



Nearing Pier 85

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Nearing Pier 85

Howard Mumford Jones

This article is from Professor Jones's autobiography to be published in 1979 by the University of Wisconsin Press. The HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN is grateful to the Press and to Professor Jones for generous permission to print a chapter of the book here, and the BULLETIN will always be proud that he was the editor who presided over its revival in 1967.

EEW & RKB

TWO YEARS before I retired from Harvard University I was given the new and honorable chair of Abbott Lawrence Lowell Professor of the Humanities. I think I was the first member of the regular faculty to occupy this seat, though it had been briefly given the previous year to Edmund Wilson, the critic. Wilson, however, had made no effort to undertake the full duties of a professorship, and — tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon — the students and the faculty found him disappointing as a teacher. On the occasion of my appointment in 1960 I delivered a full-dress lecture on the meaning of the humanities, and more especially the need for them, but as I have already discussed both the need and the theory in *One Great Society*, I shall not repeat myself. Some years after my retirement — in 1973 to be exact — the national society of the Phi Beta Kappa honored me with the award of a prize and a medal for my labors in the cause of humanism.

Under the ordinary rules I should have been retired in my sixty-fifth year in 1957, but the President, the Dean, and the two Governing Boards have the power to waive the regulation if they see fit, and I was kept in service until I was seventy. The combined problems of retirement and tenure have of recent years been very much in the public eye, one reason being that we have lengthened the expectation of life in America, and another reason being that however much *réclame* a professor may bring to an institution, that institution cannot survive unless it is continually fed with fresh young talent. The problem is delicate, and I can only say with Robert Browning that it is an awkward thing to play with souls. There is also for better or

worse a sort of rule-of-thumb philosophy at work: mathematicians and scientists are said to burn out earlier than do humanists and historians. Unfortunately, like so many other rules of thumb, there are always enough exceptions to shake one's faith in the rule. Dear old Alfred North Whitehead, who joined the Harvard faculty in either his late seventies or his eighties, seemed as alert and alive as the most promising of young Ph.D.'s; and a distinguished biologist did his best research work, or so I am told, when he retired from both his administrative and his academic posts. And what shall one say of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, once a full professor at Harvard, who is, I know, no longer fashionable (he has been victimized by anthologists) but who produced some of his finest poems in the last decades of his life? For the fiftieth reunion of the class of 1827 he wrote "Morituri Salutamus," and I find it difficult to shake off the powerful impression this poem made on me when first I read it, and which it makes on me still:

The scholar and the world! The endless strife,
 The discord in the harmonies of life!
 The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,
 And all the sweet serenity of books;
 The market-place, the eager love of gain,
 Whose aim is vanity, and whose end is pain!

.....
 What then? Shall we sit idly down and say
 The night hath come; it is no longer day?
 The night hath not yet come; we are not quite
 Cut off from labor by the failing light;
 Something remains for us to do or dare;
 Even the oldest tree some fruit may bear.

Longfellow had noted earlier in the poem the cases of Goethe, Chaucer, Theophrastus, who began his "Characters of Men" at eighty, Sophocles, Simonides, and Cato, who learned Greek at eighty. An astonishing performance, this poem, for an old man of sixty-eight! Equalled in our own time only by the unquenchable creativity of Robert Frost!

This is not the place to discuss Longfellow or Robert Frost, and it is a platitude hoary with age that men are the worst judges in their own cases. But what is an autobiography but a man's final judgment on himself? My own feeling is that the last two decades of my life have been the most productive and the most thoughtful in their dedication to the task of fusing humanism and history.

Let me interrupt this solemnity by referring to one of the last courses I taught at Harvard. I called it "Neglected Masterpieces," and it drew a small group of bewildered but interested students. I had attended so many oral examinations that I began making lists of books the students knew by title only, and I thought it might be instructive to examine these books with the same care that an English department lavishes upon Wordsworth. My reading list is too long to quote, but it ran from Rossetti's *The House of Life*, intellectually one of the most difficult performances in the nineteenth century, to Owen Meredith's *Lucile*, which once used to lie on the table of every family with some pretensions to culture. I am not sure that even now I understand every sonnet in *The House of Life*, whereas *Lucile* is easy reading, a novel in verse of the most sentimental kind. I do not see, however, that it is worse than some of the standard titles in the usual curriculum, and it contains at least one unforgettable couplet:

We may live without poetry, music or books,
But civilized man cannot live without cooks.

Is not sentimentalism entitled to its masterpieces? Another book-title that sometimes came up in these examinations was Sheridan Le Fanu's incomparable *Uncle Silas* (1864). Le Fanu is gradually coming into his own, owing in part to the incessant labors of that specialist in Gothicism, Professor Sir Devendra P. Varma of Dalhousie University in Canada, who has brought out a complete edition of this writer. If *Uncle Silas* is not available to the reader, let him try *The House by the Churchyard*, which is also masterly in its kind. I did not, I now remember with regret, include Wilkie Collins' *Armadale* in my list. I found that most students could tell me about *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, but the mention of *Armadale* always drew a blank. That book has, I tend to think, the most complicated plot ever put together; and I am sorry I did not have an opportunity to compare the villainous Miss Gwilt in *Armadale* with the devilish governess in *Uncle Silas*, Mme. de la Rougierre. That I had struck pay dirt, so to speak, is evident from the fact that scarce a year passes but somebody writes in for a copy of the list.

Retired as a professor emeritus, I was recalled to active service briefly to revive that highly respectable periodical, the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN, which, after a year of preparation, came to life again with volume XV in January 1967. A short foreword by Merle

Fainsod, then the Director of the Harvard University Library, states the intent of this quarterly:

It is published in the belief that one of the great libraries of the world cannot meet in full the responsibilities inherent in its position unless it has a regular publication which will make known to the Harvard community and to the scholarly world in general its collections, its experiences, and its ideas.

Merle, alas, is no longer among the living, but he was quoting Keyes D. Metcalf, that internationally-known librarian who in a sense founded the BULLETIN and who, as I write, is very much alive. It is melancholy to remember that the first two numbers of the revived journal had to contain a memorial of William Alexander Jackson, bibliophile and teacher, who headed the Houghton Library, but who died in 1964. This article (in two parts) was written by his friend and successor at the Houghton, William H. Bond. My place on the BULLETIN is now filled by Edwin E. Williams, who served with me as Associate Editor. As Harvard now has something like nine million books, besides untold quantities of archives and manuscripts, I think that, barring total catastrophe, the BULLETIN is destined for a long life.

I say "barring total catastrophe" advisedly, for my final philosophy has become a somber one. Putting aside *ad hoc* articles, edited works, and the necessary busy-work of my profession, I have produced eleven books between 1962 and the date of this one. Obviously they are not all of equal weight. *History and the Contemporary* and *Violence and Reason* are collections of essays, the first put together as one of the requirements of the post I occupied as a visiting professor at my alma mater, the University of Wisconsin; the second was compiled with the kindly assistance of Thomas J. Wilson, when he left the directorship of the Harvard University Press for commercial publishing, only to die prematurely. The gap he left in the lives of those who knew him can never be filled. The nature of *A Guide to American Literature and Its Backgrounds* is evident from its title; it would not have been useful had I not had as my colleague for successive editions of the little volume Richard M. Ludwig, the man to whom this autobiography is dedicated. Bessie, my gifted and industrious wife, and I got out *The Many Voices of Boston* together; it is an anthology intended to destroy the legend that only the Puritan, the Brahmin, and the Irish created the Athens of America.

Jeffersonianism and the American Novel had so queer a history I think it must be told. The University of California at Berkeley has an annual lectureship devoted to some phase of Jefferson's interests. The chair has been filled by such eminent scholars as Dumas Malone, Jefferson's biographer. I felt honored when I was asked to become the Jefferson lecturer in the sixties and set about finding a topic within my competence as a literary scholar. I selected *Jeffersonianism and the American Novel* for the lectures I proposed to give. The formal arrangements with the University were, and are, that the lecturer, after delivering his addresses, receives one half his fee, the other half being paid when he turns in a manuscript to the University of California Press. My custom, when I am to give an important set of lectures, is to write them out so that, with very few revisions, they can go at once to the publisher. This I did at Berkeley and received the total fee in one check. Many weeks went by and I heard nothing from either the President of the University or the Director of the University of California Press.

When I sifted through the enormous body of Jefferson's printed words, I discovered that he took contradictory views of the novel. Like many other eighteenth-century worthies, he thought most novels were trash and warned young people against wasting time on them. But again, like some others of the period, he also said a novel can touch the heart, awaken right emotions, lead the soul to virtue, especially domestic virtue, and make a wiser citizen out of the reader. This part of Jefferson's views led me to think that what Jefferson wanted out of novel-reading was a lesson in civic morality, rationalism, and the duties of domesticity. This test being peculiarly Jeffersonian, notably in its emphasis on reason, I applied it to American novelists from the beginning to the present day. Thus the novels of Cooper, whether one agrees with his political view or not, do teach civic duty. So likewise do the novels of Howells and, more weakly, those of James. It seems to me impossible, however, that a responsible representative republic can rest on the shoulders of the characters in Faulkner's fiction, for example, the entire Snopes tribe or, for that matter, almost all of his creations—save one or two. I said this, adding that this was not a total valuation of Faulkner. Indeed, when we get into modern times, an era colored with the uncritical adoption of Freudian and post-Freudian psychology by writers, it seems self-evident that reading fiction of this kind would have made Jefferson unhappy; and I

plainly said this, declaring not once but several times that this was not the whole story of twentieth-century American novel-writing. Other scholars have remarked the rise of the anti-hero as the central character in American fiction.

Manuscripts are not accepted by the Director of the Press until they have been approved by the editors, syndics, or whatever their title may be, representing all of the many campuses of the University of California. Apparently nobody informed this committee of the circumstances in which my lectures were given, nor, I should guess, did they know Jefferson. At any rate, they reported I was badly informed about the development of American letters and my manuscript was therefore not worth publishing. It was returned to me by the Press. I was at the time a Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Behavioral Sciences near Stanford; and after consulting with a number of my colleagues there, I wrote to the President of the University of California, saying that I had carried out my part of the bargain. Why did he permit the University of California Press to get out from under its obligation? The answer I received was curiously evasive, not only in my opinion but in the opinion of my colleagues at the Center. Accordingly, I withdrew the manuscript and went through it, carefully erasing any reference to California or to the Jefferson lectureship; and through the kindness of Lawrence Cremin, then a Fellow at the Center, the book was published by the Teachers College Press of Columbia University, which not only seemed glad to get it but raised no question of my competence as a cultural historian. But now let me concentrate on my general view of history and humanism.

America and French Culture (1927) had been applauded because it seemed to give a better background, a richer setting for American literature down to about 1850. I think I may truthfully say that this book was an unconscious prelude to what I shall refer to as my trilogy: *O Strange New World* (1964), *Revolution and Romanticism* (1974), and *The Age of Energy* (1971). I put these titles in what I may call their historical order, not in the order of their publication. At points they overlap because they were not written schematically, nor was the order and pattern of any volume necessarily neat and logical like a legal brief; the only word I can think of to illuminate their structure is *symphonic*. By this I mean that in each volume I have seized upon three or four major themes and studied their development in American history as closely as I could. The trilogy is therefore not a consecutive

history of either American culture or American literature, but the intent of the whole is to analyze what was happening in the mainland colonies and the United States, not alone in the light of what seems important to us today but also in the light of our relations with the Old World. *O Strange New World*, for example, pays great attention to Latin America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and I regret that I could not find the space, even if I had the knowledge, to continue studying the relations and parallels between the two New World continents. It sometimes seems to me that every new presidential administration in the United States resolves on friendlier relations with Latin America, but even in the twentieth century most American universities pay insufficient attention to Latin American culture, or no attention at all. One of our difficulties is that history is in most institutions political and social. Viewed unfavorably, the history of Latin America seems to be a monotonous succession of revolutions, dictatorships, rebellions, and mismanagement. If, however, historians of American culture would take their eyes off Latin American rulers and turn their attention to Latin American thinkers and philosophers, we should have, in my opinion, a far juster understanding of the culture (or cultures) south of us. Leading American thinkers in South America believe, or at least some of them believe, that their destiny is to become the "cosmic race," by which enigmatic phrase they mean, as I understand it, that their intermingling of races — Indian, Negro, European, Asiatic, and so on — promises more happiness for mankind than does our enigmatic interpretation of doctrines of liberty, equality, and fraternity. If this is unacceptable to the reader, let him at least remember that the institutions of this country are North European (Germanic, Teutonic) in their distant origins, Protestant in spirit, and focused on London, whereas the countries of Latin America are Mediterranean and Amerindian in their beginnings, Roman Catholic in their value systems, and look to Paris as the great focal point of the Latin mind and of Latin values. Undoubtedly there are exceptions to these rough generalizations, but they at least go beyond the "banana republic" attitude of too many North Americans. There is a "dark legend" of Spanish cruelty in that part of the world; it is a much exaggerated legend, and when all the cards are down, it would be difficult to show that the treatment of the Indians by Spanish and Portuguese conquerors was worse than the treatment of these same

people by the various governments that have ruled the United-States-to-be.

O Strange New World has its inception in the historical truth that Britain came late into the colonial era and found Latin American culture already old in most of the New World west of the Mississippi and of course in French Canada. The theme of the book is the ambivalent nature of European experiences on continents as strange to them as life on another planet, if there is any, would seem to us. As part of this complex story, I tried in this volume to give both sides of the medal — the emotional glow with which news of the discovery of riches in the New World was received, and, on the other hand, the fright and horror that alternated with the golden glory. I then went on to discuss how far the Renaissance culture of Europe, whether of the south or of the north, influenced voyages of discovery, the ownership of land, and finding, or the disappointment in not finding, gold, silver, and jewels all over the Americas. In both North and South America the formulas of discovery, invasion, conquest, and settlement began by being military; but because the church universal was and is a unit, or likes to think so, the endless ecclesiastical squabbles that distinguish and disgrace the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the future United States were not shaping forces in the development of all New World civilizations. I then went back and confined myself for a while to the British Isles in an effort to discuss why this great seafaring people had been so loath to cross the Atlantic; and I suppose for most readers the new note here was my comparison, historically justified, of the wild Irish and the wild Indians. I then went on to trace as well as I could the leading ethical values and political ideals of the British colonies, contrasting these from time to time with the principles regnant in Spanish or Portuguese America. Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the last third of the book is entitled "Roman Virtue"; this points out the paradox that, though the American republic was never part of the Roman Empire, classical concepts in art and government have played their important roles in the earlier history of the United States. I traced the history of this fashion through the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

Turning next to the American Revolution, I made the point that the United States in its beginning was a republic that contradicted the good sense of all European rulers by being too large to govern; and I simultaneously dwelt upon the fears of Europe (perhaps not altogether

unjustified) that this upstart nation would corrupt ancient values. The Americans were afraid that the values of Europe would corrupt the United States, and this fear led Washington to warn the country against entangling alliances; Jefferson to advise young travelers visiting the courts of Europe to look at them as if they were going to a zoo; and Monroe to formulate the Monroe Doctrine (convenient to the British Foreign Ministry), which boldly announced what was even more brashly stated later in American history by Secretary of State Olney during the Venezuelan crisis, when he bluntly declared in 1895 that the policy of the United States was paramount over the entire New World. Secretary Olney and other members of the Cabinet managed to avoid a war with Germany over the Venezuelan debt question; but we conveniently forget that, despite Washington, Jefferson, and Monroe, this country has been constantly or intermittently involved in the affairs of Europe from the undeclared naval war on France in the administration of John Adams, through various attempts to reform or occupy Caribbean lands or the Hawaiian Islands, to our second and fantastic war with Great Britain and our refusal to recognize as valid an imperial system in Mexico, instigated and for a short time upheld by Louis Napoleon of France. In the twentieth century, of course, we have been as mixed up with Europe as any true European power could be.

The final chapter of *O Strange New World* has to do with that relation of wildness in the uninhabited forests, the savage rivers, the great lakes, the great plains, and the lofty mountains east and west which have created so diversified a climate for the American republic. For this volume I received the Pulitzer Prize and the Emerson award of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

Since the 1960s were the centenary of the American Civil War, I thought of doing a book on this vast conflict and its causes, but so many excellent volumes by other historians were issued that I decided to forgo the opportunity. There is therefore an awkward gap in time between the era covered by *O Strange New World* and the period I have discussed in *The Age of Energy*.

On re-reading *The Age of Energy* I find it a better-organized book than *O Strange New World* but one which is unfortunately written in denser prose. The impulse to write the volume came from my increasing distaste for the uncritical opinion of many historians, an opinion summed up in that vicious standard phrase, "the Gilded Age."

This phrase implies both a moral condemnation of whatever is narrated before the reader has had time to form his own value judgments, and a fixed opinion that nothing good could come out of so superficial and coarse a culture. Scoundrelism in finance, public life, and politics is supposed to be matched or produced by "the Gilded Age," a phrase that stops all critical investigation and damns beyond salvation, except in the case of a few protestors, the immense American library produced by the period. Historians have also apparently forgotten, if they ever knew it, the wise injunction of Edmund Burke that he did not know how to indict a whole people. It seemed to me, therefore, that the Gilded Age and the Genteel Tradition alike required a new analysis.

I warned the reader at the beginning of my study that I was not going to moralize upon either the actions or the personages prominent in these decades. I myself doubt that the distribution of good and evil in the era differs greatly from the distribution of good and evil in any other half century. Seeking out some title that would express the actual central characteristic of the five decades between our Civil War and World War I, I arrived at the phrase, the "Age of Energy." In a sense my idea is self-evident, though I again warned the reader that even though I gave him the technological definition of energy in engineering and physics, I was going to use the term loosely — the energy of style, the energy of personality, and energy in politics, in religion, in science, in the industrial world, and in the economic life of the nation — in short, wherever I should find it. I came to feel that the age of energy moved relentlessly to a climax in the two presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt.

As for the Gilded Age, I threw overboard a whole library of stale and superficial generalizations uttered by the "authorities" on this period, many of whom, I am impolite enough to think, have never studied the context or the accomplishments of the period. They seem to forget the Emersonian injunction that every scripture should be read in the light of the circumstances that brought it forth. Possibly the most important "fact" inevitably inducing the esthetic theories we associate with the Gilded Age was American weariness with romanticism in all its phases and the feeling that, however fine romantic masterpieces might be, artists, thinkers, and writers were more often than not deficient in technique. Accordingly, a rising generation determined to master technique, or, if one prefers, to return to the

ancient tradition of form as quintessential to art. As Dante Gabriel Rossetti once noted, poetry is the product of brain power. This search for a way out of the fragmentation of romanticism, particularly in the United States, inevitably meant a return to the study of Europe, which I applaud. By praising these artists, I do not in the least denigrate American achievements (at least I hope I don't), but I do emphasize that American modernism in the post-Civil-War period and European modernism in the same decade were very much alike. In fact, I was prepared to, and do, affirm that Europe, instead of extending to the Alleghenies where Emerson cut it off, now extends to the Pacific Coast and the islands of the sea or wherever a powerful new American-European influence has been felt since 1865. Great new original ideas, especially in the sciences, in these years seem in the main to have originated in the Old World; but when they were translated to North America, they were often re-defined, modified in utilitarian fashion, and put to use on a far larger scale than was possible in the country of their origin. Thus, although the railway is principally a cosmopolitan invention in which British engineering genius had a great part to play, by 1900 the American railway system was the finest in the world. (Alas, where is that system now? Replaced by airliners flying at incredible heights and unbelievable speeds and producing from time to time disasters far worse than anything the railroads experienced in their short period of perfection.) Reviewers were more puzzled than enlightened by my emphasis upon this return to the Old World for basic ideas, a return that grew constantly in bulk and importance not alone in the areas of art and literature but in the practical worlds of agriculture, industry, and commerce.

But if reviewers were cautious in their appraisals of *The Age of Energy*, they were often baffled by both the structure and the contents of *Revolution and Romanticism*. One newspaper reviewer said quaintly, "Mr. Jones has read too many books." Newspaper editors in some cases sent my volume to a specialist on the American Revolution or the French Revolution since that dread noun appeared in the title and since, on leafing through the pages, they found that my discussion had something to do with revolution, but they were not sure what. The resulting reviews naturally saw no point to my intense study of the meaning of classicism, neo-classicism, the pre-romantics, the proclaimers of sensibility as a mode of life, and the earlier achievements of romanticism. Other book editors sent the volume to spe-

cialists in literary history or its equivalent, and these gentry were puzzled to read chapters on the American Revolution and the French Revolution in a book that spent a great deal of time on forgotten authors or at least authors unread by Americans, such as the influential German philosopher Hamann. Since I could not count on any general knowledge of such notable creations as Goethe's *Faust*, Hugo's *Hernani*, Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, or even Byron's *Manfred*, masterpieces which now seem to be confined to college classrooms and are not always discovered even there, I found it necessary to detail the plots of works like these, to analyze at some length the contents and purpose of the great romantic achievements in words, just as I had found it necessary to differentiate between the austere classicism of the Age of Louis XIV, the neo-classicism of much of the eighteenth century, and (to confound confusion) the romantic classicism evident in poets like Keats and de Vigny, a sculptor such as Canova or Thorwaldsen, many musical compositions, and, to conclude this list of difficulties, the romantic return to the worship of throne and altar that was part of the passionate reaction against the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire.

I had to deal with the Western world in one of the most intricate chapters of its history, one that runs from the death of Louis XIV to the display of Gautier's red waistcoat at the riot produced by that shattering experience, the first production of Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830. Possibly my intent would have been clearer if I had quoted as an epigraph the statement by Hugo that the revolution of 1830 was a revolution stopped half way. I doubt that contemporary readers would catch the force of the allusion.

But all this, although I think it true enough, does not get at the heart of the problem I was trying to solve. Let me put it this way. Between 1763 and 1861 there were two gigantic upheavals in the Western world, the one in the sphere of politics, the other in the world of esthetics. The first was tremendous political revolutions, the end of which seems to me not yet in sight; the other was a great esthetic and philosophic revolution which may or may not be dead, depending upon one's view of recent literature, contemporary paintings, modern architecture, and what passes nowadays for sculpture. During the period the book discusses, three potent forces struggled both against and with each other. One was the idea of republican man evident in both revolutions but more particularly in the American rebellion;

one was the rights of the people, supposed to lie at the heart of the French Revolution, yet unable throughout the nineteenth century to produce a stable government in France; and the third was the infinite variety of the romantic rebellion in art, thought, and conduct. These are interwoven as giant vines interweave trees in a tropical forest. Not all romantics were revolutionaries and not all revolutionaries were romantics, though history would be much simpler if this were true. In general the American Revolution, whatever its dates, lies within the boundaries of eighteenth-century values and is touched only slightly by romantic doctrine, though a case can be made for the effect of eighteenth-century sensibility upon some of the participants. But the French revolutionaries began their rebellion the same year the new government of the United States took over under the Federal Constitution (a thoroughly eighteenth-century document); the leading personalities in France seemed to me, at least, for the most part romantic personalities, their conduct and their style, particularly in oratory, anticipating the rhetoric of the German romantic schools, the French romantic schools, and the French romantic rebels of 1829-1830. Principal characters in the French Revolution, especially after 1793, could have been invented by Byron. Doubtless we shall never comprehend the romantic movement in its entirety, though it altered the sensibility, the style, and the philosophy, not to speak of the political theory, of the whole Western world. Fortunately, however, the doctrine which formerly held that romanticism was a mere puzzling emotional release — a favorite theory of the late Irving Babbitt — has now given way to a deeper understanding of a movement which reshaped human life and values. My study does not touch upon the curious relation between romantic humanism and modern technology, but that relation nevertheless exists. It exists, just as our enthusiasm for scientific exploration leads us to spend billions trying to get to the moon or Mars, presumably to take care of the surplus population of our world.

In its origins American literature was of local interest, a merely provincial affair. Just before and during the American Revolution — indeed beyond the age of Jackson — its proponents regarded themselves as unique. Prose writers of the American Revolution, after the republic seemed well established, continued to regard themselves not merely as unique souls but as prophets leading Western man to a sort of popular Utopia. This was the continuing theme of the dull poets

we know as the Connecticut wits, and it was even strong enough to color the utterances of a man like Emerson when he said that American youth had listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. As evolutionary theory crept from geology to anthropology and from anthropology to social history, including the history of the arts, the British were perhaps justified in regarding the American muse as given to braggadocio; yet American writers, when the country began to have an assured place in the world, were, with certain exceptions such as Walt Whitman, quite content to rejoin the Old World and to become a province in the literary empire of Europe. We, though we will not admit it, rejoined the Atlantic Community.

If the United States is not merely to survive but also make its way amid this immense confusion, it must begin by understanding itself. The nation now contains but will not face a cultural dilemma. The republic was built on certain philosophic principles evident in the writings of the founding fathers. These principles were common assumptions among progressive eighteenth-century thinkers, who studied Locke, Montesquieu, and the ancients, who accepted the faculty psychology of their time, and who assumed as a matter of course that man is sufficiently rational to choose his rulers wisely. Their vision was that of a happy agrarian republic.

By the generation of Emerson the basic interpretation of human nature was shifting from rationality to intuition, from geometry to dynamism, from mind to soul; and when one reads Emerson's attacks on Boston's financial center, State Street, together with those of Hawthorne, Melville, and others, one realizes that a split was developing — the split noted in the 1920s by Van Wyck Brooks when he said that one half of America was descended from Benjamin Franklin the businessman and the other half from Jonathan Edwards the idealist.

But the soul disappeared in 1890 when, in his *Principles of Psychology*, William James banished it as a concept useless to the scientific psychologist. In the twentieth century the agrarian republic has also vanished into what Henry Miller calls our air-conditioned nightmare and what kindlier commentators describe as the triumph of our technological skills. There are other changes. One is the decline of the church as a guide for life. A second is the increasing importance of higher education as a surrogate for religion. A third is the virtual disappearance of the radical left and the emergence of the radical right. A fourth is the uncritical acceptance of a shallow doctrine of

human nature as fundamentally irrational. This theory is now the stock-in-trade of the arts, and, unfortunately, of many humanists, and is flatly contradicted by the dazzling success of rationality in other fields. Poets and novelists, filled with zeal for irrationalism, inconsistently continue to go to the dentist, the doctor, and the surgeon for physiological repair on scientific principles discovered by rational research.

The profound disharmony between the theory of human nature as inevitably irrational and of art as subliminal self-expression, and the triumphs of the intellect in a mensurational civilization is the principal cultural problem of our time. Doubtless, as René Dubos observes, civilizations commonly become intoxicated with their technological proficiency. But you do not correct the alleged inhumanity of a mensurational culture by celebrating the superiority of a non-rational art. No one desires to control the artist. But the humanist has the legitimate function of seeing the arts in terms of their general cultural responsibility and not merely in terms of themselves. Is not this the highest responsibility of scholarship? The duty of scholarship is to bring philosophy to the interpretation of the arts, not merely to derive its modes of interpretation from current practitioners of art and of criticism.

Whatever fashions may crowd the hour, the nobility of art and of scholarship must be what the sculptor Ernst Barlach meant when he said: "What man can suffer and must suffer, the grandeur and the need of man: to that I am committed." The emphasis is clear. It is not on the easy way of suffering but on the difficult way of grandeur.

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