticism bred of such dogmatism than the affair of John Brown. Brown, like Lovejoy, who courted martyrdom, confused the emancipation of slaves with the emancipation of souls. He confused his martyrdom with crucifixion and made his death nearly a suicide. Although John Brown was too pathetic and absurd to become more than a terrorist—Lincoln compared him to the frustrated assassin of Napoleon III—the acclaim Brown

won from Emerson and Thoreau, who compared him to Christ, is more important as an indication of the caesarism that Lincoln sensed in abolition than Brown's acts.<sup>42</sup> Brown's comments in 1859 demonstrate the nature of the caesarism involved in the transformation of religion into politics.

Brown's religious politics were the same as Noyes's, who abjured all political life, and also like Garrison's, who renounced (until about 1859) all violence. "Christ," said Brown, is "the great Captain of *liberty*; as well as salvation." This expression of religious politics was uttered by Brown after Harper's Ferry when he had begun to compare himself to religious heroes of old, including Peter. In a remarkably revealing comment, meant to justify religious politics, Brown misstates the role of Peter and thereby renders a Lincolnian judgment against himself. Writing a month before he was hanged, Brown said, "Christ once armed Peter. So also in my case I think he put a sword into my hand."<sup>43</sup>

But Jesus disarmed Peter. When Jesus was arrested, Peter was disarmed by his Master to show that the Kingdom of God, Jesus' presidency, was not of this, but of another world. It showed that Jesus was not the captain of liberty as well as salvation.

But while abolitionists condemned Lincoln as a moderate, and Douglas deplored what he called Lincoln's moral absolutism, that is, Lincoln's insistence that slavery was evil—in fact popular sovereignty and abolitionism were alike "absolutistic" in the sense disapproved by these foes of Lincoln who said they favored freedom. This is simply demonstrated: absolute freedom, whether for majorities or individual consciences, rests upon the self-canceling proposition that all truth is relative. The political or practical consequences of popular sovereignty and abolitionism as political remedies are more important. Lincoln understood that governments founded on the principle of popular sovereignty would destroy freedom by vote since that principle made it possible to enslave individuals if a majority decided that it was good to do so. Lincoln also realized that abolitionism would, for its part, make government and all social life impossible. Lincoln, supporting both majority rule and freedom, as well as the Constitution, which Southern slaveholders raised in their defense, sought to unify all three of these fundamental principles of American republicanism—majority rule, freedom, constitutionalism—as a means to prevent their destruction at the hands of any one of them. The method Lincoln employed for this purpose and called political religion may be called moderation.

By moderation Lincoln did not mean the taking up of a position halfway between two extremes. This is what Fitzhugh meant by moderation or what modern liberals mean by it. In this view the center is a creature of extremes. By moderation Lincoln understood a position above the extremes which, though partaking of principles found in each, majority rule in popular sovereignty and emancipa-

tionism in abolition, transforms and unites the extremities by means of a higher principle. The higher principle Lincoln had in view was political religion in its mechanical and its essential aspects.

Lincoln considered that political religion involved the substitution of persuasion for force as the essence of political religion. Moreover, his political religion as a mechanical or procedural principle, by seeking common intellectual ground among members of the political community, appeals to the interests and passions of reasonable men, so that passion or force shall yield to reason, or to constitutions. The aim, then, of moderation is the replacement of force and passion with reason in each member of the political community. Political religion is the teaching of self-control.

Lincoln's life shows three examples of this self-control. Two of these concern Lincoln's efforts toward others in the first years of his political life. The third example concerns Lincoln near the end of his life. Whether such consistency as Lincoln's was "foolish. . . [.] the hobgoblin of [a] little mind. . .", as Emerson would have been bound to regard it, is a matter the reader must decide for himself.<sup>44</sup>

The first example of political religion is Lincoln's first public statement as a politician on the subject of slavery, his now famous protest in the Illinois legislature, made March 3, 1837, when he was twenty-eight years old. In principle and in method this early affair set a pattern from which he did not deviate. Although this protest is famous because of its opposition to slavery founded on "injustice and bad policy," it is difficult to see why Lincoln should have received much credit for it.<sup>45</sup> And, while Albert Beveridge, many years ago, could find little difference between the majority resolutions and the protest of Lincoln and his fellow representative from Sangamon County, Dan Stone, except the "moral" difference between slavery and freedom, even this difference is not obvious.<sup>46</sup>

The majority resolutions of the Illinois legislature do not say that slavery is moral. Rather the resolutions are a high-flown defense of slavery as constitutional. The majority contend that "the right of property in slaves, is sacred to the slaveholding states by the Federal Constitution."<sup>47</sup> Stone and Lincoln do not deny this or even dispute another point of the majority, that the federal government could not abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. What then is the difference between the majority resolutions and Lincoln's protest? Is there indeed any basis for praise of Lincoln in the drafting of the protest at all? Lincoln not only agreed with the majority that the Constitution protected slavery, he also roundly condemned the "promulgation of abolition doctrines [as tending]. . . rather to increase than to abate the evils of slavery."<sup>48</sup> Finally, when one considers that Lincoln, eleven months later in the Lyceum Address, called upon every American never to violate the Constitution and laws in the "least particular," the difficulty in seeing any special point in the protest becomes even greater and more paradoxical.<sup>49</sup>

But of course it was Lincoln's agreement with the majority that makes the protest significant. The Illinois legislature, responding to petitions from Southern legislatures seeking support and assurance that Northerners respected the constitutionality of slavery and deplored the anti-constitutional implications of abolitionism, had no opponent in Lincoln. But just as Lincoln would not later, in the Lyceum Address, praise the mob that killed the abolitionist Lovejoy, so he could not join the majority in the Illinois legislature in giving unconditional support to the constitutional right to slavery without protesting that slavery was wrong. It is not the genius of Lincoln's rhetoric, however, but the intent of his politics that should be emphasized.

Lincoln's intention in the protest was to call attention to his disagreement with the majority by means of his agreement with it. The "moral" difference *was* the only difference as it was later between Lincoln and Alexander Stephens. Here, as later, that difference was the rub.

Freedom is what the Constitution supported, not slavery. Just as the framers had won support of the Constitution by appealing to the monetary interests and passions of slaveholders, so Lincoln in his protest hoped to secure the support of men whose interests in the constitutionality of slavery had less to do with the Constitution than with such commercial interests as trading in Southern ports downriver from St. Louis or Alton.

The second example of Lincoln's teaching of political religion is found in the Lyceum Address considered as a politician's instrument. Lincoln's strategy in Springfield, speaking to an audience caught up in the excitement of Lovejoy's recent murder, was the same as it had been in the Illinois legislature. Once again Lincoln's purpose was to teach self-control by demonstrating it.

As we have already seen, Lincoln's objective in the Lyceum Address was to use Christian symbols to distinguish political religion from religious politics. In the Lyceum Address Lincoln identified abolitionism as a species of antinomianism. Abolitionism makes a political principle, freedom, into a religious principle, salvation. Moreover, its open despising of politics is as dangerous to freedom as it is to religion. Abolitionism is the enemy of political religion because it is the enemy of freedom as well as law. But Lincoln was careful not to make this point in the manner of an abolitionist. He was moderate and did not say all he meant.

In the Lyceum Address Lincoln set himself the task of showing that abolitionism is mob law, hence wrong. But Lincoln did not wish to appear to applaud Lovejoy's lynchers. Lincoln also wished to demonstrate that freedom is right without appearing to take Lovejoy's side against the mob (and against his audience which had no more affection for Lovejoy than had the Illinois legislature).

Lincoln's moderation is visible in the rhetorical structure of the speech. He did not mention Lovejoy, the first and recent martyr to abolitionism, and also carefully separated his discussion of Lovejoy from his discussion of other



victims of mob rule such as gamblers and murderers. In this way the reader or listener senses a difference between wrong behavior wrongly punished and abolitionism, also wrongly punished. The impression is that abolition is a churchly doctrine carried to the point of destroying both Church or Constitution, and doctrine or freedom. Freedom liberated from its home in the law is a betrayal of freedom. Allied with mob law and with slavery in its contempt for law, abolition itself brings about lynchings. Indeed, Lincoln suggested that freedom and lynch law—slavery, in a word—may become one. This, incidentally, was Fitzhugh's point about abolitionism.

Lincoln taught in the speech before the Illinois legislature and in the Lyceum Address that self-control is the chief instrument and end of political religion. The "suicides" of Lovejoy and Brown should be called reversals of self-control and betrayals of freedom, as the Lyceum address suggests. The identification of a man's will with the law is what men have always called absolutism.

In fact it is the danger of absolutism in the name of emancipation or liberation that is the great center and focus of everything Lincoln taught and learned about freedom. Lincoln, a man whom his best friends knew to be excessively ambitious, possessed considerable personal knowledge about the freedom for which Emerson had only wished. It is perhaps as important to us that Lincoln had an opportunity to act on his knowledge. Thus Lincoln realized as early as 1838, and proclaimed publicly, that a "towering genius" and a passionate man who was unwilling simply to do his part, with lesser men, in preserving the gains to freedom brought by the Revolution, "would as willingly, perhaps more so, acquire [distinction] . . . by doing good as harm."<sup>50</sup> In particular, the great man who was not content to abide the constraints of law, who wished to tear down the "sepulchres of the fathers"<sup>51</sup> with Emerson, rather than add "story to story upon the monument of fame erected to the memory of others," would as willingly serve his passion for distinction "at the expense of emancipating slaves" as by enslaving free men. Lincoln had this chance himself in the middle of the Civil War.<sup>52</sup>

Lincoln had an opportunity to emancipate slaves in a way satisfying to both his ambition for freedom as a principle and to his personal ambition. Shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, Lincoln was bidden by Salmon P. Chase, his Secretary of the Treasury, to apply the Proclamation in areas specifically excepted by it, for example, parts of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia that were under Union control. Such an application as Chase asked Lincoln to make would subvert the letter and spirit of the Proclamation as a war measure. Lincoln resisted. Perhaps this was a hard decision—he was a man of genius after all. It was certainly a "religious" decision at all events. His explanation of his course of action to Chase is pertinent.

If I take the step [you recommend] must I not do so, without the argument of military necessity, and so, without any argu-

ment, except the one that I think the measure politically expedient, and morally right? Would I not thus give up all footing upon constitution or law? Would I not thus be in the boundless field of absolutism?<sup>53</sup>

Liberation was the graver fire bell. Unlike the bell that frightened Jefferson, this bell rang at high noon when men do not fear fire but are inclined instead to regard it as a source of illumination and warmth. And Fitzhugh heard this graver bell, too. Unlike Lincoln he was delighted by its noise and especially by the abolitionists who rang it. Did they not alert all men, if men would only see—and Fitzhugh certainly thought the light was bright enough—that the new freedom was none other than the old slavery? But here Fitzhugh may have been too sanguine. There was, as Lincoln strongly hinted, something new and far more dangerous in the new freedom.

It was the brightness that troubled Lincoln. He may have guessed that someone would say, as Perry Miller did, that "one has to look into the blinding sun" in order to be free at all.<sup>54</sup> Yet who but a man with "a transparent eyeball" can look into the blinding sun? Only such a man as Emerson's Man Thinking or one who counts the transcending of self, the extinguishment of the human I as freedom; he says, in liberation: "I am nothing."<sup>55</sup> The issue was the abolition of man, a consequence Fitzhugh could not have imagined.

The author is pleased to acknowledge the assistance of the Earhart Foundation in the preparation of this essay.

1. Fitzhugh was regarded as among the most important of slavery's defenders in his day, a judgement largely affirmed by later historians, including those who credit Fitzhugh with a Marxist-like critique of capital [Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*, New York 1969], and others who consider his defense of slavery unusual or *sui generis* [C. Vann Woodward, "George Fitzhugh, *Sui Generis*," in George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All or Slaves Without Masters*, Cambridge 1960, vii-xxxix; Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South 1840-1860*, Baltimore 1977.]

A recent collection of essays on Fitzhugh will be found in *The Conservative Historians' Forum*, 6, Spring 1982.

2. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed., Roy P. Basler, 10 vols., New Brunswick, New Jersey 1953, II, 255.

3. See Lincoln's "Fragment on the Dred Scott Case," *Works*, II, 387-388. Lincoln makes the argument here that the Supreme Court must itself overthrow the Constitution, creating a kind of popular sovereignty among the three federal branches, if it can decide "all constitutional questions."

4. Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All* 69.

5. C. Vann Woodward, *American Counterpoint, Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue*, Boston 1971, 38.

6. H. D. Thoreau, *Walden*, New York 1960, 223.

7. Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, Westport, Connecticut 1949, 319.

8. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Ithaca, New York 1966, 297.

9. Lincoln, *Works*, II, 266.

10. Lincoln, *Works*, II, 266.

11. Thoreau, *Walden*, 223.

12. Lincoln, *Works*, IV, 169. (Cf. *Proverbs* 25:11)

13. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 112.

14. *Metaphysics*, 1072a30.
15. *Phaedo*, 62b4.
16. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Ithaca, New York 1969, 247, 259, note 41.
17. *Politics*, 1310a34-36.
18. Lincoln, *Works*, II, 252.
19. Lincoln, *Works*, IV, 160, 161.
20. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 109.
21. Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, New York 1862-1868, Supplement, I, Part II, 483.
22. J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, rev. 2d ed., Lexington, Massachusetts 1973, 380. One of the better recent studies is LaWanda Cox, *Lincoln and Black Freedom; A Study in Presidential Leadership*, Columbia, S.C. 1981.
23. Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, New York 1955, 132.
24. Congressional Globe, 38 Congress, 2 sess, 497.
25. Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, Supplement I, Part II, 482-483.
26. William Lloyd Garrison, *Liberator*, VII, June 23, 1837: 103.
27. Garrison, *Liberator*, VII, 103.
28. Garrison, *Liberator*, VII, 103.
29. See the present author's "Emerson's Platonism: and 'the terrific Jewish idea'," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* XV, 1982.
30. Robert Spiller and Alfred Ferguson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Cambridge 1971, 1979, II, 30.
31. Spiller and Ferguson, *Complete Works*.
32. Garrison, *Liberator*, XXIV, July 7, 1854: 106.
33. Emerson, *Works*, II, 42; I, 53.
34. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 108.
35. Emerson, *Works*, I, 61.
36. Emerson, *Works*, I, 82.
37. Emerson, *Works*, I, 10.
38. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 299, 298; also on Davis see the present author's "The Idea of Freedom in American Historical Writing," *The Center Journal* 1, Fall, 1982; Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 319-20.
39. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 115.
40. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 112.
41. Noyes to Garrison in *William Lloyd Garrison, the Story of his Life Told by his Children*, 4 vols., Boston 1894, II, 147.
42. Lincoln, *Works*, III, 541.
43. John Brown to E. B. in Louis Ruchames, *A John Brown Reader*, London 1959, 135, 129.
44. Emerson, *Works*, II, 33.
45. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 75.
46. Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln*, 4 vols., Boston 1928, I, 195.
47. Quoted in Lincoln, *Works*, I, 75.
48. Quoted in Lincoln, *Works*, I, 75.
49. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 112.
50. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 114.
51. Emerson, *Works*, I, 7.
52. Lincoln, *Works*, I, 114.
53. Lincoln, *Works*, VI, 429.
54. Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 195.
55. Emerson, *Works*, I, 10.



# Sophocles' *Ajax* and the Ajax Myth

Philip Holt

The Greek tragic poet worked with myths, with stories shaped by tradition and known (at least in outline) to his audience.<sup>1</sup> He was not wholly in control of his material. The poet interpreted the myth; he did not invent it. Myth required that Troy fall to the Greeks, that Agamemnon be murdered upon returning home, that Oedipus discover the truth about his birth and marriage. Yet myths were flexible within limits—sometimes, broad limits. The playwright could usually choose among different versions of his myth, and he could even make innovations of his own—not simply in drawing characters and writing speeches to flesh out the myth, but in constructing the plot. Aristotle (*Poetics* ch. 9, 1451b) took notice of this freedom:

One must not aim at a rigid adherence to the traditional stories on which tragedies are based. It would be absurd, in fact, to do so, as even the known stories are only known to a few, though they are a delight none the less to all.

In view of this flexibility within tradition, we can approach a Greek play by contrasting it with earlier treatments of the same story. What did its author emphasize that his predecessors had played down, or add which they had omitted, or delete which they had included? With these questions answered, we can go on to interpret the play itself: precisely what did the playwright create by presenting his version of the story rather than some other?

## 1. The Myth

The story of Ajax' death, as Sophocles tells it, is complicated. After Achilles died, Ajax and Odysseus laid claim to his armor. The Greeks awarded it to Odysseus. Enraged at this slight to his honor, Ajax set out by night to kill the

Greek leaders, but Athena clouded his mind so that he mistook the army's cattle for its men, and he killed and tortured the cattle instead. When he recovered his sanity and saw what he had done, shame and fear of reprisals drove him to fall on his sword. The Greek commanders sought to punish him after death by leaving his body unburied, but Odysseus persuaded them to allow his funeral.

Sophocles' authority and the excellence of his play made this version prominent in later antiquity and standard for modern times. But this was not the version Sophocles inherited, probably in the 440s B.C., when he wrote the *Ajax*. The evidence on earlier treatments of the myth is often spotty, but it gives us good reason to believe that Sophocles' predecessors knew a simpler story with some highly un-Sophoclean meanings.<sup>2</sup>

We first find the Ajax story in *Odyssey* 11.543–551, where Odysseus tells of his journey to the underworld and its ghosts:

Only the soul of Telamonian Aias stood off  
at a distance from me, angry still over that decision  
I won against him, when beside the ships we disputed  
our cases for the arms of Achilleus. His queenly mother  
set them as prize, and the sons of the Trojans, with  
Pallas Athene,  
judged; and I wish I had never won in a contest like this,  
so high a head has gone under the ground for the sake  
of that armor,  
Aias, who for beauty and achievement surpassed  
all the Danaans next to the stately son of Peleus.

Philip Holt wrote his doctoral dissertation on Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (Stanford 1976). He has published several articles on Vergil and Sophocles.

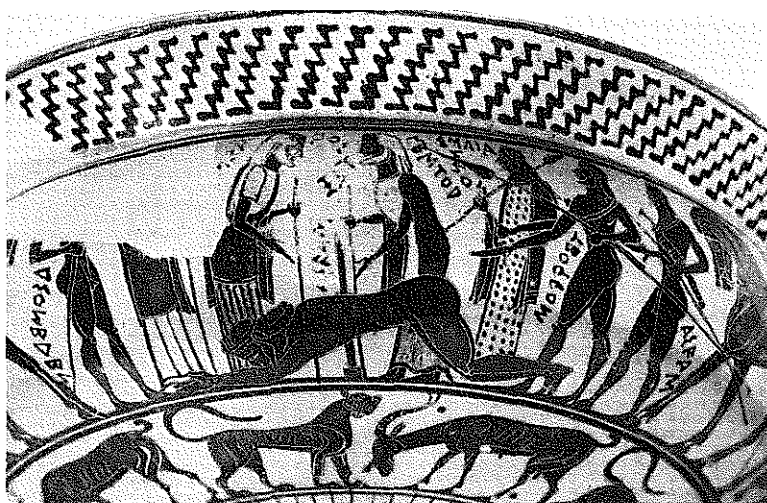


Figure 1. Corinthian cup by the cavalcade painter, sixth century B.C.; Greek leaders discover Ajax' suicide; private collection, photo courtesy of Antikenmuseum und Skulpturhalle, Basel.

Odysseus goes on to tell how he tried to speak to Ajax, but Ajax walked off without saying a word. Beyond the bare facts that Ajax lost the judgment of arms and died, Homer tells us only that "the sons of the Trojans" decided the dispute. He probably means (as one scholiast tells us) that the Greeks summoned a group of Trojan prisoners and asked them "by which of the two heroes they had been more greatly harmed." There is nothing about Ajax' madness or the slaughter of the cattle.

Pindar tells the story with considerable sympathy for the fallen hero in three passages written from 479 to 459 B.C.:

The greater mass of men have blind hearts. If it were possible for them to know the truth, then mighty Ajax would not have become enraged over the arms and thrust a smooth sword through his breast. [*Nemean* 7.23–27]

Envy devoured even the son of Telamon, rolling him upon his sword. Oblivion overcomes in grim strife the man who has no tongue but is mighty in heart; the greatest honor goes to the elaborate lie. For with secret votes the Danaans showed Odysseus favor. Ajax, deprived of the golden arms, wrestled with death. [*Nemean* 8.23–27]

The art of inferior men has seized and overthrown a stronger man. Consider mighty Ajax, who slaughtered himself late at night and won blame from all the sons of the Greeks who went to Troy. [*Isthmian* 4.36–40]

Where Homer committed the judgment of arms to "the sons of the Trojans with Pallas Athene," Pindar has it decided by the "secret votes" of the Greeks. He also regards the judgment of arms as unjust. Ajax deserved to win, but he lost because "the greater mass of men" were "blind" to his true worth, or because of the Greeks' envy and desire to curry favor with Odysseus, or because the hero "who has no tongue, but is mighty in heart" is vul-

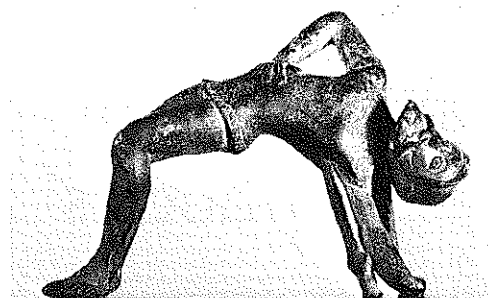


Figure 2. Etruscan bronze statuette, 460s B.C.; suicide of Ajax; Käppeli collection, photo courtesy of Antikenmuseum und Skulpturhalle, Basel.

nerable to "the art of inferior men." Pindar's view of Ajax as a victim of injustice and corruption carried weight in later decades. The Socrates of Plato's *Apology* (41b) muses that if he must die,

It would be marvelous to pass time in Hades, and meet Palamedes and Ajax the son of Telamon and any other of the men of old who died because of an unjust verdict, and to compare my sufferings with theirs.

This hero is not, however, the Ajax of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus mourns Ajax' death without admitting that Ajax was cheated. Nor is it the Ajax of Sophocles.

Both Homer and Pindar move immediately from the judgment of arms to Ajax' death. They put nothing in between—no plot to murder the Greeks, no delusion sent by Athena, no slaughter of the cattle. They might have known of these things and chosen to leave them out, for the picture of Ajax as a murderous, cattle-killing madman would mar Homer's sorrow over the passing of a great warrior and Pindar's indignation at heroic virtue misunderstood and unrewarded. Or they might not have known them. Their version of the story is quite intelligible, without any gaps to be filled with madness or attempted murder from Sophocles' plot. Homer and Pindar may present the original version of the myth, for time and retelling are more likely to complicate a myth than to simplify it. The short version kept its appeal in later times. Ovid gives us the shortest version of all, with Ajax killing himself on the spot the minute the verdict goes against him (*Metamorphoses* 13.1–398).

The *Odyssey* and Pindar's *Odes* contain the only surviving accounts of Ajax' death in poetry before Sophocles. More complicated versions (if any) must be sought among the fragments (often meager) of lost epics and dramas, and in works of art.

Our story appeared twice in the "cycle" of epics composed not long after Homer to round out the story of the

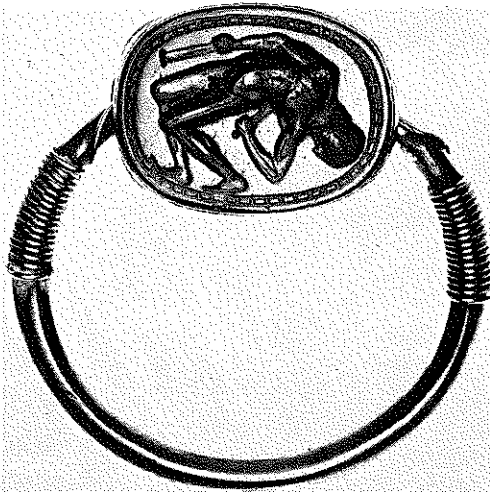


Figure 3. Etruscan carnelian scarab, early fourth century B.C.; suicide of Ajax; photo courtesy of Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Figure 4. Athenian black-figure amphora by Exekias, 530s B.C.; Ajax prepares to commit suicide; photo by H. and B. Devos, courtesy of Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Boulogne-sur-Mer.

Trojan War and its aftermath. The *Aethiopis* closed with it, with the essential events of the short version. Proclus, the author of a plot summary from the fifth century A.D., tells us that the *Aethiopis* included the judgment of arms. After Achilles' death, he says, "the Greeks made a grave-mound and held a contest, and a dispute arose between Odysseus and Ajax over Achilles' arms." The suicide is attested by a scholiast on the *Isthmian* 4 passage quoted earlier: "The author of the *Aethiopis* says that Ajax killed himself towards dawn." The judgment of arms may well have been settled by a jury of Trojan prisoners. A scholiast on the *Odyssey* 11 passage quoted earlier says the Trojan jury is described in "the cyclic poets," and we shall see that it does not come from our only other possibility, the *Little Iliad*. There is no literary evidence that the *Aethiopis* included Ajax' plot to murder the Greeks, his madness, or the attack on the cattle.

The *Aethiopis* may have been content with the short version of our story—Ajax killing himself "towards dawn" after a night of brooding over his disgrace. This ending would preserve the *Aethiopis*' focus on Achilles' exploits after the death of Hector. The death of Ajax—best of the Greeks after Achilles (*Iliad* 2.768 f., *Odyssey* 11.550 f.) and Achilles' companion and (in one tradition) his cousin—would fit into the *Aethiopis* as a somber coda to the death of Achilles himself. It would fit better in a short version than in a long one.

This may not be the whole story. Scenes from the epic cycle appear on a large relief sculpture from the early Roman empire, the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina*, and the section devoted to the *Aethiopis* includes a brooding figure captioned "Ajax mad." The nature of his madness—delusion, rage, melancholy—is not clear. In any event, the *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina* is too late, and too far slanted towards Roman versions of the myths, to tell us much about the *Aethiopis*.

Another work in the epic cycle, the *Little Iliad*, opened with the judgment of arms in a different version from the *Aethiopis*. To settle the dispute between Odysseus and Ajax, the Greeks sent spies up to the walls of Troy to learn the Trojans' opinion of the two heroes. Conveniently enough, the spies overheard two women debating that very question. One praised Ajax for carrying Achilles' corpse out of the thick of battle, but the other replied ("through the providence of Athena") that Odysseus was braver because of his work in fighting—presumably in fighting off the Trojans while Ajax made away with the body. This tradition of a decision on narrow grounds in the judgment of arms (best service in rescuing Achilles' corpse, not greatest overall prowess) was disregarded by Pindar and Sophocles, but it was fairly widespread in epic. It even left traces in the third or fourth century A.D., in the *Posthomerica* of Quintus of Smyrna (5.125, 158–160).

More important, our sources on the *Little Iliad* tell us that after the judgment of arms, "Ajax went mad, slaughtered the cattle of the Achaeans, and killed himself," and that because of this deed "he was not cremated in the usual way, but was buried in a mound because of the anger of the king." Scholars tend to assume this means Ajax set out to kill the Greeks but was blinded by Athena and killed the cattle instead. They use Sophocles' plot to fill out the gaps in our evidence for the *Little Iliad*, and then they turn around and conclude that the *Little Iliad* gave Sophocles his plot. Sophocles certainly took the slaughter of the cattle from the *Little Iliad*, and the "irregular" burial there probably inspired the debate over Ajax' burial in the last part of his play. The madness in the *Little Iliad*, however, invites another explanation once we stop using Sophocles' Ajax to piece out the story. If we read that "Ajax went mad, slaughtered the cattle of the Achaeans, and killed himself," the natural inference is that Ajax went berserk

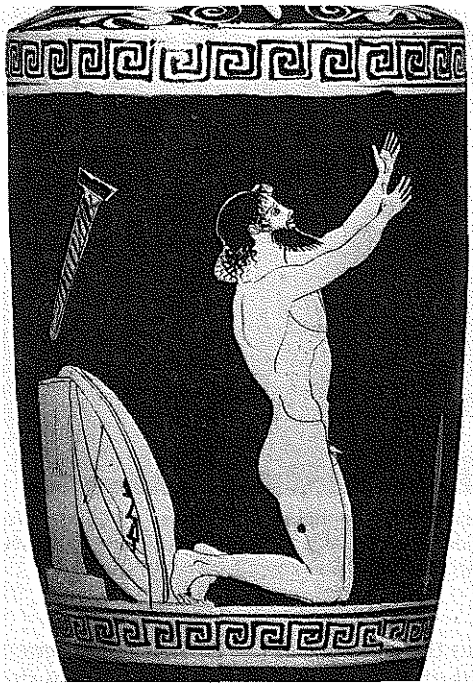


Figure 5. Athenian red-figure lekythos, 460s B.C.; Ajax prepares to commit suicide (sword planted in ground to right); private collection, photo courtesy of Antikenmuseum und Skulpturhalle, Basel.

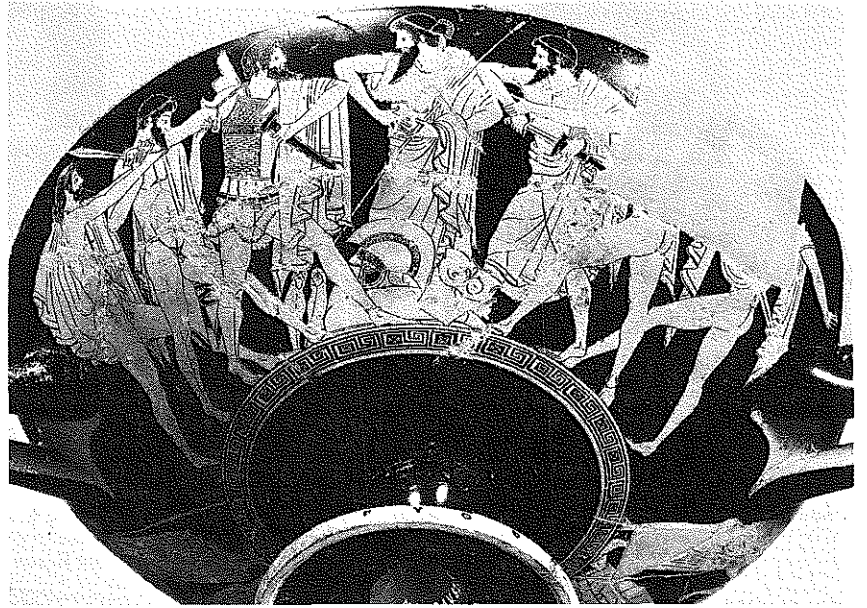


Figure 6. Athenian red-figure cup by Douris, c. 490 B.C.; quarrel of Ajax and Odysseus over Achilles' armor; photo courtesy of Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 8. Detail of Figure 7. Odysseus; Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Figure 9. Detail of Figure 7. Ajax; Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Figure 7. Other side of the cup by Douris; vote on the judgment of arms; Kunsthistorisches Museum.



and vented his wrath on the nearest available object, the cattle. This madness is a frenzy, not a delusion. Agamemnon's anger can be explained by the attack on the cattle (army property) without reference to a plot to murder the Greeks.<sup>3</sup>

The epic cycle gives other evidence of an enraged (not a deluded) Ajax. A fragment of the *Sack of Ilium* praises the diagnostic skills of the physician Podalirius, "who first recognized the flashing eyes and burdened mind of the wrathful Ajax." These symptoms may have boded an attack on the cattle or a simple suicide; they hardly suggest the onset of a hallucination.

The elaborate and melodramatic story found in the *Little Iliad*, with its spy mission, madness, and rampage among the cattle, stands in contrast to the more somber and straightforward version which seems to have appeared in the *Aethiopis*. Intrigue and adventure are characteristic of the *Little Iliad*. It is an episodic work, fond of complicated and varied incidents. Aristotle complained that it was too episodic: one could find eight or ten tragic plots in it, where a properly focused epic like the *Iliad* offered only one of two (*Poetics* ch. 23, 1459b). Amid all its romance and adventure, and no doubt because of these things, the *Little Iliad* maintains a special interest in Odysseus, whose wiles and exploits occupy a large part of its action. The *Little Iliad* glorifies its favorite hero by making his opponent's conduct as outrageous as possible. By contrast, the *Aethiopis* seems to have been relatively sympathetic to Ajax, who is much like its own favorite hero, Achilles.

Aeschylus wrote a play called *The Judgment of Arms* and presented Ajax' suicide in *The Thracian Women*. These plays included some interesting details not found in other pre-Sophoclean versions of the myth. Aeschylus seems to have used Nereids, not Greeks or Trojans, to decide the judgment of arms (fr. 285). His Ajax was endowed with a magical invulnerability (fr. 292b):

According to the story, Ajax was invulnerable on the rest of his body, but he could be wounded in the armpit, because when Heracles wrapped him in his lion-skin he left that part uncovered because of the quiver which he wore. Aeschylus says of him that the sword bent "like a man stretching a bow" when his skin did not give way to the blow, until (he says) a goddess came and showed him in what part of the body he needed to stab himself.

There is nothing in the fragments (admittedly scanty) about madness or cattle. Aeschylus' two Ajax plays may have presented the two essential events of the short version of our myth—the judgment of arms and the suicide—with little in between.

In art, Ajax' death furnished material for vase-painters, metal-workers, and gem-engravers throughout antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Representations of the suicide reach back as far as the seventh century B.C. They show Ajax bending over or lying face down as a great sword, planted hilt down in the earth, pierces his body. On the manner of Ajax' suicide,

Sophocles was following an old and well-established tradition. Figure 1 shows an early example from Corinth, with the Greek chieftains gathered around to look at the body. Later artists, more adept at showing the human figure in action, sometimes varied the poses. Etruscan artists of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. (with whom the scene was rather popular) show Ajax in wild, contorted attitudes, leaping on his sword almost like an acrobat (Figure 2 and 3).

Athenian representations of the suicide are fewer, but more impressive, than those from Corinth and Etruria. A well-known vase by the black-figure master Exekias from the 530s B.C. shows a naked, intent Ajax planting his sword in the ground (Figure 4). His armor sits opposite him, a reminder of the warrior's life he is leaving and of the warrior's honor that drives him to his death. In the 460s, an Athenian artist working in the later red-figure technique showed a similar scene (Figure 5).<sup>5</sup> This Ajax, less grim and more plaintive, kneels before his upturned sword, arms raised in prayer, in a scene recalling his dying speech in Sophocles. Both these scenes, though painted well before Sophocles wrote, would make excellent illustrations for his play.

The other main event of our story, the judgment of arms, is fairly popular with Athenian artists. The debate between Odysseus and Ajax appears on vases before 500 B.C., and scenes of the Greeks voting on their claims enjoy a vogue between 500 and 480. In one example (Figure 6), the two heroes quarrel violently over Achilles' armor. They rush at each other, one drawing his sword, the other with his sword already drawn. Their friends try to hold them back. Agamemnon, with the armor at his feet, stands between them to keep them apart. The other side of the cup (Figure 7) shows a more orderly scene: the Greeks vote (with pebbles, like Athenian jurors) between the two heroes. Athena presides—perhaps to bless democratic procedure, perhaps to ensure Odysseus' victory. Since the Greeks pile their pebbles up in the open rather than follow the Athenian practice of putting them in urns, we can see how the voting is going. The pile on the left is clearly bigger, and at the far left of the scene Odysseus shows his surprise and delight (Figure 8). At the far right, Ajax turns away to lean on his staff and hide his head in his mantle (Figure 9).

Another cup from about the same time gives us different versions of the same scenes. In the quarrel (Figure 10), we see the Greeks restraining the heroes again as a regal, but agitated, Agamemnon steps between them and shouts for order. The other side of the cup shows the scene immediately after the voting (Figure 11). A close look shows fifteen pebbles on the left and fourteen on the right: the vote has been close, but Odysseus wins. To the far right, Ajax claps his hand to his head in dismay. To the left, the cup is badly broken, but we can make out the second figure from the left as Athena, for the tassels of her aegis project from her back. The figure to her right is



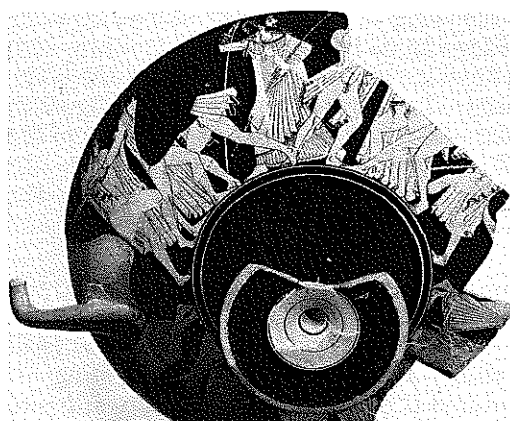


Figure 10. Athenian red-figure cup by the Brygos painter, c. 490 B.C.; quarrel of Ajax and Achilles; collection of Walter Bareiss, photo courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

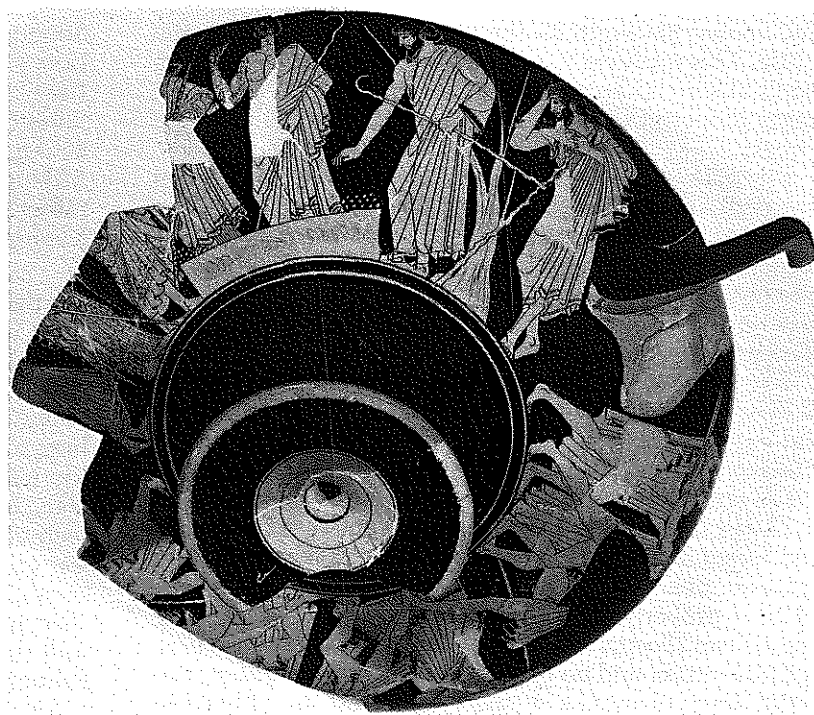


Figure 11. Other side of the cup by the Brygos painter; vote on the judgment of arms; collection of Walter Bareiss; all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

probably Odysseus, for he is holding a shield, whose lower rim can be seen below the broken edge of the cup. He has just taken possession of Achilles' armor.

The painter of this cup carries the story a step further (Figure 12). On the inside of the cup (for its strong-stomached owner to see as he drained the last of his wine), he shows Ajax pierced by his sword and lying dead as Tecmessa comes up to drape a robe over his body. Ajax lies on a nubby surface, probably a beach. The setting at the seashore and Tecmessa covering the body appear here forty years before Sophocles showed them on the stage. In these details as in the manner of Ajax' suicide, Sophocles was following an older tradition.

The artists, like the poets, appear interested primarily in the two main events of our myth, the judgment of arms and Ajax' suicide. They paid little attention to what happened in between. The slaughter of the cattle appears only once in vase-painting before Sophocles (Figure 13). Only fragments of the vase survive, but we can make out the hindquarters of a bull, lying supine with legs upturned, on one fragment and the hindquarters of a sheep in a similar position on another. The human figures must be curious or horrified Greeks on the morning after Ajax' rampage. After this vase, the cattle drop from sight (except for one appearance in Hellenistic times)<sup>6</sup> until the first century B.C. and after in Rome.

The Romans more than made up for Greek neglect of the slaughtered cattle, but only with repeated reproductions of one scene. Ajax sits on a rock, resting his head on one hand and holding a sword. Carcasses of slaughtered animals are before him. We have over thirty copies of this scene, mostly on engraved gems (Figure 14), based on a

work of art which somehow became popular in Rome in the first century B.C. That work of art was more likely an illustration of Sophocles' play than an inspiration for it.

Finding Ajax' madness in ancient art is almost as hard as finding slaughtered cattle. The wild, contorted poses in some scenes of Ajax' suicide suggest Ajax killing himself in a frenzy, but the madness of Sophocles' play is different. There are no scenes of Ajax' attempt on the Greeks in ancient art. Athena's intervention to cloud his wits might appear difficult to show in a painting, but it is not impossible; Greek art is no stranger to mad scenes. No Greek artist, however, undertook this one.

## 2. The Play

Sophocles did not inherit a canonical version of the Ajax myth. His predecessors in treating the story left him a simple outline (judgment of arms, suicide of Ajax) and ample room for choice in filling it out. Our study of the myth shows what choices Sophocles made and how they affected the meaning of the play. By examining the poet's sources, we discover something often undervalued in a Greek writer: his originality.

Like other fifth-century writers, but unlike some of the epic poets, Sophocles universalized the judgment of arms by having it decided on the broadest possible grounds—



Figure 12. Inside of the cup by the Brygos painter; suicide of Ajax; Tecmessa covers the body; collection of Walter Bareiss; all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

on who was the best of the Greeks generally, not on who did the most to rescue Achilles' body. He further universalized the conflict by following a tradition that emerged around 500 B.C.: the whole Greek community settled the dispute by a democratic vote.

Classical authors universalized the conflict in different ways. For Pindar, the conflict between Ajax and Odysseus pits true worth against low cunning. Odysseus represents "the art of inferior men," and he wins a popular election because "the greater mass of men have blind hearts." Something similar appears in Ajax' and Teucer's complaints that the judgment of arms was rigged (445 f., 1135, 1137), but this is mere propaganda, unsupported by the facts of the play. Sophocles may be raising Pindar's idea of a corrupt election only to reject it.

Other classical authors (mostly after Sophocles) see the judgment of arms as the victory of intelligence and wit over mere strength and courage. In the fourth century B.C., Antisthenes wrote two speeches for Ajax and Odysseus that stress the conflict of intelligence and courage, and the conflict looms large in the later debate-scenes of Ovid and Quintus of Smyrna. Ajax becomes the hero of brawn defeated by the hero of brain—though he is still far from the "beef-witted lord" of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Again, Sophocles raises the idea, for we hear of Ajax' size and strength as his main qualities (1077 f., 1250–1254; cf. 758). Again, he rejects it: the words come from Ajax' enemies, and the Ajax we see in the play is an intelligent man. His speeches are forceful, well thought out, and eloquent. On the battlefield, too, he is thoughtful. "Who was found more prudent than this man, or better at doing what the occasion demanded?" Athena asks rhetorically (119 f.). Few other authors praise Ajax for prudence or sagacity.

For Sophocles, the judgment of arms shows the conflict

between the assertive and cooperative virtues. Ajax is above all an individualistic hero, bold and self-assertive, proud and independent. His prowess in battle makes him a valued member of the community, needed by the Greek army, needed even more by his own followers, Tecmessa and the Chorus. His prowess also sets him apart—stationed at a post of honor at the extreme end of the Greek camp (4), open to the envy and resentment of others (154–157), repeatedly called "alone," "single," "solitary" in the language of the play. He does little to fit in with the community, to accommodate his rugged nature to its demands. His treatment of Tecmessa and the Chorus shows how deaf he is to advice and entreaties from others; his attempt to murder the Greeks shows how little he cares for the rights of others when his own are at stake.

Where his abilities and temper set him apart, he insists on being set apart in honor too—in winning extraordinary prizes to match his extraordinary merits. Like his cousin Achilles, he meets the great crisis of his life when the loss of a prize breaks down the correlation between his achievements and the community's recognition. From then on, his individualism isolates him further. He becomes the would-be murderer of his comrades in arms, an object of universal hatred (457–459), a weak support for a Chorus which cannot understand him and for a devoted woman he does not care to understand, and finally a solitary suicide left to address his last words to the landscape. Only his burial gives him a place in the human community again.<sup>7</sup> His character and fate show both the attractions and the problems of the heroic imperative to excel, to stand out from the rest of the community.

In contrast to Ajax, Odysseus is very much the man of the community, endowed with the cooperative spirit, reasonableness, and readiness to try persuasion that Ajax lacks—all qualities necessary for the smooth functioning of society. Odysseus shows these qualities most clearly at the end of the play, when he breaks into a deadlocked debate between Teucer and the Atreidae to secure Ajax' right to burial. This debate is almost surely Sophocles' invention, although Ajax' "irregular" funeral in the *Little Iliad* probably inspired it. By including the debate, Sophocles displays Odysseus' conciliatory spirit to good advantage against the vituperation, intransigence, and petty pride of the others.

More impressive than Odysseus' persuasive skills in breaking the deadlock are the humility and moderation that bring his success. More than anyone else in the play, he knows the limits set upon mortal life. He hated Ajax "while it was right to hate" (1347), but justice and respect for Ajax' merits tell him not to pursue that enmity past death (1344 f.):

It is not just to harm a noble man once he is dead, not even if you happen to hate him.

Since he knows human limits, he accepts human changes: "Many who are now friends become enemies again" (1359).

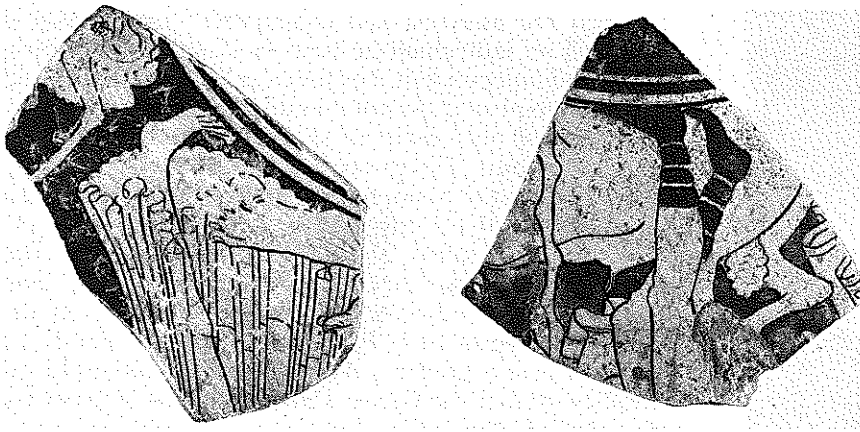


Figure 13. Fragments of an Athenian red-figure cup by Onesimus, 490s B.C.; the Greeks discover the slaughter of the cattle (?); photo by M. Chuzeville, courtesy of the Louvre, Paris.



Figure 14. Roman gem; Ajax amid the slaughtered cattle; one carcass visible to the left; photo courtesy of the British Museum, London.

Ajax made the same observation earlier, but in a tone of bitter, cynical disillusionment (678–683):

I now learn that we are to hate our enemy only so much, as one who will be our friend again, and I shall want to help my friend only so much, as one who will not always remain my friend; for with most mortals the harbor of companionship is untrustworthy.

In contrast, Odysseus accepts changes pragmatically and finds in them a call for tolerance and magnanimity.

Odysseus thinks as he does because he knows we are all weak and mortal. The fallen enemy is no different from the rest of us; Ajax' fate can happen to anyone (1364 f.):

*Agamemnon*: So you bid me to let this corpse be buried?  
*Odysseus*: I do, for I myself shall come to this.

Odysseus' words here recall his pity for Ajax in the prologue (121–126):

I pity the wretch, even if he is my enemy, because he is yoked to an awful ruin, and I think no more of his case than of my own. For I see that we who live are nothing but phantoms or a light shadow.

His enmity with Ajax matters less than their common humanity. This is the wisdom of Priam and Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*, but Odysseus uses this wisdom differently. Priam and Achilles weep together, then part to go to their separate dooms. Odysseus turns towards life, formulates sound principles for guiding life in community, and applies those principles with telling force in the final debate. In the words of Sophocles' famous praise of human achievement, "he has taught himself the temperament that governs towns" (*Antigone* 354–356). Sophocles sees Odysseus' famous versatility not as low trickery (as Pindar did) or as cynical pragmatism (as Sophocles was to

do later in the *Philoctetes*), but as the humble flexibility that we need to live with others.

Odysseus' victory over Ajax in a democratic election is the result of his sociable wisdom. Sophocles could have had him win through the favor of Athena or the caprice of Trojan prisoners. Victory through the community's choice shows the community's preference for humility and concern for the common good over boundless self-assertion and love of distinction. Odysseus makes a better neighbor (if not a better story-book hero) because he is good for the community.

If Sophocles made Odysseus nobler than the tradition did, he made Ajax more selfish, violent, and irrational. Ajax is a fascinating and sympathetic figure in Sophocles' hands, but one of the most significant conclusions that emerges from comparing the play with the myth is that our sympathy for him comes very hard indeed. Sophocles included everything the myth offered—and possibly much that it did not—that might discredit the hero. Unlike Homer and Pindar, he makes Ajax slaughter the cattle—an act both horrifying and absurd. Unlike the author of the *Little Iliad* (probably), he makes the slaughter of the cattle a diversion from something worse—the slaughter of the Greeks. He adds other touches that might, if treated differently, serve admirably to blacken Ajax' character: his callous disregard for the loving Tecmessa and for the family ties that she invokes; his proud and foolish rejection of divine aid, told to us by the Messenger in another apparent Sophoclean invention (762–775); his boast in the prologue over the torture he thinks he is inflicting on Odysseus. If Sophocles had set out to make a villain of Ajax, or to debunk his brand of heroism after the manner of Euripides, it is hard to see what more he could have done to the story.



Yet the play does not debunk, and it is not the story of a bad man's downfall—the sort of story Aristotle warned tragedians to avoid (*Poetics* ch. 13, 1453a). For all his faults, Ajax still merits Tecmessa's love and the Chorus' devotion. He is a greater, perhaps even a better, man than most who survive him. Agamemnon and Menelaus are full of petty spite, eager to abuse in death a man they could never surpass in life. Teucer, though more sympathetic, is a small-scale Ajax, a man of mere pugnacity, not of grand wrath. Even the wise Odysseus is a small-scale figure, a good and humble man rather than a great one. Display of their smallness, and of Ajax' greatness by contrast, is one reason for the debate over the hero's burial at the end of the play. (It is also one reason why some critics find the debate dull and undramatic.)

Ajax' greatness is not simply shown in his foils. It is shown in the man himself. His courage and prowess are beyond serious question, and Odysseus admits (agreeing with the epic tradition) that Ajax was the best of the Greeks after Achilles (1339–1341). His faults are fascinating, not repugnant, because they are the faults of a great man, not of a small one. His towering (and largely justified) self-confidence, his anger and self-assertiveness, his refusal to accept the army's judgment or Tecmessa's advice, all stem from the same nature that made him the bulwark of the Achaeans. His heroic merits and heroic vices are inextricably linked: we cannot have the merits without the vices.

The same can be said of Sophocles' other heroes. The qualities that make Philoctetes a worthy possessor of Heracles' bow and an indispensable member of the Greek army at Troy also give him a self-destructive grudge that confines him more tightly than his exile and nearly keeps him from going to the war. The same quick wit, keen pride, and decisiveness that make Oedipus king of Thebes and drive him to search for the truth also arouse his groundless suspicions of Creon. Some years earlier, they led him to kill his father at the crossroads. Sophocles' work shows an enduring preoccupation with the problems and appeal of a rugged, proud sort of human excellence, unquestionably great but not entirely good, needed by society but not amenable to society's desires or demands.

The paradoxes in Sophocles' heroes also show themselves in the hero-cults of Greek religion. A *hērōs*, in Greek terms, is a person who has died but who continues to exercise unusual power over human life and who demands worship at his (or sometimes her) grave.<sup>8</sup> Heroes are not honored because they are good; they are appeased and conciliated because they are powerful and dangerous. Their power is often linked to a sinister force of character that shows itself in pride, swiftness to anger, hunger for honor. Heroes arouse in their worshipers a fascinated awe or dread that is quite independent of moral judgment.

Sophocles was a devotee of hero-cults. He helped introduce the worship of Asclepius to Athens, and he founded a shrine to Heracles. (These figures were not pure heroes,

but their worship combined heroic and divine elements.) He was the priest of another hero-cult and was honored as a hero himself after his death. Every recorded example of his famous piety is connected with a hero-cult.

His interest in hero-cults carried over from his life into his art. *Oedipus at Colonus* tells, among other things, the story behind a hero-cult in Sophocles' district of Athens. The benefit that Oedipus can confer on the place of his death, and over which Thebans and Athenians fight, is the benefit that a city receives from the burial and worship of a hero in its territory.

Like the *Oedipus at Colonus*, the *Ajax* involves the foundation-story of a local hero-cult. Ajax was a popular hero in Athens, the patron of one of the ten tribes of Athenian citizens. He and his family were invoked to defend their home island, Salamis, at the battle in 480 B.C. (Herodotus 8.64, 121). The debate on his burial at the end of the play is important partly because a proper funeral and a recognizable tomb are generally prerequisites for a hero-cult. Interest in Ajax' cult seems to have influenced Sophocles' treatment of Ajax' character. He draws out the tensions and sharpens the paradoxes latent in the worship of heroes. He probes the fascination which heroes inspire.

In developing our own contemporary response to the play, we should keep in mind that fascination with heroes of this sort is not confined to ancient Greece. Something like it lives on in popular culture. We find it in the romantic fascination with the temperamental artist or performer, who can treat family and friends abominably, be moody, egotistical, and possibly mad, and still write great poems or symphonies or deliver great performances on the stage. On another level, there is something like it in a type of athletic hero who has become popular (at least in the United States) in the last fifteen years or so—the braggart, bully, or playboy who wins games.<sup>9</sup> It would be misleading to say that these people succeed in spite of their irresponsibility, selfishness, and lack of restraint. In a sense, they succeed because of them; the "heroic" vices stem from the same forces of character that produce gripping music, impassioned acting, and last-second touchdowns. Even in an age far more inclined than ancient Greece to demand humility of its heroes, and far more ready to spread moral standards into every department of life, the archaic cult-hero has a place. Fans of Richard Wagner and Maria Callas (not to mention Joe Namath and Muhammed Ali) know something of its power.

Sophocles' appreciation of Ajax' heroism is great, but extraordinarily balanced and clear-eyed. He shows us a hero worthy of admiration, but he does not ignore the claims of the community or the dangers of the heroic temper. Sophocles knows the cost of having men like Ajax in the world, and he produces a profound appreciation of the moral ambiguities of the Greek heroic type. His appreciation of Ajax would not be so subtle and deep without Ajax' plot to murder the Greeks, or his slaughter of the cattle, or his rejection of divine aid, or the other in-

criminating details left out of most other treatments of the myth.

Sophocles' most important departure from tradition concerns the nature of Ajax' madness. In earlier versions of the story (certainly in the *Sack of Ilium*, possibly in the *Little Iliad*), the madness is a rage or a frenzy—if it appears at all. In Sophocles, it is the delusion that cattle were Greek soldiers.<sup>10</sup> This is made quite clear in the prologue, where Athena describes Ajax' adventures with the care and detail we would expect in an original (or at least, an unfamiliar) version of the story. By her account, Ajax was sane when he set out to kill the Greeks. She did not intervene, "casting hard-to-bear imaginings upon his mind" (51 f.), until he was at the entrance of the Atreidae's tent. Ajax in the prologue is mad because he is still deluded. His recovery (described by Tecmessa) lies in regaining his wits and recognizing what he has really done. Nobody in the play blames madness for Ajax' attack on the Greeks, or for his suicide, or for anything else except the delusion and the accompanying slaughter of the cattle.

Identifying the limits of Ajax' madness does not reduce its importance in the play. Rather, it helps us understand its meaning and dramatic function better by focusing our attention on the important theme of correct perception. Perception gets little attention, as far as we can tell, in earlier treatments of the Ajax story. Perception is, however, a theme dear to Sophocles' heart, especially in his earlier plays. Discoveries and revelations are important in the *Antigone*, the *Trachiniae*, and the *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Both the *Ajax* and the *Oedipus* draw symbolic links between physical sight and deeper knowledge. In the *Oedipus*, sight and knowledge are opposed: the blind "seer" Teiresias has knowledge that the sighted Oedipus lacks, and Oedipus blinds himself when he gains knowledge. In the *Ajax*, sight and knowledge are equated. Ajax' delusion about cattle and men symbolizes ignorance about more important matters.

In some ways, the ramifications of the hero's ignorance are more complex and varied in the *Ajax* than in the *Oedipus*. Ajax' delusion expresses (and aggravates) his heroic isolation. He is so cut off from his fellows that he cannot even see them plainly, and so full of contempt for them that he sees no difference between them and beasts. More important, the delusion reflects a basic confusion that was already in his mind about telling his friends from his enemies.<sup>11</sup>

The Greeks, supposedly his friends, turned out to be his enemies (as he sees it) by depriving him of Achilles' arms. Tecmessa, once his enemy, has become a loving and devoted friend (487–495). Odysseus, the friend turned enemy, does a friend's service by securing Ajax' right to burial. Friends and enemies keep changing places. Ajax' bitter reflections on that fact (678–683, quoted earlier) are drawn directly from his experience. Odysseus, as we have seen, accepts that mutability and acts with the appropriate moderation. Ajax is confused by it, and particularly

confused by the supposed treachery of the Greeks against him. The confusion about cattle and men is a natural result.

Even Ajax' confusion about friends and enemies is but one aspect of something more general: confusion about the nature of the world. The steadfast Ajax believes in a world that runs according to fixed and definite rules. He had every reason to think he would get Achilles' arms because of his lineage and deeds (434–440). There seemed to be no way he could fail to kill the Atreidae (447–456). He thought he could reject divine aid in battle because his own strength would be equal to any challenge (762–775). What these things have in common is Ajax' firm confidence that the qualities of things and men are fixed, not to be altered by time and chance. His confidence is misplaced. The world of this play is full of unexpected and irrational change. "A day brings down and brings back up again all things human," says Athena (131 f.). Ajax' experience is excellent proof of her words.

The *Ajax* is a story of discovery. The hero wrestles with disillusionment, comes to see the way things really are, and faces the problem of living in a world of change. This intellectual enterprise has a symbolic model in Ajax' delusion about the cattle and his recovery from that delusion. Sophocles first tells the story of the little delusion about cattle, then goes on to develop the larger story of Ajax' discovery of the nature of the world.

We can now follow that larger story through the play. Early in the play, especially in his first monologue (430–480), Ajax confronts the shock that his loss of Achilles' arms and his failure to kill the Greeks has dealt his preconceptions. He resents these failures not simply as personal setbacks, but as violations of the proper order of things. "If one of the gods interferes, even a weakling can escape someone mightier," he says (455 f.). His rejection of divine aid earlier in the war rested on a similar principle: "With the gods, even a nobody can attain prowess, but I am confident that I shall win glory without them" (767–769). He wants to succeed by his own merits, not by divine intervention. The first monologue shows his bitter, disillusioned protests at his discovery that a man's fortunes do not depend simply on his merits. In tone and in spirit, the speech corresponds to Ajax' first cries of anguish upon discovering that his attempt to kill the Greeks has failed.

Ajax faces his situation squarely, examines the different courses of action open to him, and resolves to kill himself. Tecmessa pleads with him to go on living—eloquently, but to no avail. Ajax says his farewell to their son and goes into his tent. The Chorus sings about his impending death, and we have every reason to expect a messenger to enter and announce the worst.

Instead, Ajax re-enters, still alive and holding a sword. He delivers an eloquent and enigmatic speech on time and change (646–692). Time, he says in words that recall Athena's at 131 f., makes obscure things to grow and hides away things that were manifest. Nothing is beyond expect-

tation. Even he has been softened by Tecmessa's words so that he pities her. He goes on to say that he will go to the shore to purify himself and to bury the sword which Hector once gave him. Then he will "be sensible" (*sōphronein*) and submit to the gods and the Atreidae. After all, harsh things in nature yield: winter gives way to summer, day to night, storm to calm weather, sleep to waking. He realizes now (he says in words quoted earlier) that friends turn to enemies and enemies to friends. With some final instructions to Tecmessa and the Chorus, he leaves the stage. The Chorus sings a joyous ode to celebrate his supposed change of mind. In fact, Ajax is going to his death.

Discussion of the speech tends to center on the question whether Ajax' apparent change of mind is sincere. I shall avoid that issue to point out that on one important matter, he is telling the truth. He is describing, with considerable force and eloquence, the way the world (as presented in this play) really is. Athena enforces the law of change and Odysseus shows us how to obey it, but it is left to Ajax, the staunchest opponent of that law, to give it its fullest and most poetic expression. He has now worked past his early grief and disillusionment to see clearly and soberly how the world really operates and where he was wrong in his earlier conceptions and demands of life. In a way, the Chorus is right when it sings that Ajax has recovered from his sickness. The great delusion has passed, much like the smaller one about men and cattle.

This discovery does not alter his decision to kill himself. The old reasons for suicide—his shame over killing the cattle, the army's hatred of him, his hatred of the army—have not gone away. Rather, the speech on time shows that Ajax has found new and more profound reasons for dying. He cannot live in a world of change. When he speaks of "doing reverence to the Atreidae" instead of simply honoring them, and of "the untrustworthy harbor of friendship," his language shows a bitterness and a vehemence that mark him as the old Ajax still. He can see that yielding is natural and necessary; he cannot imagine himself doing it, and he rejects the idea even while speaking of it. Seeing the world clearly means seeing clearly the reasons why he must leave it.<sup>12</sup>

Yet paradoxically, Ajax' leaving the world is a form of yielding to it.<sup>13</sup> The law of nature is that "fearful and mighty things give way" (669 f.), and Ajax' examples of change in nature (winter giving way to summer, storm yielding to calm) all involve something grim and mighty passing out of existence to make room for something mild and gentle. Ajax will follow this law himself by passing out of existence and leaving the world to the humanity and tact of Odysseus. Death takes him into a state where things are most surely and permanently settled, but it is also the ultimate change. There is more to Ajax' death than defiance of the world. In an ironic way, and at great cost to himself, he reaches a certain rapprochement with it. Sophocles' most important contribution to the Ajax

myth was to see the story of a great man's spiritual journey within the traditional tale of warrior pride.

1. An earlier version of this paper was read before the Fourth Comparative Drama Conference at the University of Florida on April 18, 1980. My thanks to Frank Romer and the library staff of Johns Hopkins University for access to some excellent research materials and to Mark I. Davies for advice on art and for reading a draft of the paper.

2. Sources for the myth (mostly literary) are collected and discussed in the *Ajax* commentaries of R. C. Jebb, Cambridge 1896, J. C. Kamerbeek, Leiden 1953, and W. B. Stanford, London 1963. Jebb offers the fullest collection of material, Kamerbeek the most incisive discussion, and Stanford some good remarks about Ajax in Homer and at Athens. Also, Carl Robert, *Die griechische Heldensage* II.3.2., Berlin 1923, 1198–1207. For the epic cycle, T. W. Allen (ed.), *Homeri Opera* 5, Oxford 1912, and Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homeric*, Loeb Classical Library, London/New York 1964. For Aeschylus, Hans Joachim Mette, *Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos*, Berlin 1959.

3. Apollodorus, *Epitome* 5.6–7, in the first century A.D., describes Ajax' plot to murder the Greeks, his delusion, and the slaughter of the cattle much as we find them in Sophocles, then adds the "irregular" burial as it appeared in the *Little Iliad*. Did Apollodorus follow the *Little Iliad* throughout—in which case Sophocles followed the *Little Iliad* closely indeed? Or did he conflate Sophocles' version with that of the *Little Iliad*?

4. For the myth of Ajax in art, see Frank Brommer, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage*, 3rd ed., Marburg 1973, 380 f., 418, and *Denkmälerlisten zur griechischen Heldensage* 3, Marburg 1976, 14–19; Mark I. Davies, "The Suicide of Ajax: A Bronze Etruscan Statuette from the Kappeli Collection," *Antike Kunst* 14, 1971, 148–157, and "Ajax and Tecmessa: A Cup by the Brygos Painter in the Bareiss Collection," *Antike Kunst* 16, 1973, 60–70; Mary B. Moore, "Exekias and Telamonian Ajax," *American Journal of Archaeology* 84, 1980, 417–434; B. B. Shefton, "Agamemnon or Ajax?" *Révue Archéologique* 1973, 203–218; and Dyfri Williams, "Ajax, Odysseus, and the Arms of Achilles," *Antike Kunst* 23, 1980, 137–145.

5. Discussed in Karl Schefold, "Sophokles' Aias auf einer Lekythos," *Antike Kunst* 19, 1976, 71–78.

6. Some fragments in relief from a molded bowl of the second century B.C. appear to show Ajax among the cattle: see Fernand Courby, *Les vases grecs à reliefs*, Paris 1922, 287 no. 10.

7. On Ajax' "heroic isolation," see Bernard M. W. Knox, "The Ajax of Sophocles," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 65, 1961, 1–37, reprinted in Thomas Woodard (editor), *Sophocles: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1966, 29–61 (whose page numbers I cite hereafter) and Knox, *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater*, Baltimore 1979, 125–160. Knox has examined the heroic isolation of Sophoclean heroes generally in *The Heroic Temper*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1966. Also useful is the chapter on the Ajax in Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, Cambridge, Mass. 1981.

8. For a good outline of Greek hero-cults and their connection with the heroes of Sophoclean drama, see Knox, *The Heroic Temper*, 53–58.

9. There is a good account of the type in George Plimpton, *Paper Lion*, New York 1966, 72–75 on Bobby Layne.

10. This is widely, though not universally, accepted by critics of the play and stated with particular force by Knox, "Ajax," 34. I have argued it and presented my interpretation of the play's madness theme in greater detail in "Ajax' Ailment," *Ramus* 9, 1980, 22–33. Also useful are Penelope Biggs, "The Disease Theme in Sophocles' Ajax," *Philoctetes, and Trachiniae*, *Classical Philology* 61, 1966, 223–235; and Michael Simpson, "Sophocles' Ajax: His Madness and Transformation," *Arethusa* 2, 1969, 88–103.

11. For discussions of this aspect of the play, see especially Knox, "Ajax"; Simpson; and David Bolotin, "On Sophocles' Ajax," *The St. John's Review* 32.1, 1980, 49–57.

12. See Knox, "Ajax," 45–48.

13. For this important aspect of the play, see Simpson.

# Toward Reading Thomas Aquinas

Thomas J. Slakey

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID that Thomas' particular endeavor was to reconcile Aristotle with the Bible. While this is true, it is only part of a much larger truth. In late antiquity the process of weaving together Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic materials was already well under way among those in the Eastern Mediterranean who spoke Greek. In addition, Cicero and others undertook the task of transmitting Greek wisdom to the Latin West. The early Christians merely expanded this process, and in fact the first instance is recorded in the New Testament itself, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, where St. Paul is speaking in Athens. Paul uses pagan worship of an unknown god and quotations from pagan poets as starting points toward the Christian gospel (*Acts* 17: 22-34; see also *Romans* I: 19-20; II, 14-15). Many of the early Christians were educated in pagan schools and some even saw Greek philosophy, especially in Plato, as the means by which God, in His divine providence, had prepared the Gentile world for Christian revelation. Augustine emphasizes the importance of Platonic speculation to his own conversion, though it should be noted that he knew Plato chiefly through Cicero and Plotinus. Augustine in turn was one of the chief vehicles of Platonic, or rather neo-Platonic, thought to the medieval world.<sup>1</sup> Thus Thomas did not begin the process of combining and adapting pagan and Christian materials. Rather he was heir to a very long and wide-spread tradition.

Nevertheless, by his time the process had taken on a particular character through the rise of the medieval university, which began about 1200, shortly before Thomas was born. There were two chief methods of instruction in the medieval university, the *lectio* and the *disputatio*. The

*lectio* seems to have meant literally the reading aloud of a text in class, together with commentary. The commentary could range from a brief exposition of words and phrases to a detailed explanation and discussion of the positions taken in the text. Thomas himself taught in this manner throughout his career and we can get close to his classroom because many of the commentaries survive, some based on lecture notes taken by students or secretaries and some refined and reworked for publication. There are twelve commentaries on separate books of the Bible and five on other theological works. In addition there are twelve on separate works by Aristotle, but these seem to have been written by Thomas directly for the use of students rather than for his own classroom teaching, since Thomas himself was in the Faculty of Theology rather than the Faculty of Arts, where Aristotle was studied.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the commentaries on Aristotle grew out of the tradition of the *lectio* and they illustrate Thomas' way of reading a book. He rarely permits himself the moves so dear to modern scholars when they meet difficulties and apparent contradictions: maybe the author changed his mind, maybe the text is corrupt; maybe this passage was inserted by some later editor; maybe this whole way of talking merely reflects a distant and primitive past. Rather Thomas tries to understand the author as saying something intelligible or maybe even true, a tactic sometimes called *benigna interpretatio*, benign or kindly interpretation.

*Benigna interpretatio* does have a real danger: we can rest too comfortably in our own opinions and assume too easily that our own paltry ideas deserve the majestic clothing bequeathed by some great author. If we are, however, able to face our real differences of opinion with the author when they do finally emerge, this way of reading seems to me the best way to learn from books, especially old books. In fact, in its respect for texts, the *lectio* resembles our

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seminars, although we substitute a joint reading by twenty or so people for a lecture by a single teacher.

THE SECOND METHOD of instruction in the medieval university was the *disputatio* (Weisheipl, 124-26). This was an interruption in the daily routine of *lectiones* for an extended public discussion or debate of a particular issue, called a *quaestio disputata*. The question for the day would be set by one of the masters. Numerous proposed solutions would be offered by the bachelors, or junior teachers in the university, usually based on quotations from the authors in the curriculum, the *auctores*, a word which can also be translated "authorities." There would also be replies and counter arguments. Some time after the public disputation was concluded, the master who had proposed the discussion would publish his understanding of the question in writing. He would gather the proposed solutions into some kind of order, offer his own detailed resolution or "reply" to the question asked, and then briefly comment on each of the alternative proposed solutions.

Several volumes of Thomas' *quaestiones* also survive, and they extend throughout the whole period of his teaching life. Moreover, it is clearly the method of the *quaestio* which is used in the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas' longest and most ambitious work, begun at about age forty and left unfinished at his death at about age fifty. It attempts to speak to all the major questions of theology in a way suitable to beginners (See Prologue to Part I). The topics are organized into questions and subdivided into "articles," or "joints," each phrased as a question. (On the word "article" see IIa IIae, Q.1, a.6.) Each begins with a series of brief arguments, usually based on quotations from received authors, or "authorities." These arguments should not be understood as "objections," as they are sometimes described in English translations, because this word suggests that a position has already been arrived at. They are rather proposals toward a solution, and they generally set the terms in which the discussion will proceed. There follows a *sed contra*, or "on the contrary," again usually based on a quotation, and usually counter to the general sense of the first set of arguments. There then follows the "reply" in which Thomas sets out his own position, followed by brief comments on each of the initial arguments and sometimes on the *sed contra* as well. Throughout, Thomas' strategy is to save and use what he can from each of the arguments put forward, to show that the truth as he sees it is suggested by, or at least not opposed by, the quoted authority. His typical move is the distinction: taken in one sense an argument is misleading, but in another sense it is true. Dante brings this out nicely when he presents Thomas as a speaker in the *Paradiso*. In Canto X, Thomas says of Solomon, quoting Scripture, that he was "given wisdom so deep that, if the truth be true, there never arose a second of such vision" (X, 112-114, Sinclair translation). But

then what about Christ Himself, and also Adam? Three cantos later the qualification comes: Dante has Thomas explain that Solomon was wisest in the wisdom proper to kings. Thomas concludes: "... let this always be lead on thy feet to make thee slow, like a weary man, in moving either to the yea or the nay where thou dost not see clearly; for he ranks very low among the fools, in the one case as in the other, who affirms or denies without distinguishing, since it often happens that a hasty opinion inclines to the wrong side and then the feelings bind the intellect" (XIII, 94-120).

The overwhelming characteristic of Thomas' writing is its impersonality. It's as if the commentaries, the *quaestiones*, and the *Summas* could have been written by anyone who brought various authors together and carefully sifted and worked back and forth in a constant search for the truth. In notable contrast to present day philosophical and theological writing, Thomas almost never says anyone is simply mistaken and he never, never claims originality for his own positions.<sup>3</sup> Even his Christian belief is not thrust to the fore. Though he sometimes singles out questions where only divine revelation can be a guide, and where Scripture must be taken as decisive, Thomas more commonly weaves together in a single article suggestions from the Bible, from Aristotle, from Cicero, from Augustine, or from whoever else he finds speaking some part of the truth. Finally, and again in marked contrast to present day scholarly writing, Thomas almost never mentions his contemporaries by name. The most burning issues of the day appear in the *Summa* only in their assigned places.

The impersonality has its weak side. Thomas is not good at arousing our interest, at leading us into a topic, at making us care about the outcome. Feelings shouldn't bind the intellect, but some kind of feeling helps to get the intellect started. Also, the inexorable march of arguments can give the impression that Thomas always thinks definitive solutions have been reached. The *Summa* appeals to some who want simple knockdown answers to complex questions. The strength of Thomas' writing, however, is that if one is involved in a topic through a study of the authors he quotes, the Bible, Augustine, Aristotle, and others, then one can appreciate both the subtlety of his distinctions and the testing, tentative character of his work. I have used metaphors of sifting and weaving to describe it. I think he took for granted, without laboring the point, that the sifting and the weaving would be continued by others.

HOW DOES THOMAS conceive of man's relation to God? Let us begin with his discussion of religion —not Christianity, but simply religion, what would now be called "comparative religion." Thomas, however, considers religion not as an aspect of human psychology or sociology but, following Cicero's lead, under the heading of justice.<sup>4</sup> Man owes a kind of debt to

God. It cannot be a debt in the strict sense, for man in the strict sense can bring nothing to the God who made him and the whole universe out of nothing, and man can therefore make no *return* to God. The reverence and honor we show to God are not for His sake, but for ours. To the extent that we revere and honor God, our minds are subjected to Him, and in this the perfection of our minds consists. For each thing reaches its just perfection by being placed under its superior, just as body is perfected when it is made alive by soul and air when it is lighted by the sun (IIa IIae, Q.81, a.7c). As Plato argues that justice is reached only when each part of a man's soul is in right relation to the whole man, and only when each man is in right relation to the whole city, so Thomas argues that justice is reached only when man is in right relation to God. Religion is not an adjunct or department of human life. It is central to human life properly lived.

Moreover, in joining ourselves to God, we need to express ourselves in physical ways (IIa, IIae, Q.81, a.7c), by voice, by gestures such as bowing and kneeling, even by sacred buildings (Q.83, a.12; 84, a.3). Acts of reverence are not peculiar to religion. Many are shown to other men, to parents, to kings and presidents, to country. The word *pietas* or piety, as used in Latin and still to some extent in English, ranges from reverence towards gods to reverence towards family and fatherland. But one act of reverence Thomas considers proper to God alone, namely the act of offering sacrifice. Sacrifice is a sacred act in which something is offered to God and generally destroyed in the process, as in the killing of animals or in burnt offerings (Q.85, a.3, ad 3). Thomas sees sacrifice as common to peoples throughout the world (Q.85, a.1, on the contrary). He says that "natural reason tells man that he is placed under something higher, because of the lack which he feels in himself so that he needs help and direction from something higher. And whatever that is, it is what among all men is called God" (85, a.1c). The external act of sacrifice expresses "an internal spiritual sacrifice, in which the soul offers itself to God . . . as the source of its creation and the completion of its happiness." Only God is our creator and only God is the completion of our happiness. Therefore to God alone should we offer ourselves and to God alone should we make those external offerings in sacrifice which express the offering of ourselves (85, a.2c).

**N**EXT, I WISH to consider Thomas' study of humility. He classifies humility under the heading of temperance, or moderation. The Latin word *humilitas* derives from the notion of "low" or "close to the ground" and tends to have a pejorative sense in classical Latin writers. Greek has a word with a similar meaning and precisely the same etymology, *tapeinotes*. Humility is a rather striking omission from Aristotle's list of virtues in the *Ethics*, especially when one considers the emphasis Soph-

ocles and other Greek writers give to the dangers of excessive pride. Thomas' own comment on Aristotle's omission is that in his study of the virtues Aristotle was concerned only with man's civil life, whereas humility especially concerns man's relation to God (IIa IIae, Q.161, a.1, ad 5). According to Thomas we should see ourselves as assigned by God to a certain level (*secundum gradum quem est a Deo sortitus*, a.2, ad 3), and we should recognize that whatever is good in ourselves comes from God. Even the exercise of our abilities comes from God, who acts in us and through us (a.4c).

This profoundly difficult doctrine gives rise to questions about how God can act in us without destroying our free wills, and also questions as to why God did not make the world better than He has, with less sin and suffering, the questions which so tormented Job. It is a doctrine, however, which has its roots deep in the Bible, for example, in the claim that God uses whole nations and armies as his instruments for the punishment and restoration of Israel: first the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, and finally the Persians under Cyrus (see, for instance, *Amos* 3:11, *Isaiah* 7:18-20. Also *Psalms* 139). Isaiah says of Cyrus, who delivered Israel from captivity in Babylon, "Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets at every step? He gives up nations before him, so that he tramples kings under foot. . . Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first and with the last; I am He" (*Isaiah* 41:2-4). It is Cyrus who acts, but it is also God who acts through Cyrus.

The doctrine also has its roots in the concept of creation out of nothing. If we are made by God out of nothing, all we are and all we do comes from God. And yet God has not made us like rocks, and stones, and trees, or even like the beasts of the field. He has given us the capacity to think and choose, and when He acts in us it is as beings which think and choose. (See Ia, Q.22, a.4).

Finally, this doctrine of God's action in us has its roots in the life of prayer. We pray to God for help. Do we think that God who is Lord of heaven and earth can only affect such things as weather and disease and not affect ourselves? Rather we pray, "Create in us a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us. . . Take not thy Holy Spirit from us" (*Psalms* 51:10-11).

To acknowledge the fact that God acts in us and through us, to pray by it and live by it, is to see ourselves as we really are, creatures wholly dependent on God for everything we are and do and this is what is meant by humility. We become, in the phrase from Matthew's gospel, "poor in spirit" (5:3), and we feel that "fear of the Lord" which the Bible so often calls "the beginning of wisdom" (e.g. *Psalms* 111:10, *Proverbs* 9:10; see Thomas IIa IIae, Q.161, a.2, ad 3).

Thomas sees no conflict between humility so understood and the virtues which the pagan philosophers saw as leading to achievement in public life, in particular with the virtue which Aristotle calls *megalopsychia*, magnanimity or greatness of soul.<sup>5</sup> *Megalopsychia* strengthens our resolve to attempt great things when we really are capable

of them. It requires an accurate judgment of our abilities and a courageous use of them (Q.161, a.1c; also Q.129, a.3, ad 4). The vice Thomas opposes to humility is *superbia*, or "pride." The word is derived from *super*, meaning "over" or "above," and it has a double sense in classical Latin writers: it can mean loftiness of spirit but also arrogance or haughtiness. Thomas takes it in the latter sense as a vice.

Pride is not, properly speaking, the desire for honor and recognition. Thomas calls the desire for honor and recognition vain glory (*inanis gloria*, IIa IIae, Q.162, a.8, ad 2), empty glory. The name suggests a trifling or even silly vice. Pride in contrast is a vice of strength. It seeks not the recognition of excellence but excellence itself. The proud man seeks not so much to be *recognized* as first as to *be* first.

Pride becomes a vice when it seeks excellence beyond our capacity (Q.162, a.1c). Thomas does not claim that pride is the source of *all* sins. He recognizes that we sin sometimes from ignorance and sometimes from weakness (a.2c). But when sin involves a conscious and deliberate turning away from God, a refusal to seek God as the final goal of our lives, it is at least an expression of pride if not a result of pride, a desire to put ourselves in the place of God and to govern our own lives (a.7; see also Ia IIae, Q.84, a.2, and Q.88, a.1, on "mortal" sin.) In this sense pride is the first sin. It was the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden. The temptation of the serpent was that they might "be like God, knowing good and evil." They determined for themselves what was good and what was evil instead of accepting that determination from God (IIa IIae, Q.163, a.1, a.2).

Pride is also the source of many other sins, such as what Thomas calls a "distaste" for the truth (*excellentiā veritatis fastidiunt*). The proud delight in their own excellence to such an extent that they cannot experience "the sweetness" of certain facts. They might know how the facts are, but not "how they taste."<sup>6</sup>

THOMAS' STUDY OF ANGELS (Ia, Q.50 ff.) also helps clarify man's relation to God. It is frequently said that ancient and medieval cosmology, with the earth at the center of the physical universe and the sun, planets, and stars rotating around it, gave man an extremely exalted position. The Copernican revolution, placing the sun at the center, is said to *lower* man. This seems to me almost a total misunderstanding. In the medieval universe, man does have a definite place but it is not the highest place. The highest place is filled by God, and in fact so high is it above our comprehension that we cannot speak of it as place. Moreover, there also exist above us vast multitudes of angels, greater in number than human beings and animals, in Thomas' opinion (Q.50, a.3). Angels are non-bodily, and, according to Thomas' Aristotelian analysis of the Biblical and neo-Platonic materials, not only non-

bodily but not composed of matter and form at all. It follows, he argues, that each angel is a distinct form (a.2), and therefore, as it were, like a distinct species of animal. One angel is as different from the next as, say, a horse is from a camel.

Thomas holds that the angels' powers of understanding, varied as they are among themselves, exceed our own not only in degree but in kind. (See Ia, QQ's 54-58, especially Q.58, a's 2-3). All our knowledge begins from our five separate bodily senses. Through colors, sounds, textures, and so on, we slowly and painstakingly put together concepts of things. We then make sentences about them, sentences which are combinations of subjects and predicates, sentences like "lead is heavy." What we call "speech" or "thinking" is expressed, in both the Greek *logos* and the Latin *ratio*, by the same word as a mathematical "ratio," that is, a relation between a *pair* of magnitudes. And this is what is meant by saying that we are *rational* animals: we connect things. Moreover, we make further connections called inferences. We "reason," and thus we reach conclusions.

The angels, on the other hand, are *intellectual* creatures, which means that they apprehend by a kind of immediate insight or "reading into" things (*intus legere*). Thomas describes their insight only in general terms, but we can get some clue as to what it might be like by considering mathematical examples. After having gone through a proof we can often see in the figure that a conclusion must follow without having to recall all the intermediate steps. For example, having learned why the angles of a triangle equal two right angles we can see this immediately in the nature of a triangle, in the fact that it is composed of three sides. Even better would be to see this immediately without ever having gone through the proof—presumably the way Euclid first saw it. Such would be the insight of a rather low ranking angel. An angel of more powerful mind might see the whole of Apollonius in the first sketch of the conic sections. And a still more powerful angel would have an intuitive grasp of vast amounts of information which we cannot even conceive except in our piecemeal and haphazard fashion.

Although we do have some share in intellect, we are the lowest of intellectual creatures. We have bodies and our knowledge begins from our bodily senses. Our position at the center of the physical universe is of little importance compared to our position at the very edge of the intellectual and moral universes.

Moreover, as Dante shows most powerfully, the center of the physical universe can be conceived of as the locus of all that is heavy, slow, and evil. We begin to emerge from sin only as we come out of the earth and ascend the Mount of Purgatory. We still have to move beyond the shadow which the earth casts on to the first three planets (*Paradiso*, IX, 118), before we approach regions of greater speed and perfect light, which can more nearly image divine perfection. It is the *outer* boundaries of the solar system and the heavens which are their true center. Man, far



from being at the center, is at the edge. We are, as C. S. Lewis puts it, "creatures of the Margin."

**A**LTHOUGH ALL OUR KNOWLEDGE begins from the senses, and although we are therefore on the very edge of the intellectual world, we *are* on that edge. We do have the capacity to know not merely sensible particulars, a cat, a horse, but to grasp universals, cat, horse. As is clearest of all in geometry, we can understand certain properties as following not merely by physical observation and measurement of particular triangles, but from the definition of triangle. To repeat the earlier example, it is *because* a triangle is bounded by three straight lines that its angles equal two right angles.

Moreover, in the case of certain properties like "justice," we know that no physical manifestation in a just individual matches our conception of what justice is. Socrates may occasionally fail and fall short, and even if he does not, our conception of what justice is does not depend on Socrates' being perfectly just. It points beyond Socrates to something which Socrates can only aim at. To use Platonic language, Socrates has only a "share" or a "participation" in justice. He does not reach justice itself.

Similarly with our conception of being. Socrates will die, and any of the things we experience through our senses will also degenerate and pass away. All physical things have only a shared existence. They are not being itself. But even the angels, though they will not die, have only a shared existence. It is not part of their nature to exist. Rather their existence is derived, like ours, from a creator who made them out of nothing. We can strive to move beyond such beings to the conception of a being who simply is, not by sharing or participation but by His own nature. He is the source of all the lesser things we know and of all that is good and just and wise in them. He Himself is goodness and justice and wisdom. As Thomas puts it, even though we develop words like "good" from our experience of physical things, such words point beyond themselves and ultimately to God. Their full meaning is realized only in God. (See Ia, Q.13, a.6.)

**T**WO IMPORTANT ARGUMENTS follow from this conception of man as knowing universals. The first is that man's life is not limited to the world of particular physical things. Even though man obviously dies, it is his body which dies, not his mind or soul. The mind which can grasp non-bodily things like goodness, justice, and being, must itself be non-bodily. This argument is of course found in the *Phaedo* (64-69, 74-75, 78-79) and Thomas also finds it, I think rightly, in Aristotle's *De Anima*, whatever Aristotle's final opinion on this question may be. (See Ia, Q.75, a.6; *De Anima* III, 4, 429a 18-b 22.)

The other argument is that man's happiness can be found only in union with God. This argument is found at

the beginning of Part Two of the *Summa Theologiae* and is reflected in the structure of the work as a whole. Part One of the *Summa* starts from God as creator, and goes on to treat of the angels and men and all the physical universe as coming forth from God. Part Two reverses the motion. It begins from man and sees everything in human life as leading man back to God. For instance, the discussion of law, which comes from the second part of the *Summa*, deals with law as an instrument of man's service to God and return to God. (See Ia IIae, QQ's 90-108.)

We seek many things in life: wealth, sensual pleasure, power, and knowledge. Each of these has, or at least can have, some share in goodness and can therefore give us some share in happiness. But only goodness itself can fully satisfy our desire, our constant movement from one partial and temporary satisfaction to another. And goodness itself is God Himself (Ia IIae, Q.2, a.8). Whether we realize it or not, all our confused and haphazard search in life is really for God. The search Augustine describes in the *Confessions* is the true search of every man. As Augustine puts it, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are ever restless until they rest in Thee" (*Confessions*, I, 1).

There is a fundamental paradox in human existence. In one sense man is firmly in place in an elaborate hierarchy, a sacred order. He is a creature of God, he owes reverence to God. He must humble his pride and bow his head before God. He is located in a range of creatures, neither lowest nor highest, between animals and angels. In a different sense, his position is most unstable. He is a creature of the margin. He shares something of the nature of animals and something of the nature of angels. His desire for happiness leads him beyond anything he can find in the world about him. His reason leads him beyond what he can fully understand.

**I**'VE EXPLORED THREE EXAMPLES, from the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas' study of religion, his study of pride, and his study of the angels. Nothing I've said so far is specifically Christian.<sup>8</sup> For Thomas, if I understand him rightly, the world I've described so far is knowable, at least in principle, by natural reason. I do not mean to say that in developing his conception of the universe that comes from God and returns to God, Thomas makes no use of the Bible. He constantly draws on the Bible and on other Christian writers. But following a passage from St. Paul that he is fond of quoting (for instance, Ia, Q.2 a.2, on the contrary), Thomas holds that "the invisible nature" of God, "His eternal power and deity" can be "seen by the mind in things made" (*Romans*, I, 20; see also, *Romans* II, 14-15).

Thomas' understanding of religious faith is very different from that most commonly expressed today when we speak of "faith in God." For Thomas the existence of God is not a matter of faith. Rather faith *presupposes* the exis-



tence of God. Speaking strictly, to have faith means to believe that something is true because we believe that it has been revealed by God (IIa IIae, Q.1, a.1c).

In the Bible itself there is never any question of God's existence. Faith is demanded only when God enters our world and speaks in something like a human voice: when He speaks to Abraham and promises him a son in his old age, or to Moses from the burning bush and promises that He will lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, or through the prophets, or finally through His Word made flesh in the man Jesus Christ. Then those who have ears to hear must believe that it is God who speaks and they must trust in His word. This is where faith enters.

The good news of the gospels is that God has not abandoned us to our sins and to our own feeble efforts at finding him. God has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and especially in the Son made flesh in Jesus Christ. Christ has died on the cross for our sins and risen from the dead. Through him we can begin to rise from our sins in this life and later we can rise from death to live with God. In that life we will find what we have been seeking all along. It is our true home, our fatherland, our *patria*. On this earth we are only *viatores*, travelers, pilgrims. (For the use of these terms, see for example IIa IIae, Q.18, a.2, a.3.)

WHEN THOMAS APPROACHES the mysteries of revelation in study and prayer, his faith is serene. He expresses neither the anxiety nor the bluster of so many modern Christians. His world is open to the voice of God. Like Samuel he can say, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (I Samuel 3:10).

To what extent is our own world open to the voice of God? I do not know the answer to this question, but I do think there is something about the typical modern process of inquiry, especially as it begins in Descartes, which makes it difficult for us to hear God's voice when He does speak. Descartes imagines true knowledge as a city of perfectly straight streets built by one skillful engineer in an empty plain (*Discourse on Method*, Part II). Nothing could be further from Thomas' manner of inquiry, which is truly like the medieval city Descartes despises, making use of all the twisting alleys and old houses, always building on foundations laid by others, adjusting, modifying, combining.

Secondly, Descartes wishes that he could have been born with the full use of his reason and that he had never had to rely on any teacher or parent for anything he thought. This suggests that he wished to think without even the hindrance of any human language, in a new language of perfect clarity and precision. Again, nothing could be farther from Thomas' manner of inquiry. Like Plato and Aristotle, Thomas began from what was said by others. He ransacked old books, pagan, Moslem, Jewish, and Christian, for whatever help he could find.

Finally, Descartes establishes as a criterion of truth whatever is completely clear and certain to *himself*. The

first question of modern philosophy becomes, what can I know for certain? The principal endeavor of modern philosophy from Descartes through Kant and to a large extent to our own day, is to set *limits* to knowledge, to exclude from inquiry those matters which do not sufficiently meet the standards of certainty which are somehow prescribed at the beginning, and the standards of certainty generally come from mathematics and physical science. Even the most evident truths of morality become suspect, since they do not possess the kind of clarity that mathematics and the physical sciences seem to have. Obviously any purported truths of religion are even more suspect.

Again, Thomas turns this criterion of certainty upside down. He invokes a metaphor of Aristotle's in which the most certain and evident truths are precisely those hardest for us to grasp. The obscurity does not lie in those truths but in our feeble knowing powers. Aristotle says, "... as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all" (*Metaphysics* II, 1, 993b 10, quoted Ia, Q.1, a.5, ad 1 and frequently elsewhere). It is not the truth of God's existence and nature, or even the truths of revelation, which are obscure. God Himself is truth and the source of all truth. The obscurity and the weakness lie with us.

We ridicule medieval man for placing himself at the center of the physical universe. Perhaps we have made a more important mistake: placing ourselves at the center of the universe of knowledge and truth.

1. Let me mention in passing that Plato's own writings were largely unknown in the Latin West until the fifteenth century. No Platonic text was ever the direct subject of instruction in any medieval school. See *Rashdall's Medieval Universities*, ed. Powicke and Emden, Oxford 1936, 1, 38.

2. See James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino*, New York, 1974, 281-82.

3. A notable exception is Ia, Q.3, a.8, where he mentions three "errors" and describes one David de Dinando as having spoken "really stupidly" (*stultissime*) when he identified God with prime matter.

4. See Cicero, *De Invent. Rhetor.*, Book II, chapter 53. See *Sum. Theol.*, IIa IIae, Q.80, A.un., obj. 1. I'm using the Marietti edition, Rome 1948. All translations are my own.

5. David Ross's widely used translation of the *Ethics* unfortunately renders *megalopsychia* as "pride."

6. IIa IIae, Q.162, a.3, ad 1. The metaphor of tasting the truth comes from St. Gregory's *Moralia*.

7. C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, Cambridge 1964, 58.

8. See Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 18-19.

## REVIEW ESSAY

# Updike and Roth: Are They Writers?

## John Updike's *Rabbit Is Rich* and Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Unbound*

LEV NAVROZOV

When manuals entitled "How to Become a Writer" began to appear in Russia in the 20s, they used the term *zavyazka*, which is the opposite of *dénouement*. The latter means the "untying," "release," "resolution" of the novel, while *zavyazka* means its "tying-up"—its "conceptual beginning." After reading the first eighty-eight pages of Mr. Updike's novel, we finally reach its "tying-up." Nelson, son of the car dealer Rabbit, residing in Brewer, Pennsylvania, leaves his college at Kent State, Ohio, and visits his parents with a girl named Melanie.

First of all, Rabbit discovers that he is "not turned on" by Melanie. In that pansexual phoneyland that Mr. Updike and his colleagues describe as America, everyone at any age is or must be "turned on" by everyone else. Indeed, Rabbit "feels even sexier toward fat old Bessie," his seventy- or eighty-year-old mother-in-law, than to the college girl his son came with. To make this cultist pansexualism plausible, Mr. Updike goes into the lavatory experiences of fat old Bessie, as witnessed by Rabbit. Besides the incredible fact that his son's girl, Melanie, does not turn Rabbit on, said Rabbit concludes that she does not turn on his son either. Since everyone has to be sexually attracted to everyone else, Rabbit's old sick subordinate named Charlie feels *he* must have

an affair with Melanie. Why should a pretty college girl of 20 or so have an affair with an old, sick, boring, vulgar, and uneducated man who works as a car salesman's subordinate in a small Pennsylvania town? Because Mr. Updike's phoneyland has even less to do with America or any real society than the Soviet novels of the Stalin era had to do with Russia. Sex in this phoneyland is not a reality observed in any real society, but a figment of cultist imagination.

Like many other Westerners mistaken today for novelists, Mr. Updike is sure that realism in literature is the utmost absence of all good manners, utmost obscenity, utmost vulgarity. Describe all the lavatory experiences you can, and your amateur puppet show will come wonderfully to life, and your cardboard figures will begin to live. The sex Mr. Updike describes is no less detailed than in a medical reference book or locker room conversation. But as soon as Mr. Updike departs from medicine or locker room lore into human relations, this sex becomes as false, fantastic, and far-fetched as everything he writes about.

Apart from this, the-more-vulgar-the-more-realistic approach, Mr. Updike uses two no less naive amateur techniques to give realism to his puppet show. First, he believes that the more detailed his description of everything is, the more lifelike his cardboard will be. Rabbit jogs, and Mr. Updike proceeds to describe (1) the color of his running shoes, (2) where they were bought, (3) what sort of shoes they are, (4) what soles they have at toe and heel, and (5) how the soles behave, owing to "resilient circlets like flattened cleats." Also, all puppets must be fashionable: "Melanie was mystical, she ate no meat and felt no fear, the tangled weedy gods of Asia spelled a harmony to her."

After this fantastic puppet show "*nouement*," we learn that the fashionably mystical Melanie is not the girl of Rabbit's son, Nelson. Quite the contrary. His girl's name is Prudence: this is how she has been nicknamed for her insufficient promiscuity in

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*Rabbit Is Rich*, by John Updike. Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1981. 467 pages. \$13.95.

*Zuckerman Unbound*, by Philip Roth. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York 1981. 225 pages. \$10.95.

Lev Navrozov has contributed "One Day in the Life of the New York Times and Pravda in the World: Which is More Informative?" (Autumn 1981) and "A Dead Man's Knowledge" (Winter 1982) to the *St. John's Review*. Author of *The Education of Lev Navrozov* (Harper & Row 1975) and of the forthcoming *What the New York Times Knows About the World*, he has written many articles for *Commentary*, *Midstream*, *The Yale Literary Magazine*, and other magazines.

Mr. Updike's sex utopia. For some reasons as implausible as everything else in the novel, Prudence is so far into her pregnancy that Nelson must marry her. So Nelson has left the unwed expectant mother Prudence at college and come to his father to get a job at his car sales shop, with Prudence's friend Melanie to chaperone him on this mission. "You (are) such a goddam watchdog," Nelson complains to Melanie, "I can't even go into town for a beer."

The idea that a college girl will go from Kent to Pennsylvania to chaperone her friend's fiancé in his father's home and will live there as if she were the fiancé's aunt or mother is again good only for an amateur puppet theater. But Mr. Updike adds more hastily invented nonsense to this silly invention of his. We find that in the middle of a grand Hollywood-movie affair with Rabbit's old, sick, poor, uneducated, and vulgar assistant named Charlie, the beautiful chaperone Melanie sleeps also with her charge, Nelson.

Like those philistines who are, in any company, interested in nothing except obscene jokes and are dead, bored, and monosyllabic until someone begins to tell them, Mr. Updike comes to the same kind of phosphorescent animation only when he is at his locker room jokes. Mr. Updike invented Melanie and dragged her all the way from college to chaperone her friend's fiancé in order to have a pretext for more locker room entertainment.

What is the attitude of Prudence toward the chaperon's cohabitation with her fiancé? Explains Janice, the wife of Rabbit: "They don't have this jealousy thing the way we do, if you can believe them."

No, they don't have jealousy. Nor any other feelings. They are Mr. Updike's sexual-gastric puppets which Mr. Updike puts through various sexual-gastric acts of his imagination so narrow that the impression finally is that the sexual-gastric automaton is Mr. Updike himself.

After a series of locker room jokes strung out over the 467 pages, comes the *dénouement*: Nelson marries Prudence and even goes back to college. This is what Rabbit wanted: to get rid of Nelson. Father and son hate each other. Mr. Updike, an exemplary Freudian cultist, thought it necessary to invent this as well.

Mr. Updike seems to have a lower ability to observe human relations than an average person—a layman who has never dreamed of becoming a writer. About sixty pages before the end of *Rabbit Is Rich*, Mr. Updike decided again to compose *Couples*, a novel about wife-swapping written about a decade earlier, and "plug" it in somewhere at the end of whatever he had written under the title *Rabbit Is Rich*. Why not? As it was, *Rabbit Is Rich* was a string of desultory anecdotes. Why not plug in at the end some wife-swapping anecdote as well? No sooner said than done. Instead of getting someone's wife named Cindy, as he wanted, Rabbit got, according to the first night's arrangement, someone's wife named Thelma. Nevertheless, there follows the novel's biggest in-bed scene. Since the time of *Couples*, Mr. Updike has learned a perversion about which any boy of any country may read in any standard textbook of general psychiatry. Mr. Updike displays his discovery over a dozen or so pages.

The wife-swapping vacation is interrupted by the news of the disappearance of Nelson. On their way back, Rabbit's wife, Jan-

ice, begins to sob aboard the plane. Rabbit assumes that the disappearance of their son Nelson causes the tears. Finally Janice explains to Rabbit:

"I felt so sorry for you, having Thelma when you wanted Cindy so much." With that there is no stopping her crying.

The mother of a son who has disappeared cries over her husband's getting the wrong wife during a wife-swapping session.

Chekhov says about a character of his that he could multiply big figures in his mind but he could not understand why people cry or laugh. Can Mr. Updike multiply big figures in his mind? He certainly cannot understand why people cry or laugh.

The *New York Times* celebrated the appearance of this 467-page volume of emetic pulp: the upper half of the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* showed Mr. Updike against a panorama of books, presumably his own. From an article below, "Updike on Updike," we learn from Mr. Updike that his "20-odd books" have been translated into "20-odd languages, including Finnish, Serbo-Croatian, Hebrew and Korean."<sup>1</sup>

I recall how we read that the worst novels of the Stalin era had been translated into many languages. The psychology of self-evaluation is the same: "Look how *many* books I have written, how *many* pages each of them contains, how *many* copies of each of them sold, and how *many* prizes they have won."

Mr. Updike, speaking of "what the aim of my [Mr. Updike's] fiction is," says: "let literature concern itself, as the Gospels do, with the inner life of hidden men." A writer is a "secreter of images," Mr. Updike explains, "some of which he prays will have the immortal resonance of Don Quixote's windmills, of Proust's madeleine, of Huck Finn's raft." Mr. Updike's ambition does not stop at the immortal resonance of Cervantes, Proust, and Twain. "I want to write books . . ." Mr. Updike declares to Mr. Updike. Yes, what books? "Something like  $E = mc^2$ , only in words, one after the other."

No Soviet literary charlatan under Stalin had Mr. Updike's insolence: it is truly cosmic.

Now listen to Mr. John Leonard's riddles or pomposities in his *Books of the Times* review. They are vague, confusing or obscure enough to pass for wisdom intended for the select few:

He [Rabbit] wastes himself while the dead aren't looking [are they looking elsewhere?] and God is short of meanings [or of literary critics?].

Or:

After the death of God—after the chilling discovery that every time we make a move toward "the invisible," somebody gets killed—we require a myth of community, something as Felix put it in "Coups," that fits the facts, as it were, backwards."

A hard lesson and, after three "Rabbit" books, a splendid achievement. Let Felix also have the last word: "I perceived that a man, in America, is a failed boy" [period, end of review].<sup>2</sup>

What does all this highfalutin rigmarole mean?

The "death of God" is Nietzsche's phrase which had been worn threadbare (in Russia, for example) before Nietzsche died in 1900. Mr. Leonard must think it terrifically new, for he repeats it several times. But what does it have to do with someone getting killed? Who gets killed?

What is a "hard lesson?" That God is dead? That someone gets killed? That we require a myth of community, as Felix of Mr. Updike's *Coup* discovered?

What has all this to do with a man in America being allegedly a failed boy, or a boy being a failed man?

The less comprehensible the better. An understandable text will expose Mr. Leonard: everyone will see that he has no more to say as a critic than Mr. Updike as a writer.

But what was Mr. Leonard's evaluation of *Rabbit Is Rich*?

It consists of nine words. The book is the "usual Updike xylophone" (three words), and "I like his music very much" (six words). Whereupon Mr. Leonard pounces on the critics who fail to like Mr. Updike's xylophone (not saxophone?) music:

Let the critics, like Nelson, "suck the foam out of one more can," their "surlly puzzled" faces "drinking and eating up the world, and out of spite at that."

How can Nelson and the critics suck the foam out of one more can if they drink and eat up the world? Is the world the foam? Or they do not drink and eat up the world, but only their *faces* do?

Anyway, these outpourings are to show that *the* critics, their faces surlly and puzzled, are against Mr. Updike, and only Mr. Leonard is heroically out to appreciate and defend singlehandedly the "usual Updike xylophone." It is amazing how conformist salaried officials of a corporation, like Mr. Leonard, praising John Updike only because "everybody does it," are fond of imagining themselves to be lone fierce intellectual heroes, fighting against the overwhelming establishment.

The review in the *New York Times Book Review* presents a different style: the courtier describing the Emperor's nonexistent clothes. This particular courtier is Professor Roger Sale of the University of Washington. Dr. Sale ends his review quite resolutely:

For me "Rabbit is Rich" is the first book in which Updike has fulfilled the fabulous promise he offered with "Rabbit Run" 20 years ago.<sup>3</sup>

How did Dr. Sale arrive at this (fabulous) conclusion? The review is either vague or vaguely pompous in this respect:

Harry Angstrom [Rabbit] can never be described as large-minded, but that does not prevent Updike from imagining him largely [or large-mindedly?].

But at one point Dr. Sale decided to be specific. Rabbit's and Janice's "lovmaking while talking about moving out of his mother-in-law's house and worrying about their son Nelson is the best moment in the book, maybe in all Updike." Prepare yourself for the best moment:

"Could we afford it," Janice asks, "with the mortgage rates up around thirteen percent now?"

He shifts his hand down the silvery slick undulations of her belly. . . . [the dots are in the magazine].

"It seems hard on Mother," Janice says in that weak voice she gets, lovemaking. "She'll be leaving us this place some day and I know she expects we'd stay in it with her till then."

The quotation goes on in the same spirit for another twenty-four lines but I grudge the space.

Mr. Updike describes common Americans who turn out, under his pen, to be fantastic, obnoxious, stupid, and asocial animals, driven by fantastic sexual-gastric urges of Mr. Updike's invention. Mr. Roth describes Americans like himself who turn out, under his pen, to be like the phoney dukes and duchesses of old pulp novels.

The first twentieth century Western pulp novel I read had been published in England in the 1920s and was entitled *The Undesirable Governess*. There was a difference between *The Undesirable Governess* and nineteenth century European dime fiction. The latter usually displayed dukes and duchesses, and all the "appurtenances of luxury." "Tears streaming down her pale face, the duchess was running to the pond." The pond was a ducal "appurtenance of luxury." *The Undesirable Governess* displayed "people of culture" as the modern equivalent of dukes and duchesses. Instead of running to the ducal pond, the heroine read the *Upanishads*, the most cultured pastime for the English middle class of the 20s. The *Upanishads* had replaced the ducal pond. Just as the 19th-century dime novel readers were to gasp at the luxury of dukes and duchesses, the new pulp novel readers were to marvel at the culture of "people of culture."

In Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Unbound*, Zuckerman is a writer whose book makes a million dollars. "But what writer?" any more or less intelligent American is bound to ask. "A hack like Gay Talese, who has made millions of dollars, or a Chekhov, who would be unable to live off his genius in New York today?"

Philip Roth is not that complicated. His Zuckerman is a great writer—like Tolstoy, John Updike, Cervantes, Proust, Mark Twain, Philip Roth. Naturally, his book makes a million, not millions. Millions of dollars would make readers suspicious: What if this great writer were just another Harold Robbins?

A million dollars is enough for Mr. Roth to show "how the rich live"—the subject of his pulp novel—and at the same time remove any suspicion as to the greatness of his Zuckerman.

There is a writer's love affair, of course. With a Hollywood star, of course. How do writers have affairs, in contrast to Mr. Updike's car dealers or college students?

We have to recall again nineteenth century pulp literature in which the readers who never had seen a real duke or duchess at close quarters were shown how phoney dukes and duchesses lived. In *Zuckerman Unbound*, the phoney Duke and Duchess have been replaced by the phoney Writer and the phoney Movie Actress.

When Writer Zuckerman came to Movie Actress Caesara O'Shea's hotel suite, what did he do—go to bed with her as Mr.

Updike's Rabbit, a car dealer? Little do you know about the life of Writers.

Writer Zuckerman read Søren Kierkegaard aloud to her.

Do not expect that Writer Zuckerman or Movie Actress Caesara or Philip Roth himself would say anything original about "Søren Kierkegaard" (or about anyone and anything else on earth). "Søren Kierkegaard" plays here the same role as the Duke's carriage played in the nineteenth century pulp.

Now, the Movie Actress begins to fidget. After all, she is a Movie Actress, not a Theatre Actress or Authoress. A Movie Actress corresponds to the illegitimate daughter of a duke and a kitchen maid in old dime novels.

Is Writer Zuckerman going to read all of Søren Kierkegaard at a go?

Zuckerman laughed. "And what will you do?"

"What I always do when I invite a man to my room and he sits down and starts reading. I'll throw myself from the window."

Writer Zuckerman has to descend to this half-duchess-half-kitchen-maid and explain to her that he is a Duke of literature, not a Harold Robbins:

"Your problem is this taste of yours, Caesara. If you just had Harold Robbins around, like the other actresses, it would be easier to pay attention to you."

Writer Zuckerman is not like Harold Robbins who would go to bed with the Movie Actress instead of reading Søren Kierkegaard to her. Just as in old dime novels there would be the villain who was born and bred low, but who impersonated a duke, so, too, Harold Robbins, in contrast to Writer Zuckerman (or Writer Philip Roth), has no more refinement than Mr. Updike's car dealer.

Having proven, by dropping the name of Søren Kierkegaard, that Zuckerman is a Writer, not a Harold Robbins, Mr. Roth shows him and his life in a way no different from the way *People* magazine portrays Harold Robbins and his high-society life. Indeed, we are treated to a clipping from such a magazine:

I know, I know, actually you only want to know who's doing what to whom. Well, NATHAN ZUCKERMAN and CAESARA O'SHEA are still Manhattan's most delectable twosome. They were very together at the little dinner that agent ANDRE SCHEVITZ and wife MARY gave where KAY GRAHAM talked to WILLIAM STYRON and TONY RANDALL talked to LEONARD BERNSTEIN and LAUREN BACALL talked to GORE VIDAL and Nathan and Caesara talked to one another.

The actual descriptions of this kind in *People* and other such magazines at least refer to real people like real Harold Robbins. What Mr. Roth describes is phoneyess about phoneyess, society chitchat twice removed from life, a fictitious *People* magazine column about a fictitious Zuckerman.

If Philip Roth were to describe an "unsuccessful" writer as, say, Chekhov would be in New York today, *all* readers, including those who read *People* magazine and other such, would find his book unreadable, for Mr. Roth would have nothing to say on the

subject. As it is, Mr. Roth sets up Zuckerman as a Kierkegaard-reading Writer high above *People* magazine, and then proceeds to write *People* magazine stuff "about how the rich live," to be entertaining at least to some *People* magazine readers, or to those who do not read *People* magazine out of college-educated snobbery and read Mr. Roth for the same kind of "high-society" pulp.

About two pages are devoted to Writer Zuckerman's ordering of twelve suits at the most fashionable tailor. I am sure that Mr. Roth is factually accurate describing the particular fashions of 1981 in New York since he has been a millionaire Writer himself. But as soon as Mr. Roth departs from his consumer's report of fashionable goods and services, phoneyess sets in:

One night a pretty rock singer whom he'd never seen before told Johnny Carson about her one and "Thank God" only date with Nathan Zuckerman. She brought the house down describing the "gear" Zuckerman advised her to wear to dinner if she wanted to "turn him on."

Silly and cheap as Johnny Carson and his show are, it is improbable that a rock singer on his show would brag of a date with a writer (like Philip Roth) she had never seen, and would "bring the house down" by inventing the "gear" he allegedly advised her to wear. Mr. Roth sounds like a foreigner describing the Johnny Carson show to a foreign pulp magazine.

Mr. Roth must have felt that the story about how a Writer made a million dollars and proceeded to live like a Harold Robbins, except for reading Kierkegaard to Movie Actresses, as a Writer should, is too little for a novel.

The new fashion seems to be to avoid in-bed scenes, and in this respect Mr. Roth has become more fashionable than Mr. Updike. Without such scenes, however, he has not much to say. So Mr. Roth invented a substory, combining again amateur triteness and amateur implausibility to the same amazing degree Mr. Updike does.

A former television quiz winner named Alvin Pepler from Newark, Zuckerman's home town, comes to New York and meets, on page 11 of the book, the celebrated Zuckerman. This trite meeting of the trite admirer with the trite celebrity, worn threadbare in humorous sketches and vaudevilles a century ago, lasts to page 41, about one-fifth of the slender book.

Alvin Pepler turns out to be somewhat insane and threatens, in the farfetched ways of Mr. Roth's invention, to kill the celebrated Zuckerman.

Finally, Alvin Pepler reappears on page 133—he is writing a review of Zuckerman's celebrated book for the *New York Times* and wants his opinion of the review, because Alvin Pepler does not "want Sulzberger to read it if it stinks."

Everything in the "novel" is so farfetched, contrived, and amateurish that it is not clear whether this is a humorless spoof or if Mr. Roth really believes that the *New York Times* accepts reviews from former Newark television quiz winners—and Arthur Ochs Sulzberger reads them personally. Why has not this high-brow best-seller been reviewed before if it has already made a million dollars? Is this Mr. Roth's idea of being funny? Or Pepler's? Who is silliest—Mr. Roth or Pepler or Zuckerman?

This review-for-the-*New-York-Times* filler goes on for twenty-three pages, about one-tenth of the book. Finally, Zuckerman opines that Pepler's thoughts in the review are not original (are Zuckerman's or Mr. Roth's?), but "Sulzberger could be crazy about it." Pepler flairs up, like the professor from Ionesco's well-known old play *The Lesson*, which Mr. Roth evidently decided to imitate to fill in some pages, and besides, possibly to show how well-read he is.

Still, Mr. Roth felt himself duly bound to fill in another dozen or so pages. So Zuckerman's father dies, and the ensuing description, as trite and implausible as the rest of the book, does the trick of bringing the "novel" to a decent minimum size.

Anatole Broyard entitled his *Books of the Times* review of *Zuckerman Unbound* "The Voyeur Vu," for only the French can convey the subtlety of Mr. Broyard's perception of Mr. Roth's novel. "Voyeur" is in French "peeper," "Peeping Tom," meaning a writer in this particular case, and when the latter becomes a celebrity he becomes a "peeper peeped at."

Now, when he walks down the street, everyone he meets is a literary critic. He is the *voyeur vu*.<sup>4</sup>

How could one express this in plain English, instead of the language of Proust?

And what an achievement of Philip Roth, too! A celebrity is peeped or peeked at. *Voyeur vu*. Perhaps Mr. Roth should write his books straight in French?

As is usual, about two-thirds of Mr. Broyard's review is devoted to the "retelling of the plot." Then Mr. Broyard notes that "Mr. Roth's voice is convincing and emotionally charged." He refers to Mr. Roth's "wit and grace." Not that the book is impeccably free from weaknesses: "Pepler is too monolithic, too quickly comprehended." Mr. Roth's voice "seems to be pitched just a little too high up in the sinuses, too ready with ironic incredulity." Mr. Roth suffers from *too much* irony (and also from *too much* wit, grace, talent, intelligence, and beauty?).

The new book is reasonably funny, reasonably sad, reasonably interesting, and occasionally just plain reasonable.

The review in the *New York Times Book Review* is a bravura. It reproaches Philip Roth only for his new avoidance of pornography, in contrast with his former pornographic self. The reviewer (George Stade) is one of those middle-class males who imagine themselves big-hearted, open-minded, and *oceanically* gifted hemmen because they are noisy, pushy, and ill-mannered. Often they also eat and drink a lot, do not pass a single woman without a lewd observation—and this seems to prove their *oceanic* talent. Listen to Mr. Stade's boisterous masculine harangue:

The custodians of our high literary culture are as retrograde and feminizing as they were over a hundred years ago. The ghosts of Mr. Roth's *Landsman*, Fenny Cooper, Nate Hawthorne, Hermie Melville, and Sammy Clemens are nodding approval. Who cares what the Momma's boys think?<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Stade assumes that Fenny Cooper, Nate Hawthorne, Hermie Melville, and Sammy Clemens (as well as Em Dickinson and Tommy Eliot, no doubt) larded their works with American middle-class locker room anecdotes, told in the most masculine locker room manner of the most masculine he-man, as Philip Roth did in his earlier works. This is why these writers are still read in many countries. American middle-class locker room anecdotes have been cherished all over the world. No country has ever had such obscene language, or such noisy, pushy, ill-mannered males.

And look what Philip Roth has done—he has stopped pouring out obscenities because of the retrograde and feminizing custodians of our high literary culture.

I had thought that our "high literary culture" and its "custodians" were steeped in pornography. Pulp culture thrives on pornography. How can "high literary culture" abstain, if it is mostly just an amateur version of pulp culture? What else would Mr. Roth or Mr. Updike sell?

But no. The custodians of our high literary culture are as they were over a hundred years ago. Mr. Stade, the lone heroic he-man, possibly the last male on earth, is fighting single-handedly, just like Mr. Leonard, against the feminizing establishment, led by the *New York Times* (and *Playboy*?), for the preservation of that almost destroyed national treasure of treasures: middle-class vulgarity. And now Philip Roth has left the cause. Alone, all alone, Mr. Stade is, pitted against hordes of feminizing retrogrades.

Yes, only the feminized retrograde absence of modern robust male pornography mars Philip Roth's book, which is

masterful, sure of every touch, clear and economical of line as a crystal vase, but there is something diminished about it as about its immediate predecessors. The usual heartbreak and hilarity are there, but they no longer amplify each other; now both are muted.

If only there were a generous splash of pornography on every page, as in the good old days—the 60s and 70s, when the fashion was full on. How Mr. Roth's crystal vase of a book would sparkle, and how the heartbreak and hilarity amplify each other, no longer muted. Good old days. When Normie Mailer was mistaken for Billy Shakespeare. Remember? Will they ever come back?

1. *New York Times Book Review*, September 27, 1981, 1.
2. *Books of the Times*, September 22, 1981.
3. *New York Times Book Review*, September 27, 1981, 1.
4. *New York Times*, May 9, 1981, 13.
5. *New York Times Book Review*, May 24, 1981, 1.

## FROM OUR READERS (continued from page 2)

probably say so. In that case, his reactions to arguments against feminism would be more consistent than they now appear.

TINA BELL  
Nyack, N.Y.

*Mr. Doskow replies:*

Ms. Bell misses the point of my quarrel with Mr. Levin. The issue is not one of women being forced to stay home by their husbands (though this has been known to happen), nor is it a question of the importance of raising children, certainly a most important task (I would only add that Fatherhood deserves equal billing with Motherhood). Rather the issue is whether women should be judged on their individual abilities or considered congenitally incapable of doing certain kinds of work, and whether when they do the same work as men they should be paid equally, something which has not been and is not now the case. There may well be significant distinctions between men and women. But, as I thought I made overabundantly clear, what seemed to be natural differences not very long ago (women's innate incapacity to be attor-

neys, e.g.) turn out to be merely prejudices. To cite just one more example (from Stephen Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, p. 118): G. Stanley Hall, "America's premier psychologist," attributed the higher suicide rate of women to "A profound psychic difference between the sexes. Women's body and soul is phyletically older and more primitive, while man is more modern, variable, and less conservative. . . . Women prefer passive methods; to give themselves up to the power of elemental forces, as gravity, when they throw themselves from heights. . . ."

Incidentally, if *Pride and Prejudice* is to be Ms. Bell's text, it is a pity that she misses the profound irony of the first sentence which remarks, among other things, that it is not all men but only those "in possession of a good fortune" who must be "in want of a wife." Are the others not to "establish themselves in civilized society"? I might also remark that in a more enlightened age Charlotte Lucas might find something more interesting and useful to do with her life than to marry Mr. Collins and spend it as a toady to Lady Catherine.

GEORGE DOSKOW



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