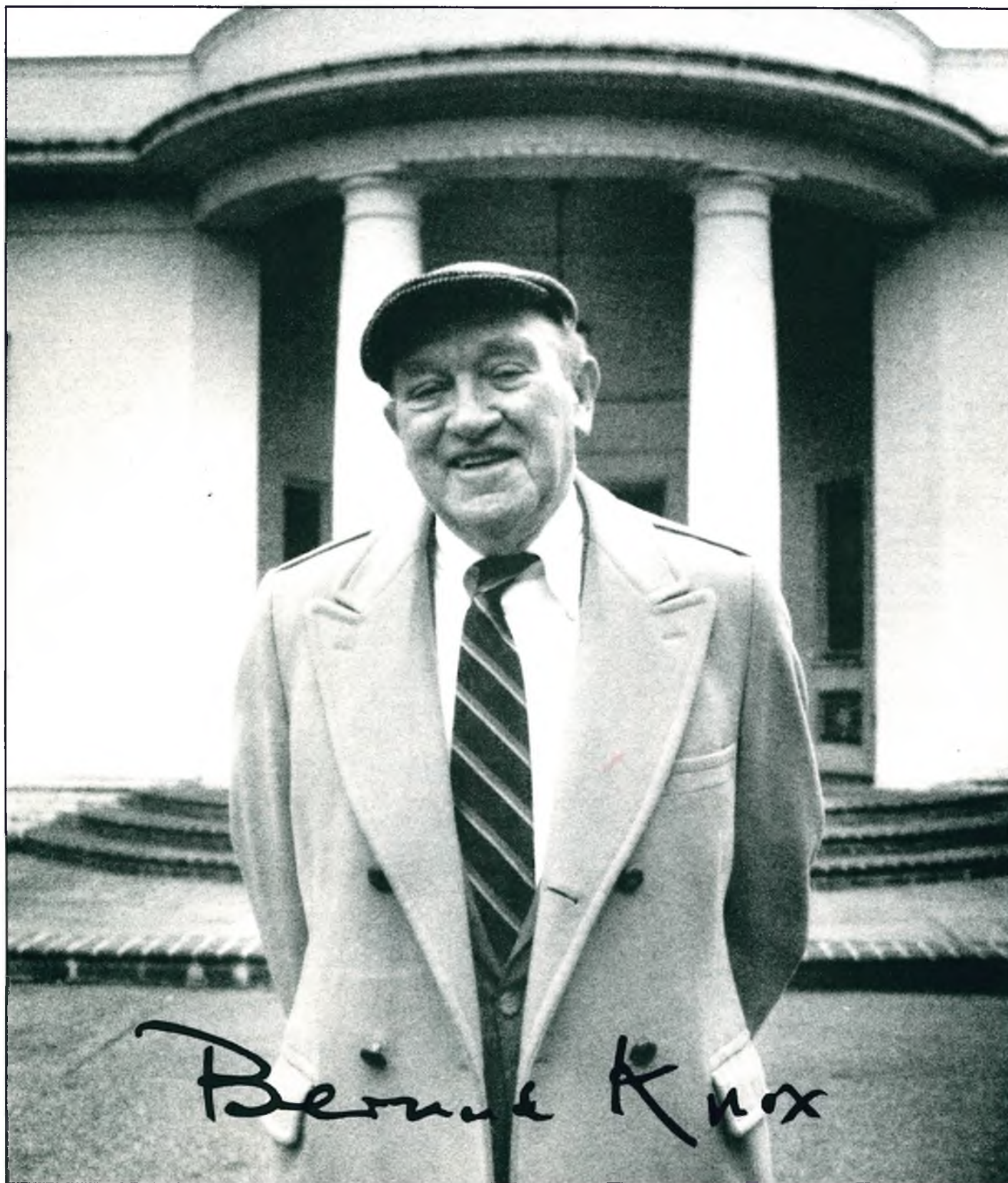


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Bernard Knox, the 1992 Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities, in front of the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington, D.C. (Photo by Teresa Zabala)

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Bernard Knox

There is a story Bernard Knox tells that illuminates much about the man himself—the soldier and classical scholar whose remarkable career has led to his being chosen as the 1992 Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities. He is the twenty-first recipient of the honor, which is the highest award the federal government bestows for achievement in the humanities.

The moment that shaped Knox's life came at the end of World War II in a ruined house in Italy where Knox, behind the lines with the partisans, had scrambled for cover from German fire.

"I saw in the debris," he writes, "a handsome, gilt-edged book lying under a patina of brick dust and broken glass. One word of its long title was legible: *Maronis*. It was a text of Virgil, printed on expensive heavy paper, one of a series of classical texts issued by the Royal Italian Academy to celebrate the greatness of ancient (and modern) Rome; the title page bore the improbable heading, in Latin, *Iussu Benedicti Mussolini*—'By Order of Benito Mussolini.'"

He opened the book at random and stabbed his finger at a line. It was from the first Georgic: "Here right and wrong are reversed; so many wars in the world, so many faces of evil . . . On one side the East moves to war, on the other, Germany. Neighboring cities tear up their treaties and take to arms; the vicious war god rages the world over. "These lines," he continues, "written some thirty years before the birth of Christ, expressed, more directly and passionately than any modern statement I know of, the reality of the world I was living in: the shell-pocked, mine-infested field, the shattered cities and the starving population of that Italy Virgil so loved, the misery of the whole world at war." He left the book behind—it wouldn't fit in his pocket—but Knox, B.A. Cambridge, '36, promised himself: "If I ever get out of this, I'm going back to the classics and study them seriously."

And he did. Decorated with the Bronze Star and the French Croix de Guerre, Knox abandoned the military for Yale University, where he got his doctorate in 1948 and began teaching. He recalls the time: "As I moved through the ranks of instructor and then assistant professor, teaching, for the most part, the classics in translation, the same shock of recognition I had experienced in northern Italy recurred, even stronger this time, as I read and taught Thucydides in the forties and fifties as the Greek civil war reenacted the heroism and horrors of the Peloponnesian War and, on a global scale, the Cold War aligned the opposing camps in the tense, fragile balance analyzed so brilliantly in Thucydides' introductory book. It seemed to me that there was no better key to an understanding of the modern world's power struggles than this unfinished history of a war fought twenty-five hundred years ago between two states whose combined population was less than half a million."

He was to teach at Yale for thirteen years. In 1961 he left to become the founding director of Harvard University's Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C., created to offer a year of residential study to young classical scholars from around the world. He retired as director in 1985.

Among his books are *Oedipus at Thebes* (1957), *Oedipus the King* (1959), *The Heroic Temper* (1964), and *Word and Action* (1979). Knox's most recent book is *Essays Ancient and Modern* (1989), which won the 1990 PEN/Spielvogel-Diamonstein Award for the literary essay.

—Mary Lou Beatty

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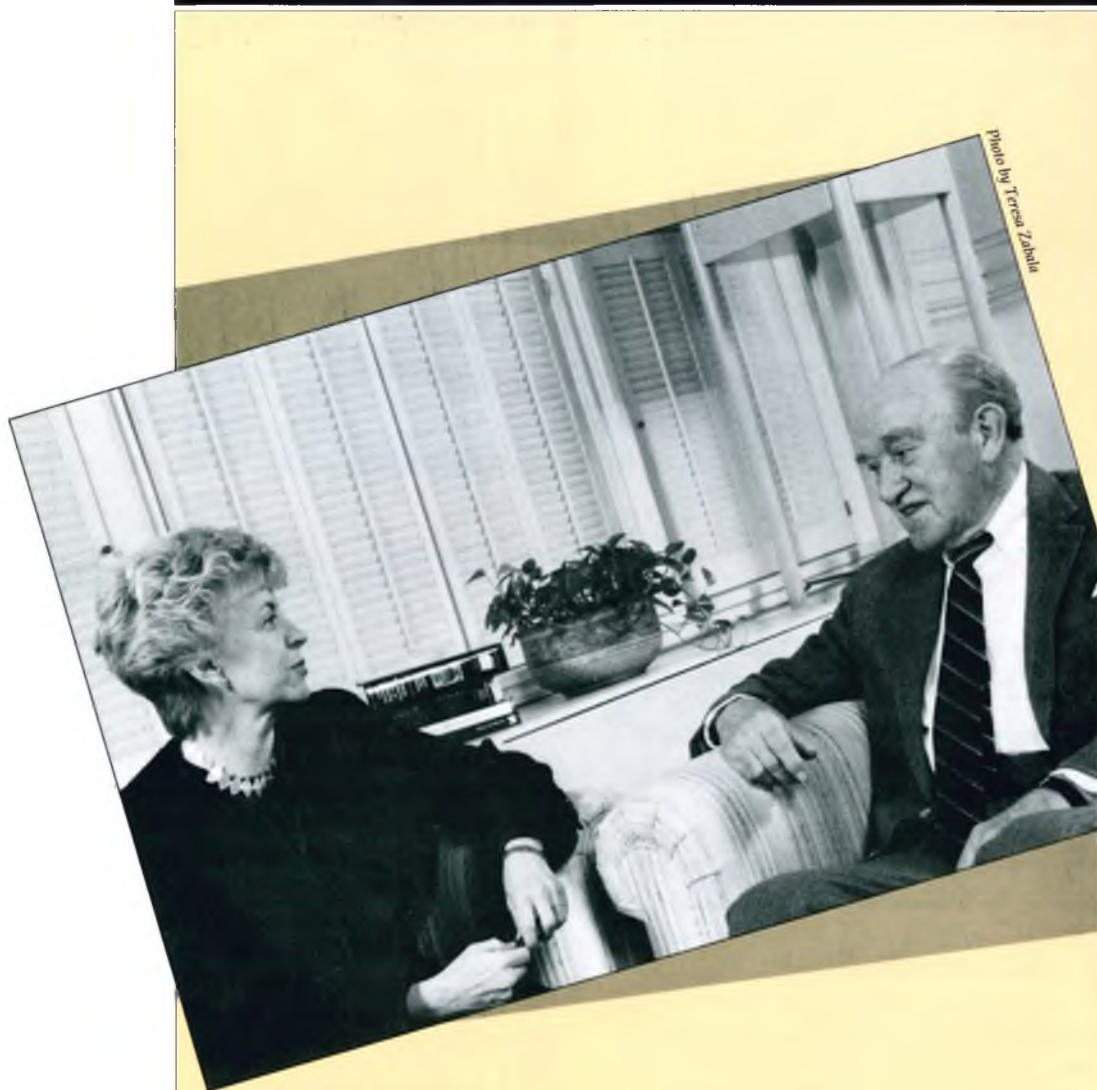
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A Conversation with ... BERNARD KNOX



When NEH Chairman Lynne V. Cheney talked recently with Bernard Knox, the 1992 Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities, the topics ranged from his exploits in war to his years as a classical scholar. Knox was a distinguished professor at Yale University for thirteen years and the first director of the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C. Among his five books are *The Heroic Temper* and *Essays Ancient and Modern*.

THE EARLY SCHOOL DAYS

Lynne V. Cheney: I think that our readers would be interested in knowing the story of your English schooling, and how you fell in love with Greek even though the school wasn't offering it.

Bernard Knox: Well, I was at the stage that some of us go through where I was trying to learn all the languages in the world, including Russian, from books.

Cheney: How old were you?

Knox: I was in grammar school. I must have been twelve or thirteen. There was a secondhand bookshop across from the school which I frequented during lunch and where I spent my lunch money. I chanced on a book called *Dr. Smith's First Greek Book*, which is an old Victorian book—I think about 1880—and got fascinated by it because everything is so complicated. For example, in Latin, you have the active and the passive voices; in Greek, you have another one, the middle. You don't have just indicative and subjunctive; you have the optative, and so on and so on. The geometrical progression of forms is immense, and for some reason it's fascinating. Well every now and then, the teacher couldn't think of anything to say, so he would announce, "All right, study period," and you could do whatever you liked. Everybody did something or other, and the master went around patrolling to make sure people weren't copying out obscene texts. It was quite a business, copying out something that purported to be from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and another one from *The Well of Loneliness*.

Cheney: Oh, Radclyffe Hall.

Knox: Yes. Years later I discovered that the passages we were copying weren't actually in the book. The book is very pale compared with this text that was being circulated in school.

Cheney: How funny.

Knox: Anyway, I got so bound up in this Greek that I forgot about the silent

figure pacing along, checking everyone. Pretty soon a hand fell on my shoulder and a voice said, "What are you doing, Knox?" and he confiscated the whole thing. I thought, I'm in trouble now. But apparently when he got back to the masters' Common Room, someone said, "That's Greek," and the Latin master was very interested. He said to me, "Would you like me to tutor you?" And I said, "Well, yes." What could I say? But I did want to. Then there was the wonderful question of what I'd give up.

Cheney: Please let it be algebra. (laughter)

Knox: I couldn't get out of that one. It was chemistry, which is a good thing because I was in trouble in chemistry. I had invented a thing called the Battle of the Nile, which consisted of taking pipettes, these long tubes which are on a wooden stand, getting pieces of paper and putting the pieces of paper on them like sails, and then filling the sink and floating them so they were like battleships of the eighteenth century. Then we got some sodium—I don't know where we got that from—and threw it in the water and created explosions. The high point of the Battle of the Nile came when the chemistry master came back into the room. I had to admit that I had invented this thing, though everybody else was playing with it. From then on in chemistry, what I did was go to the back of the class and write out the chemistry textbook, starting always with page one. It was getting monotonous.

Cheney: Was it British schooling that aroused your curiosity about languages, or was it your home life?

Knox: I don't know what it was. We did have a very good Latin teacher. I also had a very good French teacher.

Cheney: But then Greek was the language that fascinated you.

Knox: Yes, and they didn't have it as a regular course. I was tutored and read a great deal, buying more Greek books, which were very cheap. Apparently a great many people had them at school and were throwing them away or selling them for a few pennies. I eventually had to take what they call matriculation, at the age of about 16, I guess. That's why I needed the algebra because you had to do mathematics, history, a language...

Cheney: Is matriculation an exam?

Knox: It was an exam set by the London authorities, and it was quite

severe. But if you passed that, then you could stay in school for two more years and prepare for the university, so I did that. Then the man who tutored me in Greek, who came from Cambridge, said, "I think you might get a university scholarship." So they sent me up to St. John's, which was his college, and I passed the exam. In fact, they gave me the biggest scholarship they had, one hundred pounds, and that was a lot of money in those days. The London County Council kicked in another one hundred or so if you got one of these things. So I was really in very fine shape. They were very generous.

LIFE AT CAMBRIDGE

Cheney: Cambridge is a wonderful place to be.

Knox: Marvelous place to be.

Cheney: Wittgenstein was there when you were there?

Knox: Oh, yes. He was in Trinity, the college just next door, and I had a friend who lived on the floor just above Wittgenstein and just underneath Housman, the poet.

Cheney: Oh, my word. Did people like Wittgenstein and Housman contribute to the intellectual life of Cambridge, or did they just tend to their own pursuits?

Knox: Wittgenstein had a great influence. He had what we would call graduate students, and Housman was the same. Housman occasionally gave a lecture, and when he did, everybody went because they thought it was going to be something wonderful, and it would be as dry as dust, deliberately, so that people had to start leaving in the middle of it. His very last lecture is famous. Everybody came—the press came from London—and he talked about some obscure text or passage in Juvenal, I think it was, that drove them all up the wall. He was grinning to himself all the time.

Cheney: You've done, in your essays, a review of a new book that makes him sound much more interesting than I was ever taught he was in graduate school.

Knox: Well, if you ever want to read an example of English invective at its best, just read the preface to his edition of a very obscure Latin poet called Manilius. It's in English, for once. It is mainly an attack on various German

scholars who dealt with the text before him, and the things he says are so wounding but so funny. It turns out that after his death, people found he had a notebook in which he put down horrible things to say that suddenly occurred to him while he was having a walk. He was really something terrible.

In his texts in the library at Trinity, which were given to the library, you can find every now and then little marginal notes. There's an edition of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus with a handwritten note at the line where the watchman starts talking about seeing the stars—he's a sentry on the palace roof. In this particular edition that Housman had, the editor had said, "This shows some kind of knowledge of astrology." Housman wrote in the margin, "Aeschylus knew as much of astrology as he did of Christianity or the pox"—which was perfectly typical of Housman. He was quite a character. Cambridge was full of wonderful characters.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Cheney: Did you fight in the Spanish civil war after you had received your degree?

Knox: Yes. I was a B.A.

Cheney: So then you went off to the civil war, and then you taught for a while?

Knox: No. When I got back from there, I was in pretty bad shape.

Cheney: You were shot, weren't you?

Knox: Yes, through the neck and shoulder.

Cheney: And the two men you went to Spain with were killed.

Knox: Yes, the other two, they were both killed. We were all, of course, wildly left wing. In fact, I guess technically we were Communists.



Cambridge, 1934.

Cheney: In that everyone who fought on your side was labeled that way by the other?

Knox: Actually, the Spaniards issued us a Spanish Communist party card. I think I lost it, by the way. But that's the aegis we came in under. John Cornford was very much a Communist, a very devoted one, and a very brilliant man. He was killed.

Cheney: I'm sorry. He was one with whom you went . . .

Knox: He was the son of Francis Cornford, the Regius Professor of Greek, very famous in England. John was, I think almost everybody agreed, perhaps the most brilliant man at Cambridge in that year, as a historian. It is hard, of course, for anyone who wasn't there at the time to understand the appeal that communism had for young people in the England of the early thirties. You have to realize that the Depression had been hanging on for years, and it really looked as if capitalism had foundered, gone belly up. Even Harold MacMillan, who later became a Conservative prime minister, wrote, looking back on those years, that "something like a revolutionary situation had developed." Also, the Communist parties had given up—just for the time, it later turned out—their revolutionary program and were actively organizing a broad front of people and parties opposed to fascism. That was the real reason so many people went to fight in Spain, the fact that Hitler and Mussolini had backed Franco with troops and arms from the very beginning, and a Franco victory would have been one more step toward a fascist Europe.

Cheney: So you came back and you had to spend some time healing.

Knox: Yes, and looking around for a job. For a while I ran a left-wing bookshop in Cambridge. The man running it wanted to go to Spain, so he needed a replacement. He survived, I'm happy to say. But I made such a mess of the shop, I finally turned it over to somebody else and just drifted around for a while doing odd jobs.

Cheney: You were about twenty-two then, twenty-three.

Knox: Yes, about that, twenty-three. Then I met my wife, who is an American, whom I'd known at Cambridge before. She was an undergraduate there. She was then engaged to a friend of mine. She was on a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation to find out something about English

education and was having a high old time. We just fell madly in love with each other. There's nothing else to be said. She broke off with this chap, who was in the foreign office and destined for a brilliant career, who'd been to this country and visited her parents and they highly approved of him. She had an awful lot of explaining to do when she got back, I must say. We sort of hung around together until Munich. And when that happened—what was that, summer of '38?

Cheney: Yes.

Knox: Her parents sent her a telegram saying, "You'd better come back at once," because it did look as though there was going to be a war. So she went back and she said to me, "Why don't you come to America? It's the best thing you can do." I was convinced at this point, after what happened at Munich, that is, the total betrayal of the Czechs, I thought this government was never going to fight Hitler and was just going to give way all the way, and I didn't want any part of that, so I thought I would like to go to America. I got an immigrant visa, which was pretty easy in those days because the English quota wasn't filled at all. My poor bride-to-be had to go to her father and say, "Look, Dad, I'm not going to marry John, I'm going to marry somebody you haven't met called Bernard, and he's going to come to this country and you have to sign this form." The form, of course, was an undertaking that this person would never become a public charge.

Cheney: Saying he would support you if all else failed. (laughter)

Knox: He just said to her, "Do you really love this man?" and she said yes. He said all right.

Cheney: What a good father.

Knox: A good father, yes.

ARRIVING IN AMERICA

Knox: Anyway, I came over in early '39, and all I had in my suitcase was a typewriter, a Cambridge College scarf—you know, those things about six feet long, which I still have—and not much else. I had a little money, but I got in some bad company on the boat, a couple of English drinking companions, and one night my wallet was stolen.

Cheney: Oh, dear.

Knox: So I really arrived in bad shape.

The only reason I had any money at all was, there was a wonderful man—a German Jewish refugee and his whole family who had managed to get out and were coming to America. Katz, he was called. He heard my story and he gave me, I think it was ten dollars, something like that. I tried to get his address and he said, "I don't have an address yet." I've never seen him since, but it was a wonderful gesture.

Cheney: Then you found a job teaching after you got here.

Knox: Yes. I got a job teaching in a private school in Greenwich, Connecticut, of all places, a progressive school for boys and girls, very progressive.

Cheney: This is the *Auntie Mame* period of American education. You know the play?

Knox: Yes. Well, this one was really wild because you had to do what the kids wanted.

Cheney: Did they want to learn Latin? Is that what you were teaching?

Knox: Yes. I had a terrible time. I announced the course in Latin. About ten girls turned up. There were very few boys in the school—a progressive school for girls and boys wouldn't have a football team—didn't. But about ten girls turned up, and I started telling them about the mysteries of the first declension—*agricola, agricolae, agricolam*, and so on. And I gave them the verb *amo, amas, amat*, and showed them how to say "I am in love with the farmer"—*Amo agricolam*. I said, "Learn those declensions and learn the conjugation of the present indicative of *amo* and of the other verbs in the first lesson and the other nouns, and then come back and we'll make Latin conversation." Four came back. I thought, "Hmmm, one more session like this and I'm out of a job." So I invented something called Latin poker. I've often thought I ought to have patented it. I made little cards which said *agricola, agricolae*, and this, that, and the other, and gave them a few more. I gave them the second declension—*filius, filium*, and so on.

Cheney: Oh, I see how this is going to work. And soon you've got a sentence.

Knox: Well, if you got just two words in a grammatical relationship that you could translate, like *filius agricolae*—you knew it meant "son of the farmer"—you had a pair. You might have two pair. And then you might have threes if you could produce a grammatical, meaningful phrase. If you got three, you got a full house.



Photos by Teresa Zabala

... I invented something called Latin poker. I've often thought I ought to have patented it. I made little cards which said *agricola*, *agricolae*, and *this, that, and the other* . . . Well, it really worked, and they were very enthusiastic. Of course they wanted to play for money.

You would have a straight flush if you had five.

Cheney: That's a wonderful idea.

Knox: Well, it really worked, and they were very enthusiastic. Of course, they wanted to play for money. They were all quite well off. The school's fees were very high. So I said, "No, we can't do that, it's illegal." But we played for match sticks or something. And pretty soon they were galloping along and got a good grip of the language. And then they said, "Why don't we read something?" and I thought, "What do we do now?" because anything you read in Latin is pretty difficult. It's the word order and so on. I thought, I've got to get some simple text that we can start with. Usually what you do at this stage is use a made-up text. There's a famous one called *Fabulae Faciles*—"Easy Stories." But they are so unbelievably boring. They're the tales of Jason and so on, but told in such a stiff way. I thought, there is one text in Latin written by a great Latin writer, which is very simple, and it's the translation of the Bible by St. Jerome.

Cheney: How interesting.

Knox: It's very simple and meant to be, so that it wasn't like Ciceronian rhetoric. It was meant so that a person who could only just read could read this. Very often the word order is more like English than Latin. And I thought, but where can I get a copy of that? And then I thought, well, I'll go to the local Catholic church. I went there and talked to the priest and told him what my problem was. He said, "I think that's a very interesting idea."

He said, "What you need is a copy of the Vulgate," and I said, "That's right." He said, "How many do you need?" I said, "Well, at the moment I need about eight, and I'll return them all at the end of the year." And he said, "I think I can get them for you." So we began reading that. It was extraordinary. They raced ahead. They would come back. They got through Matthew, and some of them were reading Revelation, and that's rather a wild text.

Cheney: That's hard in English.

Knox: Then we sent them up to the Connecticut State Latin Exam at Hartford, and they all got distinction.

Cheney: Was this at the end of their first year?

Knox: The end of the first year we did the Vulgate. Then we did Ovid.

Cheney: I was just going to guess that that's whom you'd take up next. But which Ovid?

Knox: Well, we did bits and pieces. Some of the *Heroides*—the letters of heroines to their heroes, Medea to Jason, Penelope to Ulysses, and so on. They're great fun. And then bits and pieces of the *Amores*, though I had to choose very carefully. But it was very nice.

Cheney: So you taught for what, a couple of years?

Knox: Yes, until just after Pearl Harbor. What had happened since, of course, was that the war had started in Europe and when this happened, I said to my wife, "I really ought to go back to England," and she said, "The hell you will!" She said, "I've gone to all this trouble to get you over here."

But I consulted British friends, who said, "Look, nothing's happening. Wait." Then when the collapse came, I was told, "Look, every single square foot of shipping space we have is for the food and ammunition. They don't need men."

Cheney: The collapse?

Knox: The French collapse in '40, when England was in danger of invasion. By this time, by the time the Battle of Britain was over, it was clear they were not going to be invaded. I relaxed, and I began thinking, "America is certainly going to get into this war. Mr. Roosevelt is trying his damndest to get us in, and I'm pretty sure he will soon. So I would like to be an American, and the best thing for me to do would be to fight in the American army, so I'll just relax."

JOINING THE ARMY

Cheney: You got in as a British citizen?

Knox: I was still a British subject. Being married to an American gave me the equivalent of first papers, as they call them, and when I was commissioned, which was about three months, four months—I had about four months as a private—I was still a British subject. In fact, I was naturalized in England. I was on an air base there. The adjutant called me in one day and he said, "You've got orders to report to replacement depot such and such." It was a place over near Gloucestershire. And I said, "What for?" The replacement depot is a dread

word. It means you're sort of fired from this outfit. You're just sent to replacement depot, and anyone who needs warm bodies will take you. You may end up in cooks and bakers school, God knows. He said, "No, no, it's not that. You're to be naturalized." So he said, "Here's a couple of things you might look at on the train," and he gave me a copy of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence and he said, "You'd better read up on these, Limey. You've got things to learn."

Cheney: So how long was it, then, before you were dropped behind lines into France?

Knox: That wasn't until the summer of '44, so all this happened in '43. I was on the air base. My job was to be defense officer, and I had to make the defense plan for the place—I've still got a copy of it and all the attachments and maps—and train machine gunners in case we needed anti-aircraft machine guns and this sort of thing. But it was pretty clear that we were never going to be attacked and I was getting very upset. I kept going to the adjutant, Major West—Westie, we called him. I said, "Westie, you've got all these cables that come in asking for people. Don't you hear of anything interesting?" He said, "Well, why not see what I can find." So one day he came in and he said, "I've got something that sounds as if you'd like it." He said, "They want men to start operations in a new theater." I said, "That sounds like fun." "Shall I put you in?" I said, "Yes." Two days later I got a call from wing headquarters. A good friend of mine was there. He said, "What the hell have you been doing, Bernie?" I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "They're sending you to Iceland to build an air base, for God's sake." So I said, "Oh, God, please get me off of that." And he crossed my name off and put down some other character's name.

After that, I was quiet for a while. But then I got restive and started on Westie again and I said, "Try again." He said, "Remember what happened last time." The next one said, "Men with fluency in European languages," so I said, "Okay, put me in." And I got a call to go to London and to report to an address off Grosvenor Square. I went into a room about as big as this one, and for wartime London, it was luxuriously appointed. The American major sitting there was dressed in a uniform that must have been made



First Lieutenant Knox, Cambridgeshire B-17 base, England; 1943.

on Savile Row. It was beautifully cut. A Princeton grad, I found out later. And he had a young woman, who was clearly a secretary, who also was beautifully dressed; this was obviously some high-class business. So he said—I was still a first lieutenant—he said, "Lieutenant, I understand you speak fluent French," and I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Miss King, carry on." Miss King said, "*Il paraît que vous parlez couramment français.*" So we talked for about ten minutes. And then she said, "He's okay, Major." He said, "Very well, Miss King, you may go." I mean, the whole thing was sheer Hollywood. It was the Office of Strategic Services.

Cheney: Was everybody in the OSS rich? Did this account for the dress?

Knox: A lot of them were. OSS people said it meant "Oh So Social," because everybody who was anybody was in it, you see. I mean, Evangeline Bruce, all these ladies, Mrs. Dillon Ripley. Anyway, he explained to me what we were going to do. Originally they took me on just as an instructor. The Jedburghs, as they were called—the code name of the operation was Jedburgh.

Cheney: That's such a funny word, Jedburgh.

Knox: Jedburgh. It's a town in the north of England, near the Scottish border.

Cheney: I just didn't understand what this odd word was.

Knox: Why they chose that, I don't know. In England they say if you have a Jedburgh trial, that means they're

going to hang you, and they know they are before they try you. It comes from the period of the border wars between the English and the Scots. Jedburgh was the English base, so to speak; if they picked up some Scotsman they thought was a guerrilla, that was the end of him.

Anyway, there were equal numbers of English, French, and American "Jeds," as we came to be called, and some Dutch and Belgian, a small contingent. The Americans had been recruited mostly from paratrooper battalions. Not many of them, unfortunately, spoke French, so I was supposed to help them with that. They also needed instructors for the French, none of whom spoke English, of course. I was taken on as an instructor and went up to this beautiful place, Milton Hall near Peterborough. It was originally the sixteenth-century country home of some great aristocrat. Like nearly all these great English country houses, it had been turned over to the army for training purposes. We had a grenade pit on the grounds and a place where you could fire bazookas at old tanks and so on.

As an instructor, I was part of the permanent party, and it meant I lived in a very luxurious suite. The Jeds all lived like animals, ten in a room. There came the time when I thought I would like to go on this operation, and I made that known. Next thing you know, a sergeant came along and came into my luxurious room and said, "Have you packed your things, sir?" and I said, "Oh, so soon?" "Oh yes, sir, yes." So I packed and I went down to live with the animals.

Cheney: Is that right?

Knox: Not only was I a Limey in American uniform, but I had been one of the upper class, so I had quite a time of initiation. But we became very good friends and still are. Bill Colby is one of them, Lou Conein another. Have you heard of him?

Cheney: No, I don't know that name.

Knox: He was a legend in Vietnam, very famous. And he'd been in the Foreign Legion, of all things. When the war started in '39, he was in Kansas City or something like that, and he wanted to get into the war. He went up to Canada and tried to join the Canadian Air Force, and they actually held on to him for a few days till they discovered that he was only seventeen. They threw him out and he went to New York and went to the French

*He gave me a copy of the Constitution of the United States
and the Declaration of Independence and he said, "You'd better read
up on these, Limey. You've got things to learn."*

consulate and said, "I'd like to join the French Foreign Legion," and they said, "Oh, yes, wonderful," so he did. Then what happened was, when we got into the war, all American citizens serving in allied armies were automatically transferred to the American army, and so he was.

Cheney: And by this time he'd picked up a little French.

Knox: He had picked up the kind of French they talk in the Legion, which is to say, the lowest kind of foul slang you can imagine, freely mixed with Arabic. I used to talk to him just to get this stuff. He was quite a card. Another one that was transferred to us was Stuart Alsop, Joe's brother.

Cheney: Is that right?

Knox: He was in the British army. He'd gone into the British army as an officer and was in North Africa.

Cheney: And then you were dropped.

BEHIND THE LINES IN FRANCE

Knox: We were dropped in teams of three, one British, one French, one American, or one Dutch or Belgian, as the case might be. And I had a regular French officer who'd been what they called *un enfant de caserne*—born in the barracks—and spent most of his life in North Africa in an outfit called the Tirailleurs Marocains, which is a crack French force there.

Cheney: So they dropped you in, and you knew, being dropped in, that you were going to have to fight your way out. I mean, there was no way out.

Knox: There was no way of parachuting yourself out. We were in uniform, and this was one of the strange things about it.

Cheney: This is part of the code of war.

Knox: We didn't know whether that would actually work. In fact, one of our people who was captured was sent off to a concentration camp and never really recovered. He committed suicide a few years later. Others were shot. It depended on who cap-

tured you. If it was a regular German outfit, you were probably all right. If it was the SS, not much hope.

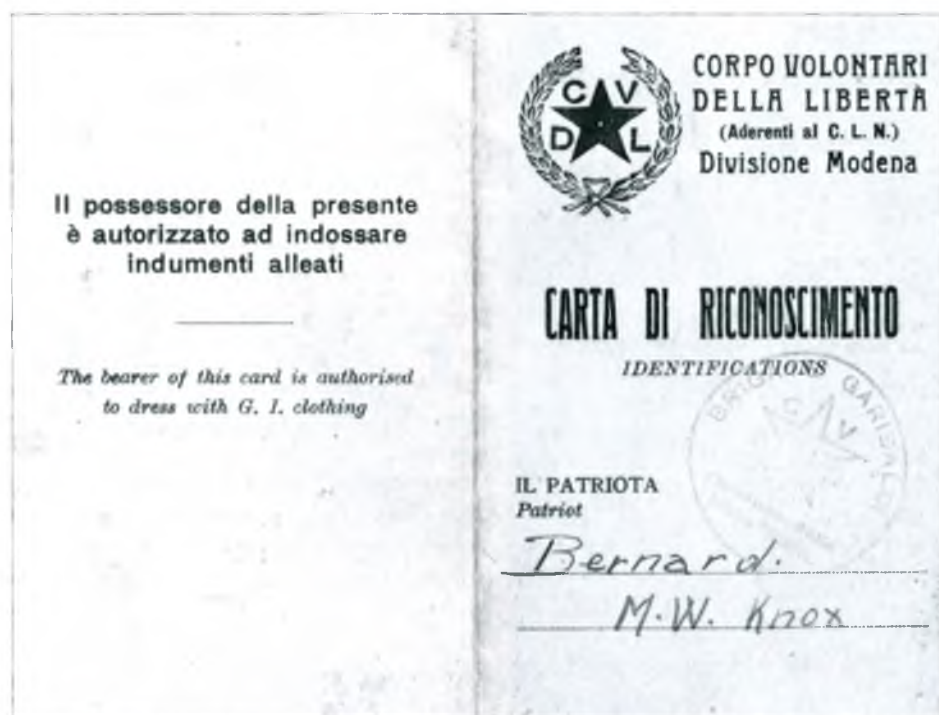
Cheney: Uniform or no uniform made no difference.

Knox: They'd just blow you away. The way they did our people in Belgium—

you know, that great massacre at Malmedy. That was an SS outfit. There were about 120 Americans just shot after they surrendered.

Cheney: And they were all in uniform.

Knox: All in uniform and captured
continued on page 31



Identification document issued by the Italian partisans.



Bernard Knox: an APPRECIATION

BY HUGH LLOYD-JONES

PEOPLE OFTEN POINT to the abundance of popularizations about the ancient world as proof of widespread interest in the subject, but at no time since the Renaissance has knowledge of the ancient languages been so rare. This makes it exceedingly important that the work of interpreting ancient literature and religion to the modern educated reader be done as well as possible; for the value of an acquaintance with that literature and that religion has never been greater than it is now.

Scholars are now coming to realize that the Greeks had a religion, though it was not like Christianity, and that Greek polytheism, modified by its belief in one controlling god, accounted for the universe in a way not more unreasonable than that of other, more dogmatic systems. This religion did not have one answer and one only to most ethical problems; thus its believers were able to invent tragedy, which had been an element in their literature long before they invented the kind of drama that bears that name. Since the time of Goethe, there have been people who have seen the advantages of that

kind of religion, which may indeed account for the actual nature of the world and human life more easily than can the worship of a single god who is entirely good and benevolent. The student of ancient Greek has the additional advantage of being able to appreciate one of the greatest of all literatures, which as Goethe observed retains its power over the reader because it is concerned with problems that are not likely to alter while human nature and the conditions of human life remain the same.

For more than thirty years, Bernard Knox has been the leading interpreter of Greek literature to the educated audience in the United States. That is a position requiring an unusual combination of qualities and an unusual kind of experience, which he most fortunately possesses. He is a fine scholar, with a wide knowledge of Greek literature and a delicate feeling for the Greek language. He has also an excellent knowledge of modern literature in several languages, something that was indispensable if he was to perform his task. Finally, he is not a cloistered scholar who has spent his whole career in universities, but a man who has wide experience of the harsh realities of life. Any account of him should start with a mention of that experience, which he himself has admirably described in the introduction to his *Essays*

Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones was Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford University from 1960 to 1989. His most recent books are the Oxford text of Sophocles, Sophoclea, and Academic Papers.

Ancient and Modern (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

Bernard Macgregor Walker Knox is of Scottish ancestry; he is descended from those Macgregors who were so formidable that at one time the very use of their name was banned, as readers of Scott's *Rob Roy* and Stevenson's *Catriona* will remember. But he was brought up in London, where an eccentric schoolmaster, in defiance of the tradition of French teaching in England, taught him French in such a way that he could actually speak it and pronounce it properly, something that turned out to have great importance in his later life. He also studied Greek and Latin to such effect that he won a scholarship at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he matriculated in 1933, the year Hitler came to power. He thoroughly enjoyed Cambridge and profited by the teaching and friendship of a distinguished scholar, the Rev. M. P. Charlesworth; but preoccupation with political events prevented him from concentrating on his university studies in the way such a person would be expected to do. Under the influence of his friend John Cornford, the gifted son of the eminent scholar Francis Cornford and of the poet Frances Cornford, *née* Darwin, he was drawn into left-wing politics and the championship of the republican cause in the civil war in Spain. After taking his degree in 1936 he left for Spain to fight against Franco with the International Brigade. Knox took part in the gallant defense of Madrid by an ill-armed republican force, in which his friend Cornford was killed and he himself was seriously wounded. Returning to England, he drifted from one job to another, but fortunately renewed his acquaintance with Betty Baur (the gifted novelist Bianca Van Orden), an American whom he had met at Cambridge, and they became engaged. He followed her to the United States, and in April of 1939 they were married in New Jersey. For two years Knox taught at a preparatory school in Connecticut; but when the United States entered the war, he managed to get permission to join the army.

He was soon commissioned, and after a spell as defense officer on an American air base in England he answered an appeal for officers who could speak foreign languages and was transferred to an allied unit whose

task was to dispatch three-man teams to arm, train, and direct the activities of the French Maquis. For some time Knox was an instructor, but in July 1944 he was parachuted into France and took an active part in the operations of the Maquis in support of the invading forces. His citation for the Croix de Guerre mentions "arms drops which enabled four thousand men of the Maquis to take part in the liberation of Brittany," and Knox was in the thick of the fighting when the Maquis harassed the German Second Parachute Division as they moved against the Americans and attacked them again as they fell back on Brest. Later he was transferred to the Italian front, where his French and Latin enabled him to pick up the language rapidly, and where during the Gothic Line and Po Valley campaigns he again took part in heavy fighting. In more than one way this Italian phase of the war had an important influence on Knox's life. He and his wife got to know Italy well and managed to arrange that their son Macgregor should attend an Italian and not an American school; the consequence of Mac's experience in Italy was that he has become a distinguished authority on modern Italian history. Also, taking cover in a ruined house during a battle, Knox came upon a handsome edition of Virgil.

This incident played an important part in his career and presaged his return to the classics. In September 1945 he was demobilized; in addition to the Croix de Guerre *à l'ordre de l'armée* (avec palmes), he had won the Bronze Star with cluster. He now took up graduate work at Yale, where in 1948 he obtained his doctorate with a dissertation on "Traditional Structure and Formula in Tragic Narrative Speech." He taught at Yale till 1961; in that year the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C., was opened. On land given by Mrs. Truxton Beale, and with an endowment set up by the Old Dominion Foundation, a group of handsome buildings was erected, comprising a library, a director's residence, and quarters for the seven or so junior fellows, some from the United States and some from Europe, who were to spend a year each working in these agreeable surroundings. Knox was appointed to be its first director, a post he held till he retired in 1984. With his command of languages and

his familiarity with European life, he was the ideal person to deal with the foreign scholars who spent a year as junior fellows of the center; he built up its library and used his wide range of contacts to arrange interesting and provocative lectures. Meanwhile, he brought out a steady stream of books and reviews.

Knox is a born teacher, and it is regrettable that he was lost to university teaching at an early age. But he often visited universities to lecture, which he did with notable success. In 1975 he was induced to spend a term at Oxford as the Nellie Wallace Lecturer; the bequest establishing this post enables the Faculty of Literae Humaniores to invite for a term a scholar of special distinction from a foreign country. Knox chose to lecture about modern interpretations of Greek mythology; he attracted large audiences from start to finish, and his lectures were not only highly instructive but immensely entertaining. He did not spare the ridiculous excesses of Freudian interpreters, and while he was describing these, some of his hearers were rolling on the floor, unable to control their laughter. Unfortunately the kindness of his heart has so far prevented him from publishing these lectures, which those who were fortunate enough to hear have long been impatient to see in print. His presence in Oxford gave special pleasure to his hosts; at first Mrs. Knox was with him, and they stayed in the Randolph Hotel, but later Mrs. Knox returned to America, and her husband moved into rooms in Corpus Christi College, where he made a splendid contribution to the conversation of the Common Room.

Most of Knox's learned work is concerned with Greek tragedy, and in particular with Sophocles, the tragedian who has attracted the most interest during the last fifty years. He has written two books on Sophocles, *Oedipus at Thebes* (Yale University Press, 1957) and *The Heroic Temper* (No. 35 in the series of Sather Lectures, University of California Press, 1964). In the latter, Knox shows how each surviving play of Sophocles contains at least one heroic character, who, without necessarily being the "hero" of the play in the sense of being its central figure upon whom all else centers, is braver, stronger, and more intelligent than the common run of humanity, but

suffers from the corresponding faults of pride and obstinacy.

Knox also contributed a valuable introduction and notes to the volume *The Three Theban Plays* (Viking Penguin, 1984), which contains Robert Fagles's translation of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the *Antigone*. To Fagles's recently published translation of the *Iliad* (Viking Penguin, 1991), he contributed an excellent introduction, which gives a clear and accurate summary of the present state of the Homeric Question, dealing with the dispute over the date, authorship, and composition of the works attributed to the poet. He did valuable work as one of the two editors of the *Cambridge History of Greek Literature* (1985), making excellent contributions of his own, particularly his chapter on "Books and Readers in the Greek World."

But Knox's finest academic work is to be found in *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). It contains three essays that complement his book about the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, with its sometimes-disputed thesis that Oedipus symbolizes the dynamic Athens of the fifth century B.C., and three essays on other Greek plays—the *Ajax* of Sophocles and the *Medea* and *Hippolytus* of Euripides—that are of high quality; so is the introductory essay, on "Myth in Greek Tragedy."

In *Essays Ancient and Modern* he again deals with the issue of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* in "The Freedom of Oedipus," perhaps the best of all his essays. The volume contains as well a number of reviews of books about antiquity that are not only beautifully written but often make original contributions to the topics they discuss. His writing about the classics is refreshingly free from humbug and pomposity; he has written that "most productions of Greek tragedies, though I should be the last person to say so, are a crashing bore."

Knox confronts the modern world in this volume of essays with the same sense of brio. He writes about the Spanish civil war not only with the authority of a participant but with the power of making the reader understand what it must have been like to have been there. In these contemporary essays he writes about modern poets—Housman, Siegfried Sassoon, Auden—as sensitively as he writes about ancient ones. □

A LIGHT IN DARKNESS



Caricature of Knox the professor;
from the Yale Daily
News, 1954.

BY GARRY WILLS

IN 1958, I ARRIVED at Yale's classics department just as an era was ending—the time of the excavations at Dura-Europos, the ancient Roman frontier city on the Euphrates River. The department's resources had long been mobilized to interpret the finds from that Syrian "dig," artifacts now in the Yale museum. Brad Welles, successor to Rostovtzeff in this effort, was head of the department; promising graduate students, on the Greek side, were coaxed into fields useful for completing the project.

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Even Greek literature was more valued if it came from the Roman period. I had a course from Welles on religious syncretism in Plutarch. He thought the subject would appeal to me, since I had been in a Jesuit seminary. Today I would find the subject fascinating; but then it left me cold. Literature as such was so neglected that Howard Porter had to commute from Columbia to teach authors as disparate as Homer and Horace. An old philological prejudice against "appreciation" made establishing the text the only proper task for scholars. Basil Gildersleeve had mocked mere literary critics who, like Matthew Arnold, first arrange a poem and then arrange themselves in front of it, reacting. A.E. Housman said you either get poetry's *frisson* or you don't; but real classicists then spit on their hands and go back to work, rooting out corruptions in the transmission of the unreadable Manilius. The highest honor one could aspire to was getting one's own emendations accepted in the standard text. In such an atmosphere, there was something shameful or embarrassing about actually loving a Greek poet.

The department would later swing to the other extreme, under Eric Havelock—but the prejudices of the fifties made me choose for my dissertation director, not a congenial soul like Howard Porter or Bernard Knox, but Christopher Dawson, who had been extremely suspicious of my "subjective impressions" in a course on Hellenistic poetry. I figured that I would have to work harder to convince Dawson (the American classicist, not the British historian) of my view on Aeschylus; and his wary scrutiny would armor me for the criticism I could expect in defending the thesis. (Actually, I probably exaggerated Dawson's opposition to "literariness." He was not only very cordial and helping as I wrote, but a generous booster after I left the department.)

Yet the truly encouraging professors, for those who thought of the classic figures as great authors, were Porter and Knox; and of these Knox had the more romantic image. He had been a warrior as well as a scholar. Others on the faculty had been in World War II, but mainly at intelligence desks. Knox had parachuted behind enemy lines. Besides, he had fought in the Spanish civil war. Campus McCarthyites like Willmoore Kendall, of the political science department, still muttered doubts about his soundness on communism.

More important to us, Knox was interested in literature of many sorts and many ages. He was as much at home with the New Critics in the English department as with the grammarians of Phelps Hall. He had been one of the first to apply New Critical methods to the classics—in a pioneering study of the *Aeneid's* imagery. He certainly did not neglect the establishment of a sound text—the first, indispensable task for people studying authors so precariously descended to us. But things did not end there. He

was interested in Euripides in the same way that people were interested, back then, in Jean Anouilh. Drama was, for him, a way of approaching the deepest mysteries.

Yet there was nothing dramatic about him in the classroom. I heard he was a great undergraduate lecturer, but I knew him in the graduate seminar, where he avoided all professorial eccentricities. On that level, he could not compete with Welles, who brought his large labrador retriever to class. In those days before air-conditioning, pigeons would stroll along the indoor window sills—making, as the labrador erupted from under the seminar table, for noisy lunges and feathery escapes, intermitting archaeological niceties with dumb-chum melodrama.

Knox's seminar method was no different from that used by our other professors. Each student was responsible for a certain number of lines in, say, a play of Euripides. After discussing the difficulties in the text, one answered questions from other students—some trying to trap or upstage the reciter, since a rather grim competitiveness was encouraged. I was once alone on the top floor of Phelps during the lunch hour, where I observed—unobserved myself—a student go into the seminar room and read from their notes what the reciters would be saying, so he could prepare his response. I felt so crawly, embarrassed at having seen it, that I slipped down the stairs (avoiding the noisy elevator) before he could come out and see that he was seen.

Knox encouraged no such games. He wanted to get at the humane concerns of the artist, the dramatic point of any scene, the function of characters within the playwright's vision. He was quick to pick up on, or to introduce, critical notions outside the classicists' restricted orbit of that day. I remember his eyes lighting up when I quoted a line about poetry's "meaning more than it means to mean." He wanted to know the source (it is Chesterton). On the other hand, he was satirical in his treatment of critical pretentiousness—he gently mocked my use of one phrase, "verbal tactics." And he could tease one for one's failures. In the written doctoral exam, the sight-reading text I failed to recognize was from the Acts of the Apostles. He asked how a Jesuit seminarian could miss *that* passage, of all things. He could not know that we had read the Bible always in Jerome's Latin. I bought my first Greek New Testament after leaving graduate school.

His main gift to us was himself, the living proof that the classics could be broadening, not narrowing; that learning did not have to dwindle into pedantry; that the long perdurance of the great works of the past is evidence of life, not just a residue of "dead" civilizations. In all these ways I thought of him, in Aeschylus's words, as moving through that minor dark age of the fifties graduate school *phos en euphronei pheron*—sheltering torchlight through the shadows. □

EXCERPTS

from the writings of Bernard Knox

ON MYTH AND HISTORY

For the fourth-century Athenians, as for those of the fifth, myth, and therefore tragedy, which gave it dramatic form, had the unquestioned authority which we grant to history; the masked actors on stage were the great figures of the audience's past. But it is history in which the original core of genuine memory, if indeed that ever existed, had been transformed by the selective emphasis of the oral tradition. Over many generations of oral transmission, stories change on the lips of tellers to reflect new preoccupations, new attitudes. And in such a process only what remains meaningful and relevant will survive. The oral tradition, myth, "what they say," emphasizes and preserves only what is memorable. A witty book by two English history teachers, *1066 and All That*, stated in a joking fashion a profound truth: "History is what you can remember." And it is remembered only because it has meaning (or is given new meaning by adaptation and addition); it embodies a view of life, an attitude, an ideal, a warning; it has contemporary significance. In the absence of records, only what continues to have significance will survive in the communal memory.

What myth, the popular memory, preserves is not historical fact, not the particular details, the multiplicity, complexity, and ambiguity of any *real* happening. It preserves, creates, and recreates symbolic figures and situations, persons and events which typify recurring dilemmas and challenges, heroes whose relations to gods and to their fellow men embody permanent religious and social problems, whose actions present an ideal by which men can live and die or a monitory exam-

ple of conduct to be avoided. Myth, in other words, is indeed history for the fifth-century Athenians, but it is history transformed by the selective emphasis of a long tradition, shaped and concentrated, and so endowed with universal significance. In other words, it is a kind of poetry.

Even today, in the age of records, of computer banks which remember the date of birth, credit status, and social security number of every one of us . . . a mythical history of this kind is not dead. For most of us, history is indeed "what we can remember." And what we can remember is not very much, and not even that little will always stand up to critical examination. I take an American example again. What does the popular memory say of one Patrick Henry, a prosperous lawyer who lived in Virginia in the eighteenth century? That he forced the royal officials in Virginia to pay three hundred pounds for the gunpowder they had removed from the colony's stores? That he bitterly opposed the ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1788? It says none of these things; in order to find them, one has to consult the historical record. But if that record disappeared forever, the popular memory would still credit Patrick Henry with two unforgettable phrases. Speaking at Williamsburg against the Stamp Act, he said: "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles I his Cromwell, and George III . . ." Interrupted by cries of "Treason!" he continued, "and George III might profit by their example—and if this be treason, make the most of it." And he also said "Give me liberty or give me death." And after all, these two phrases are the most important thing about him. If he had not said these things his name would hardly be remembered . . .

Every people has to have a vision of

its past to live by, and even today, in the age of the record, that vision is as much mythical as scientific, in spite of the evidence and prestige of historians devoted to the search for "the untold incident, that actually occurred." But for the fifth-century Athenians, there was no check of any kind on the mythopoeic creation and adaptation of tradition; their vision of the past, of their own history, was fully poetic from the start, its personages and events symbolic representations of every aspect of man's life on earth, his strength and weakness in the struggle against his fellow men, the forces of nature, and the bleak fact of his own mortality. Myth and its tragic adaptation have, besides the authority of history, the power of poetry. The masked actors in the theater of Dionysus present to the audience not only the historical figures of the past but also poetic symbols of its own life and death, its ambitions and its fate.

Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

ATHENS AS SOPHOCLEAN HERO

The relevance of the heroic temper to the splendid achievements and brilliant prospects of Periclean democracy can be found only in the great events of the century in which Sophocles played his full part as citizen, statesman, and soldier. His life spans almost the whole course of the heroic saga of Athens' rise to a height where the mastery of the whole Greek world seemed within its grasp, and of its catastrophic fall.

For Aeschylus, the Marathon fighter, who had lived under the tyranny, seen the establishment of Athenian democ-

racy, and taken a soldier's part in its triumphant vindication in the war against Persia, the future was full of hope. The *Oresteia*, produced within two years of his death, is a pageant of man's advance, blind and violent, but still an advance, from savagery to civilization under the mysterious guidance of a stern but benevolent Zeus. The pattern of the trilogy is the thrust and counter thrust of apparently irreconcilable opposites, ending in their reconciliation, and this reconciliation is the basis for a new and better dispensation. In the democratic institutions of his city, so hardly won and so valiantly defended, Aeschylus saw the prototype of his reconciliation of opposites among men as among gods; force is superseded by persuasion, armed vengeance by the court of law, civil war by debate in assembly. There would be more strife, new opposites to be reconciled, new suffering to be endured for new progress made, but the strife and the suffering he saw as creative—that "violent grace" of the gods which the chorus celebrates in the *Agamemnon*.

But Sophocles, in the years of his maturity, lived in a different age. The political power and material wealth of Athens reached a level which Aeschylus, confident though he was of Athens' future greatness, could hardly have foreseen; but the future became darker over the years. Athenian imperial policy enforced membership in what had started as a league of free cities for the liberation of Greece but was now an empire which even Pericles compared to a *tyrannis*, an autocratic, despotic power. Sophocles himself took part on more than one occasion in punitive operations against cities which had once been free allies and were now Athenian tributaries. The fear and hatred of Athens, the "tyrant city," grew with the years; all over Greece the cry was once again for liberation, but this time from Athens, and it was achieved in the long and destructive war which Sophocles, now an old man, saw almost to its bitter end. I have argued elsewhere that Athens itself, its heroic energy, its refusal to retreat, to compromise, was the inspiration for the figure of Oedipus *tyrannos*. But, as we have seen, Oedipus is cast in the same mold as other Sophoclean heroes. The choice of such a heroic figure, the fascination it exerted on the poet's mind through the long years of his career as a dramatist, may owe more than a little to his

participation as soldier and statesman in the great heroic drama of his time—the attempt of the small city of Athens to dominate the whole of the wide-spread Hellenic world, to impose its political will, as it was already imposing its art and thought, on all Hellas, the islands, the mainland, even, in a megalomaniac venture worthy of an Ajax, on rich, powerful, distant Sicily. Undaunted by losses and defeats, impervious to advice or threat, finding always fresh sources of energy in its passionate conviction of superiority, Athens pursued, throughout the course of Sophocles' manhood and old age, its stubborn, magnificent course to the final disaster. It was like a Sophoclean hero, in love with the impossible.

The Heroic Temper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964).

ON OEDIPUS THE PARADIGM

The *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles combines two apparently irreconcilable themes, the greatness of the gods and the greatness of man, and the combination of these themes is inevitably tragic, for the greatness of the gods is most clearly and powerfully demonstrated by man's defeat. "The god is great in his laws and he does not grow old." But man does, and not only does he grow old, he also dies. Unlike the gods, he exists in time. The beauty and power of his physical frame is subject to sickness, death, and corruption; the beauty and power of his intellectual, artistic, and social achievement to decline, overthrow, and oblivion. His greatness and beauty arouse in us a pride in their magnificence which is inseparable from and increased by our sorrow over their immanent and imminent death. Oedipus is symbolic of all human achievement: His hard-won magnificence, unlike the everlasting magnificence of the divine, cannot last, and while it lives, shines all the more brilliant against the somber background of its impermanency. Sophocles' tragedy presents us with a terrible affirmation of man's subordinate position in the universe, and at the same time with a heroic vision of man's victory in defeat. Man is not equated to the gods, but man at his greatest, as in Oedipus, is capable of something which the gods, by definition, cannot experience; the proud tragic view of Sophocles sees in the fragility and

inevitable defeat of human greatness the possibility of a purely human heroism to which the gods can never attain, for the condition of their existence is everlasting victory.

Oedipus at Thebes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

As I moved through the ranks of instructor and then assistant professor, teaching, for the most part, the classics in translation, the same shock of recognition I had experienced in northern Italy recurred, even stronger this time, as I read and taught Thucydides in the forties and fifties as the Greek civil war reenacted the heroism and the horrors of the Peloponnesian War and, on a global scale, the Cold War aligned the opposing camps in the tense, fragile balance analyzed so brilliantly in Thucydides' introductory book. It seemed to me that there was no better key to an understanding of the modern world's power struggles than this unfinished history of a war fought twenty-five hundred years ago between two states whose combined population was less than half a million. And in Greek tragedy, which became the focus of my scholarly work and teaching, I found the same modernity, the same immediacy. The figure of Oedipus, the man who knew the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx but not his own identity; Prometheus, champion of mankind's material progress, crucified on a mountainside but unyielding in his defiance of oppressive power; Antigone, a girl who without help or encouragement challenged the power of the state and buried her brother's body, though she knew the penalty was death—all these were compelling images of the human condition in the twentieth century. I remembered often the man in Lewis Carroll's poem who "thought he saw a rattlesnake, / that questioned him in Greek. / He looked again and found it was / The Middle of Next Week." Though it had taken me a long time, I had finally realized that when you read Thucydides, or Sophocles, or any of the great Greek writers, you may think you see an ancient text that speaks to you in Greek. You look again, and find it is The Middle of Next Week.

Essays Ancient and Modern (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

mODERN LIBERAL democracy and the ancient Greek *polis* stand, in their fundamental principles, radically opposed. The ancient city was a republic of virtue—by its very nature, and because it had to be one in order to survive. Its cohesion was not and could not be a function of negotiation and calculated compromise; it was and had to be bound together by a profound sense of moral purpose and common struggle. Alexander Hamilton captured the difference between the two polities when he wrote, “The industrious habits of the people of the present day, absorbed in the pursuits of gain, and devoted to the improvements of agriculture and commerce are incompatible with the condition of a nation of soldiers, which was the true condition of the people of those [ancient Greek] republics.” The point is a simple one: The modern citizen is a bourgeois; his ancient counterpart was a warrior.

No ancient thinker could have written of any Greek city what Montesquieu said of England—that it was a nation devoted to a “commerce of economy,” that it sought, “gain, not conquest,” and that it was so “pacific from principle” that it would sacrifice “its political interests to the interests of commerce.” The Enlightenment vision of the benign effects of trade—so central to the understanding of political economy which guided America’s founding fathers—would have seemed absurd to the ancients. The Greeks were not a nation of shopkeepers. Their cities were brotherhoods of peasant warriors, not associations of merchants, and one community’s freedom was understood to entail another’s

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BY PAUL A. RAHE

subjection. So Hellas rarely knew peace—and when she did, it was generally a peace purchased at the price of freedom. Greek history was a struggle for mastery: Turmoil was the norm, and tranquillity the exception.

The citizens of a tiny, warrior community in such a world needed a unity that an extended, bourgeois republic endowed with a dynamic economy and located on a vast and nearly empty continent could afford to dispense with. Pythagoras is said to have compared faction (*stásis*) in the city with disease in the body, ignorance in the soul, division within the household, and a lack of proportion (*ametría*) in general. “One must avoid these things,” he reportedly observed, “with every means at one’s disposal, and one must root them out with fire and sword and with every sort of contrivance.” For the cities of Hellas, the presence of the enemy without required the suppression of dissidence within.

For this reason, James Madison’s well-known antidote for faction could never have been applied within the Greek *polis*. No one in antiquity would have countenanced economic differentiation and the multiplication of religious sects. If the commonwealth was to survive, it was vital for the citizens “to act in unison with each other,” which Madison understood to be the essence of tyranny. As a consequence, the ancient republic sought to solve the problem of civil strife not “by controlling its effects,” but rather “by removing its causes.” As Madison himself had occasion to observe, the Greeks attempted this not by granting free rein to opinion and by encouraging a proliferation of special interests, but rather “by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.” Where the Greeks excluded the merchant and the craftsman from political life, and where they simply held the tradesman in disdain, the cause was not some bizarre and irrational prejudice against men of business. Instinctively, the Greeks

redefining democracy for the modern state

recognized that the differentiation of interests inevitably fostered by trade and industry was a danger to the hard-won solidarity that enabled them to survive.

Among the theorists, this recognition was more than merely instinctive: Looking back on the experience of the Greeks as well as the Romans, Cicero observed that "it is easiest for there to be concord in that republic in which the same thing profits everyone; from a diversity of interests, when one thing is of advantage to some and another to others, discord is born." Cicero was by no means the first man to reach this conclusion. Centuries before, Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle had directly addressed the corrupting influence of the marketplace, and the last two members of this threesome had even discussed the geographical issue that would later so plague the proponents of the American Constitution. Alexander Hamilton and James Madison would have understood perfectly well why Plato and Aristotle proposed assigning to every citizen two plots of land—one on the periphery of the civic territory, the other near its center. The circumstances that give rise to the clash of interests were as fully apprehended in antiquity as they were to be in 1787. Some Greek cities even excluded those owning land on the border from participating in deliberations regarding war against their immediate neighbors.

In the most famous of his numerous contributions to *The Federalist*, Madison directly addressed the problem of faction in his new constitution. He argued that it was "impracticable" to remove "the causes of faction" without sacrificing political liberty and suggested that one could cure "the mischiefs of faction" by regulating its effects.

As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed But the most common and durable source of factions, has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold, and those who are without property, have ever formed distinct interests in society.

Opinions, passions, and interests—these are the notions that lie at the heart of Madison's analysis. As long as men are men, they will form different opinions and have different interests; and as long as this is the

case, their passions will be engaged and they will quarrel with bitterness. "Neither moral nor religious motives," writes Madison, "can be relied on as an adequate control." Men will always be at odds, particularly where the landed and the landless coexist.

Madison was not the first to fathom the human propensity to quarrel. The ancients were no less conscious of the clash of interests dividing the rich from the poor, and they were acutely aware that the heightened political rivalry innate to republics tended to give rise to disorder and incessant civil strife.



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Men will always be at odds, particularly where

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Aristotle, nonetheless, considered it possible to blunt, if not resolve, class tension by establishing a mixed regime and to restrain and channel the love of glory by giving first place to an aristocracy of true gentlemen (*kaloï kagathoi*) educated in prudence, moderation, and virtue and dedicated to cultural as well to martial pursuits. James Madison and his colleagues harbored no such convictions.

Noah Webster, for instance, readily conceded the attractiveness of the notion that "all the members of a society should be present, and each give his suffrage in acts of legislation." But this did not prevent him from restating Montesquieu's critique of participatory democracy. As he put it, direct popular exercise of the legislative power is "impracticable in all large

states," and it is "very questionable" in any case "whether it would be the best mode of legislation." After all, direct democracy had been "practised in the free states of antiquity; and was the cause of innumerable evils." "To avoid these evils," he asserted, "the moderns have invented the doctrine of representation, which seems to be the perfection of human government."

Like Webster, the authors of *The Federalist* shared Montesquieu's opinion concerning the defects of classical republicanism. Alexander Hamilton prefaced his eulogy for the new "science of politics" by restating the case made by Thomas Hobbes and the other defenders of enlightened despotism. "It is impossible to read the history of the petty Republics of Greece and Italy," Hamilton noted, "without feeling sensations of horror and disgust at the distractions with which they were continually agitated, and at the rapid succession of revolutions, by which they were kept in a state of perpetual vibration, between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy."

Of course, Hamilton was no more ready to accept Hobbes's conclusions than Montesquieu had been. To refute the "gloomy sophisms" of the English philosopher concerning "free government," Hamilton could point to states such as England and perhaps the Netherlands as well, where "stupendous fabrics reared on the basis of liberty . . . have flourished for ages."

Madison was no less unhappy than Hamilton with all forms of direct rule and no less attached to what he called "the great principle of representation." Direct democracies, he told his readers, provide an arena for sycophants and demagogues: They "have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property." In rejecting Aristotle's antidote to the diseases incident to self-government, he charged that direct aristocratic rule was similarly flawed. As he put it, "in all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the sceptre from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob."

The authors of *The Federalist* believed that if republican government was on the verge of collapse in the various

states, it was largely because the state constitutions were too faithful to the classical models. They had discovered that modern representative government could reconcile the advantages of monarchy with those of republicanism and effectively promote the subordination of passion to reason.

Madison hoped that, in a superintending role, the new national government would perform the function reserved for the monarch in the English regime and serve as a "disinterested and dispassionate umpire in disputes." To this, he and his colleagues thought the new nation's ablest citizens could make a special contribution. Along with David Hume, Madison was prepared to believe that the substitution of representative government for direct democracy might enable a republic "to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice, will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations." At the same time, Madison conceded that the effect might be the reverse. He was sensitive to the increasingly populist tenor of American politics, and he was aware that "men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may by intrigue, by corruption or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests of the people." Madison and the others hoped to discover firmer ground on which to erect the edifice of republican liberty.

Montesquieu and Hume showed the framers of the American Constitution where to look. They acknowledged the greater nobility of public-spiritedness but suggested that baser motives would provide a more solid foundation. "Every man who possesses power," Montesquieu explained, "is driven to abuse it; he goes forward until he discovers the limits." On this subject, Hume was characteristically blunt. In a passage echoing Machiavelli and much admired by Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, and like-minded Americans, he asserted that it was "a just political maxim, that every man must be supposed a knave." This conviction, shared by nearly all of the political theorists of the early modern age, was the foundation for Madison's

discussion as well. "If men were angels," he observed, "no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controuls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to controul the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to controul itself." That statement—elegant in its simplicity—summed up the political problem with admirable brevity.

In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu



*"The British Constitution
was to Montesquieu,"
Madison observed,
"what Homer has been
to the didactic writers
on epic poetry."*



distinguished two types of republicanism—the sort represented by ancient Athens, Sparta, and Rome; and the kind exemplified by eighteenth-century Great Britain. The classical city was a republic of virtue: It could not long survive on an extended territory because the dispersion of its citizens undermined the force of the moral and religious motives which sustained the public-spiritedness it required. In contrast, Great Britain was a "republic which disguises itself under the form of a monarchy"; it is a "democracy founded on commerce": such a regime cannot survive *without* an extended territory because, in the absence of genuine civic virtue, its stability depended on a balancing of factions of the sort possible only in a complex society. "The British Constitution was to Montesquieu," Madison observed, "what Homer has been to the didactic writers on epic poetry."

Hume used much the same scheme of classification as Montesquieu and shared his preference as well. "The chief support of the British government is the opposition of interests," he wrote, "but that, though in the main serviceable, breeds endless factions." He broke with him on only one fundamental issue: With the proper institutions, he thought it possible to do without the monarchical disguise; he believed that, even in a large sphere, one might establish a pure republic—lacking king and aristocracy alike. In a seminal essay read by James Madison, Hume asserted:

Though it is more difficult to form a republican government in an extensive country than in a city, there is more facility, when once it is formed, of preserving it steady and uniform without tumult and faction. . . . The parts are so distant and remote, that it is very difficult, either by intrigue, prejudice, or passion to hurry them into any measures against the public interest.

Here lay the inspiration for the course of "reflection" on Madison's part that explains his and his fellow framers' choice.

As the framers of the American Constitution conceived it, the modern alternative to ancient republicanism involved neither the direct, systematic promotion of genuine civic virtue nor the outright suppression of factions but, rather, an indirect assault on "the mischiefs of faction." The establishment of representative institutions would make possible what Hamilton had called "the enlargement of the orbit" of the republic "either in respect to the dimensions of a single State, or to the consolidation of several smaller States into one great confederacy."

The most controversial element in the new constitution was to turn out to be its mainstay. "Extend the sphere," Madison argued, "and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other." As he would put it some months later,

The society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests and classes of citi-

zens, that the rights of individuals or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority. In a free government, the security for civil rights must be the same as for religious rights. It consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in the other, in the multiplicity of sects. The degree of security in both cases will depend on the number of interests and sects; and this may be presumed to depend on the extent of country and number of people comprehended under the same government.

Madison's solution was not so much an extension of the territory encompassed by the republic as a multiplication of the factions composing it. If the new federal government could be made a dispassionate and impartial umpire, it was paradoxically because of the great number and variety of petty parties and factions clamoring for its favor and maneuvering to gain political leverage.

In Madison's view, factions should normally spring into existence because men (and the rich and poor in particular) have conflicting material interests. It was with this in mind that he developed the most controversial and original aspect of his argument for the extended republic. Madison's experience with religious diversity in Virginia enabled him to see that the economic diversity noted by Hamilton could be politically advantageous as well. In Europe, where aristocratic hauteur added insult to the injuries of class, it might be impossible to obviate the tension between the rich and the poor. But, in a large and prosperous society unencumbered with the tradition of juridically defined orders, the various distribution of property would greatly outweigh in importance its unequal distribution.

In short, once artificial factions had been disposed of, the real import of geographical extension was economic diversity, and this was the goal that was Madison's primary concern. His argument was essentially an economic argument and only tangentially a geographical argument. Because of the dissimilarity in climate and in terrain, because of the disparity in soil quality and in natural resources, and because of the discrepancy in the conditions of security, in the ease of communication, and in the means of transport available, the myriad of distinct locali-

ties composing the nascent republic were suited for different modes of subsistence: for the growing of different crops, for the procurement and export of different raw materials, and for the manufacture of different finished goods. This geographically dictated division of labor would pit town against country, seaport against hinterland, and frontier region against settled district; it would set mountain against plain, swamp against forest, and thin soil against rich.

If Madison and his colleagues thought it possible to improve on the



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ancients and to avoid class struggle altogether, it was because they believed that the economic diversity characteristic of an extended republic and the social fragmentation that went with that diversity would undercut the fundamental antagonism between the rich and poor by generating a host of petty and easily reconcilable antagonisms. The framers did not establish a corporate state, but they did devise institutions intended to have something of the same effect: As they well knew, the representatives elected from the various territorial districts would inevitably take to heart, at least in some measure, the parochial interests and affections of their constituents.

The new American republic was not what the ancients would have called a democracy. Nor can it be accurately described as an aristocracy, an oligarchy, or even a limited monarchy. It certainly was not a republic of virtue.

And yet its framers doubted whether it could survive if its citizens were utterly bereft of that quality. The American republic was, as James Madison would later insist, "a system without a precedent ancient or modern." It claimed to be unmixed. In a sense, it was. And yet, in its own, strange, convoluted way, it bore a certain, undeniable resemblance to what the ancients chose to refer to as a mixed regime. It occupied an intermediate status between the enlightened despotism of Thomas Hobbes and the classical republicanism of the ancient Greeks, and in assessing the degree to which man could justly be termed a political animal, its advocates tried to strike an appropriate balance.

James Madison and his colleagues paid careful attention to the weakness of human reason and to its propensity to fall under passion's sway. But, just as they rejected enlightened despotism and a slavish dependence on political architecture and on man's unreasoning spirit of resistance, so they stopped well short of endorsing the presumption, fundamental to the proponents of these mechanical principles, that reason is simply the slave of the passions. They considered government "a reflection on human nature," and, as we have already remarked, they were acutely sensitive to the fact that men are not angelic. The defects in human nature that render government necessary render it rightly suspect as well. By means of the extended sphere, federalism, the separation of powers, and the other "inventions of prudence" built into the constitutional frame, Madison and his colleagues hoped that "the passions" of the citizens could "be controuled and regulated by the government" so that "the reason of the public," liberated from bondage, might serve "to controul and regulate the government" in turn. In this regard, the American Constitution was to deploy institutional checks not only as a substitute but also as a reinforcement and inspiration for virtue. □

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in TOUCH with the past

BY JOHN McK. CAMP II

ARCHAEOLOGY CAN BEST be defined as the study of antiquity using the surviving physical evidence. In recent years there has been a great increase in the use of scientific technology to recover this evidence of the past, but it should be emphasized that these modern techniques are primarily a tool. Archaeology as a discipline remains a humanistic study of the history of man and his place in the world. This is especially true for classical archaeologists, who enjoy a distinct advantage over their colleagues working in other periods or in other parts of the world. The Greeks and Romans were literate people, and a huge collection of written evidence survives to supplement and shed light on the finds and sites uncovered around the Mediterranean.

One of the great pleasures of practicing classical archaeology is the sense of immediate contact one feels in confronting the past. The texts of Herodotus and Pausanias, for instance, allow one to visit the plain of Marathon and recreate the battle of 490 B.C., when the Athenians turned back a Persian invasion which, if successful, would surely have changed the course of Western civilization. It is still possible to stand on the burial mound of the 192 Athenians who died, to visit the great swamp where 6,700 Persians perished, and to see the Ionic column of white marble the Athenians set up to commemorate their victory. This confluence of written history and physical remains is a major component in the "romance" of archaeology which attracts the interest and enthusiasm of so many people. The literary

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Ruins of the Royal Stoa, ca. 500 B.C., in the Agora in Athens. This stoa housed the king archon, second-in-command of the Athenian government, who was responsible for religious matters and the laws. Socrates was indicted in this little building in 399 B.C.

record that permits these associations is largely fixed, and no significant new related text has been found since Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians*, discovered more than a century ago. Archaeological evidence, however, continues to be recovered in large quantities, allowing us to increase our number of direct associations with the past. Even after more than a century of exploration in Greece, it still remains possible to make startling discoveries, usually through excavation but occasionally even from surface exploration.

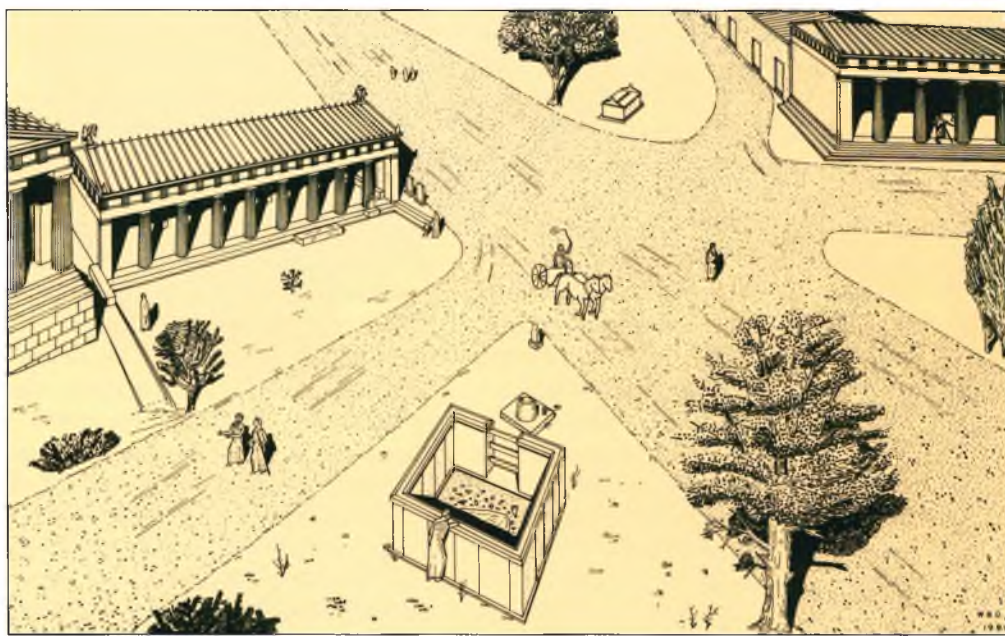
Athens, the greatest city-state of Greece, produced most surviving Greek literature, and here the possibilities for associations are greatest. Plato, for instance, preserves a crucial reference to the legal difficulties of Socrates: "Now I must present myself at the stoa of the Basileus (king) to meet the indictment of Meletos." The archon basileus, or king archon, was second in command of the Athenian state, with especial concern for religious matters and the laws. He held office, according to the traveler Pausanias (ca. A.D. 150), in a stoa or colonnade bordering the Agora, the main square of the city. In 1971 excavators from the American School of Classical Studies uncovered the modest remains of a small colonnade of eight columns at the northwest corner of the square. The building is in a pitiful state of preservation: The north wall stands waist high, the two surviving stumps of columns come up to one's knees, and the rest rises no higher than the ankles. An inscribed statue base, dedicated by a king archon around 400 B.C., still stands in its original position on the steps of the building, assuring its identification and allowing us to associate these unprepossessing ruins with one of the great trials of antiquity, the conviction of Socrates for impiety and corruption of the youth of Athens in 399 B.C.

Across the street lies a second stoa, partially cleared in 1981 and still under excavation today. It is forty feet wide, and its full length is concealed under the buildings of modern Athens.

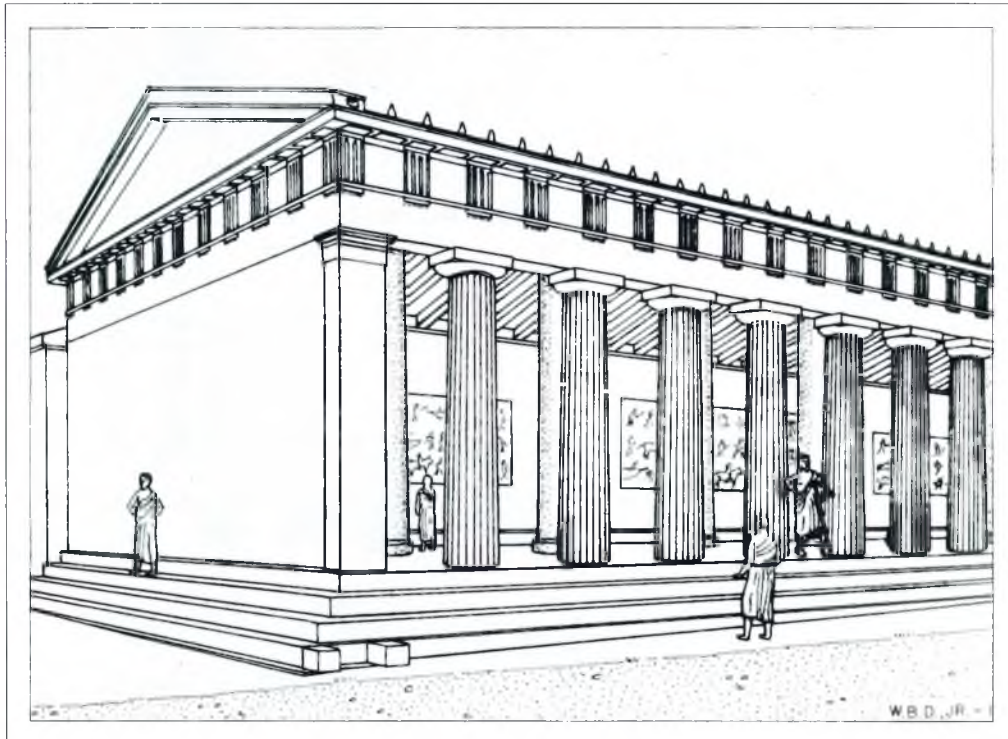
Thanks again to Pausanias's description of Athens, we can identify the building with a fair degree of certainty: It should be the Painted Stoa (*Stoa Poikile* in Greek), built around 465 B.C. and used as a gallery to display panel paintings done by the best artists of fifth-century Athens. Pausanias describes several, already very old, which he saw in the year A.D. 150; they were removed and carried off by a Roman proconsul around A.D. 370, after adorning the Stoa Poikile for nearly eight hundred years. The stoa was a true public building, dedicated by a rich family for the use of all the citizens and not for any one group or function. Athenians flocked to the stoa, which faced south overlooking the Agora square, and those whose trade required a large crowd followed them there; beggars, sword swallowers, fishmongers, and jugglers are all known to have frequented the building. Also drawn to the stoa, where they were sure of finding a ready audience, were the philosophers of the city, especially Zeno, who came to Athens from Cyprus in the years around 300 B.C. He so preferred the Poikile that he and his followers

became known as the Stoics, taking the name from their unusual classroom. Diogenes Laertius is one of several sources for this information: "He used to discourse in the Poikile Stoa . . . Henceforth people came hither to hear him, and for this reason they were called Stoics." In this case, the extensive literary tradition of Athens allows modest and only partially excavated remains to be identified as the birthplace of a major Western philosophy.

Other attempts to associate the archaeological figures or events are more controversial. In 1977, a barrel-vaulted tomb was found deep within a huge artificial mound at the small village of Vergina, ancient Aigai, in western Macedonia. About sixty such tombs have been found throughout northern Greece, but this one was unusual in that it was unplundered and contained amazing grave goods: a gold wreath, silver vessels, an iron helmet and cuirass, a gold and ivory shield cover, wooden furniture inlaid with gold, ivory, and glass, and numerous bronze weapons and vessels. The dead man's bones were wrapped in a cloth of purple and gold and placed



Northwest corner of the Agora, as it would have appeared ca. 420 B.C. The Royal Stoa is on the left; at the upper right is the west end of the Poikile (Painted) Stoa.



Reconstruction of the west end of the Painted Stoa, built ca. 465 B.C. and used as a picture gallery for eight hundred years. The philosopher Zeno used this stoa as his classroom, which gave the name "Stoic" to that branch of Western philosophy.

in a golden casket, as were the bones of a woman found in the antechamber. The tomb had an ornate architectural facade decorated across the top with a painted frieze of a lion hunt.

Material from the tomb clearly dates to the second half of the fourth century B.C., and the suggestion was put forward that this burial was actually the tomb of Philip II, king of Macedon and father of Alexander the Great. After uniting the Macedonians and having defeated the Greeks at Chaironeia in 338 B.C., Philip was preparing for an invasion of Asia when he was assassinated in 335 B.C. in the theater at Aigai, the Macedonian royal capital. He was presumably buried there, and the association of rich tomb and king is attractive. Nonetheless, several scholars have come forward to challenge this thesis, on several grounds. Some archaeologists argue that the true arch used in the vault construction reached Greece only after Alexander's conquest of Asia Minor in the 320s. Others also suggest that the burial is too late to be Philip on the basis of pottery found in the tomb. Physical anthropologists are not in agreement as to whether or not the partially cremated skull shows signs of an eye wound Philip is known to have sustained in 340 B.C. More work needs

to be done and much scholarly ink will be spilled before it is clear whether we have another association of archaeology and written history, between the Vergina tomb and one of the most powerful figures of ancient Greece.

Chaironeia, in central Greece, was the scene not only of Philip's victory over the Greeks in 338 B.C. but also of a pivotal battle between Rome and Mithridates, king of Pontus, on the Black Sea. As so often, the conflict between East and West was fought on Greek soil, in this case between the Roman general Lucius Cornelius Sulla and Mithridates' general Archelaos in 86 B.C. The biographer/philosopher Plutarch, whose hometown was Chaironeia, describes the campaign in detail. Before the battle, Archelaos installed a large contingent of Pontic troops on a hill called Thourion, overlooking the broad valley of the Kephisos River where the battle was to be fought. Sulla was concerned about this threat to his flank until two citizens of Chaironeia, Homoloichos and Anaxidamos, volunteered to lead a troop of Romans through the mountains behind and dislodge the enemy force. The two men were successful, killing more than 3,000 Pontic troops and contributing significantly to Sulla's victory. According to Plutarch (*Life of*

Sulla 19), Sulla "inscribed upon his trophies the names of Ares, Nike, and Aphrodite because he had brought the war to a successful conclusion no less by good fortune than by shrewdness and strength. Now the trophy of the battle in the plain stands where the forces of Archelaos, extending as far as the stream Morios, first gave way, but there is another placed on top of Thourion to commemorate the encirclement of the barbarians, which signifies in Greek letters that Homoloichos and Anaxidamos were the heroes."

In February of 1990, five members of the American School were spending the day scouting the ancient border between Boeotia and Phokis. Walking from Boeotian Chaironeia to Phocian Panopeus we spotted a likely hill for a fort guarding the border be-

tween the two traditional enemies. We struggled up the steep, rocky slope, and on top there were indeed the remnants of a fortification. More interesting, however, was a large worked block that we found lying in a pile of rubble. The bottom was smoothed, the top carried a round socket for a column of some sort, and the face carried a weathered inscription. It took a few minutes to decipher all of the name Homoloichos and most of the name Anaxidamos. It took only a little longer to realize that we had found the inscribed base of the trophy set up by Sulla to honor the two local men who were so instrumental in his victory. The trophy that stood on the base would have been a sculpted representation of a suit of armour, the traditional form of a trophy, now lost. The inscription described by Plutarch, however, had been on this hill, unnoticed, for more than two thousand years.

The victory and trophies were important to Sulla; after the battle, he changed his signet to a representation of trophies, and several coins issued under his authority after 86 B.C. bear trophies on the reverse. Sulla also added the title Felix (fortunate) to his name; centuries later good fortune had once again put us in touch with the past. □

BY JAMES S. TURNER

WORSHIPPING ATHENA

UNLIKE THE POSTMODERN world, in which there is no consensus about what is sacred, all of life for the ancient Greeks was a sacred drama in which the gods were the script writers and, together with heroes, the principal actors. Originating in Bronze Age oral traditions that were formalized by Hesiod and Homer probably in the eighth century B.C. and written down two centuries later as the *Theogony*, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey*, the anthropomorphic deities of the Greek pantheon helped make the vicissitudes of life explicable. But the ways of worship proliferated. And when the fifth-century historian Herodotus credited Hesiod and Homer with establishing for the Greeks the genealogy of the gods, giving the gods their titles, dividing their functions among them, and defining their images, he pointed to the essential fact that only the poets' cultural authority preserved a measure of coherence among the mixed religious ideas and practices of ancient Greek communities.

In Herodotus's day, these communities ranged from the eastern end of the Black Sea almost to the Straits of Gibraltar. Each independent Greek city-state, or *polis*, honored its own patron god or goddess in addition to other deities of the pantheon. Without sacred texts, creeds, or ecclesiastical authorities, Greek religious practices evolved into patterns of ritual devoted to particular gods. What emerged were spectacular festivals, which included consultations with oracles, colorful processions, athletic and other contests, votive offerings, animal sacrifices, and other rites.

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Panathenaic prize amphora, ca. 480 B.C. It contained forty liters of olive oil and was one of sixty such vases awarded to the winning wrestler in the Great Panathenaic games held in Athens every four years. Athena is depicted on the front. The Medusa head on her shield is the hallmark of the artist known as the Berlin painter. (Photo courtesy of the Hood Museum of Art)

Today, perhaps the best-known ancient Greek religious festivals are the panhellenic gatherings at Olympia, in honor of Zeus, where the Olympics are said to have originated in 776 B.C.; at Delphi, in honor of Apollo; at the Isthmus of Corinth, in honor of Poseidon; and at Nemea, also in honor

of Zeus. These were called the "crown festivals" because the winning athletes were crowned with wreaths, such as the olive wreath of Olympia.

Yet in ancient Greece there were at least 300 public, state-run religious festivals celebrated at more than 250 locations in honor of some 400 deities.

Most of these festivals were held in the cities, in contrast to the crown festivals, which were held at rural sanctuaries. In Athens, for example, four annual festivals honored Athena, the city's divine protectress, in addition to those for other gods. In all, some 120 days—a third of the year—were devoted annually to festivals in Athens.

By far the largest event of the Athenian religious calendar, rivaling the crown gatherings in prestige, was the Great Panathenaic festival. "The public knows next to nothing about this event," says Jenifer Neils, chair of the department of art at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. "Yet it is the one that is best documented in the ancient sources."

That documentation, the fact that this is an Olympic year, and the fact that this year also marks the twenty-five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Athenian democracy, reckoning from the constitutional reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 B.C., is the impetus behind "Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens," an exhibition supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It opens next September at Dartmouth College's Hood Museum of Art in Hanover, New Hampshire, and travels to three other art museums in 1993.

Neils, who is guest curator of the exhibition, says the show will trace the development of the Panathenaic festival—the ritual embodiment of the cult of Athena—as it evolved from a purely local religious event into a civic and panhellenic one. This transformation, and that of the image of Athena from an aggressively martial goddess to a more humane figure of victory, parallels the great political changes that occurred in Athens from 560 to 430 B.C. as it evolved from a tyranny to a democracy, and from a city-state to an empire. "By shedding new light on the Panathenaia," she says, "we hope to show the ways in which a major religious festival shaped the culture and identity of a flourishing center of civilization."

Athenian reverence for Athena originated in Greek mythology with a quarrel between Poseidon, god of the sea, and Athena, daughter of Zeus,



This inscribed marble relief commemorates the athletic victories of a son of Alexandros of Rhamnous, showing the prizes awarded at each of the games in which he competed. The Panathenaic amphora is at the left, followed by the pine wreath of Isthmia, the shield of Argos, and the celery wreath of Nemea. It is possible that the olive wreath of Olympia appeared just beyond the broken left end of the relief.

over possession of Attica. In a contest between the two, for which Zeus appointed a panel of gods and heroes to decide the winner, Poseidon struck the Acropolis with his trident, unleashing a sea of salt water, and Athena planted an olive tree on the crest of the hill. Athena, judged the winner, was made the patron goddess of Athens, to which she gave her name. This myth doubtless reflects the Athenian economic dependence on olive oil, Neils suggests: "Athens had extensive olive groves, and olive oil was a major export commodity used for lighting, perfumes, as well as cooking."

The origin of the Panathenaia, however, is shrouded in mystery. One ancient source states that it was founded by Erichthonius, a prehistoric king of Athens. According to legend, after having been reared by Athena on the Acropolis, he held games for his foster mother and competed in the chariot race, which he reputedly invented. The first concrete evidence for the festival, says Neils, is a Panathenaic prize vase from ca. 560 B.C. depicting a horse race, which implies an older lineage for the event. Scholars also infer that equestrian events were part of the early festival from two legends—the tradition that Athena taught the Athenians horsemanship and Homer's account of her assistance in building the Trojan horse to aid the Greeks against Troy.

Much more is known about the Panathenaia after 566 B.C., when the festival was reorganized under the tyrant Peisistratos. At that time, the festival, in addition to its annual celebration, was heightened every fourth year into the Great Panathenaia.

"They added athletic contests, which began to attract people from all over Greece," Neils says. "They attracted

the best athletes by offering monetary prizes—for instance, 140 vases of olive oil for winning the chariot race—as opposed to honorific wreaths."

From the mid-sixth century B.C. until the end of antiquity when the Christian emperors suppressed pagan religions, the high point of Athenian religious life was the Great Panathenaia, held every four years in July—tradition-

ally the month of Athena's birth—and lasting for about eight days.

The importance of the Great Panathenaia for scholars is immense, Neils says, because of the iconographic evidence for ancient Greek festivals that it generated. Some 1,300 painted amphorae, or vases, were commissioned every four years for the occasion; about 300 are extant. Olive-oil-filled amphorae depicting the athletic and equestrian events went to the winners, and many amphorae, even though they were not used as prizes, depict other events of the festival—musical contests, the procession, and the animal sacrifices.

"As far as we know, none of the crown games commissioned any art for their festivals," says Neils. "Ironically, when you look at books on Greek sport, they use the Panathenaic vases to illustrate the events that took place at Olympia and elsewhere."

The accoutrements of Athena in the iconography—helmet, spear, and shield—figured prominently in the contests of the Panathenaia. Events included javelin throwing; pyrrhic dancing, or martial-movement routines by spear-wielding men in full armor; and a race by hoplites, or soldiers, in full armor. Other athletic events included footraces, wrestling, boxing, the *pentathlon* (a combination of discus throwing, running, broad jumping, javelin throwing, and wrestling), and the *pankration*, a fierce struggle for physical supremacy permitting almost any kind of bodily attack. Equestrian events included horse races, chariot races, and javelin throwing from horseback. There were boat races, musical competitions on the lyre and double pipes, and poetry contests in which rhapsodes, or storytelling troubadours, would recite long passages of the *Iliad*

and *Odyssey*, with each contestant picking up where the previous one left off. And there was a torch race run as a relay, the original significance of which was the ritual transfer of fire to the Acropolis, where it was used to light the altar for the sacrifice to Athena.

The climax of the Great Panathenaia was a procession to the Acropolis, ending at Athena's sanctuary, where all the people of Attica paid homage to the city's patron goddess in a great burnt offering. Prominent in the procession was a floatlike shipcart; stretched across the mast's yardarm was the *peplos*, the woolen robe that would be draped around a wooden icon representing the goddess.

The sacrifice of cows to Athena at the procession's end augmented the Athenian diet, Neils says. "This was one of the rare times that Athenians ate meat. They didn't kill animals at will, only when they made a sacrifice to a god. They burned the bones and fat on an altar, and the rest was distributed to the populace. There was a huge barbecue, literally."

The Acropolis's grandest monument to Athena was the Parthenon, built in the interlude between the Persian wars of 490-479 B.C. and the Peloponnesian wars of 431-404. It housed a colossal ivory-and-gold-plated marble statue of a standing, armed Athena, made by the master sculptor Pheidias. Worship did not take place inside the windowless edifice, but rather at the altars outside. From there, the people could have viewed their own actions in the continuous frieze that decorated the temple wall behind the colonnade, which depicted scenes from the Panathenaic festival.

"The imagery of the frieze is unique in Greek sculpture because it depicts mortal Athenians in their worship of Athena," Neils says. "This is totally anomalous in the history of temple sculpture, which always shows the gods or heroes but never mere mortals. The Athenians, I think, were apotheosizing themselves—elevating themselves to the level of the gods."

Popular piety, with its considerable folk element, was not always so grandiosely expressed, says Neils. "We look at the fifth-century Athenians as the great enlightened thinkers of the world. But the fact is that religion among ancient peoples was characterized by superstition. Even though they have the gorgeous marble

Parthenon gleaming on the Acropolis, they also crawled into caves on the north slope and made offerings to gods of the underworld—all sorts of bizarre mystery cults with snakes and things like that." Everyday decisions, she says, were based on consultations with oracles—the ancient equivalent of palm readers—who threw dice or read the flights of birds to determine the auspices before any undertaking.

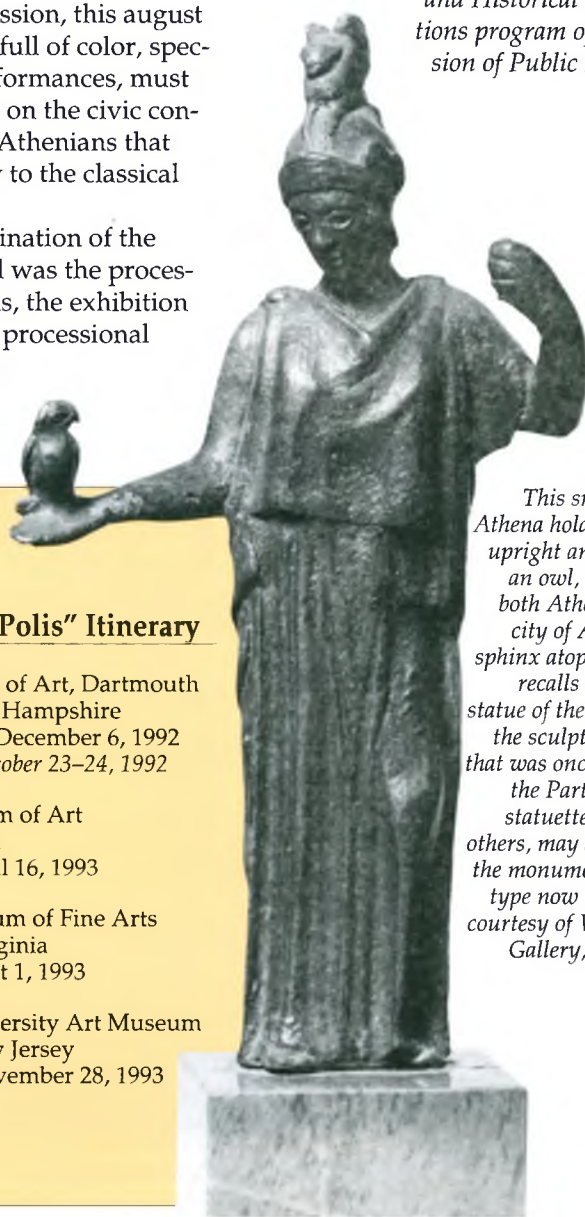
Fifth-century Athens is perhaps remembered less for the ordinary devotional piety of its common citizenry than for the extraordinary reflectiveness of its uncommon intelligentsia, whose luminaries at the time included the philosopher Anaxagoras, the sophist Protagoras, the historians Herodotus and Thucydides, the political leader Pericles, the playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, and the gadfly Socrates. But the glory of classical Athens is as attributable to the former as it is to the latter, Neils says. "My ultimate thesis is that this procession, this august festival, which was full of color, spectacle, and great performances, must have had an impact on the civic consciousness of these Athenians that contributed directly to the classical style in art."

Because the culmination of the Panathenaic festival was the procession to the Acropolis, the exhibition will be laid out in a processional format. Containing seventy objects, including marble

sculptures, bronze statuettes, terracotta figurines and reliefs, silver coins, and painted vases, the exhibition will begin with representations of Athena in the early sixth century B.C. and end with the classical image designed by Pheidias for the Parthenon. Physically and visually the viewer will move through the events of the goddess's festival to recapitulate the experience of ancient Athenians as they witnessed the rituals. At the same time viewers will move chronologically through two centuries of Greek art.

A symposium titled "Athens and Beyond," in conjunction with the exhibition at the Hood Museum, will explore the distinctiveness of the Panathenaia in relation to the other major festivals of ancient Greece and examine its impact on the life and culture of ancient Athens. □

For this project, the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth received \$192,545 from the Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations program of the Division of Public Programs.



This small bronze Athena holds her spear upright and launches an owl, a symbol of both Athena and the city of Athens. The sphinx atop her helmet recalls the colossal statue of the goddess by the sculptor Pheidias that was once housed in the Parthenon; this statuette, like many others, may derive from the monumental prototype now lost. (Photo courtesy of Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore)

"Goddess and Polis" Itinerary

- Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth Hanover, New Hampshire
September 12–December 6, 1992
Symposium: October 23–24, 1992
- Tampa Museum of Art
Tampa, Florida
January 9–April 16, 1993
- Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Richmond, Virginia
May 11–August 1, 1993
- Princeton University Art Museum
Princeton, New Jersey
August 31–November 28, 1993



Photos courtesy of Cordier & Ekstrom Gallery, New York City

Circe's Domain, Romare Bearden (1914-1988). This work comes from Bearden's series of twenty *Odysseus Collages*, first exhibited in 1977.

ELLISON'S MODERN ODYSSEUS

BY WILLIAM W. COOK

IN THE INTRODUCTION to the thirtieth anniversary edition of *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison notes that the novel he originally planned "was upstaged by the voice which spoke so knowingly of invisibility." This is the voice of the trickster, the voice that complicates and often redirects discourse. It frequently undermines even as it appears to conform, a voice at once mimetic and parodic. As a result, Ellison's modern *Odysseus*, although he shares with the Homeric protagonist a wandering movement toward self and home, is no simple modern version of the Homeric hero.

William W. Cook is Israel Evans Professor of Oratory and Belles Lettres at Dartmouth College. Last November, he spoke on the subject of this article at a public conference on the oral and epic traditions in Fairlee, Vermont, sponsored by the Vermont Council on the Humanities.

Crucial to understanding Ellison's text is what literary scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in *The Signifying Monkey* (Oxford University Press, 1988) calls its "signifying" potential—its repetition and its simultaneous critique of the older text. Ellison's *Invisible Man* speaks in a number of voices, the surface dialogue and narrative often undermined by resistant and dissenting voices of its trickster protagonist. It is a "black" text, in terms of Gates's definition of blackness as a reflection of "literary uses of language that are shared, repeated, critiqued, and revised." Ellison's trickster voice, as Gates argues, parodies the literary structures of Richard Wright's *Native Son* through repetition and difference. But that voice also constitutes a "critical parody" of a much older and even more canonical text than that of Wright—the *Odyssey* of Homer.

Critical parody, Gates notes, is an "exaggerated imitation of a work of

art . . . a form of literary criticism which consists in heightening the characteristics of the thing imitated." He further notes: "When the subject matter of the original composition is parodied . . . it may prove to be a valuable indirect criticism or it may even imply a flattering tribute to the original writer." How does Ellison's novel parody Homer's *Odyssey*?

In Ellison's text, the protagonist's wandering follows that of Odysseus, who is doomed by Poseidon to wander forever, never to find his way home from Troy because he has offended the god by tricking and maiming Polyphemus. The event that triggers the protagonist's wandering—the "battle royal" scene—is both a clear parallel to Homer's battle at Troy and just as clearly a parody of that incident. In both instances, a group of fighters struggles not so much in response to individual grievances as from the compulsions and at the directions of the gods, represented in Ellison's revision as the leading white men of the town. They fight to amuse these gods and are selected by individual deities as their champion. The literal object of the struggle here is not the beautiful Helen of the Homeric work, however; she is a hired stripper at a kind of high-class smoker. She is blond and possessed of a steamy sexuality that arouses men and gods. Yet her cheapness and seeming indifference to her tawdry situation mocks the original.

By failing to repeat the cant of Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Exposition Address about capitulation to the status quo, the protagonist incurs the wrath of the "mighty gods" and after the battle is sent on a futile mission, a mission that is to take him away from, rather than toward, the "home" that he desires. He is given a briefcase containing seven letters intended to "keep this nigger boy running." Just as Odysseus incurs divine wrath from "the Earth Encirler Poseidon who, ever relentless, nurses a grudge" (*Odyssey* V.68-69, translation by Richmond Lattimore [Harper and Row, 1965]) and who "drives [Odysseus] back from the land of his fathers" (V.75), making Odysseus "a fugitive from the sea and the curse of Poseidon" (V.445), so Ellison's protagonist incurs divine wrath from another Poseidon figure, Dr. Bledsoe, who condemns him to seven letters (years) in vain

pursuit of the "bitch goddess success." This is not the flawless beauty of Homeric lore.

Another convergence of the texts can be found in the chapel scene that follows the protagonist's accidental delivery of Norton to Trueblood's house and to the Golden Day. In this scene, Homer Barbee, a blind bard with a clearly allusive name, chants the heroic tale of the founder, that great man whom all the students have been taught to emulate. On hearing this epic, marked by conventional tropes of African American oral narratives, the protagonist is as overcome with sorrow and remorse as was the Homeric hero on hearing Demodokos (Homer's blind bard) relate the glorious and tragic history of Troy. He weeps over the great dream he has failed to realize. But is that dream as worthy of his tears as is Odysseus's dream of returning home from his wanderings? So caught up is Ellison's listener in the myth of the "black Horatio Alger" that he is not aware of the blindness of his guide. Odysseus, on the other hand, is the deceiver and not the deceived. He hears the story of his own life and not that of a fictive other. He is aware that the teller is blind, as blind to his true identity as are the other listeners.

In his blindness, Ellison's protagonist has several guides. His relationship to them further amplifies Ellison's

signifying purpose. The vet who attempts to open his eyes is not Homer's "goddess gray-eyed Athene," who frequently appears in masculine guise, but a man who is condemned to a mental institution because he foolishly believed that he could live according to his talents and ambitions. His advice that the young man learn the game in which he is a player falls on deaf ears. He offers the gift of invisibility and the freedom that it makes possible. But unlike Homer's hero, who uses Athena's gift of invisibility, Ellison's young man is baffled and repulsed by the vet's wise counsel. The protagonist cannot understand the language used by the vet and the other inhabitants of the Golden Day:

They were supposed to be members of the professions toward which at various times I aspired myself, and even though they never seemed to see me I could never believe that they were really patients. Sometimes it appeared as though they played some vast and complicated game with me and the rest of the school folk, a game whose goal was laughter and whose rules and subtleties I could never grasp.

He is invisible, deaf, and blind. He has forgotten how to use language as a tool of resistance and liberation. More seriously, he has confused those men who control his life with gods. Norton is "not a man to him, but a



Odysseus and Penelope Reunited, Romare Bearden

God, a force." Neither the vet nor Mary nor Brother Hambro succeeds in playing Athena/Mentor to this young man.

Significant omens, especially those involving the flight of birds and those connected with the divine eagle of Zeus, mark Homer's text. Such bird imagery also appears in Ellison's ironic treatment. Telemachus receives a portent that the suitors will meet with disaster, prefigured in the Homeric text by the battle of the eagles:

and for his sake Zeus of the wide brows sent forth two eagles, soaring high from the peak of the mountain. These for a while sailed on the stream of wind together, wing and wing, close together, wings spread wide. (II.146-149)

The same imagery directly precedes the destruction of the suitors:

A bird flew over them on the left side. This was a high-flown eagle, and carried a tremulous pigeon. (X.242-243)

While the bird signs are positive for Odysseus—"indeed, the bird signs were good at this going"—for Ellison the images of eagles and pigeons become objects of parody. If eagles prophesy the bloody triumph of Odysseus in the Homeric text, they symbolize the exploitation and helplessness of Ellison's naive protagonist. He is not an eagle; he is a pigeon, a guileless tool of others. This image, like that of Zeus's eagle, is a constant in Ellison's text. It appears first in chapter two when the protagonist is blindly observing the statue of the founder, a visual text he cannot read:

I am standing puzzled, unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether I am witnessing a revelation or a more efficient blinding. And as I gaze, there is a rustle of wings and I see a flock of starlings flighting before me and, when I look again, the bronze face, whose empty eyes look upon a world I have never seen, runs with liquid chalk—creating another ambiguity to puzzle my groping mind: Why is a bird-soiled statue more commanding than one that is clean?

Later the protagonist finds himself soiled as he flees the riot—"even the birds; even the pigeons and the sparrows and the goddam gulls! I ran blindly . . . running from the birds to what, I did not know."

The texts sometimes diverge. For instance, the homecoming in the Homeric work does not occur in Ellison's text; nor does Ellison's protagonist possess the consciousness of Homer's "man of many ways." If Ellison's protagonist is both a cunning trickster and liar as well as an effective orator, his oratorical flights are the result of accident, his deception usually unconscious. The Mary he desires to find again—"I was going to Mary's . . . to Mary I thought, to Mary"—is not the circumspect and inevitably attainable domestic dream of Penelope; rather, his final destination is the dark yet exceptionally lighted descent into an underground cellar of the individual consciousness. Darkness is light, the light of 1,369 bulbs.

A list of parodic/ironic parallels between the texts reveals Ellison's project: The vet signifies Homer's Tiresius, since the Golden Day is an American land of the dead and the vet a true prophet doomed to remain there forever. Sibyl and Emma are an interesting recasting of Circe/Calypso. And Tod Clifton, that most handsome and all-powerful warrior who drops out of the struggle and reenters it only to meet his foreordained doom, is not unlike the noble Achilles. Further, the protagonist, following his return from the downtown underworld, conducts a funeral for Clifton that suggests Odysseus's funeral for the tragic

Elpenor. The death of Ras, like that of the most odious of the Homeric suitors, Alcinoös, is at the hands of the protagonist, who, like Odysseus, pierces the neck and jaw of his opponent. The time span encompassed by these tales of epic remembering is also comparable. Ellison's protagonist states that his tale encompasses twenty years of his life; Odysseus spent ten years at Troy and ten years of wandering in his journey home.

Finally, Ellison's tale reveals a linguistic character that literary scholar Mae Gwendolyn Henderson has called "heteroglossia"—the various social dialects particular to individual groups, in this case the black community. That Ellison's tale speaks in many and varied tongues reflecting "the complex matrix that is the subjectivity" of its protagonist is borne out in the public utterances of the protagonist. These range from literal repetition of Booker T. Washington to the call-response of African American preaching, from glosses on song titles and lyrics to playing the dozens—that African American game of verbal combat in which each antagonist insults the female relatives of the other. Stylistic shifts from naturalistic to expressionistic to surrealistic utterance reflect the state of his consciousness. He is a man—if not, like Odysseus, a master—of many ways, of varied selves and discourses. □



Battle with Cicones, Romare Bearden



Charlottenburg, Berlin 8099, LMCI Achilles 642

Figure 1.

MYTH

IN PICTURES

BY
JOCELYN
PENNY
SMALL



IMAGES OF THE
TROJAN WAR,
FOUGHT IN THE MYCENAEAN PERIOD
CA. 1250 B.C. BETWEEN GREEKS AND
TROJANS, APPEARED THROUGHOUT
CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY WITH DIFFER-
ENT EMPHASES AT DIFFERENT TIMES.
EACH PERIOD RETOLD THE SAME
STORIES, BUT IN ITS OWN WAY.

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS EPI-
ISODES OF THAT WAR, TOLD BY HOMER
IN THE *ILIAD*, IS THE STORY OF THE RAN-
SOM OF HECTOR. ACHILLES AVENGES

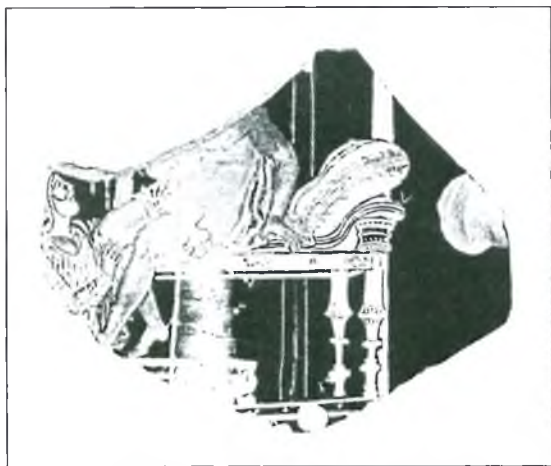


Figure 2.

the death of his friend Patroclus by killing his killer, Hector. Achilles drags Hector's body—attached by the feet to his chariot—around the walls of Troy, and then returns to the Greek camp with the defiled corpse. Priam, Hector's father, naturally wants his son's body back for burial. With the aid of the god Hermes, he sneaks into the Greek camp to persuade Achilles either through words or gifts.

The earliest representation of the ransom of Hector appears on a bronze relief from Olympia (Figure 1), dated to the early sixth century B.C. Hector lies on the ground with his head by his father and Hermes, on the right. Priam, bent with age, takes Achilles by the chin with his right hand so that Achilles cannot throw his head back to say no, but must nod down to say yes. So Thetis in the *Iliad* "came and sat beside [Zeus] with her left hand embracing / his knees, but took him underneath the chin with her right hand" (*Iliad* 1.500-501, translation by Richmond Lattimore [Chicago 1961]).

In the fourth century, a South Italian fragment shows a slightly later moment (Figure 2). Priam takes Achilles, seated on the couch, by the knees—the other ancient gesture of entreaty. Priam now wears Phrygian dress, because people from Asia Minor, where Troy is located, wore that kind of attire at the time this vase was made, and the Greeks did not realize that people from the period of the Trojan War had dressed differently. In fact, this costume becomes standard for representations of barbarian kings through the Roman era.

Jocelyn Penny Small, a classical archaeologist, is director of the U.S. Center of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* based at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Finally, a Roman silver cup from the time of Augustus (ca. 27 B.C.-A.D. 14) portrays a politicized version of the story (Figure 3). Priam again kneels, but instead of taking Achilles by the knees, he takes his extended right hand and kisses it just like a barbarian king rendering obeisance to the emperor Augustus, to whom Achilles bears a clear resemblance. Over a period of six hundred years, the same story is constantly updated to reflect

the current cultural context.

Whether seeking to understand how a story developed in classical times, how attitudes toward a story changed over time, how people dressed, or what life was like then, scholars refer to the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), an enormous illustrated dictionary of classical mythology that receives NEH support. The project synthesizes current knowledge of classical iconography from the end of the Mycenaean period to the beginning of Christianity. The LIMC differs markedly from its predecessors by being organized on an international scale with nearly forty countries participating. Each country documents the classical objects with mythological scenes in its own collections and from its excavations abroad.

Of a projected eight volumes, five have already been published. Each volume appears in two parts—text and plates—with up to five thousand plates per volume. Never before have so many photographs of classical objects been published together; and,

with pictures of many objects being published for the first time, the LIMC is the premier resource for classical iconography.

The LIMC works like any other dictionary. Gods, goddesses, demigods, heroes, heroines, monsters—all are included in alphabetical order with brief summaries of their deeds and what the ancient sources said about them, followed by a catalogue of their major representations and a discussion of the changes and vicissitudes in the artistic tradition throughout classical antiquity.

Complementing the hardbound volumes, a computerized system has been developed at the U.S. Center of the LIMC at Rutgers University to keep track of classical objects with mythological scenes in American collections. This arrangement makes it easier to find certain kinds of information not easily ascertained through the alphabetically arranged hardbound volumes of the LIMC. For example, a scholar can find all mythological scenes depicting women on Greek objects made during the archaic and classical periods. Even nonmythological questions can be answered, as in the case of the scholar interested in women working wool.

Just as Helen—the most beautiful woman in the Trojan world and the cause of the Trojan War—was for Christopher Marlowe "the face that launched a thousand ships," the LIMC is, for scholars, a project that is launching a thousand endeavors. □

Since 1980, the LIMC has been supported by \$535,000 outright and \$284,550 matching from the Reference Materials program of the Division of Research Programs.



Figure 3.

*Towards the end, the Germans decided to deal with us.
They started moving troops around us in a circle, and it looked
as if we were going to be in real trouble.*

Conversation

continued from page 9

in a battle, and there's a monument to them now in the spot with all their names. But that was an SS outfit, really nasty.

Cheney: I know you were young but it must have been a very frightening thing to jump in and know that...

Knox: No. It was very exciting, as a matter of fact.

Cheney: Really? Not frightening?

Knox: No. When you've been trained for this thing and have thought about it in all kinds of ways...

Cheney: You want to go.

Knox: That's it. You can't stand waiting. In fact, we had a horrible thing happen to us. We were supposed to go in on July 4th, and the aircraft got over the landing ground and there were no signals. There were supposed to be three flashlights in a row or three fires, and one of them flashing a prearranged Morse letter. There was nothing there. So the pilot started back. We felt terrible. There were no lights in England, because there were still a lot of German aircraft coming across. When the lights went on at the last moment, the pilot was directly above the field. And he knew that they wouldn't keep the lights on very long, so he went straight down in a sort of dive, this four-engine bomber, and pulled up. We couldn't hear anything for nearly a week.

They couldn't take us back to Milton Hall because we'd been briefed. We knew too much. They put us up at a flat in London, just off Oxford Street, and it was right on the path of the buzz bombs which were now coming in, the V-1s. You could hear these things groaning away, then they'd stop, and that meant it was coming down. The only reason we didn't go crazy was we found in the closet a demijohn of rum. They hauled us out again. They said, "We're going to try again." They took us off to a camp of an outfit called the SAS, the Special

Air Service, which was getting ready to jump a whole battalion of its people into France and it was thought we'd go in with them. But that didn't come off. We went back to London. Finally we took off and this time we said to each other, and we said to the pilot, "If you don't see any lights, drop us anyway. We can't stand this." He said, "All right, if that's what you want." He was one of these British pilots—"all right, very good, chaps." But he did see the lights and we went in.

Cheney: How long were you in there?

Knox: It must have been about August 15 that the first American troops came through.

Cheney: Meanwhile, what you'd been doing is collecting weapons that were dropped from planes. Is that right?

Knox: We were calling in weapons with radio messages. Somebody who had a bunch of young people they were taking to the woods to fight would send one person to us, and we would ask, "Have you got a drop ground? Where is it? Show us on the map." We would check it out to be sure that there wasn't some kind of wild hill or something, because the plane was coming in at 500 feet, so we had to be a little careful.

Cheney: So you were arming the resistance.

Knox: We were arming the resistance. Then our problem was to prevent them from using the arms right away. We wanted to build up quite a big and efficient force and keep it quiet until the exact moment when it would do the most good. That would be, of course, when the allied armies broke out of the Normandy pocket where they were stuck and came along the Brittany coast heading to Brest. That port was going to be vital. We didn't have a harbor because Cherbourg had been completely destroyed by the Germans before it was captured. The Allies were still landing everything from these artificial booms that they'd set up off the Normandy coast—very

inefficient indeed. We figured some armored force that was part of Patton's army would come dashing along that coast, and at that point we would let loose everything we had. That was the idea.

Well, it worked pretty well except that we couldn't keep these chaps quiet. They'd been waiting to shoot Germans for four years. Luckily, the wonderful thing about this kind of operation is that, back at the base, they only know what you tell them, so you can do what you like. So every now and then we would have a little operation to keep the troops quiet. There was one awful one when everybody ran out of cigarettes, and in those days, of course, everybody smoked like fiends. And so...

Cheney: You conducted a raid.

Knox: We conducted a raid. We killed a couple of Germans, too, poor souls. They died for tobacco. The awful thing was that we didn't get any cigarettes. We got a particularly horrible brand of French pipe tobacco.

Cheney: How long were you behind the lines?

Knox: I suppose about five weeks.

Cheney: Did you ever feel in danger? Obviously, when you ran these raids...

Knox: Towards the end, the Germans decided to deal with us. They started moving troops around us in a circle, and it looked as if we were going to be in real trouble. We thought we might have to move the whole outfit east into the next province. The only trouble was, the way there was barred by a château. It had been built in the late nineteenth century by someone who'd made a fortune in sugar, I think it was, in Martinique.

Cheney: With all the modern conveniences.

Knox: I think with modern conveniences, but also with pinnacles and that sort of thing. And the Germans had naturally occupied this. They controlled all the routes, and they could see us when we started to move, so we

thought, let's see if we can get some air on that. We sent a message back explaining what was going on, and the answer came back saying, "It's not an important enough objective. Air is scarce," and of course it was being used on a terrific scale in the battle of Normandy.

I remembered something, and that was that the radio operators and the communications staff at our base in England were British naval personnel. So I sent another message saying, "I've just discovered that the château is used as a rest home for German submarine crews from Brest." We got three planes on the place the next morning. Then it turned out that this was true, that there *were* some submarine crews there. So that sort of eased things. And just about this point, it became clear that the Germans couldn't afford to deal with us. The breakthrough had been launched and Patton's tanks were on the way.

Cheney: What was it like when you first saw the American troops coming? It must have been amazing.

Knox: The first ones I saw were dead, unfortunately. They ran into an ambush, and there were two of them, actually, dead in the jeep. Then something happened—a woman ran out of a house and screamed in French that there was a wounded American inside. He had a wound in the chest that was bleeding and it was near the heart, and I thought, "He's a goner." So I looked at his tag. It always had the religion on the tag, and his was Roman Catholic. So I said, "It's all right, you're among friends." My uniform didn't look—I mean, it was a British camouflage jacket and I'd lost my hat on the jump, so I had a black beret on. I said, "I'm an American officer. It's all right, you're going to be okay." And I said, "I'll send for a priest." He said, "I don't want a god-damn priest, I want a doctor." Well. So, we got the local doctor, and he looked at it and said, "If he's still alive, he's probably going to live. I can't figure him out." The doctors had an underground that had been helping us—in fact, we got them a decoration after the war, two of them—by taking care of our wounded. What they did was slip them into civilian hospitals as traffic casualties.

Cheney: How interesting.

Knox: So they got him into a hospital in a part still controlled by the Germans. I heard later that they had to put him under sedation because he

kept asking for his PX ration. There were Germans in the place, too. They had to keep him quiet. But of all the optimistic things, I mean, it's really wonderful. He wasn't prepared to die. **Cheney:** You tell these stories so wonderfully. When you look back on the whole course of your life, is there any other time that was ever as exhilarating as the war?

Knox: Well, being in love. Otherwise, no. I mean, compared with this, my existence has been rather humdrum.

Cheney: What does this tell us about human nature? You talk about this when you talk about Thucydides and how he focused on war.

Knox: I think war does bring out the best in people and also the worst in people. The worst is very bad and the best is quite remarkable—all the courage people show, and the self-sacrifice. It seems at times almost beyond human capacities. It sometimes takes a war to bring out the best in people. That's no argument for having one. I don't mean that.

Cheney: No. I understand.

Knox: And, of course, the spectacle of atomic war is something different.

Cheney: Well, why did Thucydides focus on war?

Knox: Mainly, I think, because the Greek states were constantly at war. They were all separate cities with their separate ambitions and their separate frontiers. War was a sort of permanent condition. In fact, Plato says that peace is merely a sort of break between wars. There's no such thing as constant peace. Both the republic of Plato and the model city of Aristotle make provisions for war, constant training of citizens, and so on. Of course, Thucydides was writing about the war that he claimed was the greatest and most important war to have ever happened in history. He had been a participant, an admiral, and that's what fascinated me. He says at one point that war is a hard taskmaster and it sharpens, I think he said it brutalizes, the people who take part in it.

Cheney: But it didn't brutalize you.

Knox: I was pretty brutal at the time, I think. One had to be.

WITH THE PARTISANS IN ITALY

Cheney: You jumped in again into Italy.

Knox: No, in Italy, we were in the

mountains. Let's see, in 1944, the Germans were driven north out of Florence, and it looked as if they were going to evacuate Italy. But there was still one mountain barrier, the Apennine range, which separates Florence and Tuscany from the Po Valley. The Germans had a very strong defensive position there. It was known as the Gothic Line, and it looked that time as if they were going to evacuate it. And at that point, all the partisan outfits in the Po Valley and elsewhere rose up. Some of them actually declared a republic. However, Alexander, the allied general, was not able to push on.

Cheney: Was he British?

Knox: He was British. He was the overall commander. And his troops were not in shape to push on. So all these partisans, the only thing they could do was to run through the mountains to our side. And there they were. They were in camps, and no one knew what to do with them, until the allied command realized that it was very short of men. They turned this job over to the OSS, to organize these people and to command them. In a way it was an ideal place for the partisans. Between the coastal road to the west and the Futa Pass to Bologna to the east there was really no way through the mountains except a couple of roads that it was easy to block, and the Germans had blocked them by blowing down the side of the precipice. So we held about 75 miles of front. We held mountaintops and they held mountaintops and we watched each other during the day. At night, we could go all over the place, and did. These partisans, many of them, came from the other side of the mountains, from Modena. They had been smugglers, and they knew these mountains.

There were smugglers because in Italy every single *provincia*, like Tuscany and Modena, had customs. If you brought rice from the Po Valley to Florence, you paid duty. The same if you took olive oil from Tuscany. So these chaps would take great sacks of rice and cans of olive oil through the mountains at night on paths that they knew, and sell them. They knew paths that weren't on the map—that the Germans didn't know—and they could go everywhere.

So we would go through and come back the same night, except one awful occasion we kept going, and it was too late to turn back. I was getting worried. They said, "*Non si preoccupi, capitano*"—"Don't worry." Pretty soon

*I think war does bring out the best in people
and also the worst in people. The worst is very bad and the
best is quite remarkable ...*

we had to hole up and wait a whole day. We went on the next night. Finally I said, "Where the hell are you going?" and one of them said, "Well you see, Rinaldo here, his mother is sick." We'd gone all the way to see Rinaldo's mother. I was furious. But luckily, on the way back we picked up some prisoners, so it worked out.

Cheney: Tell me the part about encountering the text of Virgil issued under Mussolini. You were in an old castle?

Knox: As part of the main offensive in April, we were told, "All right, you can capture the mountains over there and just keep going." So we did, we captured the mountains. It was rather rough going, but we did. And then we went through all the way to Modena, which was rather wonderful. We had to go on foot and we had to wade across rivers. It was like an old Roman war. In fact, there'd been a great Roman civil war in that area, when Modena was called Mutina. Anyway, the Germans sort of held. They weren't fighting. They just had a rear guard to hold us.

Cheney: This is '45 now?

Knox: This is '45, April. The Germans would just leave a rear party to hold us up for a couple of hours with a heavy machine gun. And at one point we ran into one of those and had to jump for it. We were in a house that had been bombed and were lying in the rubble there, in shelter. We sent a flanking party around to get behind the machine gun. So we had to wait until the firing stopped, and that's where I saw the book. It was a special text of Virgil issued by the Academy. I hadn't read any Latin for years. I just thought, I wonder if I can still read it. Then I thought, why don't I try something. In the Middle Ages, they used Virgil as a kind of I-Ching. You would open to any place in the book, and the passage there would tell you what was going to happen or tell you something important. There's a famous incident in English history



Captain Knox (center) with
Italian partisans, 1945

when Charles I, during the civil war, was at Oxford, and he went into one of the college libraries, opened a text of Virgil, and came to a passage which predicted the fate of Aeneas—that he would be faced with hostile people, his own people against him, that he would die and be left unburied on the shore. Some of that did happen to Charles. So I thought, I'll do that. I flipped it open and came across a passage in the *Georgics*, the Virgil poem in four books which is about work on the land, and came to a passage which was a pretty good description of the Italy we were in. It was about the farmers having to leave their fields and the place being ravaged and so on, and I suddenly felt: He seems to be talking about now. Italy, you know, was a dreadful mess. It was so destructive, that war. It's frightful. And the people don't realize when they go there now what they're looking at. Every single bridge in Florence was blown to smithereens except the Ponte Vecchio. They've all been put back just as they were. In Ravenna,

the famous Palazzo Malatesta, all in white marble—that was just dust and rubble, smashed by British artillery. They had the plans, of course, and put it all back together. But at the time, there wasn't a bridge left standing. The Ponte Vecchio, the exception, was saved only because the German commander who was ordered to blow all the bridges thought, "My God, I can't blow it. It's the oldest bridge in Europe," and sent a special telegram, in fact, which got to Hitler, and he was told to leave it. But they had to make it impassable, so what he did was blow down all the buildings for about a quarter of a mile on either side.

Cheney: So the text you picked up, the Virgil, the passage was about ruin and devastation after war.

Knox: Yes, exactly, yes.

Cheney: You know, one of the big debates that goes on in the humanities, not just now but for a very long time, is whether or not Virgil's words can transcend their time and really speak to us. This certainly seems to argue that they can.

Knox: I think so, and in other ways, too. His great poem, the *Aeneid*, is about empire, about what it costs in sacrifice, and this is something for us to think about, too.

Cheney: You've lectured at the Naval War College, I know, about the relevance of ancient texts to modern foreign policy.

Knox: That was because of Stansfield Turner. When he was appointed commandant of the school up in Newport he put in a very rigid schedule. He added a strategy course that was to begin with Thucydides. Well, Thucydides, to the incoming marine and naval officers, consisted of the Penguin text full of names they'd never seen before and couldn't pronounce. Very tough going. He almost had a mutiny on his hands.

The next thing I knew, I was on a navy plane flown up there. I must say, it was something—not just the lectures, but the seminars were extra-

ordinary. We'd have a long table and seven or eight people. And these Marine colonels and so on would ask me things like, "Well, these galleys, what draft did they have?" and all kinds of things. I'd just say, "I have to look that up." I'd never thought about these problems.

There were a certain number of foreign students there from allied navies. And there was one wonderful occasion when a sort of national character was revealed. I was talking to them about the Periclean strategy in the war, which was defensive. Since Athens was a naval power and couldn't really beat Sparta on land, and Sparta couldn't really capture Athens because the fortifications were so strong and the connection to the port was well enforced, all Athens really had to do was to wait, because it was Sparta that started the war to try and cut down Athenian power. If they went on banging their heads against a brick wall, they would have had to stop at some point and it would in effect have been an Athenian victory.

Cheney: And Pericles understood this.

Knox: Yes, that was his policy. It didn't work because, of course, the plague took such a toll among the Athenians. Anyway, we were talking about this, and there was one officer who was very impatient. He said,

"Defensive strategy? It's absolutely ridiculous. You can't have a defensive strategy. It's a contradiction in terms." I said, "But, look, he wasn't talking about a victory. All he needed was a stalemate." And he said, "You can't even have a stalemate with a defensive strategy. You've got to take the offensive." At this point, the moderator, who was from the staff, was getting distinctly annoyed. He suddenly said to this chap, "Would you please put on your identification." Everybody was supposed to have one. And he said, "What happened to it? Who are you?" and the fellow answered, "Captain Levy, Israeli Navy." Everybody burst into helpless laughter.

ON ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

Cheney: What does the story of Pericles tell us about leadership in a democracy?

Knox: Well, Thucydides says that Athens was in name a democracy but in fact the rule of one man. This one man had to be reelected every year to the position on the board of generals, from which, so to speak, he directed Athenian policy. After the plague, he wasn't reelected. People got sick of waiting, because they had to watch

the Spartans come in and lay waste to Athenian territory all around the city. This was the other side of the strategy, waiting, and they had to put up with this, and Pericles became unpopular and was not reelected for that year. So it was a democracy in the sense that you would change the leadership.

It was a peculiar democracy because it was direct and not representative. The meeting of the Athenian assembly was like a town meeting. Anybody could go—any man, that is; women couldn't take part.

Cheney: Nor did slaves, of course.

Knox: No, nor slaves. Anyway, all the offices were yearly, and at the end of the year you had to give your accounts to the people. Anyone could ask you a question about what you'd done or where the money went and so on. After a while, as the century wore on, they decided that there wasn't much point really in electing people for most of the offices. They would just draw lots, from a select list probably. We don't know, but they must have excluded people who were regarded as quite hopeless. Otherwise it was felt that any citizen could do any of these jobs, with one exception: general. There was a board of ten generals because they were organized in ten tribes, so-called—ten tribal regiments. For that, you had to be elected. And you could be elected year after year. Not many people were. Pericles was, which meant that after two or three years, he was the one figure who had been consistently in a position of authority for some time.

Cheney: What was the secret to his being able to be elected repeatedly and yet manage the democracy? That's the problem, being loved by the people and at the same time managing the country—the city-state—in a way that's decent and wise, and sometimes tough and difficult.

Knox: He was a political genius of some kind, obviously, because he was very much admired and loved. We are told that he was a magnificent orator, too, though we have only the speeches written by Thucydides for him, so to speak. This ability was vital in Athens. If you couldn't persuade your fellow citizens, you were not going to get anywhere. The thing that's important is you have to be able to persuade the people to do something that they don't like.

There's a better example of this in Themistocles, the original Athenian



Knox receiving the Bronze Star from General William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan.

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leader who led Athens during the Persian War in the 480s. Just before the war started, the silver mines in Attica ran into a new and very rich vein, and it was immediately proposed in the assembly that they share the proceeds so there'd be a bonus for every citizen. But Themistocles suggested that they use it instead to build a fleet and persuaded them. Can you imagine? Instead of getting money in your pocket, you were going to get a fleet. He did persuade them, and that's what saved Athens and the West. If it hadn't been for that fleet, the Persians would have overrun Greece.

Cheney: And there would have been no Periclean Golden Age.

Knox: There'd have been no democracy or anything.

Cheney: You know, that is an interesting question. Somebody asked me this the other day, and I had no good answer. Why did democracy arise first in Greece?

Knox: Nobody knows. In a way, the question really is why did *politics* in that sense arise in Greece? In Egypt, in Babylon, and so on—in these kingdoms run by divine kings and priestly castes and so on—there weren't really any politics. There might be intrigue at the top, but the idea of a discussion of policy on the citizen level begins in Greece, and it begins before democracy. Before democracy you had an oligarchy—an upper-class, partly aristocratic and, as the years went on, partly commercial government—as in the great city of Corinth—which guided the affairs of the city by discussion with a restricted number of people taking part in the discussion.

Then you got what were called tyrants. The lower classes, of course, felt depressed under this oligarchy. As the economic situation got worse, and it did, apparently what happened was that the cities became overpopulated, which is why they spread colonies all over the Mediterranean. People just took off to find some other place to plow the earth. The discontent

below was organized by one particular clever politician who managed to get supreme power, and he's what they called a tyrant. It's not a Greek word, *tyrannos*; it comes probably from one of the Eastern languages. And it simply means a ruler who has seized power and retains it by armed force. Now he may be a good or a bad ruler, and many of them were not tyrants in our sense at all. In fact, they seemed to be rather progressive people. On the island of Samos, the tyrant Polycrates carried out great public works so as to keep people employed. There's the famous tunnel that was built to bring water to the town. And they engaged in a forward foreign policy and trade. Usually they lived out their lives, and then, of course, the son succeeded, and the son usually wasn't as clever as his father. At this point you either went back to oligarchy, though probably with a wider group of people controlling policy, or, as in the case of Athens, you ended up in a democracy.

Athens wasn't the only one. It's the one we know most about. Argos was another one. And in Sicily, in Syracuse, for a while they had a democracy about the same time. Of course, the Athenian democracy at the beginning was fairly limited. I mean, there was a court, the Court of the Areopagus, which consisted of all the ex-magistrates, and which exercised an enormous influence on policy. People deferred to it. But as the years went by, Athens became a permanent naval power with its wide-flung empire and all those different cities were contributing money to it for its fleet. This depended now not on the landed class, mostly the farmers, who were the people that had armor and fought in the ranks at Marathon on land; it depended on the men who rowed the ships.

Cheney: People who rowed the galleys were citizens?

Knox: They were citizens. And they realized, of course, that everything depended on them, so democracy was

gradually broadened towards the end of the century until it became a full-fledged democracy. The Areopagus was stripped of all of its powers and became simply a court of law.

IN DEFENSE OF SOPHISTS

Cheney: You've written about how the rise of democracy led to the humanities.

Knox: Yes, with the so-called Sophists.

Cheney: I am just amazed when I read you on the Sophists because you make such a good case for them.

Knox: Well, a case has to be made for them because Plato blackened their name.

Cheney: Is it possible that that is a bit of sophistry? Are you making the worse the better cause when you write about the Sophists?

Knox: I think the results of their teaching were both good and bad. This is true of most teaching. But certainly they've been much maligned. Plato is such a great artist. It's so brilliant, this picture of them, that it's hard to believe that there was more to it than that, but there obviously was.

Cheney: When I read you, I keep wanting to say, "Stop, wait." It's true, being able to persuade your fellow citizen is essential in democracy, but the worse is still the worse cause. And if you can manage to make the worse seem the better cause, I'm not sure you've done your fellow citizens a favor.

Knox: Yes, but the same word in Greek that you translate and I sometimes translate "worse" and "better" also means "stronger" and "weaker."

Cheney: So it's complete relativism, then.

Knox: The weaker cause may not be the worse cause but the one that's more difficult to defend. It all depends.

Cheney: I see.

Knox: At any rate, these were just training devices, and we have a col-

lection of what are obviously not real law cases, but rather like what you do in law school. They are remarkable examples of the different techniques that were used, the argument from probability, for example: Is it conceivable that I would attack a man who is twice as strong as I am? If you once start thinking of what's probable, then you begin to wonder about the Trojan War. Is it probable that it took ten years?

Cheney: Or that it was all because of Helen.

Knox: And that they had a wooden horse. You get this rationalistic approach. Thucydides deals with what is probable when, in his first chapters, he reconstructs the early history of Greece, and he does have a Trojan War. He says, more or less, if it lasted ten years, that was because they had to keep going somewhere else to get supplies. He put his finger on the weak point. How do you supply an army for ten years outside a city that's besieged?

Take another—the business of invoking human nature—it's a courtroom defense. When I gave the lecture on this at the Naval War College, I constructed a Greek sophistic argument, a case where there's a man whose wife has been deceiving him, and he doesn't know this but he says, "I have to go across to the island of Aegina today and I'll be back tonight." She says, "Yes, dear." But he realizes he's forgotten a vital document and he comes back. And what does he find? His wife in bed with this chap, and he kills him. He says to the jury, "Human nature was too strong for me." Well, that sort of argument you can see might be useful in a courtroom, and in fact the whole business of *crime passionnel* in French court is pretty much that.

Cheney: I suppose what always makes me uncomfortable just reading about the Sophists—obviously, I'm far away from my area now, and probably about to ask you ten naive questions—is its extreme relativism.

Knox: Yes, it does have that. In fact, Protagoras has this famous statement, "man is the measure of all things, of the existence of what exists and of the nonexistence of what does not exist." It's interpreted in various ways. Plato suggests one interpretation at one point and then something else at another. But at any rate, it's relativism—you're right.

Cheney: And you do think that the humanities came from the Sophists.

Knox: Well, yes, because, you see, they professed to teach. Protagoras said he knew how to make a man a better citizen—he meant somebody who can take his place in the democracy, persuade his fellow citizens, influence people, and so on. To do that, you need not just the tricks of rhetoric. You need to know a lot more. You need to know history, you need to know poetry because the Greeks are still under the spell of poetry. Homer is their sacred book. The way the Jews have the Torah, and the Bible, and so on, the Greeks have Homer and other poets too, including Aeschylus and the other tragic dramatists. You had to be able to understand these texts and use them. You had to know what was, in effect, anthropology, something about other peoples. All this is part of the training to be a full, useful citizen. It's the humanities.

Cheney: Couldn't you look at it another way? That the Sophists had one approach to the humanities and the Platonists another, an approach that emphasized the idea of truth, as opposed to the extreme relativistic stance of the Sophists?

Knox: If you look at what Plato is actually recommending in the *Republic* . . .

Cheney: Oh, it's very undemocratic. I understand that.

Knox: It isn't very humanistic either. Poets are not going to be allowed in the republic unless . . .

Cheney: They sing the state song.

Knox: Yes, right. It sounds like something that just collapsed recently on the other side of the world.

Cheney: That's true.

Knox: I think one has to attribute the humanities to the Sophists. They had this idea that to be a citizen, you need this full, all-around training, and these are the things you study. They're still the things you study.

Cheney: I just read again a book by Bruce Kimball called *Orators and Philosophers*, and he suggests that there's a school that we would think of the Sophists as representing, and another school that we would think of Plato as representing; and that these two forces, the one which is extremely skeptical, relativistic, and the other which has commitment to the principle of truth, have throughout the history of the humanities come into conflict. It's an interesting way to look at it since it does seem to explain part of what's going on now.

Knox: I'd agree with that, because although some of the Sophists made philosophical statements—Gorgias did, for example—you wouldn't really call them philosophers. Whereas with Plato, you are in that realm—very much so.

Cheney: What is the state of classical studies today? Is it healthy?

Knox: I think it's very healthy.

Cheney: And what about the state of the humanities?

Knox: Well, I haven't taught in universities for a long time, but what I read is not very reassuring. All these attempts to break down the common culture that we've always had—at least since English-speaking people have had any kind of a common culture.

It is hard, even now, to give students more than a superficial acquaintance with the main documents of the Western tradition; all we can do is try to give them enough so that they will want to read on for themselves later. But if we add Asian, African, and other literatures, I'm afraid that no one will get more than a smattering not only of the new additions but also of the texts that have defined our identity since the Renaissance.

Cheney: But other than that, classical studies are healthy, other than the fact that they're part of Western civilization, which has been declared "civilization non grata." (laughter)

I don't mean to keep you much longer, but there's one part of the Virgil story you didn't tell. When you found that copy of the book and you saw the relevance to your own life, did that set you on a course of classical studies?

Knox: Yes. I remember thinking, I ought to get back to this, I'll do what I was trained for. On the other hand, at that point I was thinking of staying in the army. I liked the life. I would have, except when I got back here and inquired about what could happen now—and I'll never forget—it was a colonel talked to me, who said, "Do you realize, we've got something like 13 million men under arms and they're going to be reduced to about maybe a million?" He said, "You know what will happen to you if you stay in? You might make corporal." So I said, "Oh, well." But I'm glad I didn't. I'm glad that happened because I'm very happy with what did happen.

Cheney: The army's loss has been classical studies' gain. □

CALENDAR

May ♦ June



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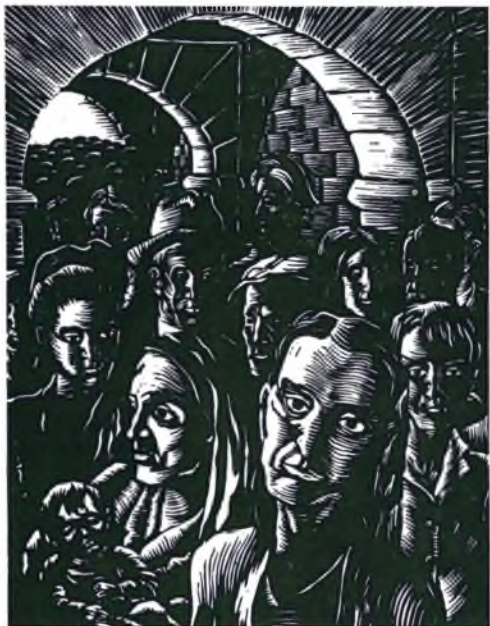
"American Studies and the Undergraduate Humanities Curriculum" will be discussed at a conference at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, May 29-31.

A family in the rural South thins out plants and removes weeds in this photograph from "Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915-1940," which travels to the Museums at Stony Brook, New York, from June 20 through September 7.



New York Public Library

Sanctuary, a 1946 linocut by Wilmer Angier Jennings, is interpreted as a representation of either slaves on the underground railroad or victims of the Holocaust in "Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews," a current exhibition at the Jewish Museum in the New-York Historical Society.



National Center for Afro-American Artists

Among the Columbian Quincenary exhibitions continuing throughout the country are "First Encounters: Spanish Exploration in the Caribbean & United States, 1492 to 1570" at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul, May 29-September 7; "The Age of the Marvelous" at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, May 19-August 25; and "1492: Two Worlds of Science" at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Portland, June 20-November 1.



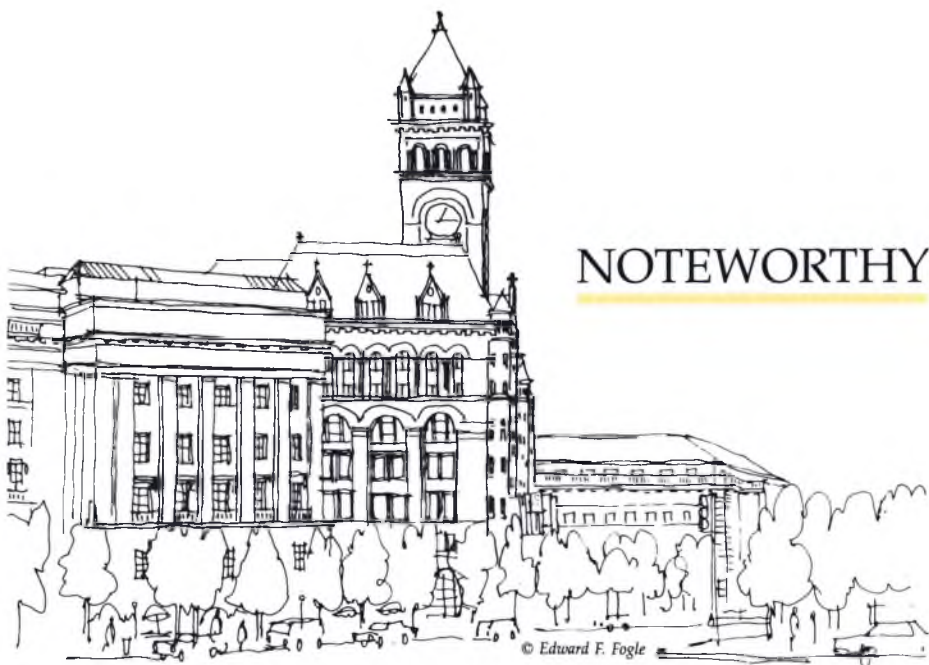
Richard and Marion Pohrt

This Gros Ventre shield, made of buffalo rawhide, buckskin, wool stroud, and eagle feathers, is part of the "Art of the American Indian Frontier: The Collecting of Chandler and Pohrt," opening May 24 at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Library of Congress

The "International Bicentennial Conference on Percy Bysshe Shelley" will be held at the New York Public Library, May 20-23.



NOTEWORTHY

New Marianas Council

Fewer than fifty miles north of Guam in the Pacific Ocean lies the newest state council of NEH, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities. Fourteen islands comprise the Marianas with a total land mass of 182 square miles. The capital island is Saipan, where the council will be located. William R. Barrineau, executive director, says that the Marianas' two populations, the Chamorros and Carolinians, are facing an erosion of their culture and values. The council will be supporting projects that maintain these traditions, especially those that involve the *manamko*, or elders of the community.

"In Micronesia, the proper practice of certain intricate customs literally means the difference between life and death," says Barrineau.

To illustrate this, he tells the story of a young Peace Corps volunteer who had been allowed to accompany a canoe on an ocean voyage to Fais, a tiny spit of sand some two hundred miles away, which was a rookery for green sea turtles. "The voyage would take several days. Precise navigation was a must and one of the oldest and most reliable native navigators was planning to make the voyage. But the volunteer, being something of a sailor himself, produced a chart, a sextant, and a compass, and persuaded the navigator to let him direct the course.

"Reluctantly, the old navigator agreed to let the volunteer and modern science take over where tradition and custom had never failed. However, he remained with the party to see how the instruments worked.

"After sailing for three days, the crew was hopelessly lost. Finally, the old navigator stepped in, changing their course some sixty degrees, and within a half day, made it to Fais. The incredulous volunteer asked how, with no instruments or apparent signs, the man knew that Fais lay there, precisely in the canoe's path. The navigator solemnly replied: 'It's always been there.'"

Dial-a-Professor

Ohio State University is keeping pace with current events by improving the Russian skills of foreign language teachers. Through a telephone teacher-assisted program, secondary school teachers will spend fifteen minutes each week for six months speaking conversational Russian on the phone with a fluent Ohio State professor.

Leon Twarog, professor emeritus of the Slavic department at Ohio State, has developed an unusual opportunity for thirty Russian teachers from schools around the country to strengthen their listening and speaking proficiency. While all participants are currently Russian language instructors, they have varying levels of experience and skills.

"These are teachers who may not speak Russian in class, who cover only the basics of grammar," Twarog explains. "They will never enroll in an institute or a class because they fear showing their ignorance." One-on-one telephone instruction avoids these obstacles, says Twarog, whose project is supported by NEH.

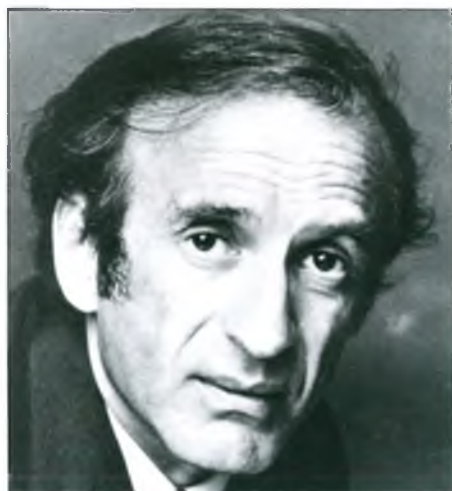
Integrated with the conversations will be exposure to the cultural media—viewing videotapes of Soviet

news and public-affairs broadcasts and movies. A six-day workshop for participants will conclude the program.

The course also has far-reaching implications for teaching other languages, according to Twarog. "There are greater numbers of badly prepared teachers of French, Spanish, and German. If this is successful, we will acquire materials and implement programs for those languages."

Wiesel Lectures at Johns Hopkins

Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel once said, "If there is a single theme that dominates all my writings, all my obsessions, it is that of memory." The Daniel Coit Gilman Lectureship will present Wiesel at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institution on May 27, as part of the "New Perceptions of Memory" lecture and film series. Wiesel's lecture, "The Ethics of Memory," concludes a yearlong public programming effort by Johns Hopkins devoted to the phenomenon of memory, part of a larger endeavor by the institution to renew dialogue between humanists, the medical profession, and the general public.



Elie Wiesel

Johns Hopkins Medical Institution

Since 1985, Johns Hopkins has been exploring the historical relationship between the humanities and medicine through a series of NEH-funded public film viewings, videotaped lectures, discussions, and symposia. Concerned that this relationship had disappeared from the immediate human reality of medical care-giving, the project directors set out to reestablish this connection in their urban community. To achieve these ends, the series has also examined topics such as "The Vision of Tragedy," "Reading the Past: Archaeologies of Medical Thought," and "The New Sciences of the Past."

—Robin L. Baur

HUMANITIES GUIDE

FOR THOSE WHO ARE THINKING OF APPLYING FOR AN NEH GRANT

ASCHOLAR ASSUMES THE persona of Frederick Douglass under a chautauqua tent in Minot, North Dakota. A regional institute plans lectures at locales along a 1,000-mile walk undertaken by eighteenth-century naturalist John Lawson as he traversed the Carolinas. A high school group studies Shakespeare after school and watches behind the scenes as the Folger Theater mounts *Measure for Measure*.

These are a few of the diverse projects supported by the Public Humanities Projects program of the Division of Public Programs. Unlike the division's other three programs (Humanities Projects in Media, Humanities Projects in Museums and Historical Organizations, and Humanities Projects in Libraries and Archives), Public Humanities Projects (PHP) does not restrict its grant making to a single set of constituencies or activities. Rather, it encourages a range of applicants to be creative in finding effective ways to bring scholarship in the humanities to public audiences across the country. Applicants include historical societies, colleges and universities, community groups, and performing arts organizations. These grantees have used a variety of innovative formats, including symposia, community forums, debates, festivals, lecture series, after-theater discussions, brochures, and books. PHP is not a program where "anything goes," but one where all things are possible.

From time to time anniversaries have served to focus PHP projects on subjects or themes of broad scholarly interest. For example, the White House Historical Association received a grant to coincide with the two-hundredth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of the White House. The programs include a symposium, monthly discussion programs, a traveling exhibit with education programs, and a publication to examine the political,

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Public Humanities Projects

BY WILSONIA CHERRY

social, architectural, and cultural history of the White House. The monthly lecture series will engage other cultural institutions in Washington, D.C., including the Martin Luther King Library, the Historical Society of Washington, the Garden Club of America, and the American Institute of Architects, to examine topics such as "The White House: Planners and Builders" and "First Ladies: Influence in Their Time." The exhibition will travel to various presidential historic sites. A book of photographs and essays will also be published and made available to the public.

In addition, the State University of New York, College at Brockport, coordinated scholarly symposia, exhibitions, and a film and lecture series commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of America's entry into World War II. Similarly, the Waverly Consort, a group devoted to the performance of early music, responded to the Endowment's initiative on the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's voyages with "Musical Reflections of the Year 1492: Cultural Encounters in the Age of Discovery." The multiyear project will employ lectures, colloquia, exhibitions, radio programs, and program books to provide a cultural context for the age's musical repertoires. Themes include the confluence of

politics and culture in Europe in the years leading up to the events of 1492, the fall of Granada, and the transmission of European and African cultural traditions to the Americas.

Another ongoing project that brings the history, theory, and criticism of the arts to the public is the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina. In conjunction with a national tour, the group will organize programs on the history of African American dance using slides, videos of African American choreographers, and panel discussions by scholars of dance history and theory.

Sometimes a number of different institutions will work together to mount an array of public programs, as when the Brooklyn Historical Society, the Mercantile Library, the Walt Whitman Birthplace, and the Museum of the City of New York planned symposia, lectures, readings, and walking tours to explore Whitman's life, work, and legacy. In another instance of cooperation, six states—Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota—worked with the Montana Historical Society to investigate their common heritage in community forums, using a slide-tape overview and a booklet of essays. Large or small, multistate or local, PHP projects are characterized by both their scholarship and the particular suitability of format and subject matter to the public.

The Endowment welcomes applications to PHP from nonprofit institutions and organizations for planning or implementation grants. Deadlines are semiannual, in March and September. We invite potential applicants to write to the program briefly describing the proposed project and requesting guidelines and application forms. The staff will be happy to work with prospective applicants. Drafts should be submitted six weeks in advance of the deadlines. For further information, contact the Division of Public Programs, NEH, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506, 202/786-0271.

Award Winners

- **Alaska Historical Society, Historian of the Year Award**, for research and publications in the field of Alaskan history
Fienup-Riordan, Ann. *The Real People and the Children of Thunder: The Yup'ik Eskimo Encounter with Moravian Missionaries John and Edith Kilbuck.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- **American Association of State and Local History, Award of Merit, 1991**
de Caro, Frank. *Folklife in Louisiana Photography: Images of Tradition* (museum catalogue). Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.
Horne, Catherine Wilson. *Crossroads of Clay: The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition* (museum catalogue). Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.
Smith, Barbara Sweetland, and Barnett, Redmond J., eds. *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier* (museum catalogue). Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1990.
- **American Historical Association, George Louis Beer Prize, 1991**
Gillingham, John R. *Coal, Steel, and the Rebirth of Europe, 1945-1955.* Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- **American Historical Association, Leo Gershey Award, 1991**
Nader, Helen. *Liberty in Absolutist Spain: The Hapsburg Sale of Towns, 1516-1700.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- **American Historical Association, Joan Kelly Memorial Prize, 1991**
Glenn, Susan A. *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- **Association of American Publishers, Outstanding Book in Philosophy and Religion, 1990**
Zuckert, Catherine H. *Natural Rights and the American Imagination: Political Philosophy in Novel Form.* Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990.
- **Association for Asian Studies, Joseph Levenson Prize, 1991**, for outstanding work on pre-twentieth-century China
Wu Hung. *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.
- **Bancroft Prize, 1990; Mississippi Historical Association, McLemore Prize, 1991; and Gustavus Meyers Center for the Study of Human Rights in the United States, Award for Distinguished Writing in Race Relations, 1991**
McMillen, Neil R. *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow.* Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- **Bancroft Prize, 1991**
Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- **Before Columbus Foundation, American Book Award, 1991**
Dauenhauer, Nora Marks, and Richard Dauenhauer, eds. *Haa Tuwunaagu Yis, for Healing Our Spirit: Tlingit Oratory.* Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature, 2. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Juneau: Sealaska Heritage Foundation, 1990.
- **Centro Internazionale di Etnostoria, Premio**

EX LIBRIS NEH

BOOKS PUBLISHED RECENTLY WITH NEH SUPPORT

- Internazionale di Studi Etnoantropologici Pitre—Salomone Marino**
Pentikäinen, Juha Y. *Kalevala Mythology.* Translated and edited by Ritva Poom. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- **Dance Perspectives Foundation, De la Torre Bueno Prize, 1990**, for best dance-history book
Souritz, Elizabeth. *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s.* Edited by Sally Banes. Translated by Lynn Visson. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990.
- **Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in the United States**, outstanding book on human rights in the United States, 1991
Foner, Eric, and Olivia Mahoney. *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln* (museum catalogue). New York: Chicago Historical Society and W.W. Norton and Company, 1990.
- **History of Science Society, Pfizer Award, 1991**, for best history of science book published in the past three years
Desmond, Adrian. *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- **Library Association, (UK), Besterman Medal, 1989**, for outstanding bibliography or guide published in the United Kingdom
Ringler, William A., Jr. *Bibliography and Index of English Verse, Printed 1476-1558.* London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1988.
- **Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters, Special Achievement Award, 1990, and Society for the Study of Southern Literature, C. Hugh Holman Award**
Wilson, Charles R., and William Ferris, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- **Modern Language Association, Morton N. Cohen Award, 1991**, for a distinguished edition of letters
Darwin, Charles. *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin.* Vols. 1-7. Edited by Frederick Burkhardt and Sydney Smith. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985-1991.
- **National Jewish Book Award in Scholarship, 1990**
Cohen, Jeremy. *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text.* Ithaca: Cornell University, 1989.
- **North American Conference on British Studies, John Ben Snow Prize in History and the Social Sciences, 1991**
Peck, Linda Levy. *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England.* Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- **PEN Book of the Month Club, Translation Prize, 1991**, for an innovative translation closer to the text than any previous English translation
Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov.* Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990.
- **Phi Beta Kappa Society, Christian Gauss Award, 1991**, for outstanding work of literary scholarship or criticism
Altick, Richard D. *The Presence of the Present: Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991.
- **Phi Beta Kappa Society, Ralph Waldo Emerson Award, 1991**
Degler, Carl N. *In Search of Human Nature.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- **Piedmont Center for the Study of Middle and Extreme Orient in Turin, Italy, CESMEO Prize**
Lariviere, Richard W. *A Critical Edition and Translation of the Hindu Legal Text Naradasmṛiti.*
- **Pulitzer Prize in History, 1990**
Ulrich, Laurel T. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.
- **Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize in Film, TV, and Video Studies, 1990**
Harpole, Charles, ed. *History of the American Cinema.* Vol. 1, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, by Charles Musser. Vol. 2, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915*, by Eileen Bowser. Vol. 3, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928*, by Richard Koszarski. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990.
- **Society for Cinema Studies, Jay Leyda Prize in Cinema Studies, 1990, and Theatre Library Association, Best Book of the Year in Film and Broadcasting, 1990**
Musser, Charles. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907.* History of the American Cinema, vol. 1. Charles Harpole, general editor. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990.
- **Society for History in the Federal Government, Thomas Jefferson Prize**
Berlin, Ira; Thavolia Glymph; Steven F. Miller; Joseph P. Reidy; Leslie S. Rowland; and Julie Saville, eds. *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867.* 1st ser. Vol. 3, *The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Lower South.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- **Sonneck Society, Irving Lowens Award**, for outstanding American music scholarship

Cockrell, Dale. *Excelsior! Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846*. Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1989.

■ **Spanish Ministry of Culture, "Spain and America in the Quincentennial of the Discovery" 1990 Second Prize**

Kessell, John L., ed. *Remote Beyond Compare: Letters of Don Diego de Vargas to His Family from New Spain and New Mexico, 1675-1706*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.

■ **Stanford University, Wayne Vucinich Prize for Best Book in Slavic Studies, 1989**

Stites, Richard. *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

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Blair, Sheila S., and Jonathan M. Bloom. *The Here and the Hereafter: Images of Paradise in Islamic Art*. Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, 1991.

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