



## THE PARADOX OF PLACE

By Dr. Paul Connell, Fellow

The attachment to place runs deep in the Western tradition, revealing a deep yearning in us for a sense of stability, rooted in the familiar.

There are many accompanying images, but one in particular presents a certain paradox.

Odysseus, in Homer's *Odyssey*, must leave his native Ithaka to fight the Trojan War. The primary action of the epic is his return home to achieve his "nostos" or homecoming. There his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus await, as does the task of putting in order his household after a twenty-year absence.

The attachment that one feels to the familiar, to hearth and household, the sadness of leaving what one loves, the anxiety and anticipation of the unexpected, the trials and tribulations of the journey, and the hoped-for return, recur in large ways and small throughout life.



The farther one travels, oftentimes, the closer one feels to what one has left behind. Therein lies the paradox of leaving and returning, of home and away.

This movement of departure and return finds its parallel in the Christian tradition: pilgrimage. One leaves the familiar on settled terrain for a high spiritual purpose to return to one's native place having received certain graces and having undergone something of a transformation.

Part of the transformation is looking at the place one has left with new eyes.

One may embark on a pilgrimage for various reasons, even for motives not completely known to the pilgrim, but there is the fairly constant sense of a "perceived deficiency" in the pilgrim that calls for redress.

In fact, one of the graces that a pilgrim may receive could be a purification of motives.

One might say that one departs as an "old man" to speak in anthropological terms, and returns a "new man." And so it is that the journey is never the same going to the destination as it is coming back, even if it is on the same road.

The path, imaginatively, takes the same pattern as that of the Magi, perhaps the original pilgrimage model for the Gentile peoples. We are told that after being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, that the Magi departed into their own country another way (Matt. 2:12).

Such is the reverberation of an Epiphany.

What the pilgrim receives, therefore, at minimum, is the grace of an insight,

often given in a way that one might not expect. Consequently, the shape of a pilgrimage, going and returning, "biglietto andata e ritorno," traces a type of crescent, or, more precisely, an ellipse. (Coincidentally—or perhaps not—the form of the Piazza San Pietro in Rome, the point of convergence for pilgrims from all over the world, is an ellipse.)

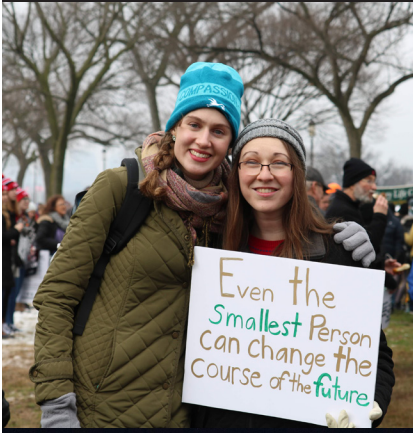
A poem that expresses this paradox of home-and-away and the transformative effect of the journey may be found in the works of a sixteenth-century French poet Joachim du Bellay, born into a family of some status in the Loire Valley in 1522, a first cousin of the then-notable Cardinal Jean du Bellay.


In 1553 he was sent to Rome as a secretary of Cardinal du Bellay, staying in Rome for four and one half years. This was a time of maturation in his poetry. And though his time in Rome was privileged in a certain sense, it was

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# SUGAR SHACK

*By Phil Lawler, Visiting Fellow*

Sometimes Mother Nature lavishes her bounties upon us at no cost; sunsets and birdsongs are free to all. At other times she makes us work for her gifts. Sugar is in that latter category. Before you enjoy that delicious taste, someone must grow, harvest, and process cane or beet. Or someone must keep bees, and after a little nurturing and coaxing of the industrious little creatures, take away the surplus of their labor. Or one may tap maple trees and boil sap down into sugar.

Since someone must do that work, why not do it yourself? I myself keep bees and tap trees, and I find the work instructive as well as rewarding. Instructive, because through the process I learn a bit more about nature, about the beauty of Creation. And this rewarding, because—well, because the end result brings quarts and quarts of pure honey or maple syrup.

Making maple syrup is deceptively simple but not necessarily easy. The trees provide the sap; all we need to do is boil it. And boil it, and boil it. But first, of course, we must choose the right trees.

New England is rich in sugar maples—beautiful trees that help give the region its spectacular autumn colors. Sugar maples can be identified by their five-lobed leaves and their distinctive seed fruits. After a bit of consultation with an experienced hand (or a book or a web site), any novice can pick the right trees.

Tapping the trees is easy. Late in winter, when temperatures are below freezing at night and above during day—usually mid-February in the vicinity of TMC—the time is right to drill holes and insert taps. Any household drill will work. Taps are available online but can easily be improvised. Hook a plastic bucket to the tap, or better, run clear plastic tubing from the tap to a bucket, and wait. Have plenty of large buckets on hand; a healthy tree can produce a couple of gallons a day.

Cover the buckets as you fill them, and store them somewhere cold, probably outdoors. Be prepared to cool them if the temperature suddenly rises; warm sap will “bloom” and give off an unpleasant odor, presaging an unpleasant taste.

If you have professional-grade equipment, the next step is equally easy. For a hobbyist, though, the real work begins. You have collected sap, not syrup. If you sample a bit, it will look and taste like water because that’s essentially what it is. To produce one quart of maple syrup, you need to boil off approximately 40 quarts of water.

This boiling must be done outdoors; that much steam would take the paint off your kitchen walls. You’ll need a fire pit, several large pots, and plenty of wood for fuel. This might be a good time to use up scrap wood or soft pine that you wouldn’t use in your woodstove. (But be careful; pine burns hot and fast; you’ll have to stoke the fire constantly and watch vigilantly so that the sap doesn’t boil over.) Expect to spend several hours boiling.

At this stage the process could be boring, but I find that it can also be a pleasant social occasion. Invite a few friends to come join you. You’ll all be warm around the fire and can enjoy a

pleasant conversation while you take turns stirring the pots and adding fresh logs.

As the first pots of sap boil down, consolidate them, fill the available pots with fresh new sap, and repeat the process. Gradually you notice that the processed sap is thickening and taking on a hint of color. You find yourself treating it with great care, whereas you sloshed the pure sap around roughly. And indeed it is precious. Taste it now. You’re almost there.

I have found that the last step is best taken in the kitchen, where it’s easier to control the temperature. A moderate amount of steam will not be unwelcome in a house that has dried out through the winter heating season. When the precious liquid reaches 219°, it’s maple syrup. Congratulations.

Sample the syrup once, and you’ll know that you can never accept the sticky, pallid substitutes again. You’ll feel a sense of accomplishment because it was your work that transformed watery sap into this amber elixir. As you share the final product with your friends, you’ll find that they want to be invited back again next year—or maybe take up maple-syruping themselves. Can you blame them?



# Nathaniel Hawthorne

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CURRICULUM: COMPA



By Dr. William Fahey, President

When I first came to Rome, I came like so many—filled with strong images of imperial grandeur and Pontifical solemnity. The city of my imagination had been laid out and constructed on a monumental scale. In earlier years, I had soaked myself along Hadrian's Wall, spent several summers surveying Legionary fortifications in Armenia and Syria, and tramped through the provinces; now I would enter Rome triumphant. I would now march through the arches of Piranesi, pledge an oath before Robert's Marcus Aurelius, sweep along the Via Sacra just as it had been photographed in my *Jenney's Latin*.

As I rode in, that first time, from Fiumicino, I felt less like Judah Ben-Hur gazing upon the Palaestra, and more like an Elizabethan Cassius uttering in disbelief, "What trash is Rome, what rubbish and what offal." My encounter with Rome was just what I needed, a humiliation. A complete and utter devastation of the idols in my mind. It is not that all my youthful readings and meditations were false, in the common sense, but the images I had constructed in my imagination were idols; and like all who lose their idols, I was left with a confusion and sadness. Rome conquered and dictated terms—*parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*. Ironically, I did not fully understand this until my second trip to Rome during the

Pauline Pilgrimage year. For that trip, I brought three books—my Bible, Pope Benedict's *Paul the Apostle*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*.

During that pilgrimage I was cured of two maladies. I had prayed for healing of the body and mind and, through them, the cleansing and strengthening of my soul. In all truth, a leg injury that had burdened me for over two decades simply vanished after my visit to San Paolo alle Tre Fontane—the church built over the site of St. Paul's execution. Equally wonderful was reading *The Marble Faun* at the Villa Seranella to the merry song of the Rose-ringed Parakeets and striking upon a particularly illuminating passage.

*The Marble Faun* is a tale that explores, as Hawthorne put it, "the Human Soul, with its choice of good or evil close at hand." It is a tale of friends, American and European, who are drawn to Rome by their own conception of its beauty and power and who move through their own Edenic revelry and fall from innocence. There is mystery, murder, love, cruelty, retribution, and forgiveness—the full sweep of human experience. I have now carried this book with me through all quarters of Rome, bright and shadowy, over the past decade, and my love and appreciation for Hawthorne's craftsmanship as well as his melancholic struggles with his own mind grow with each pilgrimage.

What was that first illumination that I was given to the song of the Parakeet? It came with the following words, words that express a central idea which Hawthorne reconfigures again and again throughout the book. The quartet of friends in the novel goes to visit the Coliseum at night. Their minds are filled with Romantic notions as they enter the Coliseum, which is flooded with the startling light of the moon, and they find it, as Hawthorne says, "a great empty space... too distinctly visible." With a strong sense of irony, he continues, "The splendor of the revelation took away that inestimable effect of dimness and mystery by which the imagination might be assisted to build a grander structure than the Coliseum,

and to shatter it with more picturesque decay. Byron's celebrated description is better than the reality." The party then goes on to observe other Americans and English "paying the inevitable visit by moonlight, and exalting themselves with raptures that were Byron's, and not their own." Throughout the novel, Hawthorne forces the reader to meditate with him on the doom of the thoughtful: How does one untangle the visions of the imagination from the firmness of the world? How do we turn away from idols toward reality, without an abandonment of the arts of civilization that make our lives tolerable and meaningful, if not cheerful?

Rome instructs; great art and artists instruct. When in Rome, I try to take the students through the Piazza de Campidoglio and through the Capitoline Museum, an area that plays a central part in Hawthorne's tale. But there is something else I like to show them. There is a little path I know that will take you around corners, through arches, and up steps to a hidden café, atop the Museum. From the patio, you can scan Rome—to the east the ruins of the Forum, to the west you gaze over the Campo di Fiori towards St. Peter's. There is life. There is *Roma aeterna*. The reality of Rome now works well with my imagination. They are reconciled. When I gaze on the messy stone squalor of the Forum, a history of magnanimous failures, I see more the magnanimity of what was attempted, and less of the disarray. Or perhaps, better, I see that the ruins have a quiet nobility to them, for a ruin speaks of hope, initiative, and action. A noble ruin is a testimony of a noble life. The ruin demonstrates human failure and anticipates divine perfection. And when the tolling of Aracoeli persuades me to look the other direction, I am not sad, nor do I think of my mind as divided between the literary Rome of Edward Gibbon (or Hawthorne) and the Rome of Benedict and Francis. The tolling bells that I hear now are real, at one with all that I have read, and calls me to the same thing. *Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion: ut aedificetur muri Jerusalem.*



# Kenyon's *The Marble Faun*

## UNION REFLECTIONS BY A FELLOW & AN ALUMNUS



By Michael Yost '18

The reader who finds himself wandering through the winding passages and prospects of this book will find much to catch his eye and much to wonder at. As Hawthorne allows his audience to meander (and sometimes to stumble) across the famous wreckages of Rome, he meanwhile sweeps across the wide and jumbled array of human dilemmas which that infamous city contains within itself. Hawthorne's dialectical style allows Rome to question herself and, at the same time, to question us, but the author does not give an explicit answer to this question. Much remains hidden, even as the romance reaches its close. Yet the reader will find himself, again and again, glancing sideways at the book, like a tourist in a museum, trying to catch the still, single point that must exist within the work, binding all together, allowing nothing to be lost.

As one glances, one must speak with the work in its own language—the language of the artists filling its pages, who are all busily interpreting, seeing, and re-creating the world in their own images on their Italian tour, with the spectre of New England looming behind their conscious thoughts all the while. Hilda, Kenyon, Miriam, and even the simple-minded (but aptly-named) Donatello speak the language of imagination. Art,

and their own imaginative responses to it, brings them closer to whatever is real (or “truly” represented) within artificial creation. In *The Marble Faun*, art is what brings the real into reality: The highly artificial confessional rite brings the Protestant Hilda to peace. A statue's benediction brings hope to a pair of beleaguered lovers. Throughout the book, paintings, statues, and buildings reflect, oppose, and bring about the main character's various states of mind. The images that seems to vivify, to truly represent in the minds of the young artists the substance of eternal things, amid the squalid wasteland of a ruinous past.

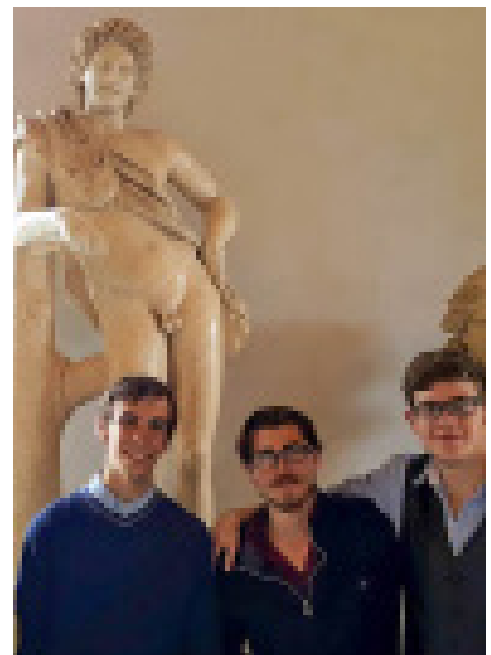
Yet only in their aesthetic experiences do Hilda and Kenyon allow the unity of the symbol and the thing symbolized. They shy away from the Roman Church, whose value as an image of the mystical body seems at odds with its historical reality. Kenyon, an epitome of Protestant rationality, says of the Church that “the exceeding ingenuity of the system stamps it as the contrivance of man, or some worse author, not an emanation of the broad and simple wisdom from on high”.

Hawthorne recognizes this disparity in his repeated condemnations of Rome. Rome, for Hawthorne, is a monster. She is a broken image of a once living glory, a dead carcass on which only scavengers and parasites can sustain life. This is the Rome of history and of death. But in her world of art and imagination, the friends find transcendence in both statue and symbol.

In Rome, the eternal city and the city of living death, Hawthorne chooses to tell his tale of sin and reconciliation and to work these contrarities around the image of the marble faun. Kenyon, the foremost male character, is a “man of marble”. As a sculptor, his art is repeatedly criticised by the fiery, beautiful Miriam for its coldness, its lifelessness, and above all, its inability to pass away. By Miriam's account, in his effort to preserve the beauty of life forever, he merely adds to the receipt of the world's ruins. Here we have a repetition of the image of living death. Hawthorne

repeats that it is the overwhelming presence of the past that makes Rome unbearable. It is Rome's everlastingness which is evil, since so much mutability ought, in time, to pass away.

Praxiteles' marble faun is a reverse image of Rome, as is Donatello, that statue's living embodiment, since it is through an encounter with the work, hewn out of the dead block of marble, that the group of friends first encounter Donatello's faunish, lively, past-less, memory-less nature. Donatello is a kind of Rousseauian Adam, led into a sinful knowledge of evil by his love for Miriam, a beautiful woman whose origins are as inexplicable as those of Eve herself. By knowing himself in the present with reference to the past, by moving beyond the boundary of the moment and into the painful realm of memory, Donatello undergoes a crisis of personality, emerging as a higher, more human person, not only capable of both good and evil but of remorse and penitence. His knowledge, once a curse, brings with it the capacity for height and depth; in a word, the capacity for nobility, for overcoming. Out of the dead marble of Praxiteles leaps a living faun, who sins and stands in need of penance and reconciliation, happy, in the end, because of his happy fault.



# WISDOM AND



With a desire to address weaknesses common to young people in our culture, in 2009 the teachers and administrators at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts reconsidered the nature of the academic curriculum and the student life. To an outside observer, most of the developments would likely appear modest. One, however, was not. It was bold. Though it occupies only a small portion of the credit hours expected with the curriculum, it is a clear statement about the crisis in modern education and one way to find encouragement and strength in the Catholic educational tradition.

The classical world fashioned an understanding of the liberal arts, but the ancient gentlemen who studied those arts looked down upon those who worked with their bodies. The Hebrew tradition was different. Teachers and wise men practiced handcraft—St. Paul and Our Lord both exemplify this traditions. The distinction springs from a fundamental difference between the pagan and Christian understanding of God. Through revelation we know that God is a creator who works in history and with the material world. The monastic founders of Catholic education, while preserving the learning of the Graeco-Roman world, created a culture in which devotion to the word was integrated to the dedication to work.

In a flash, we had a vision of Catholic education: an education which would neither turn away from work and activity or leisure and contemplation, but would keep them unified—as Christ Himself had. As His early disciples had. As the Benedictine architects of Catholic education had. This unity of craftsmanship and learning was possible only because of God’s revelation to the Jews and Christians: God himself was a craftsman. God Himself was constantly contemplating His creation. And most intriguing, God called man to imitate Him and participate in both contemplating and making.

Under such encouragement, we began to reconsider aspects of medieval civilization and examples of how in a single community intellectual and spiritual exploration was brought together with work and craftsmanship. The monasteries provided a solid example, but an American liberal arts college is more akin to an entire small city, and with that image, we struck upon the idea of the Guild.

One of the concerns that vexed those of us who had been educated in Great Books colleges was that our endeavor seemed not in accord with the intellectual tradition. After all, the architects of the twentieth-century creation of Great Books schools seemed consistently to speak against any blending of liberal studies with either the fine arts (e.g., painting) or the mechanical arts (e.g., wood-working).

The iconic figure Mortimer Adler and his followers were regularly saying things like, “Liberal education is education for leisure; it is general in characteristic; it is for an intrinsic and not an extrinsic end; and as compared with vocational training, which is the education of slaves and workers, liberal education is the education of free men.” Adler and other proponents of the Great Books regularly conjured up Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Blessed John Henry Newman as authorities on the matter.

A result of the wall of separation that Adler built between activities such as learning Latin or reading Shakespeare, on the one hand, and naturalistic drawing or carpentry, on the other, was that it led most proponents to the conclusion that liberal education could not be one in which men and women were formed in and for virtue. How could an art justified in itself and free from other purposes and ends remain free if things like character, virtue, or self-mastery were involved?

However, a careful reexamination of great writers of the Western tradition revealed to us the extent to which they recognized not only the compatibility of, but the need for, unifying the theoretical and practical. Cicero speaks of this blending in works like *On Duties*. Hugh of St. Victor draws together all the arts for consideration. And Aristotle—the writer Adler most commonly cites in his defense of the utter separation of liberal and servile—emphatically advocates that for the student and scholar, theory and practice must be joined, even while he maintains a theoretical distinction in the arts.

In his formal consideration of education at the end of the *The Politics*, Aristotle states that a purely liberal arts education, free from practical experience, or an education myopically focused on





# CREATIVITY

avoiding useful arts and perfecting only knowledge of the liberal arts, will “degrade the mind.” In his view, a good education must find the balance between the theoretical, the useful, and that which will form student in virtue.

Aristotle admitted to being puzzled as to how one finds the balance. Would that Aristotle had encountered Christ.

The educational program and community life at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts purposes to bring the three into balance: the traditional liberal arts, the useful arts, and an education for virtue. Our guild program plays an important part in achieving this balance by providing an encounter with Catholic tradition, an occasion for growth in the virtues (particularly humility and prudence), and an opportunity to serve and delight both those within the College and in the surrounding area with the results of the Guild art.

Catholic guilds in their earliest form had developed out of man’s natural spirit of association. Guided explicitly by Church teachings, guilds encouraged a corporate enactment of charity and political prudence. They were fraternal benefit societies, religious associations, civil organizations, as well as educational alliances.



Inspired by these origins, Thomas More College intends that the guilds enable students to gain practical skills and experience in areas such as woodworking, sacred art, folk art, and music. The College’s guilds derive their spirit from those earlier voluntary communities of men and women who advanced their trades and arts while responding to the needs of their local communities.

Each guild meets for a few hours every week and is taught by someone devoted to perfecting the skills of his or her trade, if not already a master. Students are required to meet a series of benchmarks throughout the year so that their performance can be measured—whether that is the perfection of a dovetail joint, the correct reading of plain notes, or the memorization and performance of a dozen folk tunes.

For many students the guilds are a welcome and relaxing break from their studies. This is to be expected; participation in them is meant to be enjoyable. However, the guilds offer more than simple recreation. Each guild offers practical experience that is integrated with the College’s academic curriculum. One objective is to demonstrate our belief that a Catholic liberal education need not, in fact should not, divide what is contemplative from what is practical, what is beautiful from what is useful.

The guilds are a forum in which the virtues are taught through hands-on experience. A hammer blow to the thumb, singing an off-key pitch: these teach humility in a bodily way. The lessons learned through the guilds can be applied to any aspect of daily life, even if one does not pursue woodworking, art, music, or gardening as a career. Through the experience provided by the guilds, students come to understand what is meant by a living tradition.

The core principles of an art come alive and can be passed down. This orderly and personal participation and knowledge is at the heart of tradition.

The Thomas More College Guilds contribute to the development of the student, the life of the College, and the common good. Each guild instills a spirit of cooperation, prayer, and service. Service to the community is as simple as singing to the elderly in nursing homes, taking on construction projects in one’s parish, and baking bread for the homeless.

Through habitual consideration of the end to which the guilds’ activities are directed, students will understand how work, paid or unpaid, can be directed towards the common good. The old Roman virtue of labor comes alive! Through their twin labors—both intellectual and practical—our students creatively engage the wider culture and serve as agents of its transformation.







MERRIMACK, NH



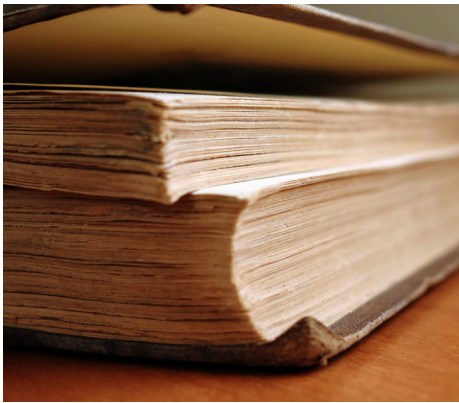






# ORESTES BROWNSON: THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

## TREASURES FROM THE LIBRARY



By Alexis Rohlfing '08, Librarian

I have been known, from time to time, to wander through the stacks of our small but interesting rare books room on a whim. Even three years into the digitization of our catalog, the actual books we have in our possession sometimes comes as a surprise. Between the hodgepodge of Excel spreadsheets and the out of date card catalog, there remains plenty of room for serendipity. And so I took myself downstairs when the time came to find another interesting piece to share with you all. I found several, as I invariably do, but this semester we're highlighting just one book: Orestes Brownson's *American Republic*.

Orestes Brownson, as a reminder, was a New England boy. Raised a Calvinist, he filtered through the Presbyterians, Unitarians, and the Transcendental movement before converting to Catholicism. He wrote prolifically, both in long form books and in periodicals. His writings spanned literature, philosophy, and political thought.

The book we're looking at, *The American Republic*, is Brownson's attempt to analyze the development of American political thought. *The American Republic* was published in 1865, a culmination and reexamination of Brownson's thoughts on the structure of American government. Brownson writes as a Catholic and as a New Englander and was a leading thinker in his day. *The*

*American Republic* has gone in and out of print and in and out of awareness. At its time, it was considered one of the most complete reviews of the American Constitution.

One would not describe Brownson as being from the same school of thought as the Founders, however. For one thing, Brownson had the advantage of time—100 years of actual governance. For another, *The American Republic* was written after his conversion to Catholicism, and all the thought that went with moving through his previous viewpoints. Natural law is an important underpinning for Brownson, and he acknowledges the influence of Greece and Rome while viewing the Constitution as a move toward perfecting the underlying principles.

Now this book is interesting, and it's important...and this particular copy is not as charming as some of our other highlights. The thing with books, of course, is that they are meant to be read and pondered and discussed and borrowed. There is a certain wear and tear that goes along with this. We aren't the first owners of this book, though with a publication date of 1865, this should not surprise you. There are marks from at least one other library, but the big stand-out is the spine.

Let's take a moment to examine library preservation. Preservation is an ever-evolving discipline, and it's a blend of art and science in unexpected ways. The theory behind preservation has changed over time as well. There

was a period of time where books were rebound in "library binding," stripped of their original spine and cover, and chopped down to fit the robust boring binding that still looks untouched, even 50 or 60 years later. As the field moved away from rebinding, spine repair was in its infancy, and that looks to be the time when our volume needed some attention. The original spine is fully covered with thick, sticky blue tape. Think of painter's tape but as robust as duct tape. At that point in time, the focus was on keeping books together, in a very literal sense. It was practical and cheap and nigh on irreversible.

By the time I went through library school, the focus was on preservation with a defined point of failure—20 or 30 years out – to allow for reevaluation using a new techniques that had cropped up. There are now ways of directly replacing a spine, splicing in end paper, and generally helping the book along. If only these were options! At this point, we have to wait for tape failure, because pulling the tape off will damage our volume further. We can't fault the librarians of the past too much, though. After all, it may not be pretty, but the book is still with us. And someday, we'll get a peek at the spine. Hopefully, there is enough there to reattach it. Even if there's not, the boards are in good repair, and the paper hasn't gone brittle. Fortunately for us, books from the late 1800s have a habit of holding up, and this one should follow suit, tape and all.





## AMERICA'S BRITISH CULTURE AS AN INHERITANCE?



By Dr. Sara Kitzinger, Teaching Fellow

What an extraordinary relief it is to know that society does not begin and end with the immediate desires of you or me. Edmund Burke was at pains to remind France of the noble repercussions of this simple fact. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* sounded an alarm that delivered all the majesty and civility of the ancient peoples of the West. In his rebuttal of an individual-rights-based polity, he declared society—the political community and its culture—was an order of beneficence. All those things that allowed for the flourishing of men, body and soul, were sustained not by “the rights of man”, but through time by the custom of inheritance. For Burke, one's inheritance must involve deference to the wisdom of the past. Cultural inheritance is thereby the way in which civilization endures.

I join Russell Kirk's conclusion that when contemplating our own cultural inheritance, it is undeniably “America's British Culture” that we encounter. As Kirk noted some twenty years ago in his volume of the same name, “In language and literature, Virginia and Massachusetts...transplanted England to the eastern shore of America. Almost four centuries later, that language and that literature remain the footing for the culture of some two hundred and eighty million North Americans.” As anyone familiar with Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, King Edward the Confessor, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, or John Winthrop's “City on A Hill” can

attest, the legacy of English culture is one steeped in a civilized, Christian imagination. An English inheritance is a Christian inheritance. But this declaration is a peculiar one, and we find ourselves, like the unconverted John Henry Newman, defensive of our mother yet apprehensive about our patrimony—at once a believer and a critic. For the English inheritance, as all European inheritance, is an expression of Western Christian culture marred by both the Enlightenment and the Reformation and all of their disordered intellectual and practical consequences. Yet this is the English story, the New England story, our story. How can this modern, muddled chronicle constitute anything like Burke's “inheritance”?

I have found one of the most discerning ruminations on our diverse English inheritance is Henry Adams's poem, *Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres*, written in 1901. Adams, the great grandson of President John Adams, begins with a plea for help from the Virgin and begs her to remember him who “prayed for grace in vain/ Seven hundred years ago”. He then makes present the ancient inheritance of the West. His character, “I”, is “an English scholar of a Norman name”, who also proclaims:

“When your Byzantine portal was still young  
I prayed there with my master Abailard;  
When Ave Maris Stella was first sung  
I helped to sing it here with Saint Bernard.”

This “I”, residing in Christendom's tradition of learning and civility, then forsakes it and embarks upon a new quest for knowledge and dominion of “the Infinite”:

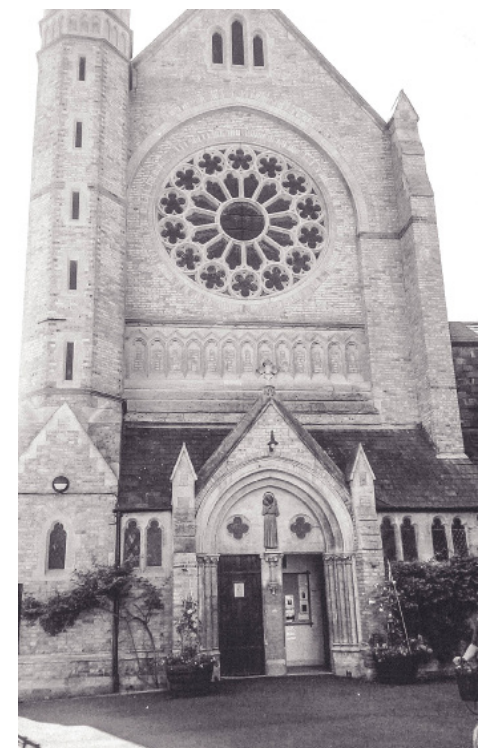
“Crossing the hostile sea, our greedy band  
Saw rising hills and forests in the blue;  
Our father's kingdom in the promised land!  
—We seized it, and dethroned the father too.”

The “I” then enters Adams's own steely, atomic age and finds the modern Dynamo answers not the mystery of the Infinite, but instead “his life-blood anoints / Me—the dead Atom-King!”.

The poem continues with the weary “I” returning to the feet of the Virgin, the very vessel of the Infinite.

What is remarkable for our purposes here is that Adams has the character “I” establish civilization as well as work to destroy it. Oddly, both actions make for his inheritance. In the wake of his rejection of tradition, Adams concludes his poem by repeating his pedigree—Byzantium, Abailard, Saint Bernard, etc. This repetition of verse makes possible the final act: falling to the Virgin's feet and confessing the Incarnation. In Boston-born Adams's case, his deference to the wisdom of the past placed the gravity of its errors in relief. The resulting contrast propels him toward authority not of his making.

The tragedy of his story isn't denied; it is interrupted, redeemed by making present more than just the past—Adams returns to the wise, to all which proclaim the *limitations, promise, and end of our human nature*. As to inheritance: Adams returns to the wise *because* of the errors, but only because all the while the truth was “handed down, to us and from us...”



Oxford Oratory, Oxford, England

# THE PARADOX OF PLACE

(Continued from page 1)

hardly idyllic, feeling very keenly the absence of his native place, coupled with the frustrations of living in sixteenth-century Rome.

This Roman exile produced one of his best poems, *Heureux Qui Comme Ulysse*, which superbly expresses the happiness of returning home after a long absence.

One of the best translations of this poem is by the American poet, Richard Wilbur:

## Happy the Man

Happy the man who, journeying far and wide  
As Jason or Ulysses did, can then  
Turn homeward, seasoned in the ways of men,  
And claim his own, and there in peace abide!

When shall I see the chimney-smoke divide  
The sky above my little town: ah, when  
Stroll the small gardens of that house again  
Which is my realm and crown, and more beside?

Better I love the plain, secluded home  
My fathers built, than bold façades of Rome;  
Slate pleases me as marble cannot do;

Better than Tiber's flood my quiet Loire,  
Those little hills than these, and dearer far  
Than great sea winds the zephyrs of Anjou.

Another fine translation of this poem was done by G.K. Chesterton. And Hilaire Belloc wrote a fine commentary on the poem in his *Avril: Being Essays on the Poetry of the French Renaissance*.

So this poem has a very good pedigree.

The poem begins with what is called a macarism. "Macarism" comes from the Greek for beatitude, an expression of happiness. Some of the most famous and most paradoxical macarisms in the Christian tradition are the Beatitudes from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

In the context of the poem by du Bellay, the answer to the question of what makes you happy, what makes you blessed in life is this: returning home.

What becomes apparent to him is the

loveliness of the "chimney-smoke," the "little town," the "small gardens," the "plain, secluded home," the "quiet Loire, and the "Zephyrs of Anjou."

But du Bellay had to go to Rome to find that out.

And so it is that students from the Thomas More College of Liberal Arts leave home, all that is familiar, their family and classmates and make their pilgrimage to Rome in their sophomore year to discover something of great value about the place they left.

Fortunate are those that leave. Blessed are those upon their return.

Coda:

Another literary work from another time, place, and tradition which draws a similar moral is a certain Yiddish folktale. There are a number of versions, but basically it goes like this:

Centuries ago, there was an old Jewish baker named Isaac ben Yakil who lived in Krakow. He kept having a certain dream. He would dream that if he made a journey to Prague, and if he looked under the Charles Bridge at the foot of the palace, he would find a pot of gold.

At first he paid no attention to the dream, but finally he thought that he had to act on it.

So he made the long journey to Prague.

Isaac found the Charles Bridge and went there at night to look for the pot of gold. He looked all around the

embankment, under the span of the bridge, he looked everywhere but found nothing.

In his looking, he aroused the attention of a Gendarme who was guarding the bridge and palace. The Gendarme asked him what he was up to.

Isaac told him the story about the dream and the pot of gold.

The gendarme laughed and said, "Dear man, there is no pot of gold here, that I can assure you. Though, it is odd: I had a similar dream, that if I went to Krakow and looked behind the wood stove of an old Jewish baker, I would find a pot of gold."

Isaac left disappointed and puzzled.

When he got back home to Krakow, he looked behind the wood stove, lifted up the floorboards, and what did he find but a pot of gold.

So there you have it.

To me the story is less about the dream and the gold than it is the wood stove and the journey.

Thus one must have to leave home to get a better perspective and clearer understanding of what is in front of them.

One's treasure is at home, where the hearth is, but you have to leave home to find that out.

"Biglietto andata e ritorno"





Please tear out this page at the perforation and use this icon of St. Thomas More and his Psalm of Detachment to keep Thomas More College of Liberal Arts's faculty, staff, and community in your prayers.



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### *Psalm of Detachment*

Give me thy grace, good Lord:  
To set the world at nought;  
To set my mind fast upon thee,  
And not to hang upon the blast of men's mouths;  
To be content to be solitary,  
Not to long for worldly company;  
Little and little utterly to cast off the world,  
And rid my mind of all the business thereof;  
Not to long to hear of any worldly things,  
But that the hearing of worldly phantasies may be to me displeasing;  
Gladly to be thinking of God,  
Piteously to call for his help;  
To lean unto the comfort of God,  
Busily to labor to love him;  
To know mine own vility and wretchedness,  
To humble and meek myself under the mighty hand of God;  
To bewail my sins passed,  
For the purging of them patiently to suffer adversity;  
Gladly to bear my purgatory here,  
To be joyful of tribulations;  
To walk the narrow way that leadeth to life,  
To bear the cross with Christ;  
To have the last thing in remembrance,  
To have ever afore mine eye my death that is ever at hand;  
To make death no stranger to me,  
To foresee and consider the everlasting fire of hell;  
To pray for pardon before the judge come,  
To have continually in mind the passion that Christ suffered for me;  
For his benefits uncessantly to give him thanks,  
To buy the time again that I before have lost;  
To abstain from vain confabulations,  
To eschew light foolish mirth and gladness;  
Recreations not necessary — to cut off;  
Of worldly substance, friends, liberty, life and all, to set the loss  
at right nought for the winning of Christ;  
To think my most enemies my best friends,  
For the brethren of Joseph could never have done him so much good  
with their love and favor as they did him with their malice and hatred.  
These minds are more to be desired of every man than all the treasure  
of all the princes and kings, Christian and heathen, were it  
gathered and laid together all upon one heap .

*-Written by St. Thomas More during his imprisonment  
in the Tower of London, 1534.*



## ON MANCHESTER STREET BY DR. ANTHONY ESOLEN

### *The Men and Women Our Culture Makes*



"Therefore all I desire to do is to bid you pause – pause, and think, and consider the arguments of the leaders of the 'movement,' without passion, without prepossession, and without that foolish vanity of would-be imitation of men which means a great lack of true feminine pride. But above all do not be tempted to say, 'We women must look out for ourselves and our own interests.' It is a slander upon the men of America to say this – upon those men who have so cordially helped us to become the most highly considered women in the world. And it is a defiance of the laws of nature and of common sense to declare that the best interests of the sexes are separable. To declare this is to give men an excuse, a temptation – nay, a veritable right – to say, 'Then we must also look out for ourselves and our own special interests.' Do you think that our country would fare better if our men said this, or that its women would fare better?"

From *Should We Ask for the Suffrage?* (1894), by Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer (Mrs. Schuyler van Rensselaer).

It is sometimes instructive to revisit the arguments in a losing cause, especially when, as in the case above, people have forgotten that there ever were any sensible arguments at all. Mrs. Van Rensselaer was nobody's fool. Someday soon I should take my students on a trip to the studio of her friend, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, up the road in Cornish, New Hampshire. She was also an important patron of his; her articles on church architecture in England, Italy, and New England, written for *The Century Magazine*, made her for a long while the leading authority on the subject in the English-speaking world. Saint-Gaudens sculpted her profile in a

beautiful bronze relief. She is beautiful and grave at once.

It may be fitting to consider Mrs. Van Rensselaer and Saint-Gaudens together, because he too became, all too quickly, something of a lost cause. It's hard to imagine how that could be. If you go to Lincoln Park in Chicago, that will be Saint-Gaudens' colossal bronze statue you will see of Lincoln the young lawyer. If you go to Dublin, that will be Saint-Gaudens' monumental tribute to the Irish patriot Parnell. If you go to the cathedral of Edinburgh, you may see Saint-Gaudens' medallion of that favorite son of the Scots, Robert Louis Stevenson. Saint-Gaudens took his leads from the classical and Renaissance past, though no one would mistake him for any other than a firmly-placed artist brought up on this soil. Similarly, Mrs. Van Rensselaer, much as she wrote about and learned from such places as Salisbury, Gloucester, and Durham, was a woman of New York and New England and was as American as the women she opposed, whose leaders could not match her in grace and penetration of the intellect.

Modernism came and swept all before it as quick and as destructive as a hurricane. Here we have Theodore Roosevelt commissioning Saint-Gaudens to cast the "Walking Liberty" gold double eagle, and a heartbeat of the culture later, we have Henry Moore casting amorphous bronze lumps and calling it art. And as for Mrs. Van Rensselaer, who will have heard of her? The first woman to be invited into the American Institute of Architects; granted a doctorate in letters from Columbia; the friend and fellow worker of the urban reformer Jacob Riis; yet she was on the losing side, as was Saint-Gaudens.

That may lead us to ask, "What would these two people be like, if they lived now?" I am afraid you might as well ask, "What kind of orator would Henry Clay make, if he were in our senate?" Or "What kind of missionary would David Livingstone make, in the current Anglican Church?" The questions almost have no meaning. We have no orators, so there would be no Clay. We have no explorer-missionaries, so there would be no Dr. Livingstone. Saint-Gaudens, who knows, might be crafting computerized images for Hollywood. And Mrs. Van Rensselaer? The thousand cultural influences that went toward making up a woman of such breadth of vision, so grateful to the male sex, so astutely and gently critical of her own, so appreciative of the past, so loyal to her nation, so difficult to move with specious arguments or with flights of political passion – those thousand influences no longer exist.

If we are to evaluate a culture according to the men and women it makes, how would ours fare?







THOMAS MORE COLLEGE  
of LIBERAL ARTS  
Six Manchester Street  
Merrimack, NH 03054

## THE SOCIETY PAGE



*Left to right, top to bottom:*

**ENGAGEMENTS:** Theresa Scott '16 and David Counts '18; Micah Kurtz '11 and Megan Faeth; Helena Fahey '18 and Michael Davis.

**WEDDINGS:** Josh Perts '18 and Nicole Liquori; Hannah (née Howard) '16 and Haytham El Chaer; Annie (née Fagan) and Andrew Fagan, both '18; Brigette (née Nelson) and Ryan Fagan, both Class of 2019. **BABIES:** Daniel Gideon, son of Theresa (née Mazzarella) '18 and Peter Lajoie, Class of 2019.

**ACHIEVEMENTS:** Michael V. Dougherty '95. Michael's book "Correcting the Scholarly Record for Research Integrity: In the Aftermath of Plagiarism" was published as volume 6 in the series Research Ethics Forum by the publisher Springer; Sisters Cecilia '15 and Emma Black released their debut album of folk music for children titled "Singsong Pennywhistle: Folk Music for Young Folks".

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