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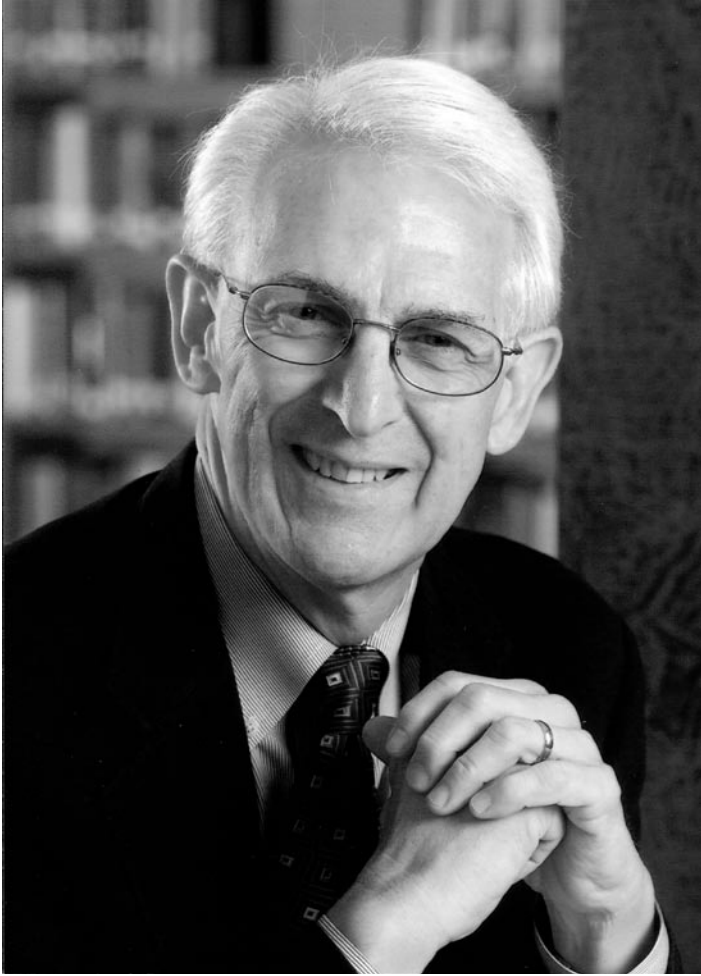
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Trinity College
HARTFORD CONNECTICUT



A PASSION FOR HISTORY

A Symposium in Honor of

BORDEN W. PAINTER, JR.

20TH PRESIDENT OF TRINITY COLLEGE

MAY 10, 2004

Edited by John Alcorn



Cesare Barbieri Endowment for Italian Culture

2008

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Introduction

On May 10, 2004, the Cesare Barbieri Endowment for Italian Culture held a symposium in honor of Borden W. Painter, Jr., on the occasion of his retirement as president of Trinity College. The weather was glorious, the audience overflowing, and the words insightful, affectionate, and humorous. The Barbieri Endowment is delighted to mark its fiftieth year (1958-2008) by publishing the symposium.

The theme, *A Passion for History*, captures Borden's intellectual spirit—and a value that bridges all the liberal arts. Thus the symposium features his keynote address and lectures by faculty from each of Trinity's four academic divisions. Ward S. Curran (social sciences) is an economist drawn to history by his birthplace: Springfield, Illinois. Henry A. DePhillips, Jr., (natural sciences) is a chemist drawn to history by his vocation for art conservation. Kristin A. Triff (arts) is an architect converted to art history by her love of Roman *palazzi*. Howard DeLong (humanities) is a philosopher drawn to history by the unmined potential of Thomas Jefferson's conception of deliberative democracy.

An ordeal prevented Howard DeLong from delivering his lecture at the symposium. The ordeal, the courage that withstands it, and the generosity that transcends it, deserve to be recorded here. At the time

of the symposium, Howard's daughter, Karen Parles, was at a terrible moment in what is now a ten-year struggle with lung cancer. Against all odds, Karen lives. And by her nature, she gives; she is the founder and propeller of the life-affirming website, *lungcanceronline.org*. In 2001, Williams College honored Karen with its highest award, The Bicentennial Medal, for her distinguished achievements in patient education and advocacy in the face of great personal adversity. The Barbieri Endowment is moved to witness Karen's resilience and nobility and to make the symposium whole by publishing Howard's undelivered lecture.

At the symposium, by way of introduction to the keynote lecture, John H. (Jack) Chatfield—historian, master teacher, conscience of the College—provided an eloquent appreciation of Borden. Jack's remarks, too, are published herein.

Borden and I share research interests in modern Italy and historiography; and we have taught a variety of courses together. In the archive, Borden is a paragon of the intellectual virtues; in the classroom, a natural mentor. What makes him a fine historian and teacher is that he remains at heart a student. He has a passion for history.

To be sure, dispassionate motivations—cognitive and practical values, the reasons of the mind—are reason enough to study history. Judges, who wish to rule wisely, need to know legal precedents, and perhaps also the original meanings of laws. Scientists resourcefully harness historical evidence when their hypotheses cannot be tested

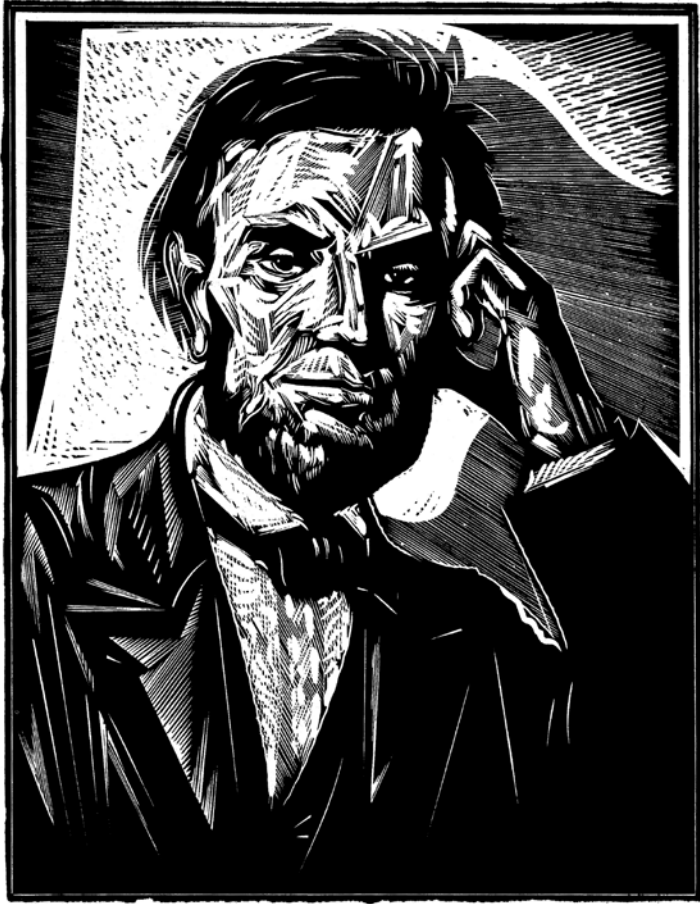
directly by controlled experiment or by field observation. Leaders, who must make momentous decisions, vicariously enlarge their experience by reading historical biographies. Communities try and discover why and how their institutions emerged and evolved, the better to assess their heritage and to evaluate ideas for change. As these examples indicate, in various crucial domains of civilization we trust dispassionate historical inquiry to help us do our level best. No wonder history is a bridge among the liberal arts!

Yet how we care about the past integrates more than the reasons of the mind. The lectures in this volume also betoken history's reasons of the heart. The symposium itself is testament to Borden's profound mark on minds and hearts at Trinity. ☞

John Alcorn

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CESARE BARBIERI ENDOWMENT FOR ITALIAN CULTURE



Linoleum block print © Stephen Alcorn

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND MY PASSION FOR HISTORY

Ward S. Curran '57

WARD S. CURRAN DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS

My passion for history began at an early age. When one is born and raised in the capital of the State of Illinois, he or she “cannot escape history,” at least American history.

I was also influenced by my father, who had his own passion for history and who regaled me with stories of my paternal great grandfather, who held a minor position in the Lincoln administration.¹ I was further influenced by my mother, who, as Director of Technical Services for the Illinois State Library, was often assisting or directing the assistance of those using the Lincoln collection. She was acquainted with Benjamin Thomas, whose one-volume biography of the sixteenth president was for years a standard and is still in print.

I lived in a bungalow directly across the street from the Lawrence home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which in turn piqued my interest in his role in the history of American architecture. A few blocks away stood the home of Vachael Lindsay. When Jim Miller taught English at Trinity, he employed some of Lindsay’s poems in at least one of his courses. My paper route included the Governor’s Mansion near the Lindsay home. As a result, Governor Adlai E. Stevenson (the Democratic nominee for President in 1952 and 1956) was one of my customers.

I wish to thank my colleague, Dean Ronald Spencer, for his very helpful comments and suggestions on this paper. The content, however, is the responsibility of the author.

¹Nathaniel B. Curran, “General Isaac B. Curran: Gregarious Jeweler,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 71:4 (November 1978) 272-8.

Vachael Lindsay was the reason why my peer group and I experienced a remarkable set of English teachers, all women, all single, all well trained in their subject, including the historical context in which English and American literature developed. All were widely respected in the community. They were, of course, in the later stages of their careers. If it were not for Vachael Lindsay, they would probably not have come to Springfield.

Against this background it is easy to understand why one develops a taste for history. The scope of my reading in the subject broadened in college and continues to do so. Unlike most economists (with notable exceptions in economic development, monetary economics, economic history, and the history of economic thought), I prefer to combine an historical with an analytical approach to my field rather than concentrate solely on the analytical framework that dominates the field.

I have always had an appreciation for history as a part of both my general education and my professional work. Furthermore, for most of my life I have had a specific passion for a better understanding of Abraham Lincoln. The sixteenth president, in the eyes of most people, is one of our greatest and, in the opinion of many, including the author, the greatest president this country has yet seen.

Although few in number, he has his detractors. The libertarian historian Thomas DiLorenzo in *The Real Lincoln* attacks him as among other things, a centralizer.² Indeed he was, as that term might be applied in the economic context of the day. Lincoln was a Whig and, of course, later an early member and leader of the Republican Party in Illinois. Whigs were for government-sponsored internal improvements, a national bank, and a protective tariff. Lincoln

² Thomas DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln* (New York: New York Three Rivers Press, 2003), Ch. 9.

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supported all of these measures very early in his political career and was consistent in his support of them. In the context still understood today in terms of economic policy, Lincoln was a “Hamiltonian” not a “Jeffersonian.”

Of course, the Civil War, or in Lincoln’s view the “insurrection,” created its own economic and financial problems. The first income tax was enacted in 1861.³ The national bank did not materialize but a national paper currency, the Greenbacks, did emerge. They were largely the responsibility of Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury. In addition, legislation creating banks with national charters was enacted. A ten percent tax was placed on state chartered bank notes, which quickly disappeared as a medium of exchange. Bank notes were, of course, replaced by demand deposits or checking accounts.⁴

Within the larger context of American history, Congress enacted, and the President signed on May 20, 1862, the Homestead Act. (Buchanan had vetoed a similar bill in 1860 on the grounds that Congress did not have the power to give or sell public lands to citizens.) In April 1862, slavery was abolished in Washington, D.C. On June 19, 1862, an Act of Congress forbade slavery in all the territories.⁵ By May 14, 1862, McClellan was within hearing distance of the church bells of Richmond and the fortunes of the Confederacy looked bleak.⁶ Yet on July 2, 1862, the Union Army of the Potomac withdrew to Harrison Landing on the James River.

³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Almanac of American History* (New York: C.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1983), p. 280.

⁴ George David Smith and Richard Sylla, *The Transformation of American Capitalism* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 14.

⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁶ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 454.

In recent years as I continue to learn more about Lincoln, I have begun to reflect on an interesting counterfactual. Suppose McClellan had succeeded in taking the Confederate Capital sometime in 1862. I realize, given his indecisiveness, McClellan probably would not have done so. McClellan was, to use the modern idiom about the Chicago Cubs, quite capable of “snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.” Moreover, by July 2nd the military situation was a stalemate. Grant had nearly lost at Shiloh in April.⁷ McClellan’s subsequent retreat, punctuated by the Battle of Seven Pines or Fair Oaks, had cost the Confederates dearly.⁸

What makes the counterfactual so intriguing was, to use Donald’s words, “The lack of military success blocked Lincoln’s plan to unite all the moderate elements in the country in a just, harmonious restoration of the union.”⁹

In an earlier appraisal, but in the same historical context, Benjamin Thomas, anticipating Lincoln’s move toward the Emancipation Proclamation, noted that the President

[...] had shaped his policies to command the united support of Republicans, war Democrats and loyal border state slave owners. But he could resist the anti-slavery Republicans no longer and still command the support he must have to win the war.¹⁰

On July 1, 1862, Congress passed the Pacific Railway Act which authorized the construction of a transcontinental railway.¹¹ Thus the

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 405-13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 464-71.

⁹ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 355.

¹⁰ Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1952), paperback version (Barnes & Noble, 1994), p. 333.

¹¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 283.

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Homestead Act encouraging family farms, an act abolishing slavery in the territories, and an act of Congress authorizing the transcontinental railroad were in place. Lincoln had what he needed to contain the “serpent” (slavery) within its den. If McClellan had taken Richmond, could Lincoln, who had consistently stated that he wanted to restore the Union and prevent the spread of slavery,¹² have succeeded in carrying out his original policy? Even if McClellan had successfully laid siege to Richmond, it could have been, based on subsequent experience, a long struggle. Later in the war, on May 22, 1863, Grant laid siege to Vicksburg. The siege lasted until July 4, 1863. Moreover, Grant began the Vicksburg campaign on January 30th of that year.¹³ Between June 15-18, 1864, Grant laid siege to Petersburg, following horrific battles in Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and a defeat at Cold Harbor. The siege ended with Lee’s withdrawal on April 2, 1865. Union troops then entered Petersburg and Richmond on April 3, 1865.¹⁴

Given what the Confederacy was able to do, particularly in its final hours, it is highly unlikely that McClellan would have captured Richmond in a short period of time. Even if he had, the capital could have been moved. The Confederate armies would still have been intact. Nevertheless, if the counterfactual had materialized, then juxtaposition of the aforementioned legislation with Lincoln’s original objective would have put the President under enormous pressure in the northern states to end the war.

At the same time, had the counterfactual occurred, Lincoln would have had great difficulty negotiating a peace based on legislation that

¹² William Lee Miller, *Lincoln’s Virtues An Ethical Biography* (New York: Random House, 2002), Chs. 9-11.

¹³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 285, 286; James McPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 577-9, 586-8, 627-38.

¹⁴ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 290, 292; James McPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 724-6, 728-35, 740-1, 751, 756, 845-6.

restricted slavery. The institution had already been abolished in the nation's Capital and in the territories. Moreover, by July 1862, a not insignificant number of fugitive slaves had gained *de facto* freedom within Union lines. Thus it would be virtually impossible to return them to bondage. In addition, Lincoln "seriously misjudged unionist strength in the South."¹⁵ There were, of course, elements in his own party who would have backed him. Once he joined the administration, Seward, who carried considerable weight with influential people in New York, had, unlike Chase, given up future presidential aspirations to serve Lincoln loyally.¹⁶ On the other side were the radical Republican Senators, or "Jacobins," as John Hay, one of Lincoln's two personal secretaries, liked to call them.¹⁷ Many could not abide his pragmatism on the South and particularly on slavery. As Donald so aptly states, Lincoln

[...] failed to realize that there was a temperamental incompatibility between himself and these anti-Lincoln radicals [...]. If the Jacobins were overbearing, Lincoln was often evasive and elusive. He made few attempts to reveal his motives or explain his plans to these serious, self-important men accustomed to deference. Lincoln was not a modest man and as John Hay astutely observed, he quite inadvertently exhibited toward these critics an 'intellectual arrogance and unconscious assumption of superiority that mortally offended them.'¹⁸

In my opinion the above passage speaks volumes. This man with less than one year of formal schooling, but with great ambition and drive, had at some point come to realize that in terms of raw intelligence he

¹⁵ David Herbert Donald, "*We Are Lincoln Men*" *Abraham Lincoln and His Friends* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), pp. 215-6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

¹⁸ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, p. 333.

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was superior to most of those with whom he came into contact and at least equal to the rest.

Lincoln, moreover, was a self-contained man. He generally kept his own counsel and made his own decisions, albeit often slowly and deliberately. As Mary Lincoln observed, her husband was “a terribly firm man when he set his foot down—none of us—no man, no woman could rule him after he had made up his mind.”¹⁹ Thus if the counterfactual had materialized, Lincoln would probably have sought a legally correct yet politically acceptable solution to restoring the Union, which was his first priority. Suppose Lincoln had been able to reach an agreement during a possible “window of opportunity” implied by the counterfactual. What was then the pre-Civil War policy, that is the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850, suggests a still weaker federation. It would also be a federation plagued with the threat that a state or group of states could still secede from the Union. The unconditional surrender of the Confederacy in 1865 put an end to that threat.

As it turned out, of course, the war dragged on. Lincoln moved toward the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which he announced in September 1862 following the Battle of Antietam. The final version was issued on January 1, 1863. Newspaper reporter Karl Marx said the document represented the work of a “pettifogging lawyer.”²⁰ Nevertheless, in November of 1864, Marx wrote Lincoln congratulating him on his reelection.²¹ In a later era the historian Richard Hofstadter would state that the Emancipation Proclamation had “all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading.”²²

¹⁹ David Herbert Donald, “*We Are Lincoln Men*,” p. 219.

²⁰ William Lee Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

²¹ “Address by Karl Marx of the International Workingmen’s Association to Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America in the Marx and Engels Internet Archive, cited in Thomas J.D. Lorenzo, *op. cit.*, p. 281, 334.

²² William Lee Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

Of course, the Emancipation Proclamation was a legal not a moral document. Moreover, it only freed the slaves in the areas not under Union control. Therefore, it did not immediately free any slaves. As McPherson said, critics

[...] missed the point and misunderstood the President's prerogative under the Constitution. He acted under his war powers to seize enemy resources; he had no constitutional power to act against slavery in areas loyal to the United States.²³

The Emancipation Proclamation did have the effect of turning the Civil War into a war of liberation. This did not go over well in many quarters. Still Frederick Douglas wrote, "we shout for joy that we live to record this righteous decree."²⁴ Moreover, the Proclamation may have helped eliminate the possibility that Britain and France would intervene in the war on the side of the Confederacy.²⁵ For all the subsequent criticism, the Proclamation can certainly be viewed as the beginning of the end of slavery in the United States. In that sense it remains an historic turning point.

Over the years I have come to the conclusion that to understand Lincoln's policy on slavery, if not necessarily its timing, one needs to recognize the following:

First: From the time he reemerged on the political scene in 1854, Abraham Lincoln "was unequivocal, clear and persistent in condemning American slavery as a monstrous institution."²⁶

²³ James McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 558.

²⁴ Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 558.

²⁵ DiLorenzo argues that European powers would balk at supporting the Confederacy if emancipation became the purpose of the war. He is also of the opinion that Lincoln thought that a slave insurrection might follow. Thomas J. DiLorenzo, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-8.

²⁶ William Lee Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

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Second: He was just as unequivocal about leaving slavery alone in the areas where it existed, but was adamant about outlawing it in the territories.

Third: Virtually all of Lincoln's major actions should be viewed from the perspective of a lawyer who had thought deeply about the scope of Presidential powers under the Constitution. In addition, this lawyer treated the Civil War from the beginning as an insurrection. Hence, suspension of the writ of habeas corpus applied to both North and South. He never accepted the notion, which many did, that states could secede to form a new nation.

Fourth: Although Lincoln would shift tactically, he never lost sight of the fundamental purpose—suppression of the insurrection and restoration of the Union. The elimination of slavery in the states where it existed, he concluded sometime in 1862, was necessary for the preservation and restoration of the Union. He subsequently made that restoration as easy as possible. In his proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, issued December 8, 1863, Lincoln offered those slave states that had joined the Confederacy a way to return to the Union. To do so ten percent of the number of persons voting in 1860 would have to take an oath of renewed loyalty to the Union. Once they had done so, the state would insert into its constitution, in keeping with the Emancipation Proclamation, a clause prohibiting slavery. Arkansas was the first to comply on January 19, 1864.²⁷ In addition, he urged the border states still in the Union, that is Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky, to amend their state constitutions to ban slavery in their states. Finally, he worked hard to persuade Congress to enact the thirteenth amendment.

Lincoln, however, ran into problems with his reconstruction plan. First, the military commander in Louisiana, Nathaniel P. Banks,

²⁷ James McPherson, *op. cit.*, pp. 698-9; Benjamin P. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 406; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 287.

allowed his leaders to preserve “the state’s antebellum constitution which failed to protect the rights of blacks.”²⁸ Therefore, Congress, as was its prerogative, refused to seat the delegations of both Louisiana and Arkansas (the latter, as noted, having already complied).²⁹ Tennessee, another possible candidate for readmission, was caught in a quarrel between unionists and iron-clad confederates which “delayed action through most of 1864.”³⁰

Radical Republicans distrusted the southerners who took the oath. Moreover, those who wanted to replace Lincoln in the 1864 election realized that readmitted southern states could give him nominating votes at the party’s convention. For Democrats these states would in effect be “pocket boroughs” in the November election. Thus Congress enacted the Wade-Davis bill, which required, among other things, not only the end of slavery in the readmitted states, but that fifty percent, not ten percent, of the eligible voters in 1860 take an iron-clad oath binding them forever to the Union. Lincoln “pocket-vetoed” the legislation, a rare procedure at the time, warning Congress that it had no authority to abolish slavery by statute. The thirteenth amendment was pending in Congress and he urged that it be passed and sent to the states for approval³¹ under article V of the Constitution. Thus Lincoln consistently took steps to eliminate slavery, but in a constitutional manner.

Ever the lawyer, Lincoln lived to see the thirteenth amendment emerge from Congress early in 1865. In an unlawyer-like but symbolic fashion, he signed the amendment, a practice not required of the President.³² I like to think that Lincoln did so to let the nation know both that he

²⁸ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, p. 509.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

³⁰ James McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 706.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 712-3.

³² William Lee Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

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wanted it ratified and that he had done so to rid the Constitution of the “moral outrage” that had prevented “the more perfect union” which the framers in the preamble had envisioned. The thirteenth amendment was ratified by three-fourths of the states on December 6, 1865, slightly less than eight months after Lincoln’s assassination.³³

Firm in his convictions, the sixteenth President not only accomplished his objectives with deeds, but also with words. Lincoln often surprised people, particularly those who were well educated, with his ability to cut to the core of an issue. That little speech at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, is perhaps the best example of his ability to do so. Edward Everett, the featured orator of the day, stated in a letter to Lincoln the next day, “I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes.”³⁴

As 13-year-olds, I and my contemporaries had to memorize the accepted or final text of the Gettysburg address as a graduation requirement from grammar school. I distinctly remember priding myself on the fact that by subtracting four score and seven from 1863, I obtained 1776 and knew Lincoln was referring to the Declaration of Independence. Yet the revolution in thought contained in the speech escaped me at that age. One of those fine English teachers in high school pointed out that “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here,” was a rhetorical device to contrast and emphasize the next part of the sentence “but it can never forget what they did here.” Still, as she pointed out, Lincoln not only wanted those who fought and died at Gettysburg to be long remembered, he also wanted his words to be long remembered.

³³ *The Constitution of the United States with the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation*, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2002, p. 67.

³⁴ Ray P. Basler, ed., *Collected Works. The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois*, 8 vols., (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953-5), Vol. 7, p. 24-5.

Although I came to a greater understanding of that address in college and from general reading, it was Gary Wills' book *Lincoln at Gettysburg* that gave me the incentive to put the final pieces together. I reexamined what was the final text.³⁵ In the 182 words, the noun "nation," not "union," appears five times. In the second line it is a "new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." The last, very long sentence in this very short address reads "that this nation under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." As Wills so aptly states,

[...] what had been a mere theory of lawyers like James Wilson, Joseph Story and Daniel Webster—that the nation preceded the states in time and importance—now became a lived reality of the American tradition. The results of this were seen almost at once. Up to the Civil War the 'United States' was invariably a plural noun: 'The United States are a free government.' After Gettysburg, it became a singular: 'The United States is a free government.'³⁶

Lincoln ultimately prevailed on two basic points. First, slavery was ended in an orderly way consistent with the Constitution. Second, not only was the Union preserved, the United States was finally a Nation. Learned critics such as William Kendall and Robert Bork lament the fact that Lincoln, by linking the Declaration of Independence with the Constitution, has put equality into the latter document. "A national commitment (to equality) has been sneaked into the Constitution."³⁷

³⁵ Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1992), p. 263.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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Whatever one's views on the issue of equality and the Constitution, it took enormous intestinal fortitude for Lincoln to weather the storm of 1864, the year he sought reelection. There are a variety of reasons for Lincoln's problems which are outlined in the standard histories.³⁸ In the summer of 1864, however, the military situation began to improve. On August 5th, Admiral Farragut entered Mobil Bay and after three weeks "this last blockade running port in the Gulf east of Texas was out of business."³⁹ On September 2nd, Sherman took Atlanta. Although Grant was bogged down around Petersburg, to many the end was in sight. All through this period Lincoln did everything he could behind the scenes to influence the outcome of the election.

As the November election approached, the Democratic standard bearer, George B. McClellan, running on a platform under which hostilities would cease and peace negotiations begin, seemed less compelling. Lincoln had come this far consistently rebuffing efforts to end the War short of the rebel states' unconditional return to the Union and the elimination of slavery within their respective state constitutions (while at the same time the President worked diligently for the thirteenth amendment). It had to be a "hard war," yet unlike the Radical Republicans he was not seeking retribution once victory was achieved. Lincoln wanted a "soft peace" and a quick rebuilding of the devastated areas.

Given the choices in 1864, 500,000 more voters chose Lincoln over the alternative. This resulted in 212 electoral votes, including the newly admitted State of Nevada (October 31, 1864). The 21 electoral votes that went to McClellan came from Kentucky, Delaware, and New Jersey. Lincoln received fifty-three percent of the popular vote and an estimated seventy-eight percent of the "soldier vote."⁴⁰

³⁸ See, for example, James McPherson, *op.cit.*, pp. 718-852.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 761.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 804-5.

A martyred individual often becomes the subject of legend. Consider the following. Lincoln was shot on Good Friday, April 14, and died on Saturday, April 15, 1865, thus embracing, albeit imperfectly, the high point of the Christian calendar. Earlier in April Lincoln paid a visit to Richmond. This visit, according to McPherson, produced the “most unforgettable scenes of this unforgettable war.”⁴¹ Lincoln was surrounded by a cordon of black people shouting, “Glory to God! Glory! Glory! Glory! Bless the Lord! The Great Messiah! [...] Come to free his children from bondage.”⁴² One freed slave shouted, “I know I am free [...] for I have seen Father Abraham and felt him.”⁴³ Then

Overwhelmed by rare emotions, Lincoln said to one black man who fell on his knees in front of him, ‘Don’t kneel to me. That is not right. You must kneel to God only and thank Him for the liberty you will enjoy hereafter.’⁴⁴

Add to the mixture Edward Stanton, the Secretary of War, who was at the Peterson House where Lincoln lay dying. Shortly after he was pronounced dead,

Stanton paid tribute to his fallen chief: with a slow measured movement, his right arm extended as if in a salute, he raised his hat and placed it for an instant on his head and then in the same deliberate manner removed it. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘he belongs to the ages.’⁴⁵

Lincoln’s body lay in state in the White House for several days and then was taken in a sable-shrouded funeral car “along the same

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 846.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 847.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 847.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 847.

⁴⁵ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln.*, p. 599.

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winding way that he had followed on his journey to Washington [...]”⁴⁶ All along the way people lined the tracks to catch a glimpse of the train and bow their heads. The journey ended in Springfield, Illinois, at the Oak Ridge cemetery where he and Mary now lie. It was on February 11, 1861, that he departed from Springfield, telling the residents of that community:

No one in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave not knowing when or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.⁴⁷

I do not propose to separate the legend from the truth about Lincoln, the man. We do know that he had few intimate friends. In fact the only really close friend he ever had was Joshua Speed. The reason for my judgment can be found in Donald’s recent volume, *We Are Lincoln Men*. We do know that he showed leadership skills very early. We also know that he was well liked and that he rose swiftly in the legal profession in Illinois. I believe that to understand Lincoln’s policies, it is necessary to understand Lincoln as a practicing lawyer; the

⁴⁶ Benjamin P. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

⁴⁷ Paul M. Angle and Earl Schenck Miers, *The Living Lincoln* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992), pp. 375-6.

Cullom Davis edition of Lincoln's recently assembled legal papers⁴⁸ can shed much light on the approach Lincoln took to the presidency.

How Lincoln, who was personally aloof, yet outwardly friendly could receive as much help as he did in both his profession and in his climb into the top social circle of Springfield, many of whom were prominent Whigs, has never, in my judgment, been satisfactorily answered. As Lincoln was a Whig when he was in New Salem, he cannot be accused of changing his politics to advance his career.

Even on personal matters Lincoln was a study in contrast with his peers. Courtrooms, at least the lower courts in Illinois, were often clouded with tobacco smoke, not to mention the ping of saliva from chewing tobacco hitting a cuspidor. Although frowned on, a jug of whiskey might make its way into the courthouse. Lincoln, however, never touched tobacco or liquor. He probably rarely, if ever, drank wine in the "better" social circles. No doubt his integrity in personal matters, which was never questioned, helped in his professional ascent.

Lincoln was often humble and sometimes self-deprecating in public utterances while maintaining an arrogance and stubbornness concerning his own course of action, which he usually arrived at only after examining all possible outcomes. To be sure, he would take tactical advice. Seward's suggestion that he wait until after a Union victory to issue the Emancipation Proclamation is a case in point; as noted earlier, it was not issued until after the Battle on Antietam.⁴⁹

Even more intriguing is Lincoln's use of the Bible and God in his speeches. As Mary Todd Lincoln put it, her husband was not a "technical Christian" in the sense that he never joined a church.

⁴⁸ Cullom Davis, *The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln*, (Champagne, IL: University of Illinois, 2000.)

⁴⁹ David Herbert Donald, *We Are Lincoln Men*, p. 164.

Abraham Lincoln and My Passion for History

To invoke the Bible in political speeches during the 19th century was, of course, quite common. Seward had used the phrase based on Mark 3:25, that a house divided against itself cannot stand, in the debates over the Compromise of 1850. Lincoln used the same phrase in his 1858 acceptance speech in Springfield launching his Senate campaign against Stephen A. Douglas. Shortly after his opening remarks came the well known passage followed by

I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-*slave* and half *free*.

I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to *fall*—but I *do* expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing or *all* the other.⁵⁰

To be sure, Lincoln used “under God” only once in the Gettysburg Address. In what was a “tour de force” of political thought, the phrase fit. Divine guidance would be needed for a “new birth of freedom.”

It was in the Second Inaugural,⁵¹ the other bookend of Lincoln’s most memorable speeches, that God and the Bible are frequently invoked. In this instance the beginning is a factual summary of the situation at the time. Then the prose begins to build:

Both parties deprecated war but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let the nation perish. And the war came.

The above words are followed by a summary of facts about the size of the slave population (one-eighth of the whole population), the

⁵⁰ Paul M. Angle and Earl Schenck Miers, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

⁵¹ The quotes that follow are taken from *Ibid.*, pp. 638-40.

assertion that this interest was the cause of the war and “to strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union.” After pointing out that both read the same Bible and prayed to the same God seeking God’s aid against the other, Lincoln then states bluntly:

It may seem strange that any man should dare ask a just
God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of
other men’s faces; but let us judge not that we not be judged.

Lincoln who rarely attacked individuals, let alone a segment of American society directly, did so but immediately thereafter covered his attack with words based on Matthew 7:1. Then:

The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither
has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own
purposes ‘Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it
must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by
whom the offense cometh!’

This last sentence is from Matthew 18:7. Lincoln continues with the assertion that slavery may be one of those offenses for which God has given to both the North and South “this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence cometh.” In short, the nation is responsible and the nation suffers. There is collective guilt for the war. We then see Lincoln build to the climax with the moving sentence, “Fondly do we hope—ferently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.” Then relying on the 19th Psalm for justification

Yet if God will that it continue, until all the wealth piled by
the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil
shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the
lash, shall be paid for by another drawn with the sword, as

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was said three thousand years ago so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

Though Lincoln effectively employed contrasts in many of his speeches, it was perhaps in the Second Inaugural that he made his most compelling use of this device. Following the above quotation from Psalm 19:1 comes the poetic closing paragraph, the redemption if you will that we all know and which is inscribed in his memorial in Washington, D.C.

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

This last paragraph dovetails neatly with the ending in the Gettysburg Address, given the differences in the stages of war. Yet the approaches are vastly different. In the Gettysburg Address Lincoln is embracing the legal theory that the Nation preceded the states. In the Second Inaugural Lincoln is laying responsibility on the entire Nation for not ending slavery peacefully by containing it. Thus relying on the Judeo-Christian tradition, he sees the war as the retribution for failing to attend to slavery. Redemption was now (March 4, 1865) at hand.

One would have to be a confirmed cynic to believe that Lincoln was insincere in substantive matters. Perhaps Lincoln was not a “technical Christian” because he had problems with dogma. Yet no insincere person could have produced such prose without feeling its substance in his very being.

What is remarkable about Lincoln's command of the English language is his ability to be legally precise when the occasion called for it (the Emancipation Proclamation), to change the way the people of his day and subsequent generations thought about America (the Gettysburg Address), and to wax poetic when the opportunity presented itself (both the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural).

Lincoln will always have his detractors, mostly from the far left or far right of the political spectrum. Yet perhaps the most balanced appraisal of Lincoln came from Frederick Douglass when he spoke at the dedication of the Freedman's Monument in Washington, D.C. In the words of Douglass, Lincoln was "a white man who shared the prejudice common to his countrymen toward the colored race." Douglass also said that Lincoln in his "heart of hearts loathed and hated slavery" but was not necessarily in sympathy with slaves as victims. In Douglass' view African Americans were at best "stepchildren to Lincoln." At the same time Douglass admitted that the Emancipation Proclamation was an act of courage and political daring which promised, if Lincoln had lived, to be the first of several steps he would take toward greater equality. Although Douglass recognized that Lincoln from the perspective of an abolitionist was "tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent," he did balance his criticism of Lincoln with the following observation. "Measuring him by the sentiment of his country's sentiment, a sentiment he was bound to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical and determined."⁵²

As Douglass, a former slave, was Lincoln's contemporary, became his acquaintance, visited with him in the White House, and was received with respect, his opinion carries some weight. Douglass no doubt was aware that the majority of the northern population had favored restrictions on the expansion of slavery. Yet to abolish the institution

⁵² The above paragraph is based on Allen G. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), p. 249-50.

Abraham Lincoln and My Passion for History

where it existed would release an additional supply of free labor to the market.⁵³ Even though Douglass and probably Lincoln recognized that free black labor would be discriminated against in favor of white labor and even immigrant labor, whites would view blacks as potential competitors for jobs. In my view, always subject to revision, the northern states were, therefore, content in 1860 to circumscribe the institution of slavery. Moreover, many, including Lincoln, believed in doing so, the institution, abolished from the territories and the nation's capital would eventually die. Those who held this position in 1860, including Lincoln, believed that they had no constitutional right to interfere with slavery where it existed. Lincoln, therefore, at that time was in the mainstream of opinion in the northern states. The carefully phrased statement that Douglass made about him in terms of the sentiment of the country was on target. Within that context Lincoln, in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, and I might add, subsequently in working to get the thirteenth amendment through Congress, was "swift, zealous, radical and determined." He was just not all that Douglass had hoped him to be. Lincoln, as most white people of his generation,⁵⁴ "shared the prejudice common to his countrymen toward the colored race." At the same time he could easily admire Douglas as an individual who rose from even more difficult circumstances than Lincoln himself.

⁵³ In *Ibid.*, Guelzo carefully develops the attempts Lincoln made to offer compensation for emancipation as well as his efforts to institute voluntary colonization of blacks.

⁵⁴ In his famous debates with Stephen Douglas, Lincoln, in the Charleston Illinois debate on September 18, 1858, made some remarks that his detractors have subsequently employed to label him a racist. The essence of those remarks was that Lincoln did not favor social and political equality for the Negro. At the same time he tempered his position by stating that the Negro could not be denied his humanity, and his right to earn his own living as a free person, not as a slave. See William Lee Miller, *op.cit.*, pp. 350-1. Charleston is in southeastern Illinois. Many settlers in southern Illinois were from slave-holding states. In the context of the times and given the proclivity of Douglas to play on "white supremacy" particularly in southern Illinois communities, Lincoln's response, in the author's judgment, should be viewed accordingly.

In the final analysis, Lincoln is among the greatest and in my personal judgment the greatest of our presidents because he preserved not only the nation but also its founding principles. This self-contained man who generally kept his own counsel, which at times aggravated the difficulties he faced, continues to fascinate a large segment of the American public. It has been said, although I have been unable to track down the source, that the Library of Congress contains more books that have been written about Lincoln than anyone else except Jesus Christ and Shakespeare. If so, then he would probably be amused. Lincoln rarely, if ever, read biography. Perhaps it was his humble and hardscrabble youth that turned him from this literary genre. This complex man of many contradictions was attracted to what people had to say, not who they were. Still I think given the competition, he would have been content with third place. During the purgatory that characterized his years in the White House, the Bible and the works of Shakespeare were among his companions. He could quote both at length. Perhaps they were during this period his only real friends. ☞

ART CONSERVATION

Henry A. De Phillips, Jr.

VERNON K. KRIEBLE PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY

A word about art conservation: every time I work on an artifact, I feel as if I am going back in time, hence, revisiting history. Each piece teaches us about the artist, the culture and sociology of the time the work was created, albeit from a single point of view. But the experience is always exciting, always rewarding.

To begin, let me pose a question: what is conservation? You are all familiar with the restoration work completed in the Sistine Chapel frescoes done by Michelangelo. The goal of that sixteen-year project was to restore those frescoes as closely as possible to what they were when Michelangelo completed them. And that is the objective of all conservation work—to restore a work of art to the artist’s original intention. The challenge, of course, is to avoid imposing the conservators ideas during the conservation work and that is something that all conservators work very hard at avoiding. To do that, a great deal of information is needed to plan a conservation protocol. The collaboration of scientist, art historian and conservator has made it possible to achieve more closely that desired goal.

So what is the reason conservators have welcomed the use of science and technology as associates to their work? We are able to provide information formerly unavailable to them as they plan what and how much needs to be done.

Two advances in technology have accelerated the impact of science on conservation work: the first is our ability to abstract a wealth of information from the tiniest particles obtained from artifacts,

so-called microdestructive sampling, and the second is our ability to examine artifacts directly using non-destructive techniques. These two approaches have allowed the conservator along with art historians and scientists to plan and execute conservation protocols that have yielded some incredible results. Today, I am going to address the need for conservation of several art objects, conservation that I am or have been a part of over the past several years.

When examining an artifact, the conservator is really looking at a complex mixture of materials. (schematic image of painting cross-section; fig. 1*)

In paintings, one has the canvas, the ground, pigments in the binder chosen by the artist, and, most likely, a varnish layer. From sculptures, we are given tiny fragments that are mostly the base plaster or metal, oftentimes containing materials from degradation or other processes leading to contamination of the original material. When working with paper, either as backing for a painting, from a book, or from an early cartoon, the ravages of age make interpretation of results difficult. Indeed, it is just this variety of materials that we confront that makes it necessary to take a multifaceted and multitechnique approach to examining samples.

Recently, the Wadsworth Atheneum received a grant to restore a painting by American artist, Benjamin West (1738-1820), titled “The Raising of Lazarus” (fig. 2). Painted in 1780, the painting was given to the museum in 1900 by J.P. Morgan and displayed there for fifty years. But then its canvas began to tear where it was attached to the stretcher and the dirt, dust and grime it had accumulated darkened the painting considerably. Hence, it was removed from view and placed in the archives.

*Illustrations begin on page 30.

Art Conservation

A recent grant from the IMLS (the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a government agency) is allowing the Atheneum to restore the painting and work began in January of this year (2004). But first, let me show you where the painting was before it came to the Wadsworth.

This is the Winchester Cathedral (fig. 3) located in Hampshire, England. We know the painting was there at least from 1890 to 1899 as evidenced by these two photographs taken in the Cathedral (fig. 4, 5). Now it is in the conservation lab of the Wadsworth undergoing conservation work. To begin, an effort is made to gather as much information about the work and the artist's technique prior to doing anything. And these next series of slides show the results so far.

First, a series of photographs were taken of the painting in both visible light (fig. 6, 7, 8) and in infrared and ultraviolet light. The IR photos (fig. 9, 10, 11) were particularly interesting when viewing the central group of figures, Lazarus and Magda (or Mary). One can see that the artist had originally intended that Magda be looking directly out of the painting rather than to her left at Jesus (fig. 12) and it is just such changes that this type of photography allows us to see, i.e., sketches under the paint layers when the artist was composing his composition (fig. 13).

Next, a series of x-ray photographs (fig. 14) were taken and I show here only one where the image of the Madga is just barely discernible (fig. 15). If we overlay the actual black and white image on top of the x-ray (fig. 16), we can see that the image is, again, the Magda. So, what does this x-ray tell us? It gives us an indication of the kind of pigments used by the artist. First, we can tell that because the Magda image is so light—and the other images cannot be seen—West most likely used lead white as the ground for his canvas. The lead will absorb most of the x-rays, leaving few to expose the photographic plate to any other image. Next, since we can (albeit, barely) see an

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x-ray image, that tells us that the artist's palette contained heavy metal pigments. How do we determine which pigments those are? By looking at cross-sections (fig. 17) taken from the painting and then analyzing the pigments we observe in them.

From this first cross-section, we see that West constructed this painting by painting in layers. This is in opposition to other techniques artists use whereby they paint over the ground in only a single layer. In this next cross-section (fig. 18) showing a red pigment, the actual pigment could be determined. It was found to be vermilion, that is, mercuric sulfide, an expensive red pigment at the time this painting was done. What that tells us is that West used only the best pigments available to construct his works.

Finally, an ultraviolet photograph (fig. 19) showed that the varnish on the painting was quite old, as seen by the light green fluorescence in this slide. Varnishes more than about fifty years old will fluoresce under UV light whereas more recent varnishing will not.

Now that we have all this information, the process of restoration can begin. The first step is removing the old varnish, then repairing any damages such as the tears from the tacking on the frame, inpainting any losses, revarnishing, etc. The whole process will take about seven to nine months and, hopefully, the restored painting will be ready for exposition next January (2005).

Do all our investigations work out this well? Not always as the following story indicates. Again, it all began with a painting the Atheneum was considering purchasing, a painting by the artist James Tissot (1836-1902). The title of the work is "Charting the Northwest Passage." (fig. 20)

Born in France in 1836, James Tissot was a painter, printmaker and enamellist. Since he grew up in a port city, many of his paintings

Art Conservation

reflect this background, and this is such an example. The first thing a museum does when receiving an art object for purchase is to send it to the conservation lab for close examination. This painting showed the typical properties of an older painting. (fig. 21, 22: windows w/ blinds; window w/ craquelure)

Samples for pigment analysis were taken from

(fig. 23: women's shawl—white-zinc white {ZnO})

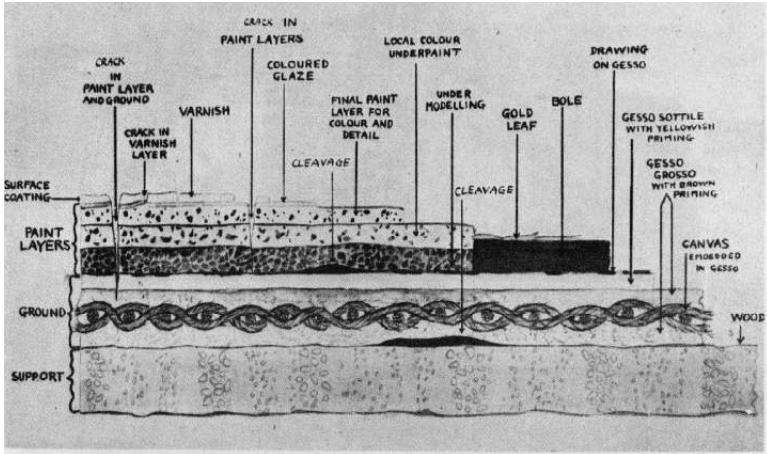
(fig. 24: red from man's shoulder—red ochre {iron oxides})

(fig. 25: yellow from ribbons, right side—zinc yellow {zn chromate})

(fig. 26: rear support: black—strange, but not unusual)

To this point, all the information was consistent with materials and methods available during Tissot's years. But one last sample from the ground obtained from the rear of the painting (fig. 27: sliver from rear w/ ground—Ti-Ca white; {TiO₂ + CaSO₄}) demonstrated clearly that the painting was a forgery. Why? Because Tissot died in 1902 and titanium oxide white was not available to artists as a pigment until the early 1920's!! ☹

Illustrations
ART CONSERVATION



I4. COMPLEX PICTURE CONSTRUCTION
Schematic representation of the stratified structure of a panel painting
(vertical section)

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3

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FIGURE 4



FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7



FIGURE 8



FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10



FIGURE 11



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FIGURE 12



FIGURE 13

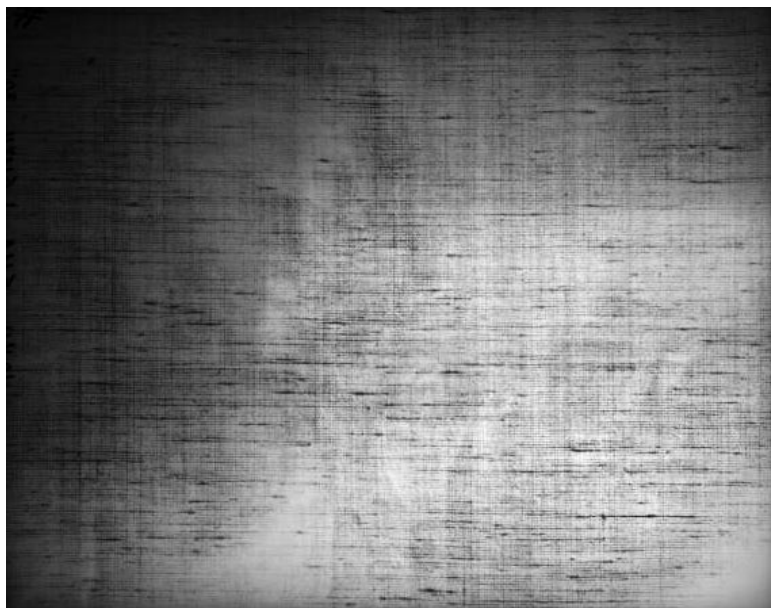


FIGURE 14



FIGURE 15

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FIGURE 16



FIGURE 17

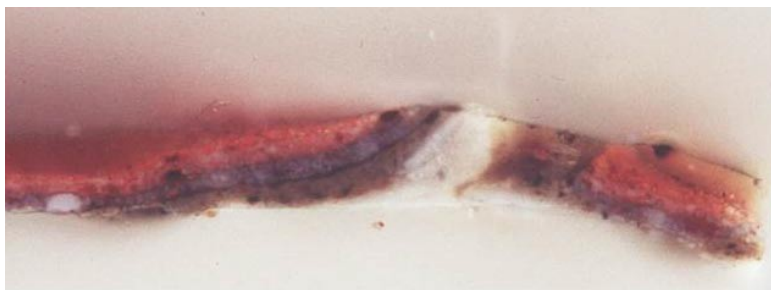


FIGURE 18



FIGURE 19

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FIGURE 20



FIGURE 21



FIGURE 22

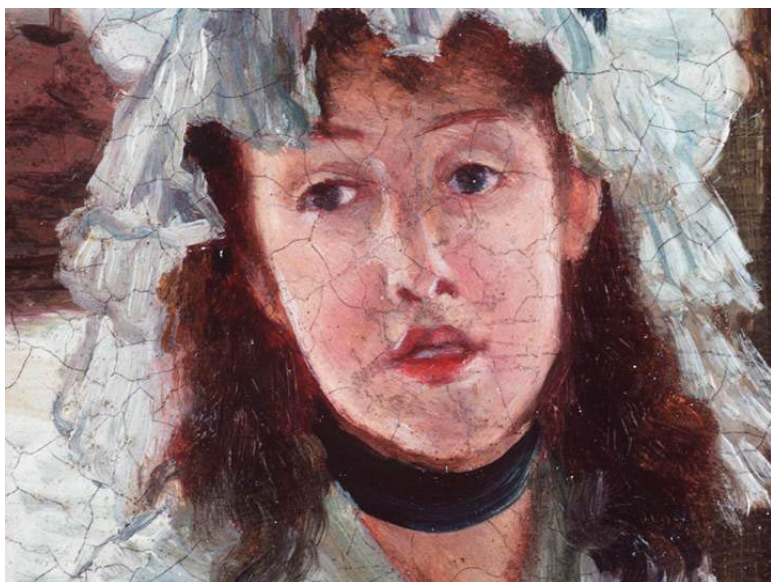


FIGURE 23

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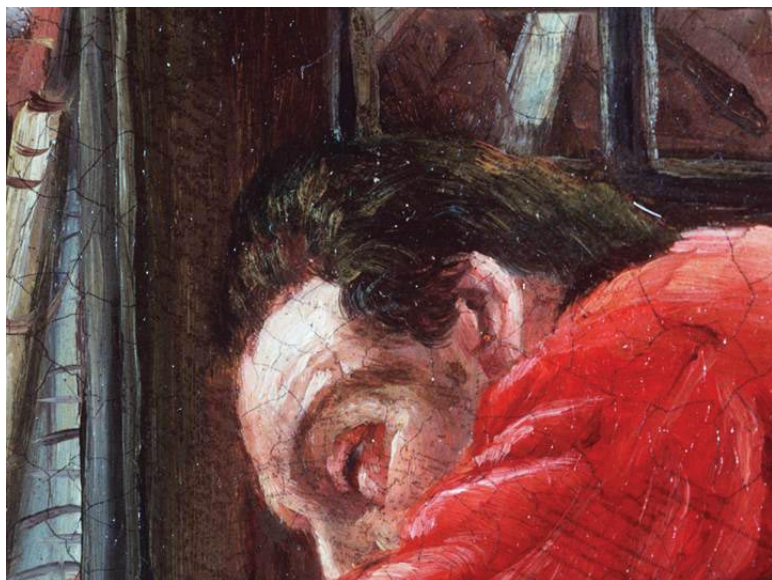


FIGURE 24



FIGURE 25



FIGURE 26

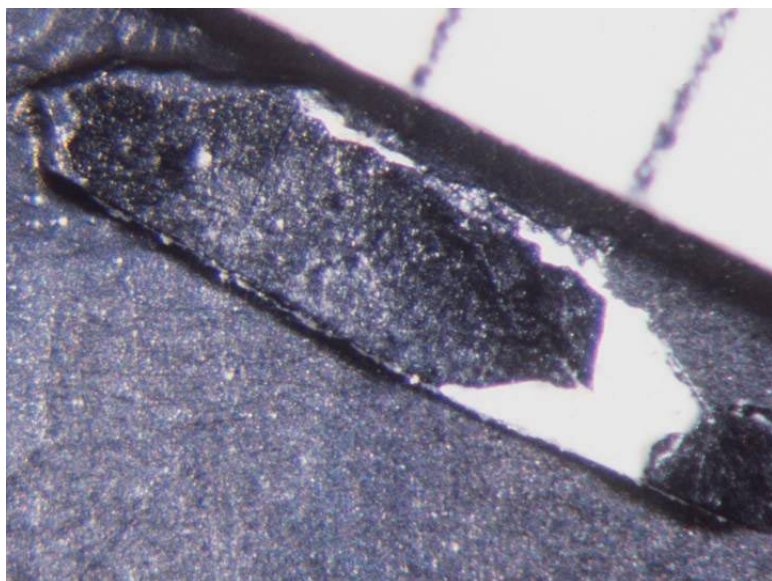


FIGURE 27

Illustrations
THE LESSON OF ROME

Kristin A. Triff

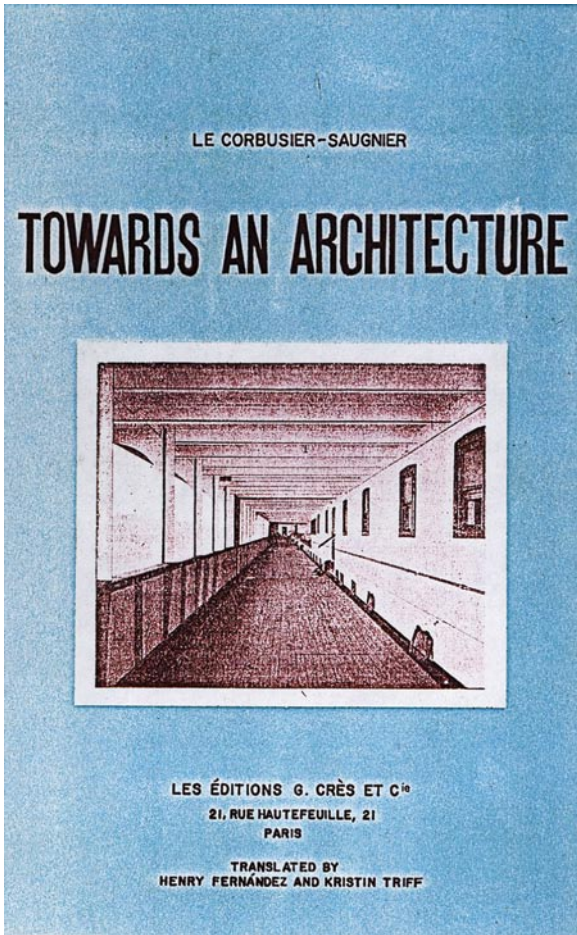


FIGURE 1.
Le Corbusier, *Towards an Architecture*,
Kristin Triff and Henry Fernández, trans.
(unpublished manuscript, 1988).

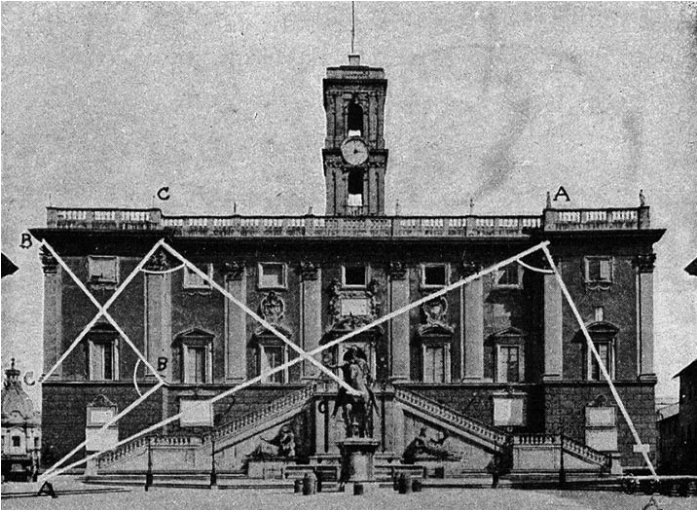


FIGURE 2.

Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*,
Frederick Etchells, trans. (New York: Phaidon, 1959) p. 74.



FIGURE 3.

Giacomo della Porta, Girolamo Rainaldi, and Michelangelo,
façade of the Palazzo Senatorio, Rome, 1582-1605.



FIGURE 4.
Rear view of the Palazzo Senatorio with *Tabularium*
and medieval towers (at corners), Rome.



FIGURE 5.
Francesco di Giorgio Martini (?), Palazzo della Cancelleria,
Rome, 1485-1513.

Illustrations: The Lesson of Rome



FIGURE 6.
Cimabue, *Italia*
(Allegorical representation
of Rome), Upper Church
of San Francesco in
Assisi, 1280.



FIGURE 7.
Coat of arms of the
Orsini family,
from Giuseppe
Brigante Colonna,
Gli Orsini (Milan:
Ceschina, 1955) 16.



FIGURE 8.

Giovanni Sercambi, "The Colonna and their followers entering Rome," *Chronicles*, manuscript, early fifteenth century.



FIGURE 9.

View of southwest wing from south,
Palazzo Orsini at Monte Giordano, Rome, 1425-1550.

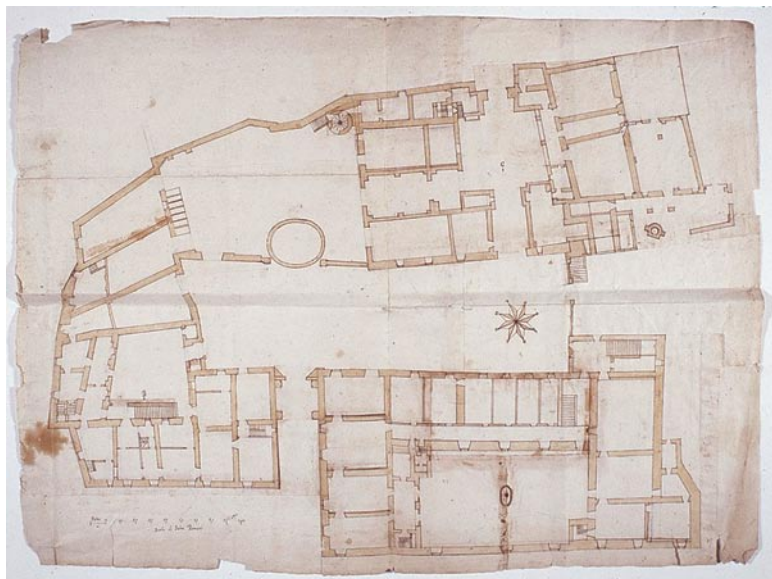


FIGURE 10.
Orazio Torriani, plan of
the ground floor of the
Palazzo Orsini
at Monte Giordano,
Rome, 1615-21.



FIGURE 11.
Courtyard portico,
southwest wing,
Palazzo Orsini
at Monte Giordano,
Rome, 1425-34.

Kristin A. Triff



FIGURE 12.
Courtyard portico,
Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini,
Rome, 1458-62.



FIGURE 13.
Filippo Brunelleschi, portico, Foundling Hospital,
Florence, 1419-21.

ARCHITECTURE, MODERNISM, AND HISTORY: THE LESSON OF ROME

Kristin A. Triff

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF FINE ARTS

It is an honor to be here today, and I owe Borden Painter a debt of gratitude for his friendship and guidance while sharing his passion for all things Roman. As an architect I have followed a rather circuitous path to the study of history, one that has led—as all roads eventually do—directly to Rome.

Like most architects practicing today, I was not educated to appreciate history. On the contrary, the culture of the avant-garde as taught in most architectural schools for the last three generations mandates a more or less complete break with tradition and a single-minded focus on individual genius. As a result, modern architecture usually suffers from historical and cultural amnesia, with resulting negative effects on both the built environment and its inhabitants. It also tends to lionize individual architects and theorists; in my early years at school, I shared the quasi-religious fervor with which the great architects of the twentieth century were worshipped by both instructors and students. Undoubtedly, the most influential architect and theorist of the avant-garde was Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier. His rejection of most pre-twentieth-century architecture and embrace of the industrial or “machine age” aesthetic have been enthusiastically and widely echoed by most architectural theorists. At Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, for example, I was instructed by prominent members of the faculty that “architecture should be banal,” an injunction repeated both in the classroom and in design reviews.

While at Harvard, I collaborated on a new translation of Le Corbusier's seminal text *Vers Une Architecture* ("Towards An Architecture"), originally published in 1923. This text is famously known for pronouncements such as "the plan is the generator"¹ and "the house is a machine for living in."² Up until this new translation was undertaken, the primary English translation of the text was that of Frederick Etchells, an early twentieth-century theorist and member of the Cubist-inspired Vorticist movement in England. Etchells skewed the original meaning of the text (whose title he mistranslated as "towards a new architecture") in favor of the most radical interpretation possible. My colleagues and I truly believed that with this new translation we would be revealing Le Corbusier's prophecies in a more "pure" form. We began with the cover (fig. 1*), which we designed as an exact facsimile of the original French edition, but with our more "correct" translation of his title.

Inevitably, the close reading entailed by the translation led to even closer analysis of the layers of meaning embedded in Corbusier's text. Since deconstruction theory had yet to gain a serious foothold at Harvard in the late 1980s, I took the author at his word (literally), grappling with a particularly complicated chapter entitled "The Lesson of Rome." Although I began the translation with the zeal of an admirer, I found Le Corbusier's judgments on Roman art and architecture somewhat surprising. I will attempt to summarize them with apologies in advance to Borden and the other *romanisti* in the audience.

Beginning with a pronouncement of the bad taste of the ancient Romans in comparison with their Greek counterparts, he goes on to condemn the ugliness of both Roman architecture in general and

¹ Le Corbusier, *Vers Une Architecture*, Frederick Etchells, trans. (New York: Phaidon, 1927), p. 8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

*Illustrations begin on page 46.

The Lesson of Rome

the Roman Forum in particular, likening its monuments and layout to “bric-à-brac.” He pauses briefly to commend Pompeii for its “appealing” rectangular plan, but deplores its architecture for being decorated with the Corinthian order rather than the more elegant Doric order favored by the (culturally superior) Greeks. Although he clearly admired the great concrete domes and vaults of monuments like the Pantheon and the Baths of Caracalla, it was for their abstract compositional qualities rather than what he described as the “barbaric” decoration that covered them.

Although much of this tirade sounds like the eighteenth-century Greco-Roman aesthetics debate between Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Johann Winckelmann, and their respective camps, it was new to me at the time and I did my best to assimilate Corbusier’s teachings. Continuing on through the chapter, I learned that the only exception to the “horrors” and “bad taste” of the Italian Renaissance was the work of Michelangelo, who was declared to be “the man of the last thousand years as Phidias was the man of the thousand years before.”³ He illustrated his “Rome of Horrors” with images of the Castel Sant’Angelo, the Galleria Colonna, the Palazzo di Giustizia, and Palazzo Barberini, concluding with the ringing indictment “to send architectural students to Rome is to cripple them for life. The Grand Prix de Rome and the Villa Medici are the cancer of French architecture.”⁴

Despite a growing sense of unease at these revelations—weren’t architects supposed to go to Rome if at all possible?—I began to look closely at the textual analysis of Michelangelo’s architecture, focusing on Le Corbusier’s use of regulating lines. This analytical tool reveals the proportional systems present in building design, and whether or not (at least in Corbusier’s judgment) the design is compelling enough to warrant a positive judgment. Looking at Le Corbusier’s diagram of

³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

Michelangelo's façade of the Palazzo Senatorio, or Senatorial Palace on the Capitoline hill in Rome (fig. 2), I too was struck by Michelangelo's apparent use of right angles to determine the slope of the main staircase, the width of the side bays relative to the rest of the building, the height of the building's base, and other design elements.

As this analysis progressed, I looked for other sources on the use of proportioning systems in Renaissance architecture, and discovered that there was, in fact, a vast body of literature on the subject, including Rudolf Wittkower's famous text, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, first published in 1949. Somewhat stunned to learn that Le Corbusier was not the first theorist to have analyzed Renaissance architecture, I began reading Wittkower and learned that, similarly, Michelangelo was neither the first nor the last architect of this period to use geometric or mathematic proportional systems in his design. The more deeply into the subject I read, the more fascinating the material became. I decided to risk becoming "crippled for life" and went to Rome.

It would be impossible to overestimate the immediate impact of the city, whose enormous scale and architectural rhetoric tend to overwhelm first-time visitors. Proceeding directly to the Palazzo Senatorio from the train station, I was determined to carry out my own analysis in the context of the "Rome of Horrors," testing and hopefully confirming Le Corbusier's theories. Somewhat disappointingly, the façade (fig. 3) turned out to be a late sixteenth-century adaptation of a Michelangelo project, built by Giacomo della Porta and Girolamo Rainaldi. Could Le Corbusier's emphasis on Michelangelo's unique genius have been wrong? If so, what implications might that have for the rest of the text?

As I pondered this question, the three-dimensionality of architecture asserted itself. Although architects are taught to focus on plan and façade, I broke with tradition and walked around the building

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(fig. 4). It immediately became clear that there was much more to the building than the façade, which was only the latest episode in the building's extraordinarily long history. Like most other buildings in Rome, the Palazzo Senatorio is a palimpsest, one whose origins go back to the massive, arcaded *Tabularium* or public records building, erected at the head of the Roman Forum in 78 B.C. and still visible as the massive lower level of the rear story. The Palazzo Senatorio, seat of Roman government since late antiquity, was—quite literally—constructed upon its archival documents.

Even more fascinating was the fact that the building was bristling with fortified, defensive towers that clearly dated back to the Middle Ages, yet were hidden (except for the campanile or belltower) from view by the Renaissance façade. Their stubborn refusal to submit to the classicizing treatment given the façade sparked the realization that Rome was far more than the sum of its ancient and Renaissance architecture. Traditionally, these two periods dominate the literature on Rome; guidebooks and scholarship focus on buildings such as the fifteenth-century Palazzo della Cancelleria, home of the Papal Treasurer (fig. 5). This building, built in the *all'antica* (“after the antique”) manner with heavily classicizing details, is typically hailed as one of Rome's first Renaissance palaces. But what of the rest of the city, buried beneath these opulent facades?

These questions stayed with me as I finished my coursework, and it was the advice of the late Renaissance art historian John Shearman that decided the course of my doctoral research. During one of his seminars in art and social history, he showed an image of a thirteenth-century fresco executed by Cimabue in the Upper Church of Saint Francis of Assisi (fig. 6). This fresco, an allegorical view of Rome as it appeared in 1280, included numerous defensive towers and a depiction of the Palazzo Senatorio at the top of the image. Incredibly, the building itself, the public seat of Roman civic authority, was prominently labeled with the coat of arms of the Orsini family, much

as billboards today advertise political candidates. This immediately recognizable *stemma*, or coat of arms (fig. 7), is composed of a red rose above a field of diagonal red and white stripes, often separated by an eel or *anguillara*, referring to their extensive fief by that name in the *campagna* north of Rome.

Reading further into the social history of late medieval Rome, I learned that the Orsini were one of the most powerful families in the city, feudal barons whose vast income-producing properties in the *campagna* funded their acquisition of property and influence in Rome itself. As the trampled warriors at the bottom of the *stemma* suggest, the Orsini wished to project an image of invulnerable strength to their peers; they were perpetually at war with the Colonna and other baronial families, creating a political climate so hostile that it led to the departure of the papacy for Avignon in 1309. An image from Giovanni Sercambi's early fifteenth-century *Chronicles* (fig. 8) gives a clear idea of the political situation: a group of Colonna supporters, gathered under the banner with their heraldic *colonna*, or column, prepare to enter a walled city that is instantly recognizable as Rome due to the presence of the domed Pantheon at the upper left. They were clearly intent on murder and mayhem; the caption at the top refers to Pope Boniface IX's order that thirty people be hanged as a result of the confrontation.

Inevitably, this unstable political climate of ongoing factional warfare had a profound influence on the architecture of medieval and early Renaissance Rome. The primary Orsini stronghold in Rome, their vast palace complex at Monte Giordano (fig. 9) has retained its heavily fortified, defensive aspect up to the present day. Just across the Tiber River from the Vatican, Monte Giordano covers almost three acres, yet has been passed over by generations of architectural historians and theorists who, like Le Corbusier, focused on the individual genius of famous architects like Michelangelo. Growing increasingly curious about this enormous but historically obscure structure, I was directed

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by John Shearman to the extensive Orsini archives in Rome, and a dissertation topic was born.

The more deeply I explored the Orsini archives, the more clear it became that the history of the Orsini family was in many ways the history of medieval and Renaissance Rome itself. As a fledgling historian, I also learned that many different sources must be consulted to form a coherent picture of historical periods and events; this was particularly true for the history of Monte Giordano. As it turned out, the Orsini archives alone were dispersed among a wide variety of locations ranging from Los Angeles to Rome to Milan, something I discovered only after months of study in the main Orsini repository in Rome, the Archivio Storico Capitolino. Following the trail to the Department of Special Collections at the University of California at Los Angeles, I discovered the earliest known plans of the palace, which date to the early seventeenth century (fig. 10).

Unraveling the building chronology of the palace took on the form of a personal quest, one that has focused less on famous architects than on the ways in which architecture is shaped by history. Looking at the plan in fig. 10, the incremental nature of the palace's growth and development is apparent, beginning with the large, rectangular block to the north or top of the plan that dates to about 1300. This original nucleus of the palace follows the classic medieval plan of a thick-walled, rectangular building, with towers guarding the entrances to the interior courtyard. This wing faced north towards the Via dei Coronari and the medieval pilgrimage route to the Vatican. Equally important from a defensive standpoint, it was directly opposite from the formidable Castel Sant'Angelo, the heavily fortified tomb of Hadrian that was the primary node in the Vatican city's outer defensive wall during the Middle Ages. During this period, the Castel itself was the property of the Orsini family, acquired during the reign of the notoriously nepotistic Orsini pope Nicholas III, who reigned 1277-80.

Although this wing predates the others, the primary entrance to the palace is now located to the south, through the portal visible to the right in fig. 9. The palace block visible in this image is currently known as the *cinquecento* or “sixteenth century” wing. However, as I continued my archival research and examined the building fabric itself, it became clear that this wing was, in fact, built during the early fifteenth century. Although Renaissance Roman palaces have been exhaustively studied and documented, Monte Giordano has languished in neglect due to the fact that no immediately recognizable name is associated with the building; prominent architectural historians in Rome earnestly encouraged me to transfer my interest and energy to a more “worthy” object. Nonetheless, certain elements of the palace were too striking to be ignored; the palace’s slender, classicizing columns and arcaded courtyard (fig. 11), display an *all’antica*, Renaissance sensibility that supposedly did not exist in early fifteenth-century Roman architecture. For example, the courtyard of the Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini, built during the mid-fifteenth century, is typical of the “thicker” appearance of medieval Roman architecture, with short, octagonal columns, lack of entasis (tapering in the columns), and simplified ionic capitals used throughout all three levels (fig. 12). How, I wondered, did Monte Giordano fit in with the established history of Renaissance architecture?

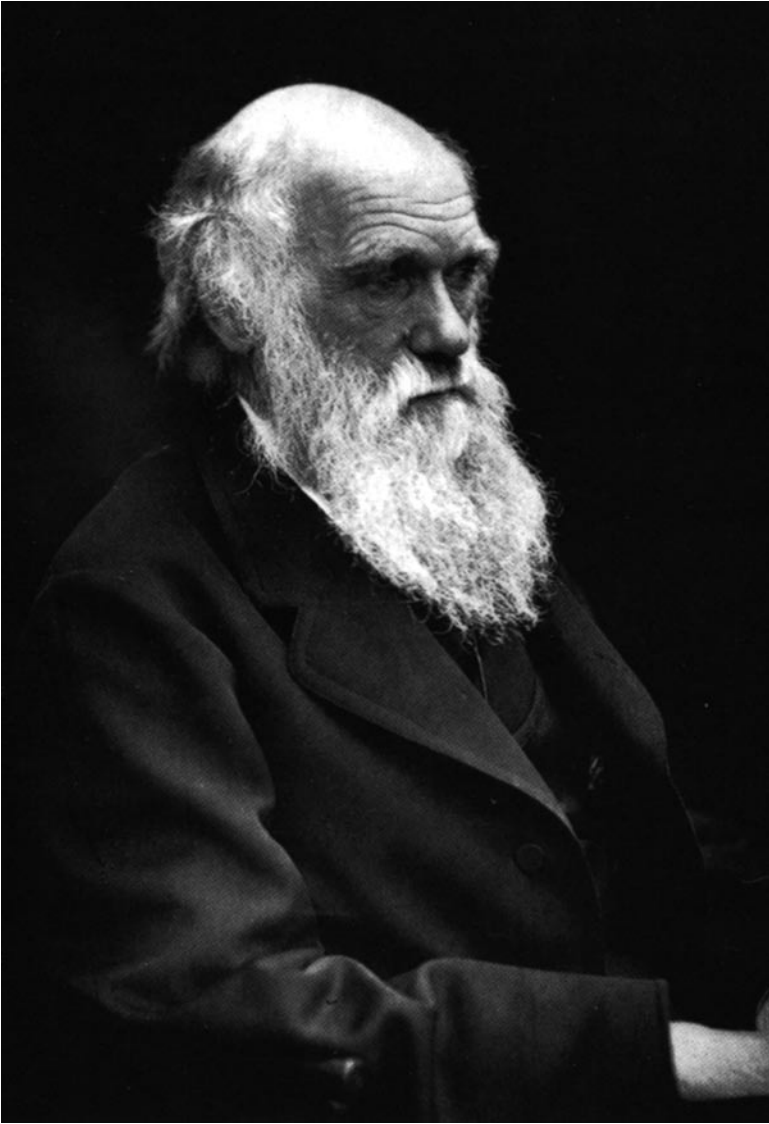
Further study of medieval history and the Orsini archives presented the answer. The builder of this wing, Cardinal Giordano Orsini, was the leader of the College of Cardinals and (in a curious exception to the ancient family rivalry) a close ally of Oddone Colonna, the reigning pope Martin V. Cardinal Giordano is known to have returned to Rome with Martin V from Avignon in 1420, and to have been in residence at Monte Giordano from approximately 1425 to 1434. During this period, he built the building wing to the southwest of the palace complex. While en route from Avignon to Rome in 1419, he spent the winter in Florence with the papal retinue, where

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he would have seen a remarkable new structure under construction: Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital (fig. 13) whose slender Corinthian columns were enthusiastically described at the time as equal to classical architecture in their proportions and decoration. Cardinal Giordano was an avid scholar of classical literature; upon his death in 1438, his collection of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew texts became the nucleus of the Vatican library. His new palace wing at Monte Giordano included his famous library, which was entered through the portico of the courtyard arcade at the bottom of figure 11. His apartments in Monte Giordano were sophisticated in their design and layout, and provided clear precedents for later palaces such as the Palazzo della Cancelleria mentioned earlier. In other words, the Renaissance arrived in Rome by way of the Orsini, and Monte Giordano was, in fact, Rome's first Renaissance palace.

None of these discoveries would have been possible without a close study of Roman history, in all its complicated and often obscure glory. In the end, it is not necessarily the famous men like Le Corbusier or Michelangelo who write history; it is the long and quiet work of individual patrons and architects who, though perhaps more obscure, are equally worthy of close study.

That, Monsieur Le Corbusier, is the lesson of Rome. ☞



Charles Darwin, photographed by his son Leonard, circa 1874.

ENDING UP IN HISTORY

Howard DeLong

BROWNELL PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY EMERITUS

When John Alcorn first asked me to contribute to a symposium honoring Borden Painter, my circumstances did not allow me to accept.* However, even after the symposium was long over, he persisted and, circumstances changing, I could accept. I am certainly more than happy to contribute to a work honoring Borden, a friend I have respected since we first met.

My first semester teaching at Trinity (Fall 1960) included a course called “Philosophy of History.” Since my Ph. D. thesis was on R. G. Collingwood, an important twentieth-century historian and philosopher, the course was a natural choice. However, my research interests turned to logic, a subject that for me has always meant mathematical logic. The focus of my interest was Gödel’s theorem, which states that given any consistent formal system powerful enough to express arithmetic, there is always a statement whose truth we can know from outside the system, but which cannot be proved within the system. This means that formal arithmetic is inherently incomplete; there always will be truths that cannot be proven. Of course, any true but unprovable statement can be added as a new axiom, but then the procedure Gödel used can be applied again to produce another unprovable statement, and so on *ad infinitum*. A consequence of this fact, I concluded, was that “the rules by which we define and discover arithmetical truth not only are, but must be, incompletely defined. We are therefore forced to define the notion of arithmetical truth historically; it cannot be explicated once and for all but must

* [See editor’s introduction to this volume, pages i-ii.—J.A.]

be redefined continually.”¹ I was certainly astounded to find that the study of arithmetic, which seemed to be an abstract realm where all truths are *a priori*, turned out to have an historical dimension that could not be avoided. Even more astounding was the fact that it could be *proven* that arithmetic has that historical dimension. Arithmetic thus requires creativity; its truths cannot all be found by mechanical means.

The study of Gödel enlarged my conception of what was capable of proof, and it greatly raised the standards of rigor that I thought a proof could ideally satisfy. Gödel’s work implied that a significant percentage of everything written about mathematics, either by mathematicians or by philosophers, had to be qualified, if not discarded altogether.

During the time I was working on logic I found myself developing a second major interest and that was political philosophy. I began in the fashion of most political philosophers by trying to understand concepts such as freedom, or rights or justice in a rather abstract way. I implicitly thought that if you make these kinds of concepts readily comprehensible you could define a free society without reference to actual societies. However, as I tried to clarify the concepts in my own mind I found myself thinking again of actual societies, especially those in ancient Greece and those in eighteenth-century America. It gradually dawned on me that if I wanted to understand what freedom should be today I had to understand what it meant in the past. For example, when Athenian democracy was young, the Greeks, although badly outnumbered, defeated the Persians at Marathon (490 BC), at Salamis (480), and at Plataea (479). In 472, Aeschylus won first prize in the Athenian Festival for his play *The Persians*. In it, the Persian Queen asks who is king of the Athenians. The answer: “Of no man

¹ Howard DeLong, “Unsolved Problems in Arithmetic,” *Scientific American* 224:3 (March 1971) 60.

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are they called the slaves or vassals.” For the Athenian audience—where many, like Aeschylus himself, were veterans, and where all had relatives, friends, or associates who died fighting the Persians—this may have been the most soul-stirring line of poetry they had ever heard. It meant that their victories protected Athens from becoming a new Miletus, which had been destroyed in 494 after the city revolted against Persian subjugation. It meant that they would never have to prostrate themselves, as the Persians had to do, before any monarch. It meant that they were free of all political oppressors, whether foreign or domestic. It meant their unique democratic freedom would henceforth define them as Athenians. And it meant that the flourishing of that freedom would honor those, as nothing else could, who fought and died for Athens’ sake.

This Athenian idea of the free person as the radical opposite of the slave greatly influenced the American revolutionists. Nevertheless they had strong doubts about Athenian society. Here is Alexander Hamilton’s judgment:

The ancient democracies, in which the people themselves deliberated, never possessed one feature of good government. Their very character was tyranny; their figure deformity; When they assembled, the field of debate presented an ungovernable mob, not only incapable of deliberation, but prepared for every enormity.²

What the Americans wanted was Athenian freedom without Athenian tumult and Athenian tyranny. They wanted to create a new paradigm of human society, one which would, in the words of James Wilson, “outshine the glory of Greece.”³ It would be the first ergonomic

² Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-87), Vol. 5, pp. 38-9.

³ Robert Green McCloskey, ed., *The Works of James Wilson*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 70.

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civilization, precisely tailored to human nature so as best to promote universal human flourishing. Whereas Athens claimed, according to Pericles, that “our city as a whole is the school of Hellas,”⁴ the Americans believed their civilization could be a school for all humanity. It would be a society so excellent that America, which had learned so much from the rest of the world, would become its teacher and that, in time, the word American would signify not only the people of the United States but a new civilization, created by the spirit of 1776, and characterized by a continuing democratic revolution relentlessly devoted to improving public happiness and private flourishing.

It was the aim of the American revolutionists to create an ergonomic civilization that led me to study human nature. The problem of designing a government that exactly fits human nature requires an understanding of what that nature is. Again, I gradually found myself becoming more and more dissatisfied with the way in which philosophers had typically approached this subject. I came to the conclusion that one needed to understand human nature in terms of evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology. Hence, in my last semester at Trinity (Spring 1999), I created an entirely new course called “Philosophy and Evolution” that investigated the evolutionary history of humans. Among other things the course took up the speculations evolutionists have for the origin of language, the birth of consciousness, the dawn of religion, and the beginnings of reason. It was for me, and I hope for the students, a very stimulating course.

What completely surprised me is that I discovered that the Darwinian principle could help solve the logical problem of creating social policies that exactly fit the needs of a given democratic society. Might it not be prudent, I thought, to use the Darwinian principle in the evolution of the policies to regulate our social lives, since we

⁴ Thucydides, II, 41.

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know that evolution can produce objects of transcendent beauty, subtlety, economy, and functionality? Let me illustrate using a simple thought experiment. Suppose that public policy must be decided on topic A. For example, A might be taxation, or welfare, or drugs. Now imagine that 128 individuals or organizations each submit a different proposed policy for A. After discussing all the proposals, the American people vote and reject one half of them (“natural selection”) in the first round. Now the sponsors of the remaining 64 proposals examine what has been accepted and rejected, and then they modify their proposals for submission to the second round (“descent with modification”). This process is continued for six more rounds, when there will be just one proposal left (“survival of the fittest”), a product of successive, and persistently successful, intelligent designs. The surviving proposal would become the public policy on A. Just as it was found that studying dolphins is useful in designing a submarine, or snake fangs in designing hypodermic needles, so, it seemed to me, that biomimicry might be fruitfully applied to politics and law. In 1670, Sir Edward Coke called the common law the “artificial perfection of reason.”⁵ The thought experiment illustrates the artificial perfection of the common reason of the people, an experiment inconceivable before Darwin, and an experiment impossible actually to carry out in a practical version without the enormous intellectual and technological resources of the contemporary world. Successful experiments of this kind would, I believe, create new standards of excellence in the cause of freedom and public happiness, thus becoming as revolutionary in the twenty-first century as the American revolution was in the eighteenth.

So I have found that all my principal interests bring me back to history. But what has applied to me has also applied to a great deal of twenty-first century knowledge. In 1690, John Locke said that “the Sun, and Stars, though they have outlasted several Generations

⁵ *Institutes*, 97b.

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of Men, we call not old, because we do not know what period GOD hath set to that sort of Beings.”⁶ Today we call some stars young and others old, indeed we apparently know the age of the universe itself. If the spirits animating twenty-first-century academic disciplines could talk, they would repeat Lincoln’s words: “We cannot escape history.” ❧

⁶ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II.26.4.

Keynote Lecture

An Appreciation of Borden Painter

It is my pleasure to say a few words on behalf of my friend and colleague Borden W. Painter, Jr.

He was born in 1937, during the Roosevelt recession—everyone, after all, has his ups and downs. He graduated from Manhasset High School, on Long Island, in 1954—a fact of special importance because of Borden’s encounter with “the legendary Jim Brown.” The two were teammates of the Manhasset football squad, and, sometime during the Fall 1953 season, Borden actually tackled—yes, he tackled Jim Brown. Whether Mr. Brown got the wind knocked out of him, or had to shake the stars from his head is not recorded.

Borden’s destiny, however, drew him away from football toward the study of history. During his first year at Trinity, he was awarded the Mead History Prize—a harbinger of things to come. He graduated in 1958 as a member of Phi Beta Kappa with Honors in History.

His graduate education included some fancy footwork: he received a Master of Divinity from General Theological Seminary in 1963 and a Ph.D. from Yale in 1965. His dissertation (directed by the eminent Edmund Morgan) was in an American subject—the Anglican Vestry during the colonial period. But his major interests as a young scholar and professor were centered on Renaissance and Reformation Europe, and Tudor and Stuart England.

Then the Eternal City beckoned. During the early and mid-1970s Borden served first as instructor and then as director of Professor Michael Campo’s burgeoning Rome Program. With this came a growing fascination with Mussolini and Italian Fascism. In 1980, he edited a special issue of the *Cesare Barbieri Courier* devoted to recent scholarship of the Fascist period. His immensely popular seminar

on modern Italy—“Fascism, Italian Style”—made him famous yet again. And in 1990, he published in the *American Historical Review* his exhaustive appraisal of the work of Renzo De Felice, a pre-eminent and controversial scholar of Mussolini’s life and works.

A distinguished career as professor and scholar might have been enough. But Borden, as we know, has cut a broader swath during his years at Trinity. True enough, he has not served as Director of Development, nor has he aspired to be Comptroller of the College. Despite these yawning lacunae in his record of accomplishments, it is still the case that he has been an institution in himself: Department Chair, Director of Italian programs, Dean of the Faculty, President of the College. And all the while, he remained Professor Painter, the inspirational teacher, never able—nor inclined—to remove the chalk from his coat. ☞

John A. Hatfield '65

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY



VIA DELL'IMPERO DA UN ARCO DEL COLOSSEO.

(Fot. A)

Mussolini's *Avenue of the Empire*, seen from the Colosseum.

CONFESSIONS OF AN ERRANT HISTORIAN

Borden W. Painter, Jr. '58

20TH PRESIDENT OF TRINITY COLLEGE

I thank you all for being here. My special thanks to John Alcorn for putting this symposium together and to Ward, Henry, Kristin and Jack for participating. What fun it is for me to celebrate history on this special occasion. I am both touched and honored.

My title is “Confessions of an Errant Historian.” Yes, it will be a confession: a confession of my sins and digressions as an historian, and my confession of personal beliefs in and about history as a discipline. “Errant” refers both to my somewhat wandering path through the fields of history and possible errors and mistakes made along the way.

I propose to do some autobiographical musing; to walk you through my life as historian. In doing that I will offer a variety of opinions, ideas, and suggestions about the study of history and about what history means and ought to mean for us. I begin with two cartoon panels that I’ve used in class. First, *Peanuts* with Charlie Brown and his sister Sally. In the first panel, Charlie asks Sally, “All Right, what happened in 1803?” to which she responds, “How should I know?” Next he asks her, “What happened in 1716?” and she answers, “Who cares?” Charlie tries again: “What happened in 1601?” and again hears Sally say, “How should I know?” In the final panel, an exasperated Charlie asks, “Why don’t you know any of these dates?” Sally responds, “I wasn’t involved.” Well, Sally is wrong. We are “involved” in history whether we choose to acknowledge it or not.

My second example is from *Calvin and Hobbes* in a more post-modernist mode. Calvin begins by saying, “We don’t understand what really causes events to happen.” He goes on: “History is the fiction we invent to persuade ourselves that events are knowable and that life has order and direction. That’s why events are always reinterpreted when values change. We need new versions of history to allow for our current prejudices.” In the final panel Hobbes asks Calvin, “So what are you writing?” Calvin responds, “A revisionist autobiography.” Calvin wants to make sure he writes his own version of his own history. It reminds me of Winston Churchill’s quip: “History will treat me kindly because I propose to write it.”¹

My interest in history appeared early. I think it clearly surfaced in the fifth and sixth grades. Mrs. Wensich was the teacher. We studied history, U.S. government, and other countries, most notably Mexico. I was the only one in class who got the answer to her question right: “Who was the first American president born in the United States?”. The answer is Martin van Buren because he was first born after 1776. I remember memorizing Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and reading my first complete book, the historical novel *Drums Along the Mohawk*, which also appeared as a movie with Henry Fonda and Claudette Colbert.

I also learned that history could be boring. This became excruciatingly clear in the seventh grade when we had to study the history of New York state, as mandated by the state legislature. It was clear that the teacher, Mrs. Gillespie, cared little for this subject and knew even less about it.

Collecting stamps helped because you learned some history, both U.S. and other countries. The series of presidential stamps helped. A post card cost one cent—George Washington; a letter cost three

¹ Quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 137.

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cents, Thomas Jefferson and so on and so forth. Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president, even though one rarely needed to purchase the sixteen-cent stamp that bore his image. Among the most colorful stamps were those of Italian East Africa, although I had little appreciation of what this implied about Italian colonialism in that part of the world or that I would one day get very involved with that subject.

I was born in 1937, and my earliest memories are of World War II. In school, we just accepted the war as a normal part of life. We had our ration books for gasoline and food; worked in our victory gardens; took the car to a service station run by a woman because her brother was in the army; and, of course, followed the course of the war. Thus, I grew up knowing exactly who our friends were: the British, the Russians, the French; and who the enemies were: Italy, Germany, and Japan. My mother had relatives in Norway, so I took a special interest in the German occupation and remember letters my mother received from them with Nazi swastika postmarks. By the time I finished high school in 1954, the Cold War and the “Communist threat” had emerged, along with McCarthy and McCarthyism. I recall hurrying home from school to watch the Army–McCarthy hearings on TV, itself a history-making event.

My life and my life as an historian were shaped by the events of my youth, by the context of my early years that included World War II, and then the Cold War, the Korean War, and the first stirrings of racial change: Truman’s integration of the armed forces, and *Brown vs. the Board of Education*; just as the next generation was shaped and influenced by Vietnam, Civil Rights, and more.

High school gave me a chance to explore history more widely, although the World History course had its limitations. Miss Decker, our teacher, probably had just stayed on a tad too many years; my most vivid memory of the class is of her struggling to get on her gloves before going to the blackboard because she was allergic to chalk!

Nevertheless I did learn some history. In our senior English class we had to do a “research” paper that did include learning how to do a proper bibliography. I chose to have a go at the English Reformation. That paper proved to be excellent training for the frequent papers in many subjects that I would have to write at Trinity.

Of course it was my four years at Trinity that had the greatest influence in my early formation as an historian. I had such interesting and challenging history teachers as Norton Downs, Gene Davis, Phil Bankwitz, and George Cooper. The department requirements in those days took us through European history, ancient history, U.S. history, and then electives that for me were predominantly British and European. We had no courses in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. That all changed in the 1960s. Even with those limitations, I had the opportunity to study broadly: medieval, early modern, modern; full-year courses in French history and Russian history. We were required to do only one senior seminar, but I did three: one on New York in the federal period with D.G. Brinton Thompson, the Crusades with Norton Downs, and eighteenth-century England with George Cooper.

George in particular challenged me to stretch myself intellectually. He knew I was a dutiful student who could get good grades, but he also knew I was not fully engaged with my studies. His challenge in my junior year opened up a wider world to me. Study became less “homework” and more exploration. Here was my opportunity to dig into history, literature, religion, philosophy, and art history in a more searching, curious, and engaged way. Call it what you will: growing up, intellectual maturation, or a more sophisticated way of pleasing the professors!

I did my seminar paper for Norton Downs on the First Crusade. I had sufficient sources, although only in English translation, to make me see that I had to shape a narrative and an analysis based on my own reading

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of these sources, not just based on the presentations of historians. At the same time, I did a double-term paper, for Phil Bankwitz for both the Russian and French history courses. It was on Voltaire and Catherine the Great. I learned, among other things, that my high school French was more than adequate for reading the correspondence between the two in the original French. It became my first published article. True, the publication was the undergraduate *Trinity Review*. Somewhat pretentiously the published title was in French, “Voltaire et l’Étoile du Nord.”

I had planned to enter theological school after Trinity, but my awakening to the delights and challenges of history sent me first to graduate school at Yale to begin study for the Ph.D. After two years of courses, passing my qualifying exams, and getting married, I went off to the General Theological Seminary in New York from 1960 to 1963. I took more history courses there, with two notable professors, and made some use of the Latin and Greek I had studied at Trinity. I had also passed the required reading exams in German and French while at Yale. As Gene Davis was fond of saying, historians often know several languages, although perhaps none of them particularly well! Italian still lay in the future, but I had already gained an understanding of an Italian phrase I would later first hear from Mike Campo: “*traduttore, traditore*” (a translator is a traitor). To understand a culture and its history requires training in a language; and going from one language to another is a tricky business. Some ideas, phrases, and concepts simply don’t translate in any satisfactory way, a caveat any historian must understand. It holds true, by the way, for English as well, as language is always changing and even familiar words may have had a very different meaning fifty, one hundred, two hundred years ago.

My first major deviation from the usual path of the budding historian came when I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation for Yale, after I had graduated from General and been ordained. My major field at Yale was Modern England, defined as 1485 to 1945, with minor fields in Colonial Church

history and the Reformation. A topic in English history would almost inevitably involve research in England for which I had neither the time nor the money. I had, of course, married into money: Ann was working as a nurse while I went to school. This arrangement did not include my doing research in England. So picking up on a suggestion from one of my history professors at General, I proposed to Sydney Ahlstrom, the late, great historian of American religious history, a study of the colonial vestries in Anglican parishes. These boards of laymen were adaptations of English vestries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They took on a new role as they developed in this country because throughout the colonial period there were no bishops sent from England to supervise Episcopal congregations here. Ahlstrom approved the topic.

I researched and wrote the dissertation from 1963 to 1965. I was working in a parish in Hamden. I began teaching part-time at Trinity in February 1964 in the required European survey, History 101-102. The research proved to be great fun. Few minute books of these colonial parishes had been published. I went to state libraries here in Connecticut and in Maryland, to diocesan libraries in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and to many individual parishes that still had records. New Castle, Delaware, was particularly interesting to me, as my father was born there and my paternal grandparents were buried in the parish churchyard. The rector put me up and supplied plentiful food and drink during my stay. The parish still owned the "glebe," that is the farm that in the colonial period was to provide the resident clergy with income.

I thoroughly enjoyed researching and writing the dissertation, an experience unfortunately not universal among Ph.D. candidates. Part of the fun was discovering how cantankerous vestry members could be. They thought they owned the clergy. They hired them, fired them, paid them, and made all sorts of demands on them. At one meeting in a New Jersey parish, one of the wardens threw a glass of

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sherry at the rector! So I learned a lot about colonial America, yet never taught a course in it. And other than revising some chapters for later publication,² never did further research in the field.

I was now on my way to becoming an “errant historian.” A dictionary definition of “errant” includes: 1) traveling or given to traveling; 2) a: straying outside the proper path or bounds; b: moving about aimlessly or irregularly; c: deviating from the standard (as of truth or propriety). Well, I never lied and did not lack propriety, but I was deviating from the standard that required focus and specialization. And the trend, after 1965 when I received my doctorate, would only emphasize my “errant” behavior.

For the first decade or so of my teaching at Trinity, this deviation from the developing norm did not make much difference. We taught six courses a year. While you were welcome to research and publish, there was no explicit requirement to do so, and there was no regular support for it in terms of college funds or a sabbatical before tenure. In fact, there wasn’t even tenure! Each department had one full professor, presumably tenured, who chaired the department, and these full professors told President Jacobs how to run the college.

I have always told my students that the reason I became a college teacher was that it was the only way to remain a student all my life and more or less make a living. In the early days it was mostly less, but we could scrape by and I’d moonlight on Sunday mornings in one parish or another. And you are always a “student” in the largest and best sense of the word. You learn so much in and through your teaching. That’s the fun of it.

² Borden W. Painter, Jr., “The Vestry in Colonial New England,” *The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church (HMPEC)* 44:4 (December 1975) 381-408; “The Vestry in the Middle Colonies,” *HMPEC* 47:1 (March 1978) 5-36.

When I went full time in 1966, I continued teaching in the full-year History 101-102, so I'd lecture on everything from the medieval church, to Renaissance Florence, to Napoleon, to World War I. I began teaching survey courses on the Renaissance and Reformation periods that I continued throughout my years at Trinity. Tudor and Stuart England was a regular subject, and I even taught the first half of the English history survey once, after George Cooper retired. We introduced the Freshman Seminars in 1969 and I taught about half a dozen over the years. I taught versions of these courses on all levels, including our graduate Master's program.

But just as I was settling down as a specialist in what we now call Early Modern Europe, that is Europe from about 1350 to 1715, I wandered off course again. It was the early 1970s. The explosive growth of college populations and faculties came to an end, inflation set in—remember OPEC and lining up to fill your gas tank—and budgets everywhere got tight. George Cooper, as chairman of the department, announced that we could no longer expect to add new colleagues teaching new fields as in the 1960s when we hired our first specialists in Russia, Asia, and Africa. George suggested we consider teaching in a second field. Gene Davis, as a native Texan, always had an interest in Latin America, so he developed what became our survey (and only course) in Latin American history until the arrival of Darío Euraque over a decade later. That's when I made my move into modern Italy. The road to Rome now lay open!

I taught my first course on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italy as a graduate course in the fall term, then known as the Christmas Term, of 1971. I had ten graduate students and one undergraduate. One of the graduate students was the Rev. Roger Smith, rector of St. James Church in Farmington. I was on the staff there, so Roger was my student one night a week, while I was on his payroll. Roger got a "Distinction" that semester! Another enticement into Italian history was, of course, the Rome program, begun in the summer of 1970 by

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Mike Campo. I had made my first trip to Italy in March 1968 on a three-week tour of the entire peninsula during spring vacation. Mike led a group of about twenty faculty, students, and administrators. It almost led to my divorce, as Ann stayed behind with our two children and a third on the way. But I took in enough of Italy to know that it was a good place to go back to. So I returned in the summer of 1971 to teach a course on Renaissance Italy; again in 1974 to direct the summer program. I took a nine-year break and went back in 1983 and 1984 to help in the first Elderhostel programs in Rome and Perugia. So with Cooper, Campo, the Rome Program, and Elderhostel, I made my “Italian Connection.”

I got another break in 1979-80 when I stretched a sabbatical into a year by gaining entrance to a full-year seminar, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, at Brown, with Professor Anthony Molho. Tony took us through the Renaissance with all the latest scholarship on what is broadly thought of as “social history.” We read Carlo Ginzburg’s *Night Battles* and *The Cheese and the Worms*, in Italian.³ Natalie Davis visited our seminar one week, as just one of a number of distinguished scholars who came over the year. This was a delightful cram course in some of the latest trends in historical scholarship.

Soon I developed an interest in Italian Fascism and Mussolini. Who was that guy I remembered as a child? What was fascism, something I had in a sense grown up with? And there was Hitler, too, and World War II. I had begun to study Italian by sitting in on Mike Campo’s introductory course. I worked on my own. One summer I got some Barbieri money to pay for tutoring by Andrea Bianchini. I offered seminars on “Italian and European Fascism” and a Freshman Seminar on “Fascism, Italian Style.”

³ English translations in paperback editions are: Carlo Ginzburg, *Night Battles, Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985) and *The Cheese and the Worms, the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

Then I had the good fortune to have an opportunity drop in my lap to do some research in this new field. The Trinity library possessed a set of documents taken from Mussolini's headquarters in northern Italy the day after he was executed by partisans in April 1945. There were interesting letters and manuscripts, including the first official letter sent by Hitler to Mussolini in June 1931. It included a signed photograph of Hitler. My job was to edit a special edition of the *Cesare Barbieri Courier*, published by Trinity's Cesare Barbieri Endowment for Italian Culture. I solicited essays from top scholars and wrote the introduction. It appeared in 1980.⁴ Now I was really hooked on the subject of Italian Fascism and determined to find ways to continue research. Elderhostel and the Rome Program made it relatively easy to get to Rome where the main archives are for the fascist period.

The publication of the *Courier* led to our conference on "Mussolini and Italian Fascism" in October 1982, the sixtieth anniversary of the fascist "March on Rome" that brought the Duce to power. The two leading historians of modern Italy, Denis Mack Smith of Oxford and Renzo De Felice of Rome, attended, gave papers and engaged in a memorable debate on the stage of the Goodwin Theater. This event was another step in putting Trinity on the international map as a place strong in Italian Studies. The Italian Connection was becoming the Italian Network.

This part of my errant journey now took a decidedly "historiographic" turn. Historiography is literally the "writing of history." It includes the history of the discipline from Herodotus and Thucydides to the present. It examines the way human beings have remembered the past and tried to reconstruct it. The emergence of the modern discipline, the methods and ways of doing history, the many "schools" of historians are all part of what we mean by historiography.

⁴ Borden W. Painter, Jr., ed., *Cesare Barbieri Courier, A Special Issue on Mussolini and Italian Fascism* (Hartford, CT: Trinity College, 1980).

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I had always enjoyed historiography, *i.e.*, looking at how historians did their work and how individual historians could influence our views of the past. In 1976 I made up a course on European Historiography. We read a series of books from the early medieval period to World War II. Henri Pirenne, Marc Bloch, R.H. Tawney, Georges Lefebvre, and A.J.P. Taylor were some of our authors. These were the sorts of historians who struck out on new paths of exploration and set the course of study often for a whole generation. They too were “errant historians.” I did this course a number of times; later as one of our double-credit senior seminars, once with Norton Downs, and another time with Susan Pennybacker.

Then the History Department, after years of talking about it, instituted a course in historiography required for all its majors. I began teaching sections of it and it became a favorite course that I continued teaching until last year.

From the mid-1970s on, Renzo De Felice was the preeminent historian of Italian Fascism. Highly controversial in Italy, he challenged the prevailing “antifascist” approach in Italy that had dominated since World War II. That approach, of course, rejected fascism on political and moral grounds, but De Felice argued that it failed to give an adequate historical understanding of fascism’s appeal and apparent success in the 1930s. It overlooked important fascist sources and it “privileged” a biased and largely Marxist/Italian Communist political point of view. As an innocent American outsider, the controversy over De Felice fascinated me. When I spent the summer of 1987 in another NEH-sponsored summer seminar at Yale under Henry Turner, I wrote my paper on De Felice. With Turner’s encouragement and many revisions, this paper became an article on “Renzo De Felice and the Historiography of Italian Fascism” that appeared in the *American Historical Review* in 1990.⁵

⁵ Borden W. Painter, Jr., “Renzo De Felice and the Historiography of Italian Fascism,” *American Historical Review* 95:2 (April 1990) 391-405.

Another stroke of luck for me was the following: one of the archivists at our 1982 conference on Italian Fascism gave a paper on the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution that celebrated the first ten years of fascist rule in 1932. The *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* or *MRF* was a great topic. Many of Italy's best artists and architects had put the exhibit together. The original catalogue that I first examined in Yale's rare-book Beinecke Library was reprinted in a facsimile version in 1982. Colleague Michael Lestz spotted it in Rome and brought home a copy for me. Over the years all sorts of friends and colleagues at Trinity and elsewhere have sent me newspaper and journal articles and other bits of news on my developing study of Rome during the fascist period.

The Archivio Centrale dello Stato completed a catalogue of all its holdings on the *MRF* and I began work in that central archive by the later 1980s. Several years of work led to one modest article on that subject,⁶ but my attempt to do a book on the three versions of the *MRF*, 1932-34, 1937-40, and 1942-43, came to naught. So here was the errant historian—striking out on a path that offered new insights into the history of Italian Fascism—who had come to a dead end!

Then about five years ago a colleague from another school suggested that I write a comprehensive book on Rome during the fascist period. In the last twenty-five years, scholars, beginning with historians of architecture, began looking anew at fascist cultural policies and specifically the makeover of Rome by Mussolini. The exhibit I had studied, the *MRF*, was part of that. Here was the best reason of all to go back to Rome. I had noticed the fascist streets and buildings in Rome from my very first visits. Now I began pulling it all together. While teaching at the Rome campus in the fall of 2000 I worked in the archives some more and spent lots of time tramping around the city. The students in my course on fascism had to take “forced

⁶ Borden W. Painter, Jr., “American Films in Fascist Propoganda: The Case of the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution 1932-43,” *Film & History* 22:3 (September 1992): 100-11.

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marches” with me through Fascist Rome. Ann had done the research on buying a high quality camera to take pictures of sites and, with its macro lens, to take pictures from various publications of scenes in the 1930s. From these I made slides for illustrating lectures on “Mussolini’s Rome.” Now I’m happy to report that I have a contract for *Mussolini’s Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City*. I will spend this summer completing the manuscript for submission in September.⁷

So there is my errant path as an historian from grade school to yesterday. Let me finish by offering some observations about history, historical study and why history matters, not only to me, but more importantly to all of us.

One of my favorite ways of presenting the problems and possibilities of history to my classes is what I call “History in the News.” I use recent newspaper articles and book reviews to show how history and historical controversy constantly swirl around us in the media. History does matter. It is part of our story; it informs who we are and who we think we are—our identities; it involves what we teach our children; how we grapple with the debris and aftermath of historical events, be they the Holocaust, slavery, colonialism, communism, fascism, religion, cultures. How did we get here? Where are we going? Sally of *Peanuts* may not want to be involved, but we all are. And like Calvin we are constantly revisiting and revising history. History is a constant study of and debate about the past.

When the Smithsonian planned an exhibit on the fiftieth anniversary of Hiroshima it set off a firestorm of controversy.⁸ How do you do history publicly in a museum? When evidence of Thomas Jefferson’s liaison with Sally Hemings made the news all sorts of debate and

⁷ Borden W. Painter, Jr., *Mussolini’s Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁸ See Edward T. Linenthal and Tome Engelhardtts, eds., *History Wars, the Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996).

controversy quickly emerged. The commemoration of Columbus in 1992 set off a nation-wide debate over the meaning of 1492. Daniel Goldhagen's Ph.D. thesis turned into a book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996), became an international best seller. A Ph.D. thesis as bestseller seems improbable, but it happened. Hollywood movies about history such as *Amistad* or *JFK* cause controversy and debate.

Here's one example I've used in class: a short article in the *New York Times* on "What is a Concentration Camp? Exhibit Prompts a Debate." An exhibit a few years ago on Ellis Island featured the camps where 110,000 Japanese-Americans were incarcerated during World War II. The title of the exhibit was "America's Concentration Camps: Remembering the Japanese-American Experience." Jewish groups objected that the term "concentration camp" has come to stand for the death camps Nazi Germany used to exterminate the Jewish population of Europe. The exhibitors countered that the term "concentration camp" had been used by some U.S. government officials, including President Roosevelt. And just to add to the difficulty of the term, we know that the first use of "concentration camp" was by the British in the Boer War a century ago to describe the encampments for Boer civilians, mostly women and children.

In discussing these controversies, a word I emphasize to students is "context." What is the proper historical context for a particular subject? You present a subject in one context and its meaning may seem quite clear. You expand or change that context and now nothing is clear or something else becomes clear.

Take the case of Dresden, the beautiful Baroque city in eastern Germany that was destroyed in an Allied bombing raid in February 1945. It has become a commonplace that this raid, which caused a firestorm killing thousands of innocent German civilians, was an "atrocious" perpetrated by the Allies. After all, the context is that the

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war was almost over. Dresden was filled with refugees fleeing the advancing Russians. There was no military purpose served by the raid, and it looked like a cynical move to please the Russians.

Now a new book⁹ sets a different context. Dresden was a rail center important in the war and in sending Jews to Auschwitz. The seminal book on the Dresden raid was written in the 1960s by David Irvine. Irvine went on to write many books on Nazi Germany and its leaders. In one of them, he argues there is no evidence Hitler ordered or knew about the Holocaust. And then he joined hands with the so-called “historical revisionists” who deny there was a Holocaust, as it has been commonly defined. In 2000 Irvine lost a lawsuit in England that castigated him for systematically manipulating and misusing historical data to serve his pre-determined conclusions. His estimates that nearly 100,000 people died in Dresden were inflated. The number may have been closer to 25,000; devastating to be sure, but accuracy is important here. And the raid destroyed records of Jews about to be sent to the death camps. It saved, for example, Victor Klemperer, a German Jew whose moving two-volume diary was published a few years ago. The diary bears eloquent testimony to the systematic way in which life for German Jews became unbearable under Nazi rule and led almost inevitably to death. In his case the allied “atrocities” saved his life.¹⁰ My point is that what was clear in one context is a lot less clear in an enlarged context.

A few final examples come from my own study of Mussolini’s Rome. Much of what we see in Rome today, including St. Peter’s, the Coliseum, the Circus Maximus, the Arch of Constantine, and the Baths of Caracalla, was shaped and framed by Mussolini and his regime. Rome suffered very little damage in the war. After the

⁹ Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday, February 12, 1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).

¹⁰ Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness, A Diary of the Nazi Years*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1999).

war fascist symbols could be torn off buildings, some monuments to fascism could be torn down and fascist place names were easily replaced. There would be no more *Viale Adolfo Hitler* for example. New anti-fascist names could go up, so that the *piazza* in front of the fascist Ostiense train station became the *Piazza dei Partigiani* (Partisan's Square) and the nearby fascist-built park became the Park of the Resistance.

Most of Mussolini's Rome remains, but controversy about it continues. A good example is the Obelisk of Axum, taken from Ethiopia in 1937 and erected at the end of the Circus Maximus, in front of Mussolini's new Africa building that now houses the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN. It is at the beginning of the fascist avenue, originally the *Via Imperiale*, that ran out to the fascist built *EUR* section of the new Rome. After the war, the Italian government promised to return this war trophy to Ethiopia. Forty-nine years later and after much political controversy, it finally will happen next year.

You lose one, win another. Out at *EUR* in the big administration building built at the end of the 1930s there is a sculpted relief over the main entrance that depicts the history of Rome. We see Romulus and Remus at the top and Mussolini on horseback giving the fascist salute at the bottom. It survived the war, but someone then chiseled out Mussolini's face. In early 2001 the face was restored.

So what's the use of history? Does history teach us anything? Are there lessons of history? Is it an art, part of the humanities, or one of the social sciences? These and a host of questions are constantly debated. I don't have answers, but let me give you the context within which I think about such questions.

History, as it turns out, is a much more difficult subject than it first appears. There is no such thing as just the facts of the past. After all, what facts and how many are we talking about? We cannot relive the

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past or try recreating it in a lab. We work with artifacts of the past: written records, public and private, archeological evidence, statistics when we can get them. History is often like detective work. We look for clues that give insight into the past. The same event will look different depending on what perspective we take.

Remember the line from the *Pogo* cartoon of years ago: “We have met the enemy and it is us”? Well the problem with history is “us.” Human beings, human nature, human societies are the subject matter. Ask five different people to describe you, and you will get five different sets of information and perspectives. There is a “you,” but understanding you and who you are, what you do and why, is not self-evident. Try establishing exactly what happened a week ago, a year ago and see what difficulties, puzzles and challenges you encounter; then try going for something one hundred or five hundred or a thousand years ago.

Historians are fond of saying there is “no future in history.” We look at the past; we hesitate and usually refuse to predict the future; we are not a science in that we cannot predict the future with any certainty or accuracy. So why bother?

First, we can’t keep our hands off history. We are always searching for a “usable past” to understand who we are or to establish one sort of legitimacy or another. In the search, we often disagree and fight over history. Eric Foner’s recent book carries the title *Who Owns History?* His answer is “Everyone and no one—which is why the study of the past is a constantly evolving, never-ending journey of discovery.”¹¹

I put it this way to my students in introducing “History in the News:”

¹¹ Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), p. xix.

History is a sensitive subject for the simple reason that we are all a part of it. We, as human beings, are the subject of history. Sometimes we are offended when “our” history is misused or misunderstood by others. What studying the “history wars” shows us is that there are a whole host of difficult, but fascinating questions about how we write, study and understand history: Who owns a particular history? What kind of history do we put in textbooks for our children? What language, labels and vocabulary are right for a particular subject? What is the nature of historical evidence? Is history art, science, literature or something else? Is there any certain knowledge or truth yielded by the study of history? If so, what do we do with it?

I believe we can find truth and truths in history, but such truth is usually approximate, not exact. It may or may not be truth that fits a larger pattern that yields some “law” or “lesson.” I think history does encourage us to be skeptical, which is not the same as cynical. Beware those who glibly use history to support their ideology or some self-serving project or policy. There are occasional insights that I believe continue to be useful: Lord Acton’s “power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely” is an example.

That history is unpredictable is another “truth” that may be useful. In other words, it is clear in studying the protagonists of the past, that they usually had no clue of what was going to happen next. What happens when wars break out is, I believe, particularly unpredictable. We are learning that again in the news out of Iraq every day. So be skeptical of confident predictions about what will happen in a war or even what will happen when a particular policy is adopted. That does not mean we cannot or should not make decisions, but history may help us to be more modest, prudent and circumspect in making our decisions.

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Most difficult and problematic for me is the moral dimension of history. I don't believe moral lessons emerge from the study of history because our moral beliefs and convictions are something we bring to the study of history, so my sense of morality will differ from yours. Having acknowledged that, it is often the moral dimension that is so difficult. How do you understand the Holocaust or the Armenian genocide? And what is genocide anyway? Slavery, persecution, religious conflicts, war, conquest, death, torture: these are part of history. When we study history do we, therefore, condemn what offends us? Yes, but then do we just begin to moralize? How do we understand why people have so often in history done what we think is morally reprehensible, while thinking they were doing what was right? I recently purchased a book I look forward to reading soon: *The Nazi Conscience* by Claudia Koonz.¹² Michael Marrus comments on the book jacket that this “arresting new book makes the case that between 1933 and 1939, before the Second World War and the Holocaust, the Nazis built a perverse ethical consensus in Germany. Preaching fears of racial weakness along with pride and commitment to a new moral order, self-righteous opinion leaders created an ethnic fundamentalism—of which we have not, she suggests in a closing reflection, seen the last.”

Indeed many of what we believe were the crimes of the twentieth century were done in the name of political ideologies that claimed to be scientific—whether the racial science of the Nazis or the scientific world view of Soviet Communism. My life began in the midst of that bloody century. As I said at the outset today, those events shaped my early years that stretched into the decades up to the end of the Cold War. My errant road as an historian led me to Rome, fascism, the twentieth century—a period I will continue to study and meditate upon in my retirement. What happened in those decades matters, not only because that history has shaped the world of today, but also

¹² Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

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because we need to understand what it tells us about our human nature and the human dilemma. Why, for example, do we do such horrible things to our fellow human beings while thinking we are doing the morally right thing?

A final indication of the way history matters is revealed in the current state of history textbooks in our public schools today. Thanks to the unrelenting pressure of political lobbying by both the right and the left, especially in California and Texas, today's textbooks are largely boring, inaccurate, uninspiring and short on good prose and story-telling and long on pictures, graphs and silly questions. The process of how this has come about has been chronicled in articles in recent years and most recently in Diane Ravitch's book *The Language Police*.¹³ I can only hope that such critiques may be a healthy sign that we want to recover history as a subject for our children.

What a shame that history is made dull and ponderous. History—our history, our story as human beings—can and should be approached from so many perspectives: history as comedy, history as tragedy, history as drama, history as achievement and failure, history as moral dilemma, history as a reservoir of experience, if only we know how to draw upon it.

We live in a society that tends to look constantly to the present and the future, but the past continues to intrude. At Trinity the study of history is alive and well. It has been my privilege to have been a part of the effort for the past 40 years. I may not have walked the straight and narrow path, but I've certainly enjoyed the life of an errant historian. Thank you for hearing my confessions this afternoon. ☞

¹³ Diane Ravitch, *The Language Police* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

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(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Chronology—Borden W. Painter, Jr.

- 1937** Born in Brooklyn, New York
- 1954** Graduated from Manhasset High School
- 1954-58** Undergraduate at Trinity College
- 1957** Elected to Phi Beta Kappa
- 1958-60** History Ph.D. courses, Yale University
- 1959** Married Ann Dunning
- 1960-63** Student, General Theological Seminary
- 1963** Ordination to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church
- 1965** Received Ph.D., Yale University
- 1964-66** Instructor, part-time, History Department, Trinity College
- 1966-2004** Assistant Professor to Professor, Trinity College
- 1974-79, 1989-93** Chairman, History Department
- 1977** Trinity Club “Man of the Year”
- 1984-87** Dean of the Faculty
- 1981-98** Chairman, Board of Trustees, Cesare Barbieri Endowment for Italian Culture
- 1989-2004** Director of Italian Programs
- 1994-95, 2003-04** Interim President
- 1995** Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, Trinity College
- 1995** Eigenbrodt Cup, Alumni Award
- 2004** Named 20th President and President, Emeritus
- 2004** Retirement!

Typography

This volume is typeset in fonts that reflect Borden Painter's research interests in history:

MOISTRA

A font based based on a style of lettering often seen on Italian Art Deco posters, propaganda, and advertising of the 1930s. The digital version of Mostra in the present volume was designed by Mark Simonson in 2001.

Operina

A calligraphic font based on the Italian Renaissance lettering model of Ludovico Vicentino degli Arrighi. The font was used in Arrighi's 1522 instructional lettering book, *La Operina di Ludouico Vicentino, da imparare di scrivere littera Cancellarescha*. Arrighi's book contains the earliest printed examples of Chancery Cursive. The digital version of Operina in the present volume was designed by James Grieshaber in 2003.

Zinco

A decorative font based on a Victorian style of lettering often seen on Italian posters and wrappers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Zinco was originally designed by Herman Ihlenburg (1843-1905). The digital version of Zinco in the present volume was designed by Jim Spiece (Spiece Graphics).

Bulmer

A versatile font designed in 1792 by William Martin. It was the English answer to the sharp, fine letterforms of Italy's Bodoni and France's Didot type foundries. The Bulmer fonts are named after the printer who used them so well in his Shakspeare [sic] Press editions. The digital version of Bulmer in the present volume was designed by Monotype.