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The architecture of slavery: Art, language, and society in early Virginia

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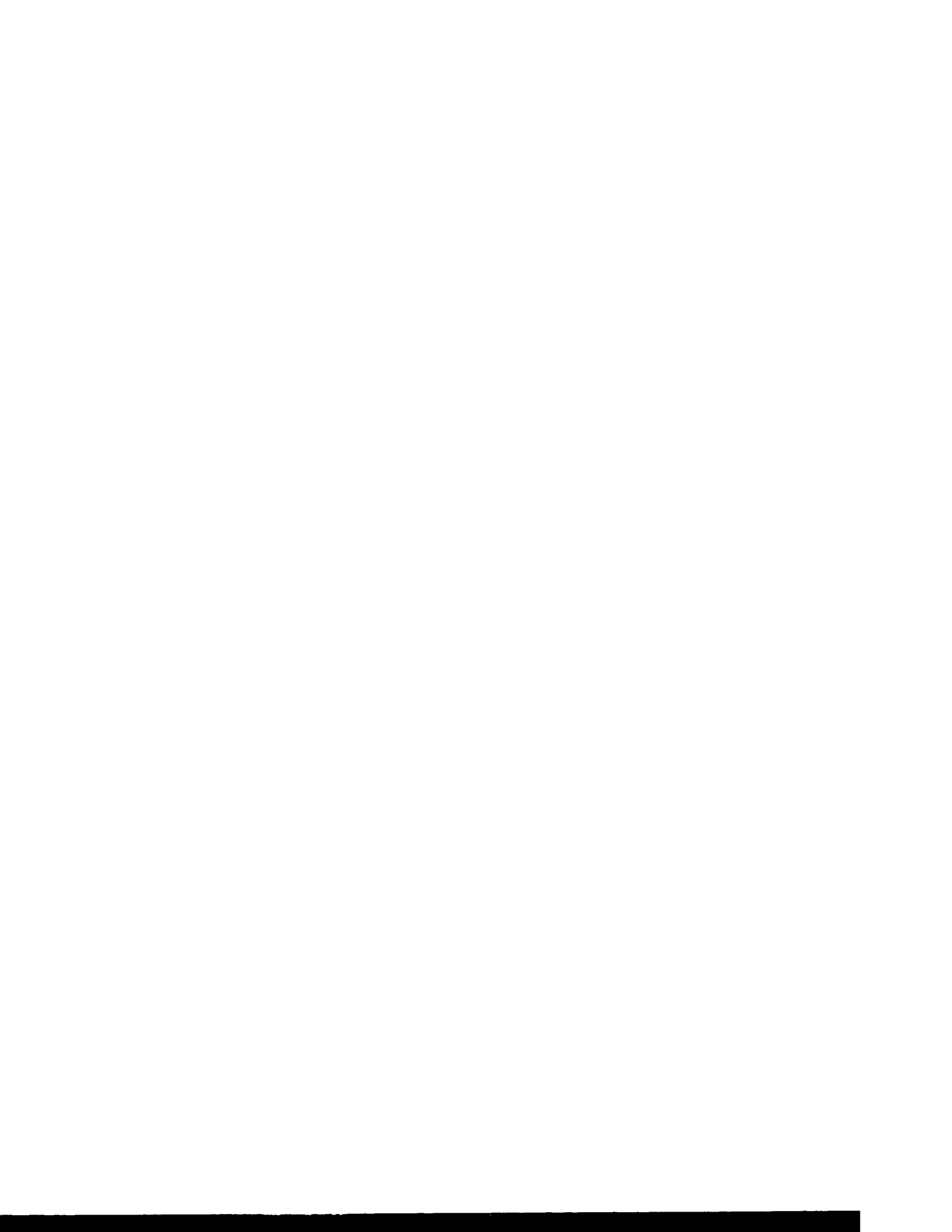
**The architecture of slavery: Art, language, and society in early
Virginia**

Boulton, Alexander Ormond, Ph.D.

The College of William and Mary, 1991

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF SLAVERY
Art, Language, and Society in Early Virginia

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

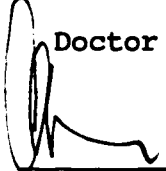
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Alexander Ormond Boulton

1991

APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
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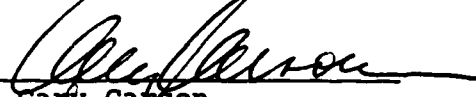

Doctor of Philosophy

Alexander Ormond Boulton


Approved, December, 1991



Chandos Brown



Cary Carson



Michael McGiffert



Robert Gross



Eugene Genovese

It was a long time ago
I have almost forgotten my dream.
But it was there then,
In front of me,
Bright as a sun --
My dream.

And then the wall rose,
Rose slowly,
Slowly,
Between me and my dream.
Rose slowly, slowly
Dimming
Hiding
The light of my dream.
Rose until it touched the sky --
The wall.

"As I Grew Older" -- Langston Hughes (Selected Poems
of Langston Hughes, New York, 1926.)

"I like the dreams of the future better than the history of
the past."

-- Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 1, 1816.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was never conceived (in the terms of the old metaphor) as an attempt to stand on the shoulders of giants so that I could see further than those who preceded me. Instead, I have tried to listen to the voices of those around me, and distill their voices into a single sound. Conversations with family and friends, often on topics far removed from the study of history have influenced my conclusions at least as much as words I have read in books. While at William and Mary, Beverley Peterson, Richard John, and Ted Delaney have been attentive listeners, challenging critics, and good friends. My sister-in-law, Pamela Nomura Boulton, first introduced me to Ben Jonson's poem "To Penshurst," which turned into the beginning of the Ariadne's thread which I followed from Kent, England to the Virginia Piedmont. During my studies the encouragement of James P. Whittenburg, Robert Skolnick, Whitfield Bell, Thomas O'Connor, Edward Pappenfuse, and James Bond were bright lights in an often dark and dispiriting academic maze. In the creation of my career as an historian, Carla Davidson at American Heritage magazine, has often seemed in my imagination to be have played the role of the protagonist in Mary Shelley's novel. Mark Wenger at Colonial Williamsburg in several conversations generously shared the results of his extensive research into

William Byrd's Westover. The writings of Claude Levi-Strauss, James Deetz, Cary Carson (and many of the members of the Vernacular Architectural Forum), David Brion Davis, and Eugene Genovese have played an important role in my evolving thought. I have been fortunate to have an excellent committee overseeing the development of this dissertation; Chandos Brown, Robert Gross, Michael McGiffert, Cary Carson, and Eugene Genovese, each of whom knows how critically important their input has been. To all -- my thanks.

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by the concept of culture as expressed in the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, this dissertation traces the roots of modern perceptions of slavery and race by analyzing three sites each of which is associated with a distinct cultural pattern and social ideology. The first, Penshurst in Kent England is described as feudal, organic, vernacular, and popular. The second, Westover in tidewater Virginia is classical, rational, and elite. Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in the Virginia piedmont, the third site, is described as romantic, liberal, and bourgeois. It is only at this third site, the locus for a distinctly modern family type, that concepts of race and slavery unique to our age are found. The new ideas about family structure, race and slavery, evident at Monticello, it is argued, have had a vast influence upon the course of American social and political development.

**THE ARCHITECTURE OF SLAVERY:
ART, LANGUAGE, AND SOCIETY IN EARLY VIRGINIA**

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation attempts to trace some of the origins of intolerance in the early years of this nation's founding. Slavery and racism, which are the most obvious and most consequential forms of intolerance in America, are not historical universals. They have grown and developed, waxed and waned, in tandem with other great changes in the society, economics and politics of the country. "America," according to George Fredrickson, "was not born racist; it became so gradually."¹

While the roles that slavery and racism have played in American history have always been very sensitive to the course of historical events, the major period when these roles crystallized and assumed the forms they have taken in the modern world was the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries -- the very years in which the basic structure of our national government arose and assumed its modern shape. The argument of this dissertation is that this coincidence was not accidental.

In understanding the relationship between social ideas and the state, I have been strongly influenced by the explication of culture described in the works of the

¹. George M. Fredrickson, The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality (Middletown, Connecticut, 1988), 205.

anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. To Levi-Strauss and other structural anthropologists, culture is the expression of an underlying structure or code which is embedded in each of its many parts. Language, the arts, family and kinship structures each are physical expressions of a set of rules or grammar. The same rules which determine how the rooms of a house relate to each other determine how the members of a family or community relate to each other and the ways in which words can be put together to form thoughts and ultimately to communicate.²

Many historians recently have used a concept of culture to emphasize the coherence and relative lack of change of certain associated ideas and practices through the course of history. David Hackett Fischer, for example, has argued that early American society originated in four original folk cultures in Great Britain, tracing parallels between "speech ways," "building ways," "family ways," "food ways," "work ways," etc.³ Other historians have focused on political cultures, which they similarly relate to a broad range of attitudes toward family, religion, science, ethnicity, and a

². Claude Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, translators) (New York, 1963); The Savage Mind, (Chicago, 1966). A good introduction is Howard Gardner, The Quest for Mind.

³. David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America, (Oxford, 1989).

variety of other culturally determined ideas and practices.⁴

The concept of culture used by anthropologists, however, is not generally in harmony with the historian's object of describing change over time. Most historians who use culture in their work generally either disregard problems of chronology or force the concept of culture into one of the available frameworks of explaining historical change in terms of progress, declension or modernization. The model of historical change used in this dissertation is borrowed from Hegel but it is used here only as a tool to help explain events. I do not imagine it, as Hegel does, as an absolute and determining law of historical change. It is only a model, and its shortcomings will be obvious in the pages that follow.

This dissertation describes three cultural traditions, the third and final one emerging as a kind of synthesis of the previous two. The first cultural tradition is almost identical to the one described by Levi-Strauss and many other anthropologists. They describe cultures rooted in

⁴. Examples include Robert Kelly, The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century (New York, 1979); Daniel Walker Howe, The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago, 1979). Although she doesn't use the term "culture," Linda Kerber's Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America (Ithaca, New York, 1970), also deserves to be included. See also Lawrence Buell, New England Literary Culture: From Revolution through Renaissance (Cambridge, 1986); and Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman, Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates (Cambridge, 1990).

local communities in which art, language, and family structures serve the major purpose of binding the group together. Absolute laws typical of literate and geographically widespread social organizations are not typical of such localized communities. Justice, for example, is designed to ameliorate conflicts through combinations of ritual practices and personal mediation. Conformity to absolute standards or rules is generally secondary to pragmatic considerations. Among such groups the boundaries between the spiritual and the purely secular are virtually non-existent. Temporal and spatial boundaries, which we generally assume are based upon common sense, are penetrable. Similarly, status and rank are fluid. This does not mean that rules governing society, arts and language do not exist but that they are both more complex and more grounded in experience than we are generally accustomed to. Among these people, racial categories have little meaning or utility. On the other hand, such societies can exhibit brutality shocking to a modern person. Physical domination, which we might label "slavery," is familiar.

A second cultural tradition is that of Classicism. With its origins in Greece and Rome, the classical tradition has been conveyed through the Roman church, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment to our own doorsteps in the neo-conservative philosophies of such contemporaries as Alan

Bloom, and Leo Strauss. An international and aggressively cosmopolitan tradition, it emphasizes rationality and logic. To the admirer of classicism, whether in the arts, literature, architecture, or politics, there are absolute standards. These universals inspire all of classicism's noblest products with the values of truth, beauty and virtue. A precarious balance often exists in the classical tradition between the realm of eternal ideas and the physical world of transient beings, and this balance finds a parallel in the contest between the emotional restraint of the higher social classes and the passionate exuberance of the populace. Despite the fact that the classical emphasis is always placed upon the harmony and balance of parts, not infrequently the ideal of harmony succumbs, especially in periods of stress, to paranoia and social repression.

The third culture described in this dissertation is historically much more recent and reflects the emergence the "modern" world. Its political expression is liberalism; its aesthetics are romantic. To a large extent, the modern world is a synthesis of the previous two cultures: an accommodation of order and enthusiasm, of rationalism and passion. Unlike the cultures that preceded it, the new culture is grounded neither in the community nor in an ideal cosmopolis, but in the middle-class, nuclear family. Here is the basic economic, social, and emotional unit of modern society. Unfortunately, however, neither the consolations

of the local community nor the certainty of the classical tradition offers sufficient comfort to the modern individual who continually strives to mark out a private, personal space. Anxieties, rooted in physical and psychological uncertainties, drive the individual, newly conscious of his and her own independent identity, to establish boundaries of time and space. More than the sum of its parts, modern culture gives birth to previously unknown ideas such as those of progress, race, and class. Given the freedom to choose absolute rules or make pragmatic choices, with no guidelines, the individual fashions the most elementary logical structure out of a unilinear scale of oppositions: black and white, good and bad. Anything that cannot easily be explained vanishes from sight. Both Reason and Passion are banned from the new society. Slavery meanwhile takes on a new life as a metaphor for everything which is not to be tolerated, while its worst features are reincarnated in a scientific theory of race embodied in "natural law."

Penshurst in Kent, England, is used here to illustrate the first of these cultural traditions. Its Great Hall and open hearth, which were constructed in the fourteenth century, were emblems of an mutualistic society which was described, as it was already fading, by Ben Jonson in his poem "To Penshurst" in the early seventeenth century. Twenty miles away Robert Filmer was writing at nearly the same time the justification for a political order based upon

the social relationships which were typical to Penshurst and to Filmer's own estate at East Sutton. His book Patriarcha was one of the central political texts of the period and became even more famous through the many criticisms of it in the following years.

In contrast to the conventions at Penshurst was the classical tradition which reached its most recent apogee in the eighteenth century and which found expression in a number of high style houses in the American colonies, most notably, for our purposes, William Byrd III's Westover in Tidewater Virginia. The transition of circumstances from the more illustrious William Byrd II to his son William Byrd III exemplifies the similarities as well as the differences between the two cultural traditions.

Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in the Virginia Piedmont represents an accommodation between these two cultures. Its aesthetics as well as the social and political philosophy of its builder were, not surprisingly, directly inspired by the writings of John Locke, the most famous and influential critic of both Filmer's patriarchalism and of the classical tradition. Monticello, like Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, represents a giant step into the modern world, and the ideas underlying its building have probably had an impact on our lives equal to that of Jefferson's great document. Studying the two of them together, I believe, helps us come to a better understanding of the world in

which we live, for the architecture of the building, the text, and our lives today are one and the same.

This is an admittedly stark portrait, painted with broad strokes. It forms, however, the basic outline for the argument which follows. I have exercised all of my skill, I hope unobtrusively, to make the evidence appear to coincide with the theory (even though the evidence always ran far ahead of my abilities to construct a theory which accounted for it). Nevertheless, I am very much aware that both facts and theories are never so closely related as historians might wish. My defense for the argument that I present here, with all of its faults, is that it does less violence to the evidence than any other argument that I can conceive.

"TO PENSHURST"

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
 of touch or marble, nor canst boast a row
Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold;
 Thou hast no lanthorn, whereof tales are told,
Or stairs, or courts; but standest an ancient pile,
 And these grudged at, art revered the while.

Penshurst, the subject of Ben Jonson's poem "To Penshurst," is an English country house which Jonson described in terms both mystical and physical.¹ It was a physical representation of its lord, Sir Robert Sidney, and a material image of an other-worldly beneficence. The house itself was built in a style already out of date when Jonson lived there as a guest of his patron Robert Sidney around 1610-12. It lacked a classical facade, with pillars, pediment, and cupola, a fault more than compensated for by its location near the Medway river and its walks past flower gardens and orchards that led over hills and through woods. Jonson specifically mentions the beech, chestnut and oak trees as well as Penshurst's orchards of plum, fig, quince, peach, and cherry trees. In the fields surrounding Penshurst were sheep, cows, horses, rabbits, pheasants and partridges, and in its ponds were carp, pike, and eels. The Penshurst which Jonson described is still extant today, much enlarged by additions in the seventeenth and eighteenth

¹. See Appendix A for complete text.

centuries. It still is surrounded by gardens and orchards, and in most details the current building and grounds seem to verify Jonson's description.

This catalogue of explicit physical details is marshaled to support Jonson's main theme that all of this small world is marked by a conformity to a larger metaphysical reality. Every living and inanimate object in this landscape is a part of a cycle of creation and consumption. It is world driven by the constant self-sacrifice of all of its inhabitants. Here the trees, the fields and the waters all offer up their best fruits. The pheasant and partridge is "willing to be killed" to be placed on the lord's table. Fish jump into the nets of the fisher; they leap onto the land before him and even "into his hand." Fruit "each in his time doth come." "All come in, the farmer and the clown (i.e., rustic)" to offer capons and cakes, nuts, apples and cheeses. They do so with no thought of recompense, but solely because it is a part of the natural order. Their daughters similarly are part of the cycle. They are like fruit, both consumed by their husbands, and themselves the producers of more "fruit."

The lord, Sir Robert Sidney, is himself a part of this cycle of provision and consumption. Like the fish, the partridge and the farmer, he makes his offering. He gives his "free provisions" at his "liberal board. . . . Where comes no guest, but is allowed to eat." To Ben Jonson and

to others, he offers his meat, bread, beer and wine, unstintingly, as well as warm and well-lit lodgings. His hospitality plays a key role in mediating between a social and a cosmological order in which the dominant theme is the gift of natural abundance.

All of this happens in a universe which, as Ben Jonson describes it, is entirely benign. The fish does not struggle against the fisher.² The partridge does not try to escape the hunter. Even the house seems to rise up out of the natural soil, its "walls. . . of country stone. . . are reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan."

"To Penshurst," with its idealized portrait of an English country house, is both a poem describing the pleasures of a simple bucolic life and a text in political economy. Its basic themes as a political text can be traced back to ancient authors, to Ovid, Virgil, Horace, and Martial,³ and forward into the twentieth century. Like all

². An image perhaps derived from Martial's epigrams, X,30, see William A. McClung, The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry (Berkeley, 1977), 118.

³. For the background see William A. McClung, The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry, 7-17. "To Penshurst" is the earliest of a group of "English Country House poems" discussed in McClung and in; G.R.Hibbard, "The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute XIX (1956) 159-174; Virginia C. Kenny, The Country House Ethos in English Literature 1688-1750 (New York, 1984); Charles Molesworth, "Property and Virtue; The Genre of the Country House Poem in the Seventeenth Century," Genre, I,2 (1968) 141-157; Don E. Wayne, Penshurst, The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History (Madison, Wisconsin, 1984).

works of political theory, its basic concern is how to explain the relationship between the individual and society. Like all good political texts, it is not neutral. It is not simply an objective description of relationships as they were. Its purpose is to justify a status quo. Jonson's solution to the central problem of political economics is in most ways not unique. Like Adam Smith, who followed him a century and a half later, Jonson imagined a social order in which the cycle of production and consumption all conformed to a larger and basically benign philosophical order. Both Jonson and Smith, like most political theorists, largely dismissed the possibility that this ideal metaphysical reality may have included a physical reality in which some people felt pain and suffered injustices.

Despite the very slow-moving changes in philosophical explanations during the period from Jonson to Smith, the physical realities were changing swiftly and dramatically and had a large impact on the vocabulary if not the grammar of political theory. Over the next two centuries Jonson's conception of a world infused with spiritual significance would be replaced by a materialistic world view envisioned by Smith and others in which a Divine Creator had absented Himself from the world to let it function wholly according to mechanistic principles.

It was a change that Ben Jonson saw coming. In the conflict of architectural styles Jonson saw a changing world

of social relationships. To Jonson the distinction was between a world of dynamic interrelationships and a world of hollow, static forms which he described in his closing lines, "Now Penshurst, they that will proportion thee\ With other edifices, when they see\ Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,\ May say, their lords have built, but thy lord dwells."

The world described in "To Penshurst" was not created by Ben Jonson out of whole cloth. The harmony which constitutes the poem's major theme was a commonplace of medieval writers and helps to explain not only the structure of the world as Ben Jonson depicted it but also the structure of his poem. As described by Otto Gierke, the medieval view was that "the World is One Organism, animated by One Spirit, fashioned by One Ordinance, the self-same principles that appear in the structure of the World will appear once more in the structure of its every part." The prevalence of this theme of universal harmony, integral to Jonson's poem, does not mean that medieval and early modern society was without conflict. There is plenty of evidence to prove the conventional view that social relations before the modern period were typically marked by violence and brutal exploitation, but the correlative view that there was a nearly universal belief in a unilinear chain of being, in which everyone accepted their ascribed rank, and that man was generally imagined as vile and corrupt cannot be

supported. Medieval political thought, according to Gierke, "starts from the Whole, but ascribes an intrinsic value to every Partial Whole down to and including the Individual. . . every particular Being, in so far as it is a Whole, is a diminished copy of the World; it is a Microcosmus or Minor Mundus in which the Macrocosmus is mirrored. In the fullest measure this is true of every human individual."⁴ This political philosophy found biblical sanction in the first chapter of Genesis, verse 27, "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

A close look at the physical realities of Penshurst reveals the complex relations of parts in the social order, and their connection to social theory. The major social divisions in England, according to William Caxton, were "the chivalry, the clergy, and the laborers,"⁵ and it is easy to see this social structure reflected in the layout of Penshurst, which included the manor, a church, and the nearby village. The French historian Georges Duby has suggested that much of European history can be understood as a conflict between these three loci of power occupied by

⁴. Otto Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Age, Frederic W. Maitland (translator) (Boston, 1958; originally, Cambridge, 1900), 7-8.

⁵. See, Keith Wrightson, "The Social Order of Early Modern England," in Lloyd Bonfield, R.M. Smith and K. Wrightson The World We Have Gained. Histories of Population and Social Structure (Oxford, 1986).

"those who fight, those who pray, and those who work."⁶
This tripartite social division allowed for a balance of power in which no single group could easily maintain dominance over the other two. Power, whether political, social or economic, depended upon shifting alliances between two of the three groups, and it was unlikely, as long as this balance was maintained, that the interests of the majority of workers could be long ignored. This situation, assisted by a favorable ratio of land to the existing population, has led some scholars to call the two centuries before the English Reformation "the golden age of the English peasantry."⁷

It is easy to imagine a great social division between the great landowners and the mass of English peasants who worked their land. Some historians have imagined two distinct cultures dating back to the medieval period, one elite, with access to books and education, and the other,

⁶. Georges Duby, The Three Orders, Feudal Society Imagined, Arthur Goldhammer (transl.) (Chicago, 1980). The concept of "ternarity" developed by Duby, LeGoff, Levi-Strauss, and others imagines a constant mediation between spheres of idea and event, which finds expression in concepts of heaven, earth and purgatory; father, son and holy ghost; or in a later period the one, few and the many.

⁷. John Hatcher, "English Serfdom and Villeinage: Towards a Reassessment," P&P, 90 (Feb. 1981) 37, 3-39; Good general discussions of medieval social structure can be found in Rodney H. Hilton, "Freedom and Villeinage in England," P&P 31 (July, 1965) 3-19; R.H.Hilton, Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the end of the Thirteenth Century (New York, 1967); R.H.Hilton, The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England (London, 1969); M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society, an Economic History of Britain, 1100-1500 (Berkeley, 1972).

popular, oral and customary.⁸ The landowners, it has been argued, were taller and stronger and lived longer than the peasantry, who generally suffered from the effects of poor diets. These physical differences were sometimes equated with moral differences which (despite the lack of a coherent genetic theory) were carried "in the blood."⁹ The topography of the typical early English village seems to confirm the distinction and extend it to separate economic spheres. The peasants worked their own open fields on a communal basis where they grew barley and oats for their own subsistence; and were also required to labor on their lord's demesne, raising wheat and other crops that could be stored, transported and sold for cash in neighboring markets.¹⁰

It was not an ideal system, but it did represent a pattern of strategies which insured the survival of the community through lean years and enabled it to grow during years of plenty. It represented a flexible accommodation between the human population and the vagaries of the natural

⁸. The argument is summed up, and dismissed, by John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," American Historical Review, 91, #3 (June 1986), 519-552.

⁹. On Peasant diet see Rodney Hilton, Medieval Society, p123. On "blood" see, Anita Levy, "Blood, Kinship and Gender," Genders, 5 (Summer, 1989) 70-85.

¹⁰. M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society, an Economic History of Britain, 1100-1500 (1972) 89-90.

environment.¹¹ It was a system, moreover, which was driven neither by religious doctrine nor by physical coercion, but by the expectations of mutual advantage by each of its members.

Peasants could expect that the majority of rents and produce collected by their landowners would be distributed locally. This was especially likely in a community in which most transactions were made in bartered goods or services rather than with currency. Furthermore, services due the landowner as a part of tenurial obligations were often utilized for the common good, building roads and clearing land. In the process, under the landlord's supervision, manpower needs could be spread out from periods of great to periods of little activity. In addition, and most fundamentally, the lord and his military retainers, before the establishment of a strong royal government and the development of cannon warfare, protected the village against

¹¹. Some might be heartened by Maitland's remarks on the feudal system in general. We should not, he said, indulge in the "habit of speaking of feudalism as though it were a disease of the body politic... Feudalism means civilization, the separation of employments, the division of labour, the possibility of national defence, the possibility of art, science, literature and learned leisure; the cathedral, the scriptorium, the library, are as truly the work of feudalism as is the baronial castle..." R. J. North adds; "In speaking of feudalism we shall not be speaking simply of subjection of the peasantry to the justice of the manor, 'not of abnormal forces, not of retrogression, not of disease, but in the main of normal and healthy growth.'...The important thing for the historian to do about feudalism is to avoid turning it into a 'walking abstraction', something that appears to have been invented in order to be replaced...'in the logic of history.'" R.J.North, p48.

outsiders.¹²

The lord's hospitality was a key element in this balance between the landholder and his tenants. At Penshurst the tradition of English hospitality, which Jonson glorified, finds physical expression in the great hall which still stands largely unchanged since its construction in the fourteenth century. The extent of Robert Sidney's largesse is suggested by the hall's great size: thirty-nine by sixty-two feet, open from the tiled floor to the apex of its roof sixty feet above. Here Sidney fed his servants and guests,¹³ held manorial courts, and hosted feasts at various times during the year, especially on twelfth-night or during the season of parliamentary elections.¹⁴ Many of the social relations at Penshurst can be read in the architectural features of this open space. At one end is a raised platform, a dais, where during the middle ages the lord and his favored companions and guests traditionally sat

¹². Georges Duby, "Manorial Economies," from Manorial Economies, reprinted in Brian Tierney, The Middle Ages, Volume II, Sources of Medieval History (New York, 1970) 123-135.

¹³. Sidney himself and his favored guests ate in the family dining chamber above, as Jonson indicates "A waiter... gives me what I call and lets me eat,\ He knows, below, he shall find plenty of meat. ("To Penshurst," lines 68-70).

¹⁴. For a good discussion of hospitality see Felicity Heal, "Hospitality and Honor in Early Modern England," Food and Foodways, Vol 1, 321-350, 1987; Felicity Heal, Hospitality in Early Modern England (New York, 1990). On the increase in hospitality during elections see, Alan M. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60 (Leicester, 1966), 51.

at the head table. In the center is an open hearth formed in tile in the shape of an octagon, which probably dates from the Tudor period.¹⁵ Around this hearth, workers, guests and the lord of the manor could have stood, each equally warming themselves, as the smoke drifted up to make its way out through breaches in the stone slates of the roof.

At the far end of the hall from the dais was a screen which separated the hall from the major doorways to the outside and to the service areas of buttery, pantry and kitchen. On the dais end of the hall were family quarters located above a storage area (the undercroft). From these quarters the lord's wife and family could peer through a peep hole (called a "squint") to see the activities in the hall below (but not, interestingly, at the dais). It is quite clear from the architecture that there was some formalized social segregation, but the center of the house (if viewed from above, the cross-bar of an H) was the great hall. All food and most traffic had to pass through this very active area. In addition to its function as the focal point for entertaining and manorial business, servants and guests may have slept here and, in foul weather, performed

¹⁵. "The Architectural Development of Penshurst Place," brochure sold at the sales desk at Penshurst. For details on Penshurst's architecture and history see Marcus Binney, Country Life articles on Penshurst March 9-May 4, 1972; and John Newman Buildings of England, West Kent and the Weald (Middlesex, Eng., 1969) 453-461.

tasks that could be done indoors. In all of this Penshurst was not unique. The most common configuration for larger houses in medieval England was an H plan similar to that at Penshurst with its implicit social distinctions.

In addition to the comforts that the lord made available to his servants and guests at the manor, the lord was commonly held responsible for the maintenance of the elderly and the poor. Food was distributed sometimes daily at the gate of the manor, and the destitute were frequently given privileges of collecting firewood or wood for repairing hedges and cottages from the lord's lands.¹⁶

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine the village community's relationship to the local landholder solely in terms of dependence and subordination. Village assemblies frequently served as a governing body, especially, as was often the case, when the landholder was absent. At Penshurst, in Leicester square outside the manor house gates (see map) a timber guild hall that dates to the late fifteenth century may have housed meetings of the assembly. There villagers could have elected jurors, reeves, foresters, ale-tasters, and assessors, as well as organized

¹⁶. Felicity Heal, "Hospitality and Honor in Early Modern England," Food and Foodways, I (1987) 321-350. See also Joan Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume IV 1500-1640 (London, 1967), 58f.

the collection of taxes and established customary laws.¹⁷ Such customary, i.e., unwritten, laws were often the major block to the arbitrary authority of landlords. They established standards of tenure and limits to manorial authority. Their power restricted the kinds of punishments which could be meted out by manorial and church courts as well as the kinds of crimes which could be tried. The goal of customary law established by the village assembly was generally not to determine and apply any abstract or universal concept of justice; rather, it was to pragmatically mediate specific conflicts.¹⁸

One of the major functions of the village assemblies was to oversee the system of open field agriculture. In open field agriculture, each household is responsible for a number of non-contiguous strips of land dispersed over a wide area. Each individual or family might cultivate strips in bottom-land and on hillside, in rocky soil and in fertile ground, thus insuring that all the members of the community

¹⁷. Zvi Razi, "Family, Land and the Village Community in Later Medieval England," P&P, 93 (Nov, 1981). There is little written material on the village at Penshurst other than; Penshurst Church and Village (tourist brochure -- Ashmead Press Limited, Lakedale Road, London, S.E. 18, c. 1989); "Typical English Villages; Penshurst, Kent," Country Life, Dec 23, 1899.

¹⁸. R. H. Hilton, Medieval Society, 241ff. On the manipulation of localistic conceptions of "justice and mercy" during a somewhat later period see Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law," in Douglas Hay, et al., Albion's Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England (New York, 1975), 17-64.

would share alike both the risks and the rewards of their toil. They shared, as well, their tools and draught animals and cooperated in making decisions on when to sow and when to harvest. Similar reciprocal obligations extended between villages, which often shared commons for pasturing livestock, wooded areas for hunting game and collecting firewood, and rights of access for salt and even for burial.¹⁹

In such a world, where physical boundaries were so amorphous and social relations so variable, scholars sometimes describe property rights in terms of a grid or network of obligations and rights. Property in land, especially, was not a static absolute. It was not a "thing" that could be easily transferred from a seller to a buyer, but represented a focal point in a complex four-dimensional structure of community obligations. Its "use value" was determined by its social and natural context and was distinctly different from what latter generations would

¹⁹. On Open field farming see W.O. Ault, Open-Field Farming in Medieval England, a Study in Village By-Laws (New York, 1972); Joan Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume IV 1500-1640. On village assemblies see R.H.Hilton, Medieval Society, 151-9; M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society, an Economic History of Britain, 1100-1500 (Berkeley, 1972), 111-120. Good general introductions to the English village include; Trevor Rowley, Villages in the Landscape (Gloucester, Eng., 1987); and Richard Muir, The English Village (New York, 1980).

describe as its "market value."²⁰

The conceptions of individual identity and status were equally fluid. An individual's status or rank could be determined by a wide variety of standards. Status could be described in terms of quasi-legalistic standards such as the nature of an individual's tenurial status; whether customary (unwritten) or copyhold (written); the obligations of money rents and/or labor services; the periods of tenure, or the rights of renewal -- each of which could be different for different members of a community and for the strips of land they held. Status could be determined also by one's relationship to church or manor where an individual might function as a warden or a bell ringer at the church, or could be employed by the manor as a bailiff, reeve, beadle, hayward, woodward, or park keeper.²¹ Status as well probably reflected other, more ephemeral, qualities: one's general humor, an ability to sing or tell stories.

One's rank also was determined by one's familial relations. But caution should be exercised in discussing the structure of early-modern families. Recent studies suggest that the concept of the nuclear family current in

²⁰. E.P.Thompson, "The Grid of Inheritance: a Comment," in Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, E.P.Thompson, eds., Family and Inheritance, Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800 (Cambridge, 1976), 337; see also, R.A.Butlin, Transformation of Rural England 1580-1800 (New York, 1982).

²¹. R.H.Hilton, Medieval Society, 154. See also William Harrison, Description of England (originally 1587), Georges Edelin, ed., (Ithaca, 1968), 118.

the twentieth-century West is inadequate to an understanding of family relations in late medieval and early modern society.²² In an English village in the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries, there were two kinds of families. Roughly the division is between those who lived in the large manor houses and those who lived in the many smaller houses around them.

The number of people who were dependent on an individual or a household formed one marker of status. The large household, consisting of the immediate family of husband, wife and children, plus a variety of blood and non-blood relations, and servants and temporary guests was the social ideal. All of these would be included when a person spoke of "my family."²³ In addition, many others in the

²². The most important studies are Phillippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood, a Social History of Family Life, Robert Baldick, transl., (New York, 1962); and Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage, In England, 1500-1800 (abridged edition) (New York, 1979). See also David Herlihy, Medieval Households (Cambridge, Mass., 1985); Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions, a Social History of American Family Life (New York, 1988). This interpretation has been criticized by Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost, England Before the Industrial Age (further explored), (originally 1965; Third edition, New York, 1984); and by Alan MacFarlane, review of L. Stone's Family, Sex and Marriage, in History and Theory, XVIII, #1, 1979, 103-126. For a critique of Macfarlane see K.D.M. Snell, "English Historical Continuity and the Culture of Capitalism: the Work of Alan MacFarlane," History Workshop, 27 (Spring, 1987) 154-163.

²³. Locke is typical in discussing, "a Master of a Family with all these subordinate Relations of Wife, Children, Servants and Slaves united under the Domestic Rule of a Family..." John Locke, Two Treatises of Government: A Critical Edition with an Introduction and Apparatus Criticus (originally 1699), Peter Laslett ed., (London, 1967), II, 86,

community were called "brother," "sister," "cousin," "aunt," "uncle" or their variants, whether or not there was any actual tie of blood kinship.²⁴

The success of the large household was usually achieved by a strategy of patriarchal family organization the key elements of which were the domination of a male head, marriages arranged to form alliances with other large families and to concentrate wealth, and an inheritance system favoring the eldest male, which allowed capital to be transferred without being diminished by divisions among competing heirs.²⁵ This family structure finds its best description and defense in Robert Filmer's Patriarcha: a Defense of the Natural Power of Kings against the Unnatural Liberty of the People. Written within twenty miles and twenty years of "To Penshurst," Patriarcha defends the

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²⁴. Keith Wrightson, English Society, 1580-1680 (Rutgers New Jersey, 1982), 46.

²⁵. H.J.Habakkuk, "Family Structure and Economic Change in Nineteenth-Century Europe," Journal of Economic History, XV, #1 (1955) 1-12; articles by Jack Goody, Cicely Howell, Margaret Spufford, and Joan Thirsk; in Goody, Jack; Thirsk, Joan; Thompson, E.P., Family and Inheritance, Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800 (Cambridge, 1976); On architectural distinctions between large and small households see Norbert Elias, "The Structure of Dwellings as an Indicator of Social Structure," in The Court Society (1969), Edmund Jephcott, transl., (New York, 1983), 41-65. On Patriarchy as a political system see Gordon J.Schochet, The Authoritarian Family and Political Attitudes in 17thc England; and Peter Laslett (ed.) "Introduction", Patriarcha and the other Political Works of Sir Robert Filmer (Oxford, 1948).

authority of a monarch as identical to the authority of the father of a family, which derives ultimately from Adam, the line of descent and power following the line of eldest sons. Like Jonson's poem, Patriarcha depends for its argument on the identity, stronger than that of mere analogy, between the micro- and macrocosms of an Edenic state, the family, and society.²⁶

As Peter Laslett has shown, this ideal was not always attained, and most people in England before the modern era lived in much smaller households.²⁷ In these smaller families, marriages were much more apt to reflect a real affection between husband and wife than an alliance of power or fortune. The woman played a very important role as a part of the productive unit.²⁸ Lineage was generally traced through both male and female ancestors, and inheritance decisions were likely to reflect the needs of widows and all children with relatively little regard for age or sex. In these smaller households, the structure of

²⁶. Sir Robert Filmer, Patriarcha, and the other Political Works, Peter Laslett, ed., (Oxford, 1949) 1-43. See especially Laslett's introduction for information on Filmer, as well as; Laslett, Peter, "Sir Robert Filmer: the Man versus the Whig Myth," William and Mary Quarterly, V, #4 (Oct, 1948) 523-546; Peter Laslett, "The Gentry of Kent in 1640," Cambridge Historical Journal, IX, #1 (1947) 148-164.

²⁷. Laslett, World We Have Lost, passim.

²⁸. On the status of women see K. Wrightson, English Society, 1580-1680, 95; and Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women have a Renaissance?" in Becoming Visible: Women in European History, Renate Bridenthal, et al. (second edition, Boston, 1987) 175-201.

the family worked to distribute the goods of its members and limited the degree to which property could be accumulated and transferred from one generation to the next.

These two household systems were mutually dependent on each other. Members of the smaller households commonly spent a major portion of their lives in service, working for and living in the households of larger families. Individuals left service with their lord's permission, which usually coincided with their marrying and establishing their own households. The lord's control of marriages, often accompanied by the necessary payment of merchet (usually a cow or other animal, paid by the bride's father to the manorial lord), acted as a form of population control, preventing the village from expanding beyond its ability to support itself.

Penshurst was larger and much more solidly built than the smaller houses of the village, most of which currently date only back to the Victorian era.²⁹ But Penshurst, like the buildings which surrounded it and, for that matter, almost all buildings in England before the seventeenth century can be described as a vernacular building. Such buildings differed from high style houses in that their design was not inspired by a cosmopolitan aesthetic tradition. Plans, elevations, and architectural ornaments were the result of long local traditions, not an imitation

²⁹. See footnote 17.

of current styles derived from urban centers or pattern books. The design of vernacular buildings has been described as organic or additive, since such buildings seem to grow by a process of natural accretion responding to local and specific needs. Such buildings are designed from the inside out, to suit functional needs. They generally show little regard for external form. Often they look like a part of the natural landscape built out of local materials. The most common feature of a vernacular house in Kent, England or anywhere else in the world is the dominant position of a central open area with a hearth which served as a multi-purpose area for working, relaxing, sleeping, and eating. Penshurst differed from the nearby houses around it in size, permanence, number of rooms, and decoration; but the central grammar, the organizing principles, of big house and little houses did not vary.³⁰

³⁰. On vernacular architecture in general see Amos Rapoport, House Form and Culture (New Jersey, 1969); James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten, The Archaeology of Early American Life (Garden City, New York, 1977); Del Upton and John Vlatch, Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens, Ga., 1986). For the "grammar" of vernacular building see Henry Glassie, Folk Housing in Middle Virginia, a Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts (Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1975). On the architecture of non-high style buildings in England see; Maurice Barley, Houses and History (London, 1986); Maurice Barley, The English Farmhouse and Cottage (1961); Maurice Barley, "Rural Housing in England," in Joan Thirsk, ed., The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume IV 1500-1640 (1967) 696-765; Eric Mercer, English Vernacular Houses: A Study of Traditional Farmhouses and Cottages (London, 1975); Margaret Wood, The English Mediaeval House (New York, 1965); R.W. Brunskill, Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture (London, 1971). On the English Country house in particular Mark

Ben Jonson was watching this world slowly unravel during the beginning of the seventeenth century. The close association between the concepts and realities of nature, property, status, and the family, which Jonson described in "To Penshurst" as parts of a complex and dynamic metaphysical unity, would be a relic within a hundred years. The most important characteristic of Jonson's conception of the world, and the one perhaps most alien to us today, is the close bond between world and idea. Jonson's Penshurst was conceived in almost entirely subjective terms. Everyone and thing inhabiting it were part of a complex network which was already too full to contain some imaginary external and objective observer outside of the grid of its relationships.

Ultimately it is a world very foreign to us today, for it requires us to imagine the whole vocabulary of status, property and family in much more fluid and temporal terms than we commonly do. Historians have long argued that individuals before the modern age envisioned themselves situated on a hierarchical, unilinear "chain of being," and even that they somehow lacked a sense of individual identity entirely.³¹ Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" to some degree,

Girouard, Life in the English Country House, a Social and Architectural History (Middlesex, Eng., 1978), is excellent.

³¹. On the "Chain of Being" the major texts are Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge Mass., 1964), and E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1944). On individualism, the originator of the concept that it is a recent development in history is Jacob Burckhardt, The

and Robert Filmer's Patriarcha much more so, might seem to support such a view, but both these works are dependent on a much more complex view of the world and man's place in it. It is a world in which the individual is the central reference point for a cosmological harmony, a role he or she shares with no metaphysical scale of rank.

If their work seems bloodless and complacent, it is partly because they were using an older conception of the world (which denied a distinction between conception and reality) to explain new and discordant realities. A series of major social, economic, and political transformations, beginning in the sixteenth century, gradually were transforming England from a medieval into a modern polity. During this period England faced a crisis of expanding population and limited resources. Between 1520 and 1650 the population of England doubled from two and a half million to over five million people, and the price of wheat rose six-fold. Some people, especially those with secure titles to moderate or large holdings in land, did especially well during the period, while others were forced from their small holdings and migrated into cities raising the urban populations dramatically. London's population rose from around fifty thousand in the 1520s to two hundred thousand in 1600, to four hundred thousand in mid-century, and to

Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (originally 1922)
(New York, 1929), esp. Vol I., 143-174.

five hundred seventy-five thousand by 1700.³² Agricultural production was decreasingly directed toward self-sufficiency and increasingly oriented toward producing foodstuffs which could be sold in urban markets. Regional specialization became more marked as areas became known for their dairy, wool, wheat, malt, or coal industries. The progress of enclosure accelerated as wealthier farmers consolidated their holdings and expelled their poorer neighbors. Social divisions widened as a declining aristocracy and an expanding population of landless poor yielded to the increasing economic and political power of a newly wealthy class of yeomen and gentry. A newly professional class arose to fill the needs of an expanding system of law, commerce and transportation.

The Malthusian cycle (which holds that population growth exceeds agricultural growth until corrected by a rising mortality rate) was broken for perhaps the first time in history by these changes, and by an accompanying reduction in the mortality and fertility rates. But the advances for some segments of the population coincided with the immiseration of an expanding class of homeless people.

³². Population figures are from Keith Wrightson, English Society, 1580-1680, 128, 121-148. For the price of wheat see Christopher Hill, Century of Revolution, 1603-1714 (New York, 1961), 11. For a general discussion of these changes in society and economics see Wrightson; Barry Coward, The Stuart Age, a History of England, 1603-1714 (New York, 1980), 4-80; and C.W.Chalkin and M.A. Havinden, Rural Change and Urban Growth, 1500-1800; Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700," P&P, XXXIII (1966) 16-55.

Without any tie to the land, these unsettled people increasingly filled the highways and cities of England. By mid-seventeenth century the vast majority of England's urban population was living in abject poverty, and in Kent, surrounding Penshurst and Filmer's estate at East Sutton, nearly a third of the householders were so destitute that they were unable to pay the hearth tax, according to assessments taken later in the century.³³ As a result, the period described by some historians as a golden age for the English yeomanry has been described by others as "among the most terrible years through which the country has ever passed."³⁴

These changes left their mark on the English landscape, which is seen in the rise of cities and the enclosing of fields, and also in the construction of new houses. Gone entirely from the landscape today are the impermanent peasant structures that housed the majority of the population before the seventeenth century. In their place new houses arose which expressed totally new ideas of design and house function. The most noticeable innovation in these new houses were chimneys, which increasingly replaced the open hearth. This allowed second floors to be constructed,

³³. Coward, 52. Wrightson, 148.

³⁴. For positive views see, e.g.; W.G.Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape, (London, 1955), 163; Hoskins "The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640," Past and Present, (November, 1953) 50. For "terrible years," see Wrightson, 146.

and a proliferation of smaller and more private rooms, each heated by its own fireplace and chimney. Houses became increasingly compact units as detached kitchens and storage facilities were brought under one roof.³⁵ The hall with all of its social importance and its symbolic associations was already becoming an anachronism by the time of Ben Jonson.

These architectural changes reflected changes in the structure of family relations as well. As the family physically separated from the network of the village community and became increasingly identified with those who lived under one roof, the authority of the father increased. According to Lawrence Stone, the new family relations accompanied an increasing formality in sitting arrangements at the dining table, in expressions of greeting, and in a variety of other symbolic gestures of submission. Fathers maintained the proper deference of their wives and children

³⁵. On the architectural changes during this period see, in addition to the works cited in fn.30 (esp M. Barley in Thirsk Agrarian History); W.G.Hoskins, "The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640," Past and Present (Nov, 1953) 44-59; N.W.Alcock, "The Great Rebuilding and its Later Stages," Vernacular Architecture, 14 (1983) 45-49; J.T.Smith, "Short-Lived and Mobile Houses in Late Seventeenth-Century England," Vernacular Architecture, 16 (1985) 33-34; Derek Portman, "Vernacular building in the Oxford Region in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in C.W.Chalkin and M.A.Havinden, M.A., eds., Rural Change and Urban Growth, 1500-1800 (London, 1974) 135-168. Christopher Dyer has argued that the transformation can be traced to a much earlier period in "English Peasant Buildings in the Later Middle Ages (1200-1500)," Medieval Archaeology, Vol 30 (1986) 19-45. The evidence for a major change dating to the seventeenth century, however, is immediately visible to any tourist visiting England.

partly through physical force. The cane and whip saw frequent use as beatings became a formalized part of family life. According to Stone, "The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were for England the great flogging age."³⁶

Patriarchal control eventually embedded itself in new religious beliefs. Daily prayer meetings and religious education became a central part of family life. As Ben Jonson described the Sidney household, "They are and have been taught religion; thence\ Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence.\ Each morn and even they are taught to pray\ With the whole household." (93--96). Not coincidentally, the rising tide of puritan non-conformists emphasized the religious importance of all those features necessary for the maintenance of the new family structure: education, daily devotion, and filial obedience.³⁷ At the same time England experienced a rising tide of trials and executions of witches who were almost without exception poor women, a clear signal of some of the ways in which ideas of religion, class and gender could interact.³⁸

³⁶. For these changes see Lawrence Stone, Family Sex and Marriage (New York, 1977), 93-146; on flogging see 122.

³⁷. On the Puritan family see David Stannard, The Puritan Way of Death, A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change (Oxford, 1977).

³⁸. Of the many discussions of witches and witchcraft, see especially Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York, 1971), 535-569, and especially 562.

These were some of the social circumstances that compelled Jonson, Filmer and other writers in the seventeenth century to seek new ways to describe the world and the relations of people to each other and to society. To T.S. Eliot the major characteristic of the literature of the age was a "disassociation of sensibilities." The fact that in Shakespeare's Hamlet the major action of the drama occurred not on stage but in Hamlet's mind was a telling point to Eliot, who saw in the play a lack of what he called an "objective correlative" to mediate the distance between Hamlet's thoughts and the physical world.³⁹ Jonson's "To Penshurst" may offer us one of the last glimpses into a world marked by universal harmony, before it unravelled in the years to follow.

³⁹. Selected Essays of T.S.Eliot (New York, 1932, 1950), "Hamlet and his Problem" 121-126.

WILLIAM BYRD II

I have a large family of my own, and my doors are open to everybody, yet I have no bills to pay, and half-a-crown will rest undisturbed in my pocket for many moons together.

Like one of the patriarchs, I have my flocks and my herds, my bond-men and bond-women, and every sort of trade amongst my own servants, so that I live in a kind of independence on every one, but Providence. However tho' this soart of life is without expense yet it is attended with a great deal of trouble. I must take care to keep all my people to their duty, to set all the springs in motion, and to make every one draw his equal share to carry the machine forward. But then tis an amusement in this silent country, and a continual exercise of our patience and oeconomy. . . . We sit securely under our vines and our fig trees without any danger to our property. We have neither public robbers nor private. . . . We are very happy in our Canaan if we could but forget the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt.

Though composed in 1726, Byrd's description of his situation at Westover in the colony of Virginia sounds as though it could have been written by Robert Filmer or Ben Jonson a hundred years earlier. As Michael Zuckerman has noted, major aspects of William Byrd's world are "as applicable to life at Westover in the early 18th century as to life in Lyon in the 16th century or in Winchester in the

¹. William Byrd II to Charles Boyle, Earl of Orrery The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover Virginia, 1684-1776 (Charlottesville, 1977), Marion Tinling ed., July 5, 1726, 355.

15th."² The similarity is not accidental. For most of his life William Byrd was actively engaged in an effort to force the realities of life in Virginia into a pattern of living that he had read about in books and seen in his travels in England. His references to the patriarchs who sit under vines and fig trees (an image derived from Micah 4:4) reflect not only his knowledge of the Bible, but perhaps also his familiarity with the writings of Robert Filmer whose son was Byrd's mother's first husband.³ Like the writings of Filmer and Jonson, Byrd's description of his estate is a combination of image and reality.

Although William Byrd enjoyed thinking of himself as a biblical patriarch or as a feudal lord, historians have seen a more unusual figure: a man caught between the old world and the new world, neither a medieval European nor yet entirely a new American. He is a paradoxical figure, an Englishman and a Virginian. He imagined himself as a feudal landlord and boasted of his self-sufficiency and independence from commerce ("a half-crown will rest undisturbed," "every soart of trade amongst my own servants"), yet he was also a major entrepreneur on the edges of an expanding English commercial empire. He was a critic of slavery and racism; at the same time he was also

². Michael Zuckerman, "William Byrd's Family," Perspectives in American History, 12 (1979) 255-311.

³. for a genealogy see David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York, 1989), 221.

one of the major architects of the institution of slavery in the American South. His own empire in tidewater Virginia was built on a basis of benevolence and hospitality, even while it was infused with an undercurrent of brutality and coercion.

William Byrd (1674-1744: unless otherwise indicated, William Byrd refers to William Byrd II) inherited his estate and position upon his father's death in 1704. This included his father's vast landholdings, his "great family of Negro's [sic],"⁴ his trading interests with Indians and with Virginia planters, and his investments in the African slave trade. In time he also gained, as had his father, the highly lucrative position of Receiver General of the Revenue for the colony, a seat on the governor's council, a seat on the parish vestry, and a commission with the local militia. Over the course of his life he actively engaged in buying land and slaves, and, although by the last years of his life he was forced to sell off some of his holdings to meet the calls of creditors, at his death he had title to an estimated 179,000 acres and several hundred slaves.⁵

⁴ Letter to W. Horsmanden, March 1684/5, Corr, 31.

⁵ Byrd mentions having "above 43,000 acres of land, [and] about 220 slaves" in a letter in 1718 (Correspondence, February 18, 1718, p313). The majority of the 179,000 acres he held title to at his death were in North Carolina (Secret Diary, p.xii) According to an inventory of Byrd's plantations taken in 1746 two years after his death, he held 242 slaves at the Falls(near present-day Richmond). In addition Byrd held

Despite these colonial interests, by the time William Byrd had reached his fiftieth birthday he had spent more time in England than in Virginia. Classically educated in England (he read Latin, and Greek daily all of his life), a student of Law at the Inns of Court, a member of the Royal Society, a friend of dukes and earls, he perhaps never entirely gave up his dream to return to England. Although he established one of the largest holdings of land and slaves in the Virginia colony, his primary goal for most of his life seems to have been to become financially secure enough to be able to return to England. Only after his fiftieth birthday did Byrd apparently make peace with the fact that he might never return to England and adopt Virginia as his home.⁶

During his lifetime William Byrd saw, we can almost say presided over, the transformation of Virginia from a

slaves at Westover and in lands further west and perhaps in North Carolina. By 1757 the Byrd holdings, now held by William Byrd III, totaled 605 slaves. (See Introduction to Correspondence. See also Richard Beeman, "Social Change and Cultural Conflict..." William and Mary Quarterly, XXXV, #3 (July 1978) 455-476. This kind of diversified holding, with very little actually invested in agriculture, was typical of the Colonial Chesapeake elite according to Aubrey Land, The Bases of Plantation Society (Columbia, S.C., 1969).

⁶. As late as 1730 Byrd still thought about returning to England, "My family too have been much out of order this spring, so that I am grown less fond of our sunshiney country than I used to be but I must be content to stay in it, so long as our tobacco continues to bear so low a price in England..." June 18, 1730, Correspondence, 429. He considered that, "retiring into the country, especially so lonely a country as this, is a fair step towards dying..." July 28, 1730, Correspondence, 432-3.

society with slaves to a slave society.⁷ At the beginning of the eighteenth century only about 20% of the population were slaves. By mid-century, the percentage throughout most of tidewater Virginia (the eastern region accessible to ocean-going vessels, the center of population, and the cultural center of the colony) had grown to over 60%.⁸ This period in Virginia also saw the establishment of political stability in the colony, the emergence of Virginia's powerful gentry families, and the rise in the House of Burgesses of a strong local opposition to the power of the royal governor. William Byrd played a major role in each of these transformations.

The construction of William Byrd's estate in the image of a biblical or medieval landscape was not just the imitation of a literary metaphor. In its physical construction, and in the social relations it fostered, Westover served many of the same functions as Penshurst. A plat of Westover drawn up around 1700 shows that Westover had all the typical components of a medieval English

⁷ Gerald W. Mullin's distinction in Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (New York, 1972). According to Lewis Simpson, "Byrd was one of the makers of the slave society of the later American South." Lewis Simpson, "Review Essay: William Byrd and the South," Early American Literature, 7, 1972, 187-195, 194.

⁸ Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together, Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (New Jersey, 1987), 3.

village.⁹ The manor house stands at the intersection of two long avenues bordered by trees. At the end of one avenue is an "old church" and to either side is a brew house and a court house. Near the court house is what appears to be a pillory. At the other end of the avenue past the manor house is a spit of land marked "ducking stool point" which perhaps got its name from a traditional method of detecting witches. Few other houses are shown on the plat, but it is certain that this was a major center of social activities for a fairly large population.

The map can be compared with the landscape that Byrd indirectly described in his diaries.¹⁰ Byrd's house, the church, the courthouse, and the Harrison's house appear both on the map and in Byrd's diary entries. The diaries also describe a variety of other buildings including granaries,

⁹ It is reproduced in VMHB XLVII, #4 (Oct. 1939) opposite 285.

¹⁰ See Louis Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712 (Richmond, Virginia, 1941); Louis Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., The London Diary (1717-1721), and Other Writings (New York, 1958); Maude Woodfin, ed., Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739-1741, with Letters and Literary Exercises, 1696-1726 (Richmond, Virginia, 1942). For biographical studies of Byrd see, in addition to the introductions to the works above: Pierre Marambaud, William Byrd of Westover, 1674-1744 (Charlottesville, 1971); and Kenneth Lockridge, The Diary, and Life, of William Byrd of Virginia, 1674-1744 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1987). In form, Byrd's diaries are remarkably similar to the depiction of a days events at a Roman villa in the first century written by Martial in De Rusticatione, "At daybreak I pray to the gods; I visit my servants and afterwards my fields, and to my staff I assign their proper tasks." (quoted in William A. McClung, The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry, 8.)

tobacco houses,¹¹ and a pigeon house (which sounds much like a medieval dovecote) that was so large that when a "terrible clap of thunder" damaged it, sixteen sheep which lay under it for shelter were killed.¹² There was as well at Westover a "brick house" used for the storage of goods and the processing of tobacco.¹³ This brick house must have been a fairly large and well-built structure, for the door was sufficiently massive to break a boy's leg when it fell.¹⁴

From the diaries and Byrd's correspondence it is possible to reconstruct the main outlines of the big house at Westover. From such entries as "The Doctor and the three women made such a hubbub and noise that I retired upstairs"¹⁵ and "My wife and I had another foolish quarrel about my saying she listened on the top of the stairs,"¹⁶ it is possible to imagine a rather small structure with two floors. From such scattered references we can assume that

¹¹. July 12-31, 1712.

¹². See Mar 24, 1712, for its probable construction, and May 11, 1720, for its demise.

¹³ Feb 27, 1711; May 7, 1711.

¹⁴. August 5, 1709.

¹⁵. Aug 8, 1711.

¹⁶. April 8, 1709.

Westover had a minimum of four rooms.¹⁷ The structure most likely conformed to a traditional colonial Virginia building pattern. Only one and a half stories high, its upper floor perhaps had only dormers projecting from the roof for light and air.¹⁸ It is probable that this was the house constructed around 1690 by Byrd's father, who established the estate. Over the years, however, Byrd probably made many additions and repairs, so that when Byrd died in 1744

¹⁷. To estimate the number of rooms see "Dunella" in Correspondence?; for upstairs see e.g: April 8, 1709; Dec 27, 1709; Aug.8,9, 1711; May 25, 1712. The house which presently stands on the site was most likely built by William Byrd III around 1750 according to the research of Mark Wenger. This conclusion is supported by the report of a substantial fire at Westover reported in the Virginia Gazette, January 12, 1749; a comparison of brickwork with the Charles City County Court House which suggests that it was built at the same time as Westover and which can be dated by documentary evidence to c1750; and analysis of stylistic details which similarly support a mid-century date of construction. Mark Wenger's Master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1980 is the most thorough examination of the structure. For this information and much more that has escaped proper citation, I am indebted to Mr. Wenger. (The 1701 plat suggests that the house had two internal chimneys, is there evidence that the kitchen may have also? what about a large stairway, as suggested by entry, April 8, 1709?)

¹⁸. For the development of the "Virginia house" form see, Cary Carson, Norman F. Barka, William M. Kelso, Garry Wheeler Stone, and Dell Upton, "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," Winterthur Portfolio, Vol. 16, 32/3 (Summer/Autumn, 1981) 135-196; Cary Carson, "The Virginia House in Maryland," Maryland Historical Magazine, 69, #2 (Summer, 1974) 185-196; Frazier Neiman, "Domestic Architecture at the Clifts Plantation: The Social Context of Early Virginia Building," in Dell Upton, John Michael Vlach, eds., Common places. Readings in American Vernacular Architecture (Athens Georgia, 1986) 292-314; Dell Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," ibid., 315-335; Henry Glassie, Folk Housing in Middle Virginia, a Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts (Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1975).

the structure might have been unrecognizable to his father.

One diary entry helps to establish the location of the big house in relation to its several dependencies. "Towards morning it snowed exceedingly and continued till about 9 o'clock. I rose about 7 and caused a path to be made to the kitchen, to the library, and to the house office."¹⁹

More important than a mere physical description, the map and diaries help us to understand how these spaces were used and to grasp the complex social relations which gave them meaning. Byrd's authority over the landscape that he saw and described was great, but not absolute. Although his house was an important focal point of activities (especially as he describes it), it was not the only center or, perhaps, even the most important one. Freeholders, servants and slaves commonly gathered in the public areas of the churchyard and courthouse. Especially on Sundays, court days, election days, muster days and various holidays, this

¹⁹. Jan 20, 1712. If there were no other evidence, the existence of a privy, alone, would be enough to mark Westover as a very elegant estate at least in comparison to most of the colonial Chesapeake where an open "slash" in the ground, as at Edenton, was the most advanced form of sanitation. Even in Williamsburg it was probably common to dispose of wastes through the nearest window, as Byrd gives evidence "I cast water over a Negro maid that was passing under the window.," Dec 24, 1709. The present privies at Westover, called by one contemporary admirer the "Temples of Cloaca," date to the colonial period and are discussed in an intriguing article by Ed Chappel, "Looking at Buildings," Fresh Advices (Nov, 1984), i-vi, who sees in the arrangement of seats a reconstruction of the hierarchical structure at Westover.

was the site of exuberant festivities accompanied by drinking and boisterous behavior.²⁰

Entries in Byrd's diaries such as these are common:

May 3, 1710, "In the evening I took a walk and saw several drunk people in the churchyard."

August 15, 1710 "about twelve noon, Freeholders met at courthouse to chose burgesses. In the evening. . . . I walked to the courthouse, where the people were most of them drunk. . . ."

Sept 21, 1710, after a meeting of the militia, the officers ate with Byrd and the Governor at the house, "and the rest went to take part of the hogshead in the churchyard."

The evening activities on this occasion ended in drunkenness. At another time an out-of-control horse and coach broke Byrd's mother's tombstone, which led Byrd to have his mother's and father's tombs rebuilt and the area fenced in.²¹

Next to the court house was the pillory. Byrd notes in his diary, "about 10 o'clock walked into the church yard to see Mr. Harrison do justice upon two of his people for selling his corn." and, a few months later, "I walked to the court where I joined with some gentlemen to save a poor girl from whipping that had a bastard."²² The public site of the post is a reminder that punishments in the seventeenth

²⁰ see e.g. May 3, 1710; Aug 15, 1710; Sept 21-22, 1710; Aug 25, 1720.

²¹ Jan 22,24,28, Feb 25, 1710.

²² June 11, 1720; and April 5, 1721. See also mention of stocks Sept 3, 1712.

and eighteenth centuries were often public affairs. They served the multiple functions of correcting wrong-doers, warning the tempted, and inspiring the righteous, and they gave all but the convicted an excuse for merriment.

The church and the court both can be imagined as areas over which Byrd and his neighbors, the Harrisons, had great, but not complete, control. At least once Byrd faced charges at the courthouse (the suit was dismissed), and the singing master at the church was able to impose a new psalm book despite Byrd's opposition to it.²³ Furthermore, the existence of a brick brew house and a well²⁴ at this site gives further evidence that this area was the site of community activities where some degree of communal rights applied.

Descriptions of Westover later in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century indicate that the quarters were situated near the location of the courthouse and church.²⁵ Even in the early eighteenth century, however, the quarters could not have been very far distant. The diaries frequently refer to people at, going to, or coming from the quarters, and Byrd often mentions that he, "took a walk about the plantation and overlooked the

²³ August 1, 1711; December 15, 16, 24, 1720.

²⁴ a well in the church yard, Jan 15, 1712.

²⁵ Thomas Lee Shippen, Westover Described in 1783, Thomas Lee Shippen, (Richmond, 1952); Harper's New Monthly Magazine, No. CCLII, May 1871, Vol XLII, 803.

quarters."²⁶ Since the main house was near the point of a peninsula, the quarters must have been within easy walking distance of the church and courthouse, in which case the interactions of local whites and Byrd's slaves, especially on holidays, must have been frequent and familiar.²⁷

Byrd certainly had more control over events at his slave quarter than he had over gatherings at the church and court house. But even here there were limits to his authority. The quarter seems to have had its own rudimentary internal economy. His slaves had livestock and gardens that were considered their own property. Mention is made in the diaries of Jacob's chickens, of John's dogs, and of Jack's sheep.²⁸ April 15, 1721, was so cold, Byrd noted, that "my people covered their plants again," and on September 19, 1720, Byrd "scolded at John F-1 for stealing the people's potatoes." Most of this activity no doubt proceeded under Byrd's benign neglect, but Byrd was less even-tempered about certain ships from New England, "Some of these banditti anchor near my estate, for the advantage of trafiquing with my slaves, from whome they are sure to

²⁶ e.g. May 11, 1710, Mar 2, 1720.

²⁷ a conclusion which is supported by Byrd's diary, see e.g. Feb 3, 1710; May 2, 1711; and Correspondence, Feb 20, 1735, 473. The close association of whites and blacks in colonial Virginia is described by Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together.

²⁸ Chickens, Nov 21, 1740. Dogs, June 16, 1711. Sheep, April 4, 1720.

have good pennysworth."²⁹

Byrd maintained his authority over his slaves, servants and neighbors by the careful application of both benevolence and coercion. In his later diaries especially, hardly a day goes by at Westover when Byrd does not note that he "walked about the plantation" and "talked with my people." Evidence of Byrd's benevolence toward his slaves is found in entries noting that he treated his slaves to punch, or gave them an extra dram, or gave them cherries.³⁰ Usually these were rewards for good services, but there were other occasions when he noted "I gave my people a bowl of punch and they had a fiddle and danced."³¹ The scene one Twelfth Night might have been described by a medieval commentator. On that night Byrd, "talked with my people, drew twelfth cake, gave the people cake and cider."³²

Students of colonial slavery, aware of the nature of antebellum slavery, are often surprised by the familiarity between blacks and whites and by the relative autonomy of slaves in the earlier period. Byrd's slaves were often

²⁹ Correspondence, Feb 20, 1735, 473.

³⁰ e.g. May 10, 15 1712; May 19,20 1720.

³¹ June 21, 1720.

³² Jan 7, 1740; for a description of cutting the Twelfth Cake in early modern Europe see Philip Aries, Centuries of Childhood, A Social History of Family Life, Robert Baldick, transl., (New York, 1962), 73-75.

employed in skilled and semi-skilled occupations, both at Westover and at his outlying plantations at the Falls near present-day Richmond. An inventory of slaves taken several years after Byrd's death lists ferrymen, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and a cooper, a miller, and a wheelwright at the Falls. At Westover at the same time, slaves were occupied as an overseer, a coachman, a smith, a butcher, a foreman, and a postilion, as well as houseservants. Such precision in determining slave occupations during Byrd's lifetime is much more difficult since his diaries and correspondence rarely indicate the race or exact status of his dependents. Byrd's servants and slaves carried messages, delivered horses, transported slaves from Williamsburg to Westover and to the Falls, and tended cattle, horses, and sheep. They sometimes had access to guns.³³ They quarreled with Byrd, and were frequently beaten or whipped.³⁴ But in all these cases it is

³³ Tom, transporting negroes; Jan 15, 1711; May 8, 1712; delivering horses, Oct 2, 24; other messages, e.g. July 8, 18, 20, 21; Jack delivers horses and letters Jan 27, 28 1712. John cattle, Sept 7, 8, 20; work gangs, Oct 9, Dec 1, 1711.. John, horse, Feb 24, 1711; L-S-N horse July 5, 1709; Jack, sheep, April 4, 1720; a gun June 23, 1720.

³⁴ John quarrels w/ Mar 7, 27 1712, whipped Apr 30, 1711; Jack whipped April 30, 1711; L-S-N whipped June 17, 1710. Whipping was a common punishment at Westover for both blacks and whites. Byrd advised his sister that in reference to her son's punishments, she should become enough of a philosopher "to hear the Dismal News of his being whipt, with-out any other Emotion, than only the concern that he may have been naughty enough to deserve it." Byrd's own wife, he said, "is become such a Stoick that she can endure the pain of even her own son being the victim." Edmund S. Morgan, Virginians at

impossible to distinguish from the evidence between whites and blacks.³⁵ It is clear from the diary and from other records that Byrd's slaves were overseers, tradesmen and artisans and that they had significant responsibilities at Westover including tending gardens and building boats.³⁶ Some slaves seem to have traveled extensively between Williamsburg, Westover, and the Falls, sometimes delivering messages, sometimes coming to Westover for medical attention, and occasionally visiting spouses who lived on neighboring plantations.³⁷

This indeterminacy of status is reflected in Byrd's conception of his family, which included not only his wife and children but also his servants and slaves. It is revealed in such commonplaces as "I arrived about 6 o'clock and found several of my family sick, and my daughter among them," or "rode home. . . and found my family well, thank God, only Sue had lost her child."³⁸ Even after the death of his first wife and while his daughters were in England, Byrd would write in his diary upon leaving Westover, "I

Home, Family Life in the Eighteenth Century(Williamsburg, Virginia, 1952), 7.

³⁵ for agreement that it is nearly impossible to tell from Byrd's diary whether a servant is black or white see The Secret Diary, 1709-1712, 2,n#1, and Mechal Sobel, 147.

³⁶ 1744 inventory, overseer Dick at the Falls; 1757, Tom Porter at Westover.

³⁷ visiting spouses; Mar 18, 1712; Dec 27, 1720.

³⁸ Sept 16, 1710; Sept 22, 1711.

committed my family to the protection of God and rode to Greensprings."³⁹ Certain slaves, particularly Eugene, Anaka, Jenny and Moll, emerge from the diary as central figures in the emotional dynamics of Byrd's family life.⁴⁰ Some of these slaves were very likely living at the main house at Westover.⁴¹ Especially during times of sickness, the big house probably took on all the appearance of a slave hospital.⁴²

Byrd's relations with his slaves were part of a pattern of social relations that encompassed everyone in William Byrd's world. The boundary between Byrd's public and private spheres was extremely fluid. Michael Zuckerman has counted ninety-one individuals who could be considered as members of Byrd's family, including overseers, artisans,

³⁹ April 24, 1720.

⁴⁰ Zuckerman, 280; see also, Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together, 147-8.

⁴¹ Edward Chappell, "Slave Housing," Fresh Advices, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation research supplement, November, 1982.

⁴² During the winter of 1710-11, Byrd mentions sick slaves coming down from the quarters for attention on December 30 and January 2, and on January 7 notes that the sick were well enough to return to their quarters. Similarly the sick slaves Ben and Jack are mentioned as being better and coming down stairs. August 6, 1709; May 29, 1709. It is unlikely that any other structure at Westover had two floors at this time. The quick burial of Old Jane upon her death "because she stank very much," may also indicate that she was being nursed in the house, Dec. 29, 1711. June 14, 1710, Byrd invited a "poor woman" to bring her sick daughter to Westover for two months for a cure.

servants and slaves.⁴³ The dimensions of this family can be gauged to some extent by Byrd's use of terms expressing kinship. Byrd used the terms "father," "mother," "brother" or "sister" for two different sets of in-laws from his first and second marriages even long after the death of his first wife. Close friends and neighbors Byrd often called "cousin," and their children "nephews" and "nieces."⁴⁴

Byrd employed generosity and hospitality to maintain his authority over his large family and to preserve his status in the Virginia colony, and Westover was the focal point of this largesse. Over the course of several years Byrd typically hosted between forty and fifty guests each month. These guests stayed for meals, conversation, cards or billiards; many stayed overnight, some for weeks at a time.⁴⁵ While Byrd was away from Westover, he partook freely of other people's hospitality. Finding no one home, he would simply stay for a meal and wait for his host to appear, but rarely did he eat alone.⁴⁶ This constant round of social activities was equally for pleasure and for

⁴³ Michael Zuckerman, "William Byrd's Family" Perspectives in American History, XII (1979) 276. This work has strongly influenced my own thinking on the subject, and much of the discussion which follows here is a re-iteration of his argument.

⁴⁴. See, e.g. Feb 4, 1712, "brother Duke" and his wife "my sister..."; See also, Jan 17, 1710, "Two of my negro children were sick..."

⁴⁵. Zuckerman, "William Byrd's Family," p 290-291.

⁴⁶. July 4, 1710; March 27, 1712; Zuckerman p292.

business, for the alliances maintained by this regimen were far stronger than those forged by written contracts, and in eighteenth-century Virginia the law was often merely the instrument of personal politics.

At a later time, categories of race would play an important part in structuring social and political relations in Virginia, but there is little evidence that Byrd recognized any specific distinctions based on race. In his History of the Dividing Line Byrd states unequivocally, "All nations of men have the same natural dignity, and we know that very bright talents may be lodged under a very dark skin. The principal difference between one people and another proceeds only from the different opportunities of improvement."⁴⁷

It is easy to demonstrate evidence of racial antipathy in colonial Virginia and in early modern England. Quite commonly such evidence is found in conjunction with justifications of the African slave trade or in periods when sexual and economic competition between social groups for a limited supply of mates or resources was at a peak. Such antipathy throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, was as likely focused on Irish, Scots, or Catholics as on Africans.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Prose Works, 575.

⁴⁸. There is a substantial historiographical debate on this point. See Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," WMQ, VII (1950) 199-222; Carl Degler,

Like other contemporary commentators on colonial Virginia such as James Blair, Henry Hartwell, Edward Chilton, Robert Beverley, Hugh Jones and William Stith, Byrd spends much time describing the characteristics and customs of the Indians of Virginia but gave extraordinary little attention to blacks.⁴⁹ Byrd's lengthiest and most direct comments on race are found in a letter to John Perceval, Earl of Egmont,⁵⁰ in which he discusses a book by Peter Kolb, The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope, which Byrd apparently read in 1730. Writing of the Hottentots, Byrd

"Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice," Comparative Studies in Society and History, II, 1959-60, 49-66; Winthrop Jordan, White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812, (Chapel Hill, 1968); Edmund Morgan, American Slavery-American Freedom, The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia, (New York, 1975); Timothy H. Breen and Stephen Innes, "Myne Owne Ground," Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676, (New York, 1980); Duncan Macleod, "Toward Caste" in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution, (Charlottesville Virginia, 1983); Duncan Macleod, Slavery, Race and the American Revolution, (Cambridge, England, 1974). For a "racist" depiction of the Irish see George M. Fredrickson, White Supremacy, A Comparative Study in American and South African History, (New York, 1981) (the Irish chose to "live like beasts, voide of lawe and all good order," and were "more uncivill, more uncleanly, more barbarous and more brutish in their customs and demeanures, than in any other part of the world that is known." 16).

⁴⁹ Henry Hartwell, James Blair and Edward Chilton, The Present State of Virginia and the College(1727), Hunter D. Farish (Ed.), (Princeton, 1940); Robert Beverley, The History and Present State of Virginia(1705), Louis B. Wright (ed.), (Chapel Hill, 1947); Hugh Jones, The Present State of Virginia(1724), Richard L. Morton (ed.) (Chapel Hill, 1956); William Stith, The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia(1747).

⁵⁰ December 28, 1730, Correspondences, 440-41. See also his paper to the Royal Society on a "dappled negro."

describes their religious beliefs, which he compares with Christianity, and their curious customs and dietary laws. He particularly praises their humanity, honesty, justice, modesty and fidelity, while finding fault with some of their social customs. The even tenor of his comments make them strikingly different from discussions of racial differences in the following century. Indeed, Byrd was not discussing racial but instead national and religious differences, which he in no way associates with a larger category based on secondary physical characteristics.

One passage, which gives a suggestion of Byrd's apparently color-blind vocabulary, is found in Byrd's diary entry for March 11, 1711, "From here we went to Mr B-s where we drank cider and saw Molly King, a pretty black girl." The "black girl," Molly King, is mentioned two other times in the diary, once on February 9, 1711: "We saw a pretty girl called Mistress King who had L400 to her fortune," and finally on September 21, 1711: "went to my brother's and called at Mr. B-s where we saw the brunette that married Dr. Burbage." It is uncertain whether or not Molly King may have had any African ancestors. The editors of Byrd's diary, however, think not. For them the word black is merely synonymous with brunette, and the Oxford English Dictionary supports their conclusion citing as their earliest such usage an item in The Spectator from 1712.

Byrd's lack of precise distinctions between races

extended beyond his choice of vocabulary into the realm of social practice. Byrd saw little reason to prohibit sexual relations between races, and, in The History of the Dividing Line, he actually proposed intermarriage among whites and Indians as a solution to conflicts between colonists and native Americans.⁵¹ Nor does Byrd refrain from following his own advice. In each of the diaries, spanning thirty years, he mentions his attractions to black females. October 21, 1711, he notes, "At night [at Col. Harrison's] I asked a negro girl to kiss me," and December 9, 1720, "I felt the breasts of the Negro girl which she resisted a little." And on January 18, 1740, "I committed Folly with F-R-B-Y, God forgive me,"⁵² and similar entries appear mentioning encounters with Sally and Marjorie.⁵³ It is unlikely, given what we know of Byrd's sexual activities, that Byrd had not consummated some unions with black women, and it is possible that such a union produced a child. His diary is less than candid here, but in 1712 Byrd apparently bought the freedom of a mulatto and established him in an apprenticeship. At the time Byrd would have been thirty-

⁵¹ Dover edition, 4.

⁵² also July 13, 1741.

⁵³ Sally, May 26, Aug 11, 1740; May 9, June 24, 1741. Marjorie, June 15, 1741; possibly the same as "Margery" who was sold in 1757 for L70. From other mentions in Byrd's diaries it seems that generally when Byrd asks divine forgiveness after a sexual encounter it means that he ejaculated without penetration, which was probably the primary method of birth control in the colonies.

eight and the mulatto about eighteen. Shortly afterwards Byrd and his wife had a violent quarrel.⁵⁴

For Byrd's attitudes on the institution of slavery, the definitive text is found in a letter to John Perceval, one of the founders of the colony of Georgia. It deserves extensive quotation.

Your Lordships opinion concerning rum and Negros is certainly very just, and your excluding both of them from your colony of Georgia will be very happy. . . . I wish my Lord we could be blest with the same prohibitions. They import so many Negros hither, that I fear this colony will some time or other be confirmed by the name of New Guinea. I am sensible of many bad consequences of multiplying these Ethiopians amongst us. They blow up the pride, & ruin the industry of our white people, who seeing a rank of poor creatures below them, detest work for fear it should make them look like slaves. Then that poverty which will ever attend upon idleness, disposes them as much to pilfer, as it does the Portuguese, who account it much more like a gentleman to steal, than to dirty their hands with labor

⁵⁴. This is admittedly speculative, but seems to me to be the most logical explanation for the events related. The passage in his diary reads, "Mr. G-r-l was here and I wished to talk with him...I reprimanded him for drawing so many notes on me. However I told him if he would let me know his debts I would pay them provided he would let a mulatto of mine that is his apprentice come to work at Falling Creek the last two years of his service, which he agreed." (March 2, 1712). Mr G-r-l was in debt to Byrd according to diary entries for L50 (January 14, February 23, 1712), and the average valuation of one of Byrd's slaves about this time was around L30 -- this figure from letter to John Smith, February 18, 1718, Correspondences, 313, in which Byrd says he has 220 Negroes and gives their total value at L7,000. June 1 1710 Byrd purchased 26 slaves for L23 ea. June 2, 1710, Byrd purchased two slaves for L70. The argument with Byrd's wife "concerning Jenny," may have been related (March 2, 1712).

of any kind.

Another unhappy effect of many Negros, is, the necessity of being severe. Numbers make them insolent, & then foul means must do, what fair will not. We have however nothing like the inhumanity here, that is practiced in the islands, & God forbid we ever shoud. But these base tempers require to be rid with a short rein, or they will be apt to throw their rider. Yet even this is terrible to a good naturd man, who must submit to be either a fool or a fury. And this will be more our unhappy case, the more Negros are increast amongst us.

But these private mischeifs are nothing if compared to the publick danger. We have already at least 10,000 men of these descendents of Ham fit to bear arms, & their numbers increase every day as well by birth as importation. And in case there shoud arise a man of desperate courage amongst us, exasperated by a desparate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline, kindle a servile war. Such a man might be dreadfully mischeivous before any opposition could be formed against him, and tinge our rivers as wide as they are with blood. Besides the calamitys which would be brought upon us by such an attempt, it would cost our mother country many a fair million to make us as profitable as we are at present.

It were therefore worth the consideration of a British Parliament, my Lord, to put an end to this unchristian traffick of makeing merchandize of our fellow creatures. At least the farther importation of them into our colonys should be prohibited lest they prove as troublesome & dangerous every where, as they have been lately in Jamaica, where besides a vast expense of money, they have cost the lives of many of His Majestys subjects. We have mountains in Virginia too, to which they may retire as safely, and do as much mischeif as they do in Jamaica. All these matters duly considered, I wonder the legislature will indulge a few ravenous traders to the danger of the publick safety, and such traders as woud freely sell their fathers, their elder brothers, & even the wives of their bosomes, if they could

black their faces & get any thing by them.⁵⁵

All of Byrd's observations on the institution of slavery, including its effect in blowing up the pride and ruining the industry of white labor, the necessity of severity, the threat of a servile insurrection, and casting the blame for the institution on the British government, bear a striking resemblance to a critique of slavery formulated by another Virginian a half century later.

Byrd's criticism of slavery was based on both practical and ethical considerations. As Byrd described his Virginia estate, "Some part of the land is laid out to tenants and more will be leas't every year, but the usual method of that country is to seat our own slaves upon it, and to send the fruit of their labour, consisting of tobacco and naval stores, to England. We can therefore have no certain way of valuing our estates by the year, but they produce more or less, according as the market happens to be for those commodities here."⁵⁶

Byrd would certainly have preferred the stable income which free tenants might provide. It was with such a plan that Byrd first imagined settling Richmond. "I would lay one [a town] out," he wrote in 1729, "into lots half an acre, and grant those lots upon easy terms. I would grant

⁵⁵ July 12, 1736, Correspondences, 487-8.

⁵⁶ Correspondences, Feb 18, 1718, 311-12.

them for 50 years (which is as long [as] houses will stand in this country) at 20 shillings fine, and one shilling per annum rent, so that the reversion and inheritance shall remain in me and my family."⁵⁷ But there was little attraction for free white workers to enter into tenurial obligations when land to the south and west was relatively easily available. To solve this problem Byrd worked continually to encourage the immigration to Virginia of people willing to accept the quasi-feudal relationships that he wished to establish.⁵⁸ Byrd particularly focused his attentions on Swiss and German settlers, whom he preferred to the Irish or to native Scots-Irish.⁵⁹ In this he was following his father's example at Manakin town, and Governor Spotswood's example at Germanna.⁶⁰ Ultimately, financial

⁵⁷. Correspondence, May 27, 1729, 398-9.

⁵⁸. Rowland Berthoff and John Murrin describe the process of a colony-wide "feudal-revival" in the early eighteenth century in "Feudalism, Communalism, and the Yeoman Freeholder; The American Revolution Considered as a Social Accident," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., Essays on the American Revolution, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1973) 257-288.

⁵⁹ Byrd disappointed in establishing a colony of Swiss wrote "I shall endeavor to supply their places with Scots-Irish from Pennsylvania, who flock over thither in such numbers, that there is not elbow-room for them. They swarm like the Goths and Vandals of old, & will over-spread our continent soon." Correspondence, July 18, 1736, 493; for preferring Germans to Irish see Correspondence, December 20, 1740, 574.

⁶⁰ The closest Byrd came to realizing such a goal was ended in the shipwreck which costs the lives of over 200 Swiss immigrants. To follow the details see Correspondences, 507-8, 519, 521, 530, 531; see also Lloyd Haynes Williams "The Tragic

reverses forced Byrd into selling off lots in Richmond in 1740 after which the town began to grow rapidly.⁶¹

Throughout his life, Byrd continually imagined his slaves to be American equivalents of the Old World poor. The difference, however, was that American slaves ate better and worked less than the peasants of Europe. "Our poor Negroes are freemen," Byrd wrote to a friend in England, "in comparison of the slaves who till your ungenorous soil; at least if slavery consist in scarcity, and hard work."⁶²

Byrd's most vehement criticism was reserved for people who lay completely outside of his bonds of social community. No group was more condemned in Byrd's writings than the "Lubberlanders" whom he came across while on a survey of the line dividing Virginia from North Carolina. There, according to Byrd, was the repository of almost every human failing, but most especially that of indolence. "Surely there is no place in the World where the Inhabitants live with less Labour than in N Carolina. It approaches nearer

Shipwreck of the Protestant Switzers," W&MO, 3rd Ser. IX, 539-42.

⁶¹. See Correspondence, July 2, 1736, 484, "I am selling off land and negroes..." to settle debts. Richmond was finally settled by Germans, see Correspondence, April 10, 11, 1740. On the problems of settling towns in colonial Virginia see Darrett B. and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time, Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750 (New York, 1984); John Reys, Tidewater Towns (Williamsburg, Virginia, 1972).

⁶² Correspondences, 356-9. In addition, Byrd frequently speaks of "Negroes and poor people" as if they consisted of a single category, e.g. Correspondences, 512, 521, 524.

to the Description of Lubberland than any other, by the great felicitiy of the Climate, the easiness of raising Provisions, and the Slothfulness of the People."⁶³ A typical situation was that at the plantation of Cornelius Keith, "where I beheld the wretchedest Scene of Poverty I had ever met with in this happy Part of the World. The Man, his Wife and Six Small Children, liv'd in a Penn, like so many Cattle, without any Roof over their Heads but that of Heaven. And this was their airy Residence in the Day time, but then there was a fodder stack not far from this Inclosure, in which the whole Family shelter'd themselves a night's and in bad weather. . . . All his Wants proceeded from Indolence, and not from Misfortune."

The irony of the situation was that the origins of the miserable condition of the inhabitants of North Carolina stemmed from the bountifulness of the land. "The Air is so mild, and the Soil so fruitful, that very little Labour is requir'd to fill their Bellies, especially where the Woods afford such Plenty of Game. These advantages discharge Men

⁶³. William K. Boyd and Percy G. Adams (eds.), William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina (New York, 1967), 90-92. The idea of "Lubberland" was known to Ben Jonson, "Good mother, how shall we find a pigge, if we doe not looke about for't? will it run off o' the spit, into our mouths thinke you? as in Lubberland and cry we, we?." Bart. Fair, III, ii (cited in O.E.D.). See also David Smith, "William Byrd Surveys America," Early American Literature, XI (1976-77) 296-310, who compares Byrd's division between Virginia and North Carolina to Locke's division between civil society and the state of nature.

from the Necessity of killing themselves with Work."⁶⁴

One of the greatest defects of such a society for Byrd was the lack of patriarchal authority. Where the women were left to do most of the household chores and the men did nothing, the "Gray Mare," as Byrd expressed it, was apt to be "the better Horse."⁶⁵

At Edenton, the only town he visited, Byrd was shocked at the poverty and the lack of respect for law and religion.

I believe this is the only Metropolis in the Christian or Mahometan World, where there is neither Church, Chappel, Mosque, Synagogue, or any other Place of Publick Worship of any Sect or Religion whatsoever. . . . Provisions here are extremely cheap, and extremely good, so that People may live plentifully at triffleing expense. Nothing is dear but Law, Physick, and Strong Drink, which are all bad in their Kind. . . . They are rarely guilty of Flattering or making any Court to their governors, but treat them with all the Excesses of Freedom and Familiarity. They are of Opinion their rulers wou'd be apt to grow insolent, if they grew Rich, and for that reason take care to keep them poorer, and more dependent, if possible, than the Saints in New England used to do their Governors.

The same conditions which made Penshurst a virtual Eden made Edenton a virtual hell. Here was a great refuge for criminals, debtors, and runaway slaves who lived, "like the wild Irish [who] find more pleasure in Laziness than in

⁶⁴. *ibid.* p304.

⁶⁵. Edmund S. Morgan, Virginians at Home, Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (Williamsburg, 1952), 41,45.

Luxury."⁶⁶ Here people lived "with all the Excesses of Freedom and Familiarity" and without religion or laws, so that "everyone does just what seems good in his own Eyes."⁶⁷

The self-sufficient economy of North Carolina was based on the fact that corn required little care and that pigs ran wild in the woods. The reliance on corn and, more particularly, on pork, according to Byrd, had a detrimental effect not only on society but on the physical characteristics of North Carolinians. "The Truth of it is the Inhabitants of N Carolina devour so much swine's flesh, that it fills them full of gross Humours." It often leads, Byrd said, to scurvy which consequently develops into yaws, which "has all the Symptoms of the Pox, with this Aggravation, that no Preparation of Mercury will touch it. First it seizes the Throat, next the Palate, and lastly shews its spite to the poor Nose, of which tis apt in a small time treacherously to undermine the Foundation." Byrd's scientific analysis leads him to conclude, "that it don't only encline them to the Yaws, & consequently to the downfall of their Noses, but makes them likewise extremely hoggish in their Temper, & many of them seem to Grunt rather

⁶⁶. *ibid.* 102. A refuge, 56,58.

⁶⁷. *ibid.* 104. On the lack of religion see, e.g., 72,74,96,102.

than speak in their ordinary conversation."⁶⁸ When Edmund Burke later in the century wrote condescendingly about the swinish multitude, it was perhaps with an image such as this in his mind.⁶⁹

North Carolina in many ways was the negative image of Virginia, where, as Byrd noted, "I must take care to keep all my people to their duty, to set all the springs in motion, and to make every one draw his equal share to carry the machine forward." To do this required Byrd's "continual exercise." His "machine" consisted of a complex interaction of parts that moved together in the semblance of harmony. Benevolence and charity drove this order, but, as Byrd realized, strife and conflict also had to fuel it.

Byrd could look on with occasional amusement at the lack of order and authority in North Carolina, but the threat of disorder and the possibility of a breach of his authority was a constant reality at Westover. No one represented a greater threat to Byrd's ordered world than his own wife, Lucy Parke Byrd. To a very real degree, Byrd's public world was maintained at the cost of his private world. A quid pro quo was virtually in effect. The stability of his public, predominantly male world required

⁶⁸. Ibid. 54-55.

⁶⁹. Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, Thomas H.D. Mahoney, ed., (Indianapolis, 1955) (originally 1790). See Olivia Smith, The Politics of Language, 1791-1819 (Oxford, 1984), 81ff.

an attitude of indifference toward his nuclear family, and an ambivalence toward his wife and other women which ranged between the extremes of idolization and misogyny.

According to Michael Zuckerman, Byrd's relations with his family were typified in his reaction to his son's death. During the three weeks that ten-month old Parke Byrd lay dying, Byrd "simply pursued his ordinary businesses and pleasures." When he finally died, Byrd "displayed an indifference that is baffling if not bizarre."⁷⁰ Byrd's diary notes, "news was brought that the child was very ill. We went and found him just ready to die and he died about 8 o'clock in the morning. God gives and God takes away."⁷¹ Over the course of the following days Byrd continued his regular routine; he entertained guests, commented on his upset stomach, and monitored his wife's emotions, noting that she "had several fits of tears for our dear son but kept within the bounds of submission."⁷² During this time, Byrd's "concern was for the figure he cut, not for the loss he had suffered. The death of his only son belonged, for him, to the sphere of public life, not to the realm of

⁷⁰. Michael Zuckerman, "William Byrd's Family," Perspectives in American History, 1979, 255. Zuckerman and also Lawrence Stone have been justifiably criticized for exaggerating the apparent lack of parental affection in pre-industrial societies. An insight into this relationship can be found in Ben Jonson's poem "On My First Son."

⁷¹. June 3, 1710.

⁷². June 4, 1710.

family feelings."⁷³

For the eighteenth-century elite, the nuclear family of husband, wife and children was continually de-emphasized, while the bonds of association with the larger community were constantly accentuated. Marriage itself was a business relationship, tying together not just individuals but also their families in alliances which were based on property and politics. Women were a valuable currency in the expanding network of property relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Byrd was an exceptionally active player in the marriage markets of eighteenth-century England. His letters to "Sabina," "Charmante," "Minionet," "Facetia," "Fidelia," and "Zenobia" are records of his desperate quest to marry an heiress. They are full of cloying sentimentality, exuberant praise, literary allusions, and promises of future happiness. But Byrd's stratagems all failed. His fortune and status in Virginia were small prizes in London's mathematics of matrimony.

Byrd's first marriage, to Lucy Parke, daughter of the illustrious rake, Daniel Parke, initially seemed to fulfil all of his expectations of marriage. Unfortunately, Parke's debts greatly exceeded the value of the lands and slaves that Byrd received upon Parke's death. The picture of Lucy Parke Byrd which emerges from her husband's diaries, according to one scholar, is that of "a petulant,

⁷³. Zuckerman, 257.

undisciplined, and spoiled girl who knew little or nothing of household management."⁷⁴ The marriage was marked by frequent violent quarrels which generally concluded only when his wife "submitted" and "was passive again," and Byrd could write, I "maintained my authority."⁷⁵

Lucy Parke Byrd's situation in her own household often seemed to be that of number one servant to William Byrd. She was apparently wholly excluded from Byrd's library. He refused to lend her books from it, and only while she was recovering from a miscarriage did he allow her to borrow some pictures from it to divert her.⁷⁶ Although Byrd's hospitality was famous within his community, it was less appreciated within his own family. On July 2, 1711, he noted, "I ate veal for dinner, but gave my wife none, which bred a mortal quarrel."⁷⁷ Similarly during a visit of Governor Spotswood to Westover, Byrd and Spotswood went to the church in Byrd's coach without Mrs. Byrd, a slight which left her "terribly out of humor because she could not go likewise." Mrs. Byrd's exclusion from the coach was proof

⁷⁴. Wright and Tinling, "Introduction" to Secret Diary, xx.

⁷⁵. July 9 1710; March 2, 1712; Feb 5, 1711.

⁷⁶ books, Dec 30, 1711, Jan 21, 1712; pictures June 26, 1711; see also July 28, 1710 normally kept in the library.

⁷⁷ See also, May 16, 1709; Ned Randolph, who was apparently boarding at Westover while going to school at the Harrisons, similarly complained "that he had not victuals enough."

to anyone who cared to notice that her status at Westover was beneath that of the governor -- a fact she deeply resented. She only came down to join the company for dinner after much coaxing.⁷⁸

Lucy Parke Byrd seems in addition to have had no monopoly on Byrd's sexual activities. The ideal of marital fidelity had little power over William Byrd. He commonly sought out sexual partners whenever he was absent from his wife and on at least one occasion carried on a rather extensive flirtation in her presence. "I played at [r-m] with Mrs. Chiswell and kissed her on the bed till she was angry and my wife also was uneasy about it, and cried as soon as the company was gone. I neglected to say my prayers, which I should not have done, because I ought to beg pardon for the lust I had for another man's wife."⁷⁹

⁷⁸. Sept 24, 1710.

⁷⁹. It is interesting here that Byrd is remorseful for having infringed on another man's property. November 2, 1709. Sought sexual encounters while married, see; Sept 6, 1709; April 21, 1710; Oct 19, 20, 21, Nov 11 1711; see notes above for Sally, F-R-B-Y, Marjorie. It is possible to see occasional glimpses of Byrd's tenderness toward his first wife especially in their reconciliations after quarrels when they might have walked the plantation together or engaged in sex [Sept 4, 1709; Sept 1, 1710; Dec 25, 1710, Sept 25, 26, 1711; July 30, 1710.]; or in such entries as that of March 14, 1710 when he wrote "my wife was melancholy which made me weep," or as in Byrd's consolation of his wife after their son's death, "my wife continued very melancholy, not withstanding I comforted her as well as I could." [June 5, also June 7, 1710.] The most touching expression of Byrd's feelings for his wife is contained in his letter following her death to John Custis;

When I wrote last I little expected that
I should be forced to tell you the very

Byrd's second marriage to Maria Taylor was notably more pacific but equally unprofitable. Byrd's marriage to the daughter of a moderately successful English merchant perhaps began with an elopement, and never seems to have won the acceptance of her family. Byrd may have received a thousand pound dowry, but even this is doubtful.⁸⁰ Unlike Lucy Parke Byrd, however, Maria Byrd may have had more control over the day to day affairs of Westover, if only because she was twenty four years Byrd's junior.

Perhaps it was Maria Taylor Byrd's industry which

melancholy news of my dear Lucy's death, by the very same, cruel distemper that destroyed her sister. She was taken with an insupportable pain in her head. The doctor soon discovered her ailment to be the small-pox, and we thought it best to tell her the danger. She received the news without the least fright, and was persuaded she would live until the day she died, which happened in 12 hours from the time she was taken. Gracious God what pains did she take to make a voyage hither to seek a grave. No stranger ever met with more respect in a strange country than she had done here, from many persons of distinction, who all pronounced her an honor to Virginia. Alas! how proud was I of her, and how severely am I punished for it. But I can dwell no longer on so afflicting a subject, much less can I think of anything else, therefore, I can only recommend myself to your pity, and as much as any one can be, dear brother, your most affectionate and humble servant, W. Byrd. [December 13, 1716.]

⁸⁰ see Correspondences 348; A thousand pounds would have represented less than a month's income for Byrd. Byrd's annual income in 1718 he estimated at about L15,000, see Correspondences 312,314.

inspired these comments from Byrd to a friend in London,

This at least may be said of a country life, that one of the sexes are not so absolutely useless as it is in towne. There their whole business is to give pain to the men, and pleasure to themselves, tho' the dear creatures are very often mistaken, and the pain comes to their own doors. But here for want of more agreeable employment, they are forced to assist in the management and superintendency of their familys. The difference then is this, that here the women are the bees who help to make the honey, and your ladys the drones who eat it.⁸¹

Women served several functions in Byrd's world. They were sexual objects, tokens in a game of international finance, status markers, plantation managers, and breeders of children. As Byrd noted in a letter, April 3, 1729, "Mrs Byrd will hardly be in a traveling condition till she's toward 50. I know nothing but a rabbit that breeds faster. . . I know no remedy but to make a trip to England some times, and then she must be content to lye fallow til I come back."⁸² Of course Byrd's remarks on his wife's fecundity are part the braggadocio of an older man about his sexual prowess (he was 54, she 30), but part of his pride (and a source for the humor in this statement) might have stemmed from the shared assumption that large families, which were the result of a fertile wife, were a sign of wealth and rank

⁸¹. Correspondence, July 28, 1730, 432-3.

⁸² Correspondences, 391.

(which Byrd mockingly disparages).

At Westover an individual's status was dependent not on his or her ascribed rank (even that of wife), but on the actual influence which an individual could exert on events. Generally, however, the power to affect events did not reside in individuals (with the exception of Byrd himself), but in groups acting in ad hoc alliances. In such alliances the complexities of social relations at Westover are revealed.

An example of the realities of power at Westover can be seen in the case of Betty, a runaway slave.⁸³ On June 24, 1710, Byrd noted in his diary that all was well at Westover, "except that a negro woman and seven cattle were gone away." The following day, "My people could not find the negro woman but found her hoe by the church land." Three days later Byrd notes, "The negro woman was found again that they thought had drown herself." Apparently, Byrd at this time had a bit installed on the woman's mouth, the most severe punishment of which we have a record at Westover.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, on July 1, "The negro woman ran away again with the [bit] on her mouth." Over the course of the next

⁸³. Internal evidence suggests that the person described in Byrd's diaries as "the negro woman," (July 1, 1710ff), "the negro boy [or Betty]," (July 15, 1710), and "my negro G-1 [girl?]," (Aug 10, 1710), and the "negro woman," (August 1, 1711), were all the same person, most likely a slave woman named Betty.

⁸⁴ For other references to this punishment see; June 10, 1709; January 11, 1712.

five months Byrd's problems with Betty escalated.

July 2, 1710: "The negro woman ran away again with the [bit] in her mouth and my people could not find her."

July 8, 1710: Two negroes of mine brought five of the cows that strayed away from hence. . . . The negro woman was found and tied but ran away again in the night."

July 15, 1720: "About 7 o'clock the negro boy [or Betty] that ran away was brought home."

July 19, 1710: "My negro Betty ran away again but was soon caught. I was angry with John G-r-1 for losing the screw of the [bit].

August 10, 1710: "My cousin's John brought home my negro girl that ran away three weeks ago."

November 6, 1710: "The negro woman ran away again."

November 13, 1710: "I had a letter from home which told me all was well except a negro woman who ran away and was found dead."

But Byrd's problems were not over,

August 1, 1711: "It was court day and I had some business there about the negro woman that was dead. About 11 o'clock came Colonel Hill and Mr. Anderson and Mr. Platt and about 12 I went with them to court and the suit against me was dismissed. I brought the persons mentioned before home to dinner."

And there was a final coda in the diary to the episode,

August 2, 1711: "Somebody shot a poor mare and drove her into my lane to make people believe that my people had done it. I suppose it was Mrs. Harrison."

What is notable about this series of events is not just the contest of wills between William Byrd and the slave Betty, but the ways in which a cast of secondary characters played out their specific roles. Byrd's "people" could not find the runaway slave woman. "Two negroes" found five cattle

which Betty may have taken with her. John G-r-l "lost" the screw for the bit. Byrd's "cousin's John" brought Betty back to Westover. Finally Byrd's role in these events was the subject of a court case at which all the particulars of the case may have been recited and evaluated before the entire community, which was capable of reaching its conclusions apart from what the legal verdict might have been. Byrd's defense apparently was buttressed by his appearing at court in the company of three of his close friends who were important men in the colony, and who may have had some knowledge of some aspects of the case.⁸⁵ The three included one of the commanders of the local militia, Colonel Hill; the Reverend of Westover church, Mr. Anderson; and Randle Platt, who the following year was appointed sheriff of Prince George County.⁸⁶ There were as well some unnamed people who returned Betty on several occasions, and the anonymous person who started the rumor that Betty had drowned, and the persons who pressed charges against Byrd. Finally, in a symbolic gesture of protest (the significance of which seems to have been obvious to William Byrd, but which is probably forever lost to us), a horse was shot and

⁸⁵ All three were frequent visitors at Westover during this period, and Mr. Platt and Col Hill were both present on July 15 the third time Betty was returned.

⁸⁶ see f.n. to March 9, 1710, p 150; for Byrd's role in appointing sheriffs see...

driven into the lane by some anonymous person or persons.⁸⁷

For a brief moment, perhaps only for a day, Byrd's conflict with Betty polarized Byrd's community. On one side stood Byrd and his three friends, on the other whoever it was who pressed charges against Byrd, and possibly Mrs. Harrison. Byrd's wife may have been opposed to his course of action as well, for four days before the court proceedings Byrd noted, "My wife and I had a small quarrel about the trial which made us dumb to each other the rest of the night."⁸⁸ Most people, however, apparently were able to avoid choosing sides. John G-r-l may have tried to assist Betty by pretending to lose the screw to the bit, and others by starting rumors that the slave woman had drowned. Byrd was to the end unable to believe that any of what he called "my people" could have opposed him, and the evidence is strong that his servants and slaves actively assisted in returning Betty to Byrd. Even Mrs. Harrison, who Byrd suspected of being responsible for the horse in his lane, was on friendly enough terms with Byrd to have dinner with him and his family the following week.⁸⁹

Such temporary alliances of people in conformity with

⁸⁷ For clues on how this might be interpreted see Robert Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre, and other Episodes in French Cultural History (New York, 1984), 1-104.

⁸⁸ July 29, 1711.

⁸⁹ Aug 8, 1711.

or in opposition to Byrd's will was a common feature of the social relations at Westover. Entries over a period of three days in 1711 (April 30 to May 2) identify a common pattern: "We discovered that by the contrivance of Nurse and Anaka Prue got in at the cellar window and stole some strong beer and cider and wine. I turned Nurse away upon it and punished Anaka. . . . In the afternoon I caused Jack and John to be whipped for drinking at John [Cross] all last Sunday. . . . I forgave Anaka, on my wife's and sister's persuasion, but I caused Prue to be whipped severely and she told me many things of John G-R-L for which he was to blame, particularly that he lost the key of the wine cellar and got in at the window and opened the door and anybody went in and stole the beer and wine &c. . . . I settled some accounts and particularly with George Carter whom I scolded at for drinking with my people at John [Cross]."

In these excerpts there is evidence of at least two "conspiracies," or suspected "conspiracies," against Byrd's authority. In one, Nurse, Anaka and Prue (the first, white, and the other two black) appeared to have contrived to break into the wine cellar. In the second, Jack and John, presumably black slaves, and John Cross, and George Carter (a carpenter and handyman around Westover also presumably white), and perhaps others as well,⁹⁰ were suspected of

⁹⁰ See Feb 3, 1710; July 19, 1711. For other instances of whites and blacks congregating see August 22 1710 and Correspondence, Feb 20, 1735, 473.

drinking together at the home of John Cross.

To quash such opposition to his authority, Byrd depended on the constant use of informers, who acted either under duress, as was the case with Prue in this instance, or out of the hope of receiving some favor from Byrd. Byrd, for example, mentions the visit of Frank who came down from the Falls: "He told me of the faults of his overseer and I advised him to tell me any faults of him for which I gave him two blankets."⁹¹ Byrd frequently notes complaints such as the one "against my man Joe who would not allow the people small beer, I did them right,"⁹² or "My man S-Y told me of some of Tom's tricks and particularly that he went to the fishing place for three hours together. I scolded Tom about it."⁹³ In such situations Byrd frequently took the side of his slaves against his overseers.

Byrd's wife's authority over the Westover slaves was a continual source of tension. When it came to disciplining servants or slaves, Byrd sometimes sided with his wife, but even more often, judging by his diary entries, he undercut her authority by siding against her.⁹⁴ The dynamics of the

⁹¹ Feb 20, 1709.

⁹² Mar 30, 1720.

⁹³ April 17, 1720; see also Feb 16, 1711; Dec 26, 1739; June 24, Aug 7 1740.

⁹⁴ Byrd took his wife's side; May 15, 1711; Sept 12, 1712. Byrd sided against his wife; July 15, Aug 12, 1710; Jan 11, 31, Dec 31, 1711; May 19, 1712.

relationships between Byrd, his wife, and his slaves could become rather complicated.

The story of "little Jenny" was unfortunately pretty typical. From the diary it is obvious that she played an important role in Byrd's family life. During the four years of the earliest diary, 1709-1712, she is mentioned about forty times,⁹⁵ which makes her one of the most frequently mentioned individuals in Byrd's diary. The entries sometimes simply note that she was sick and the treatment she received, but a large number of them mention behavior which seems entirely erratic, such as, "Jenny had run into the river last night but came out again of herself."⁹⁶ Often, as in this case, such incidents ended with a whipping.

A number of entries, recounted very matter-of-factly in the diary, suggest a deep current of events and emotions which are forever hidden from our close inspection. On August 22, 1710, for example, Byrd writes "In the evening I had a severe quarrel with little Jenny and beat her too much for which I was sorry." Or, Oct 11, 1711, "In the evening I took a walk and beat Jenny for being unmannerly." The fact that Jenny was in attendance on Byrd's evening walks, and that Byrd writes "I beat," instead of "was whipped," which

⁹⁵. There is some confusion because Byrd mentions a "Jenny," a "Little Jenny," and also a "Quarter Jenny."

⁹⁶. March 30, 1709.

was a common punishment commonly performed by an overseer, is in itself significant.

Certainly, however, Jenny was a part of a dynamic emotional triangle between Byrd and his wife. On July 15, 1710, Byrd notes, "My wife against my will caused little Jenny to be burned with a hot iron, for which I quarreled with her." February 27, 1711, "In the evening my wife and little Jenny had a great quarrel in which my wife got the worst but at last by the help of the family Jenny was overcome and soundly whipped." And, March 2, 1712, "I had a terrible quarrel with my wife concerning Jenny that I took away from her when she was beating her with the tongs."⁹⁷

Byrd mentions other instances where slaves were apparently used as tokens in a game played between Byrd and his wife. December 31, 1711, he noted "My wife and I had a terrible quarrel about whipping Eugene while Mr Mumford was there but she had a mind to show her authority before company but I would not suffer it, which she took very ill."

⁹⁷. The episode continues, "She lifted up her hands to strike me but forbore to do it. She gave me abundance of bad words and endeavored to strangle herself, but I believe in jest only. However after acting a mad woman a long time she was passive again." (March 2, 1712) From such episodes historians have usually imagined Lucy Parke Byrd as a spoiled, often hysterical woman. (see note above) Much of her behavior, however, may have been precipitated by events which Byrd does not discuss at length. In this case, Byrd's (perhaps) continuing relationship with Jenny, and on the same day, Byrd's decision to settle the debts of his overseer at the Falls in exchange for the preferential treatment of a mulatto apprentice (as described above) may have given Lucy Parke Byrd understandable motives.

Or again, "My wife caused Prue to be whipped violently notwithstanding I desired not, which provoked me to have Anaka whipped likewise who desired it much more, on which my wife flew into such a passion that she hoped she would be revenged of me." On this, as on other occasions, resolution of the conflict ended in Byrd having sexual relations with his wife. After dinner, Byrd wrote, "was reconciled with my wife and gave her a flourish in token of it."

In William Byrd's world, all the boundaries between his individual psyche and his extended family, between domestic economy and civil government, were fluid and negotiable. He acted at all times as if his emotions were expressions of universal law. He was convinced that his sins could cause the death of his slaves, that his prayers could save a person's life, and that his dreams could foretell the future.⁹⁸ Civil government was similarly only domestic government writ large.

In his entirely egocentric world there were no absolute categories, either legal or social, which determined distinctions of rank or status. There was no mystical "chain of being" in which everyone recognized and accepted a divinely appointed place in a unilinear scheme of existence.

⁹⁸. "I had two more sick people come down. These poor people suffer for my sins..." (Dec 29, 1710); "When my people hung tobacco some of the pieces fell down and hurt one of the women. I said my prayers, or else I believe it would have killed her." (Aug 16, 1720); "The Indian woman died this evening, according to a dream I had last night about her." (April 8, 1709).

There is plenty of evidence from Byrd's diary that deference to authority was not something automatically given. Even the governor had to make deals with his slaves to insure their proper attention,⁹⁹ and his authority could be disputed by a common member of the militia. Sometimes resistance to authority in eighteenth-century Virginia could be subtle, as in the creation of a rumor or the loss of a screw; sometimes it could be more obvious if still anonymous, as when a brick came smashing through a window at Marot's Ordinary in Williamsburg where Byrd dined with some friends; and sometimes it could be more direct, as when the Surry militia refused to let the governor appoint a captain over them, or when John Cross risked prison for refusing to join a militia detail in Jamestown "for pure conscience."¹⁰⁰

Even the most basic categories of family, race, and class were subject to dispute. The boundaries between blacks and whites, free and slave, family and society all had to be constantly negotiated. Status was based not only on having but also on distributing property, and benefits and punishments could be distributed on the basis of immediate conditions with little regard for legal or social

⁹⁹ Governor promised his slaves a day off if they worked on Christmas...

¹⁰⁰ Brick through the window; Oct 30, 1711. Militia refused; Oct 19, 1711. John Cross refused; Aug 29, Oct 10, 1711.

distinctions. Whatever hierarchy existed at Westover was continually being constructed and deconstructed by both Byrd and everyone else. The legalistic authority of Byrd's representatives in a "chain of command" was constantly undercut by Byrd's personal authority. This is what Byrd meant by his "continual exercise," "attended by a great deal of trouble" to "carry the machine forward." At all times Byrd maintained, to the extent he was able, immediate and face-to-face control over all of his interests.

This was not a rationally conceived organizational structure. Nevertheless, it had a logic and a rationality of its own. Paradoxically, Byrd's position depended on cultivating a certain degree of ambiguity. His position depended on his ability to establish a balance between hierarchical rankings and their continual negotiation. The constantly shifting alliances between Byrd, his wife, his neighbors, his overseers, his servants and his slaves acted to cement Byrd's authority by guaranteeing that he was constantly the focus of power. Ultimately the system insured that no factions could unite against Byrd, for no groups could find common cause based on a common position. In this way, every time that blacks and whites joined together in defiance of Byrd's authority, they were in effect acting to maintain it.

Byrd did not think of this all by himself. He did not create this system as a method of exploitation. It was a

system which had evolved slowly for centuries before it ever reached American shores. It was a system that was not imposed from above on an exploited subordinate population, but was created daily from the individual actions of everyone in the society.

Even before Byrd's death, this system of personal and immediate authority was showing signs of decay. In the middle of the eighteenth century Byrd's world would confront a general crisis. The many cords that held the various parts together were wearing too thin. The lines of power and authority, which, for a while, stretched from London to the Virginia backcountry, from the halls of parliament to Byrd's slave's quarters, were finally too fragile for the load they had to bear.

The major catalyst for the crisis of the middle eighteenth century in Virginia was the changing composition of the population. The attraction of inexpensive land pulled vast numbers of free whites westward, while the tidewater aristocrats remained behind, surrounded by their petty kingdoms of African slaves. As the social structure of Virginia changed, there would necessarily be changes in the whole landscape of social relations. This was a part of the ambiguous legacy which William Byrd II left to his son, William Byrd III.

The Language of the Augustan Moment

The Virginia Gazette in January 1749 printed the following item, "On Saturday night last (7th) the house of Wm Byrd Esqr. at Westover, Charles City County took fire and was burned to the ground with the loss of all the furniture, clothes, plate, liquore." This probably marked the destruction of the house which served as the primary setting for the events described in Byrd's several diaries. Sometime following this event, William Byrd III constructed the neoclassical mansion that presently stands on the site, and which has been justly described as one of the outstanding examples of the Georgian architectural style in the American colonies.¹

The new house reflected the emergence in the English speaking world of an architectural style based on the building practices of classical antiquity. The style, strongly influenced by the work of the sixteenth century Italian architect Andrea Palladio, was popularized in England by the works of Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren and

¹. from "Personal Items, 1746-49," WMO, 1st Ser. XX, 1911, 17. See for this Mark Wenger, "Westover: William Byrd's Mansion Reconsidered," (M.A. Thesis, School of Architecture, University of Virginia, 1980).

by a growing number of books published in London that illustrated examples of the style. In many ways the new buildings conformed to the needs of a new social environment, continuing the developments of what has been called the "great rebuilding" of seventeenth century England. The new buildings were more compact and more rationally organized, but they were not necessarily more functional than other English buildings. A new emphasis on geometrical forms, on a proportional harmony of parts, and on symmetry created buildings which were often noticeably less comfortable and practical than their predecessors. High ceilings, which cooled Mediterranean buildings, made for colder and draftier buildings in England. The placement of windows was determined by the geometry of the facade, often reflecting no specific internal requirements for light or air. The interior partitioning forming rooms and establishing traffic patterns was similarly determined by the placement of the windows and doors. Thus architects often make the distinction between classically designed houses which are built "from the outside-in," and traditional or vernacular houses which are built "from the inside-out." In addition, classical buildings are usually decorated with non-functional ornamentation which announce the transitions of surfaces. Doors and windows are surrounded by pilasters and pediments. The edges of walls are marked by quoins. Water-tables and string-courses mark

the division between floors, and cornices articulate the junction of vertical and horizontal surfaces (e.g. walls and ceilings). This articulation of parts is extended to the massing of the building. Particularly with Palladian style buildings, a large central section is often part of a three or five (or more) part scheme and is bracketed with smaller hyphens and dependencies.²

Westover's rigid adherence to a geometrical scheme is particularly interesting. The main body of the building, from ground level to the intersection of wall and roof, is composed of two adjacent squares. The height of the roofline is the same as the height of an equilateral triangle whose base is the foundation of the house. The height of the water table is at the point of intersection of arcs whose focal points are the center and edges of the line

². On the classical style in America especially helpful are; William H. Pierson, Jr., American Buildings and Their Architects, the Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles (New York, 1976); Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture, From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period (New York, 1952); Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (New York, 1922, 1950). On classical architecture in general among many good books see especially; Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism (New York, 1971); John Summerson, The Classical Language of Architecture (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); For eighteenth-century England, John Summerson, Georgian London (London, 1945); Woodforde, Georgian Houses For All (London, 1978). For Virginia see; Thomas Tileston Waterman, The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1945); Marcus Whiffen, The Eighteenth-Century Houses of Williamsburg, A Study of Architecture and Building in the Colonial Capital of Virginia (Williamsburg, Virginia, 1960, 1984); Marcus Whiffen, The Public Buildings of Williamsburg: Colonial Capital of Virginia (Williamsburg Virginia, 1958).

formed by the intersection of the planes of the roof and the wall, and whose radius is the length of one of the squares. The interior dimensions of Westover are the same as a "Golden rectangle" established by extending the side of a square by the length of its diagonal. Similar proportional schemes can be found at work at the Governor's Palace, the George Wythe house, Bruton Parish church and numerous other buildings in tidewater Virginia, Europe and England.³

The result of all of these geometrical formulas was a house visibly unlike almost any other house in the landscape. In contrast to the traditional houses which continued to be the major building type for years to come, Westover presented a facade to the world of apparently complete calm and serenity, often strikingly in contrast to the events which transpired within. Indeed, this was its major functional characteristic, for Westover's primary purpose was to impress the viewer. As William Byrd II's real world, maintained by the "continual exercise" of his personal authority, began to crumble, William Byrd III created a symbol of his own authority, a representation of a

³. For the dimensional scheme at Westover and other tidewater Virginia houses, see Marc Wenger, "Westover Reconsidered;" for Williamsburg see Marcus Whiffen The Eighteenth-Century Houses in Williamsburg, 83-88; for a Maryland example see Michael F. Trostel, Mount Clare, Being and Account of the Seat built by Charles Carroll, Barrister, upon his Lands at Patapsco (Baltimore, c1984), 18-19; for European examples, and an excellent discussion of the Platonic roots of classical architecture, see Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism (New York, 1962).

coherent system which, because it was based on the immutable rules of reason, could not deteriorate.

This was a part of a process that was happening all over the English speaking world as expanding markets and their resulting social dislocations encouraged a widening gulf between the universalistic, cosmopolitanism values and styles of those who had ties to London and the more localistic and contextual patterns of thought and society of the provinces. English merchants and lawyers and colonial gentry who were on the frontiers of the market were among the most active in shaping this new emphasis on rational order and geometric form. A socially and geographically mobile group, they were impatient to establish their positions in society. They could not wait upon the time-consuming process of building social and political networks through the continual exercise of their personal authority. Instead, they shaped their status out of the physical symbols of their position. Their houses, clothes, furniture and table settings marked them apart from the community of their subordinates.⁴

⁴. This argument is well presented by Robert Blair St. George in "Artifacts of Regional Consciousness in the Connecticut River Valley, 1700-1780," in The Great River, Art and Society of the Connecticut Valley, 1635-1820 (Hartford, Connecticut, 1985) 29-40, who points out that "The more frail and dangerously unequal the social structure, the more architecture moves toward symmetry and control." 32. St. George sees in these Georgian houses the "last gasps of fading aristocracy," fn40, p38-39. A similar argument, based on literary style is presented by Stephen Greenblat in Renaissance Self-Fashioning, From More to Shakespeare

To a large extent these social and cultural tensions found expression in the concept of "mimesis" which originated in the works of Plato and Aristotle and was developed by their followers.⁵ Mimesis was the Greek term translated by Latin authors as "imitatio," signifying the imitation or representation of reality in the arts.

The inherent problem of mimesis, however, lay in mortal mankind's limited ability to understand what was "real." For Platonists a great gulf separated the physical and ephemeral world inhabited by man, from the transcendent sphere of immaterial and eternal reality. Mankind could gain knowledge of this other realm through sense perception, through reasoning or through direct intuition. Of these methods, knowledge derived from the senses was the least reliable. Knowledge from reason was slightly better, but still suspect. Ultimate knowledge was only the result of an intuition of ideas or essences, experienced in moments of rapture, and ecstasy, during which the genius was granted a glimpse of the Platonic reality.

(Chicago, 1980).

⁵. A good introduction to the concept is W. Tatarkiewicz, "Mimesis," in Philip P. Wiener, ed., Dictionary of the History of Ideas, Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas (New York, 1973), Volume III, 225-230. Very helpful also are E.H. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae, The Visual Image in Neo-Platonic Thought," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute and, John L. Mahoney, The Whole Internal Universe, Imitation and the New Defense of Poetry in British Criticism, 1660-1830 (New York, 1985).

From the Italian renaissance to the English enlightenment, the role of the artist was to imitate the Platonic realm. This was done often enough by imitating the works of the ancients themselves, which, since the world was essentially corrupt and deteriorating, were the closest to the original divine forms. In doing so the artist mediated between two worlds, bringing a portion of the divine down to the earthly realm, and imposing a hierarchy of values from the perfect to the corrupt.

This was such a powerful concept in the eighteenth century that virtually no aspect of the arts and letters of the period can be understood without it. In architecture the connections are most obvious and can be traced in a nearly direct line from the philosophy of Plato and the harmonic geometry of Pythagoras to Vitruvius (first century) to Alberti (fifteenth century), to Palladio (sixteenth century), to Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren (seventeenth century), and to Westover. The concept was not a static one, however. Over the course of years the status of reason was elevated, the concept of the ideal realm was increasingly divorced from its spiritual associations, and the role of the individual human will expanded. But the basic idea that some objects contained a noumenal quality, a non-temporal essence, continued, and continues, to have a strong impact on thought and society. Fixing the line between the two realms would be one of the major tasks of

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

To do that several things were necessary. One of the most important was the creation of an imaginary external, and therefore presumably objective, observer. This step was taken in the field of painting by the development of the theory of perspective which limited the representation of a scene to what might be observed by a single individual at a specific point in space.⁶ In literature a similar step was taken by the invention of the omniscient observer who gradually replaced the first person authors of epistolary novels. It was exactly for such an imaginary visitor that Westover was built. For its optimum effect, the Georgian house must be viewed from a certain axis, often only from a single fixed point. As long as one stood at the right place, an understanding of the Georgian house was immediate. The evidence of the senses and of reason united in a direct comprehension of the whole. This is entirely unlike the experience of a visitor to Penshurst. At Penshurst the viewer is a part of the whole, and understanding must emerge through a gradual process of traveling through and being in the space over a period of time. The viewer of a Georgian house, on the other hand, is firmly planted in time and space and is removed from and unaffected by the action of events.

⁶. For an excellent discussion of this transformation see Wylie Sypher, Four Stages of Renaissance Style: Transformations in Art and Literature, 1400-1700 (New York, 1955), 36-99.

The new relationship between the temporal and non-temporal realms characterized by the transition from a traditional to a classical world view required also an established system of rules that determined a grammar and vocabulary for describing the physical world. New forms of expressions in the arts were contingent upon new forms in literature and language.

One of the ways of illustrating this changing representation of the world is by looking at two examples. This is from John Smith's description of his famous meeting with Pocahontas (1624):

At his entrance before the King, all the people gaue a great shout. The Queene of Appamatuck was appointed to bring him water to wash his hands, and another brought him a bunch of feathers, in stead of a Towell to dry them: having feasted him after their best barbarous manner they could, a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could layd hands on him, dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs, to beate out his braines, Pocahontas the Kings dearest daughter, when no intreaty could preuaile, got his head in her armes, and laid her owne vpon his to saue him from death: whereat the Emperour was contented he should liue to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper; for they thought him aswell of all occupations as themselues.

⁷. The Generall History of Virginia, Book III, in Harrison T. Meserole, Walter Sutton, Brom Weber, American Literature, Tradition and Innovation (Lexington, Massachusetts, 1969) 24.

Compare this with a passage from Edward Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776):

Every barrier of the Roman constitution had been levelled by the vast ambition of the dictator; every fence had been extirpated by the cruel hand of the Triumvir. After the victory of Actium, the fate of the Roman world depended on the will of Octavianus, surnamed Caesar, by his uncle's adoption, and after-wards Augustus, by the flattery of the senate. The conqueror was at the head of forty-four veteran legions, conscious of their own strength, and of the weakness of the constitution.

Within the hundred and fifty years between Smith's and Gibbon's compositions a vast "Latinization" of the English language was under way.⁹ Gibbon's work is typical of the

⁸. Cited in Peter Gay, Style in History (New York, 1974) 21.

⁹. Good general histories of the English language include; Barbara Strang A History of English (London 1970); Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable, A History of the English Language (New Jersey, 1957, 1978); and Thomas Pyles, The Origins and Development of the English Language (New York, 1964); Barfield, Owen History in English Words (London, 1953). Works which consider language change as a central aspect of historical change include; John Pocock, Politics, Language and Time (Chicago Press, 1960); Kenneth Cmiel, Democratic Eloquence. The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America (New York, 1990); Carol Blum, Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: the Language of Politics in the French Revolution (Ithaca, New York); Asa Briggs, "Language of 'Class' in early 19th c. England" in A. Briggs and J. Saville, eds., Essays in Labour History; Martin C. Battestin, The Providence of Wit. Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1989); Lawrence Buell, New England Literary Culture from Revolution to Renaissance (Cambridge, 1986); Linda Kerber, Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America (Ithaca, 1970); David Simpson, The Politics of American English, 1776-1850 (Oxford, 1986); Daniel Rodgers, Contested Truths. Keywords in American Politics since Independence (New York, 1987); Raymond Williams, Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society

eighteenth century's fascination with the Roman world and is a perfect example of the extent to which its ideals had become a commonplace to authors in England's own "Augustan" period.¹⁰ This specific passage happens to be, according to Peter Gay, "a close paraphrase, slightly rearranged and slightly rewritten, of a chapter in Tacitus' Annals"¹¹ -- an example of the extent to which imitation of the ancients could frequently go. To Gibbon, however, the form of his work was at least equally important as its content. Here, as in much Augustan writing, the reader must actively navigate between comprehension of meaning and admiration for style. A most important characteristic of this style is the facile use of parallel constructions. As in this example the text progresses through an ordered succession of balanced antitheses, which can extend from parallel clauses to sentences to the whole text. In the case of Gibbon, the structure of his writing, according to Gay, also reflected a

(Oxford, 1976). In addition there is a large and growing body of work in historical and social linguistics, stemming in large part from the works of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf: David G. Mandelbaum, ed., Selected Writings of Edward Sapir (Berkeley, California, 1949); Benjamin L. Whorf, Collected Papers on Metalinguistics (Washington D.C., 1952).

¹⁰. On the Augustans see, especially, Martin C. Battestin, The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts (Charlottesville, 1989), which makes the comparison between architecture and language; or for a shorter introduction see A. S. Collins "Language, 1660-1784," in Boris Ford, The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, Volume 4, From Dryden to Johnson (1982), 165-181.

¹¹. Peter Gay, Style in History, 23.

larger structure of history. The balanced antitheses were part of a narrative structure which passed through specific ordered phases. The larger whole and each of its parts progressed through an ordered narrative of rise, decline and fall.

Smith's passage, by contrast, is for the most part just one "run-on" sentence. It is merely a long succession of subordinate clauses connected with coordinating conjunctions such as, "and," "but," "whereas." Such writing is typical of English prose writers before the eighteenth century, and of uneducated and/or unpretentious writers ever since.¹²

In the eighteenth century the antique style of writing, exemplified here by Smith, was widely criticized by more up-to-date writers. In 1797, for example, William Godwin criticized nearly all who had written before Samuel Johnson, including Shakespeare, Addison, and Fielding, who "were prone to tell their story or unfold their argument in a

¹². See Albert H. Marckwardt, "The Language of the Colonists," in A.H. Marckwardt, American English (Oxford, 1958); anthologized in Leonard F. Dean and Kenneth G. Wilson Essays on Language and Usage (Oxford, 1963), 151-159. It is interesting also (and typical of most literature before the nineteenth century) that the violence in this passage is embedded within the normal course of the narrative, it is not somehow elevated to a dramatic position by its being the climax of a dramatic structure. Although the event may have led to a "catharsis" for Smith or his captors, such an emotional release is denied to his readers. John Smith does not rely upon the reader's empathy, or individual identification with a "hero," the reader retains, his or her own standards of judgement, which is to say continues to be embedded in his or her specific context, a fact which is respected by the author.

relaxed and disjointed style, more resembling the illiterate effusions of the nurse or rustic, than those of a man of delicate perception and classical cultivation, who watched with nice attention the choice of his words and the arrangement of his phrases."¹³

Eric Auerbach characterizes the difference between these two styles as a difference between a paratactic (as in Smith) and a hypotactic style (as in Gibbon). The paratactic style, as described by Auerbach, is a "low" style suitable for a popular audience. It is derived from common speech patterns, and is suitable for representations which are realistic and/or comic. It differs from a hypotactic style or "elevated" style which is eloquent, and literate, and a medium appropriate for heroic epics and tragedy.¹⁴

The architecture of literary works finds a parallel in the physical architecture of eighteenth century England and America. Indeed the organic, additive structure of the paratactic style characterizes Penshurst as much as it does the writing of John Smith. And the ordered architecture of geometric balance and symmetry characterizes Gibbon's Decline and Fall as much as it does the facade of Westover.

¹³. Godwin in "On English Style" in The Enquirer: Reflections of Education, Manners and Literature (1797), cited in Olivia Smith, The Politics of Language, 1791-1819 (Oxford, 1984), 18.

¹⁴. Eric Auerbach, Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, Willard R. Trask, trans., (Princeton, New Jersey, 1953).

The contrasts between a paratactic and a hypotactic style were not just differences imposed by philosophers on works of history, literature, and architecture; they were distinctions which permeated every level of an emerging elite culture. A vast number of linguistic changes occurred to make the philosophical changes possible (and vice versa).

Campaigns for a universal language played a major role in this development.¹⁵ Accepting the conception of an ideal Platonic realm which is superior to that of everyday reality, authors such as Bishop Lowth (Short Introduction to English Grammar, 1762), James Harris Hermes (1751), and James Burnett (Lord Monboddo) (Of the Origin and Process of Language, 1774-92, 6 volumes), all advocated various schemes for basing language on logic rather than on popular usage. As Lowth expressed it, language was a gift of God. "The power of Speech is a faculty peculiar to man, and bestowed upon him by his beneficent Creator for the greatest and most excellent uses; but alas! how often do we pervert it to the worst of purposes."¹⁶ It was the opinion of these

¹⁵. On this subject see Olivia Smith, The Politics of Language, 1791-1819 (Oxford, 1984); Murray Cohen, Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England, 1640-1785 (Baltimore, 1977); Hans Aarsleff, The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860 (1967); James Knowlson, Universal Language Schemes in England and France: 1600-1800 (Toronto, 1975); R.F. Jones, The Triumph of the English Language (Stanford, 1953); Barbara J. Shapiro Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationships between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law, and Literature (Princeton, 1983).

¹⁶. Cited in Smith, Politics of Language, 8-9.

grammarians that elevated and refined language was necessary to perform the tasks of abstract thinking. Such functions lay beyond the powers of a vulgar language inherently incapable of transcending the level of the present, the material, and the passions.

The argument revived the medieval debate between nominalists and realists on the nature of words; were words simply the names for objects (as the nominalists argued), or were words representations of a metaphysical reality (as the realists held)? The idea that words were simply names for things was an absurdity to Jonathan Swift which he satirized in his description of the land of Laguda. There it was proposed that, "since Words are only Names for Things, it would be more convenient for all Men to carry about them, such things as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on. . . . many of the most Learned and Wise adhere to the new Scheme of expressing themselves by Things; which hath only this Inconvenience attending to it; that if a Man's Business be very great, and of various Kinds, he must be obliged in Proportion to carry a greater bundle of Things upon his Back, unless he can afford one or two strong Servants to attend him."¹⁷

To resolve the problems inherent in popular language, theorists proposed several solutions, some of which seem

¹⁷. Gulliver's Travels and other Writings by Jonathan Swift, Modern Library edition (New York, 1958), 148.

rather quixotic to us today. James Burnett for example, advocated the use of words he called "particles", which included prepositions, conjunctions and connective adverbs, which he said best reflect universal logical relations. They were proof of the mind's ability to engage in "Pure Reason." On the other hand, words that referred to a particular place or time, the present tenses of verbs and especially monosyllables, were all characteristics of vulgar language that was "degraded and debased by its necessary connection with flesh and blood."¹⁸ Other proposals of universal grammarians had a more lasting effect on the language as verb conjugations, spellings, etymologies, and even pronunciations in English were forced to conform to Latin models.

Perhaps the most noticeable change in the language can be seen in its vocabulary. In the eighteenth century a flood of new words with Latin roots entered the language. Words such as "arrange," "category," "classify," "method," "organize", "organization," "regular," "regulate," "regularity," "system," "systematic," are typical of the new mood.¹⁹ More important than the new words, however, were the ways in which they could be used. The language of the seventeenth century, in both its vocabulary and grammar, was

¹⁸. Smith, Politics of Language, 24.

¹⁹ Owen Barfield, History in English Words (London, 1953), 179.

far more fluid than the English that became the standard of the realm in the eighteenth century.²⁰ This was largely because the model of correct English was based on oral performance rather than on published writings. For this reason, meanings were often dependent on body language and vocal inflection, and upon the speaker's dynamic relationship with his or her auditors (proxemics). In addition, the meanings of individual words were often tied to a constellation of connotations and collocations which reflected local usage and experience.²¹ Particularly in urban areas, oral language also reflected the existence of, and toleration for, numerous regional dialects, each with

²⁰. For an excellent discussion see Norman Blake's Shakespeare's Language: An Introduction (London, 1983), which is the major source for the argument which follows. See also Stephen Cohen, The Language of Power, the Power of Language: The Effects of Ambiguity on Sociopolitical Structures as Illustrated in Shakespeare's Plays (Cambridge, Mass, 1987); and Robin Headlam Wells, Shakespeare, Politics and the State (London, 1986). For the early origins of Standard English see; John Fisher, "Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century," Speculum, LII, 4 (Oct. 1977) 870-899; Malcolm Richardson, "Henry V..." Speculum, LV, 4 (1980), 726-750; Susan E. Hughes, "Guildhall and Chancery English, 1377-1422," Guildhall Studies in London History, IV, 2 (April 1980), 53-62; and Margaret Shaklee, "The Rise of Standard English," in Timothy Shopen and Joseph Williams, Standards and Dialects in English (Cambridge, Mass, 1980) 33-62.

²¹. Collocations are groups of word so often found together that a single word will call to the mind of a listener or reader the other words. Words like slavery, arbitrary power, tyranny, license, and corruption; and their opposites, freedom, virtue, propriety/property, in the eighteenth century may be considered collocations, any one of which was able to bring to mind the galaxy of meanings associated with all the rest of the words.

its own pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

In such situations, the individual parts of speech were not subject to rigid distinctions. Nouns could easily be used as verbs, pronouns as nouns, adverbs as adjectives. New words, later the subject of disapproval as "neologisms," could be endlessly invented. This flexibility of the language was the prerequisite condition for the extraordinary word-play exemplified in Shakespeare's plays.²² In terms used by many contemporary linguists, the early modern period was one in which the relationship between signifier and signified was very fluid and the relationship between langue and parole was very close.²³ The attitude of many English pedants was summed up by Samuel Johnson, who wrote that the diction of "the laborious and mercantile part of the people. . . . which is always in a state of increase or decay, cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of a language, and therefore must

²². See R.A. Shoaf, "The Play of Puns in Late Middle English Poetry: Concerning Juxtology," in Jonathan Culler, On Puns: The Foundation of Letters (Oxford, 1988), 44-61.

²³. For general introductions to this work see; Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory, An Introduction (Minneapolis, 1983), (for definitions of these terms see 96-97); Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (Berkeley, California, 1977). More extended treatments are in; Roland Barthes, Elements of Semiology, Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, transl., (New York, 1967); Roman Jakobson, Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning, John Mepham, transl., (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, Wade Baskin, transl., (New York, 1959); John Deely, Brooke Williams, and Felicia E. Kruse, eds., Frontiers in Semiotics (Bloomington, Indiana, 1986).

be suffered to perish with other things unworthy of preservation."²⁴

The gradual elimination of solecisms from polite letters was one of the results of the new emphasis on "correctness" in language, and it allowed new conceptions of the world at the same time as it obliterated old ones. Among such solecisms were double and triple negatives, which Shakespeare used in phrases such as "And that no woman has, nor never none, Shall mistris be of it."²⁵ In addition, double comparatives such as Shakespeare's "the most unkindest cut," were now rejected. No longer were negations, affirmations or comparisons a matter of degree. There were now absolute boundaries in the semantic universe, beyond which one could not go. Language had become a closed system which not coincidentally conformed to Aristotelian logic and was based on a Platonic schema.²⁶

The publication of Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language in 1755 probably had a greater impact on these developments than any other single event. Dictionaries that had taken the critical steps of alphabetizing words and of

²⁴. Cited in Robert Burchfield, The English Language (Oxford, 1986), 3.

²⁵. Cited in Barbara Strang, A History of English, 152.

²⁶. Particularly, Aristotle's law of identity and law of the excluded middle. The deficiencies of Aristotelian logic in describing the world is the subject of Alfred Korzybski's Science and Sanity, An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics (Third Edition, Institute of General Semantics, Lakeville, Connecticut, 1948).

trying to include all English words, rather than just those considered problematical, had already appeared in English beginning in the seventeenth century.²⁷ But Johnson succeeded, where the Academies in France and Italy had failed, in creating an authoritative text which "fixed" the language, that is, stabilized the language against further corruption. Before Johnson's accomplishment it was possible to say as did Humpty Dumpty to Alice, "when I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean."²⁸ After Johnson this was impossible.

The whole landscape of England and the world was changed by these linguistic developments. The creation of stable meanings for words coincided with the loss of many of their rich connotations. Each word now stood alone, alienated from its text, just as houses and people had been separated from their social and physical contexts. Parts of speech were increasingly distinct. Nouns and verbs were no longer interchangeable, and they began to take on new

²⁷. Good discussions can be found in: Baugh and Cable, A History of the English Language, 253-294; Robert Burchfield, The English Language, 77-104; and James Sledd and Wilma Ebbitt, Dictionaries and That Dictionary, a Casebook on the Aims of Lexicographers and the Targets of Reviewer (1962), 9-43.

²⁸. "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master -- that's all." Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.

characteristics unique to themselves. Verb tenses and voices proliferated, allowing a greater temporal precision, and also an increased ability to obscure responsibility for actions by the use of such constructions as the passive voice. The order of words in sentences became increasingly significant, as they, in effect, began to march in single file through the narrow path of time.²⁹

Most critical was the changing status of nouns. Nouns were entirely stripped of a temporal aspect. This semantic development, more than any intellectual movement of the time, signified the triumph of rationalism over superstition and religion. The temporal and the physical had been separated and confined within their own impermeable spheres. The new grammatical structures required a new generation of nouns which could fill the places required by parallel constructions. One result was the proliferation of nouns formed by adding the suffixes such as, "-ation", "-ism," and "-ality." A whole new vocabulary of abstract nouns mushroomed. Most of these new nouns were characterized by having no specific referent. In the passage by Gibbon cited above almost none of the nouns have any concrete reference ("constitution," "ambition," "will," "adoption," "flattery," "strength," "weakness"). Possible exceptions, such as "fence," "barrier, and "hand," are not any specific physical

²⁹. These developments, admittedly, had been underway for a long time before the eighteenth century, but they reached their final apogee in the literature of the Augustans.

objects, knowable through the senses, but are only constructions of the mind. This new exaltation of nouns led many printers in the early eighteenth century to the practice of capitalizing all nouns in a text (as in the passage by Swift above.)

These semantic developments coincided with the development of an absolute concept of property. Both things and the words used to indicate them had been stripped of their dynamic and contextual aspects. As a result of this process of "objectification," it was possible both to imagine and to describe abstract property relations as if they had a transcendent reality. It was now possible to make distinctions, to categorize, and to arrange people and things to a degree hitherto impossible. Such a language was a necessary precursor to the enclosing of fields and the invention of new house forms. It was a language ideally adapted to perform the work of England's expanding commercial and intellectual empire. It was a language invented for "a nation of shopkeepers."

The effects of these language changes were not lost on political writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hobbes, Locke, Swift, Defoe, Dryden, Johnson, Burke, and Thomas Jefferson were among the large group of writers who discussed the implications of language change on the social and political structure and who offered proposals to harness language to the cause of social improvement.

At the boundary between literary and political history were the metaphors that writers used to describe the relationship between the individual and the state. A holistic conception of the world, such as Ben Jonson's view of Penshurst, more pagan than Platonic, depends on a metaphor of the world as an image of man. Such a metaphor opens the door to a vast system of analogies in which the varying spheres of individual, family, state, and cosmos all in some way correspond to each other and follow the same basic rules.³⁰

Most Western social and political theory, in contrast, is the result of a mediation between the two Platonic realms. Mimesis is one such mediation and has a correlative social theory in the concept of the "chain of being." Here a cosmic hierarchy is imagined, which descends from ideal perfect being down through a line to increasingly more base,

³⁰. The textbook example of the metaphor is Menenius's speech in Coriolanus on the analogy of the state to the parts of the body. "Menenius: There was a time when all the body's members Rebell'd against the belly.... Your most grave belly was deliberate, Not rash like his accusers, and thus answered. 'True is it, my incorporate friends,' quoth he 'That I receive the general food at first Which you do live upon; and fit it is, Because I am the storehouse and the shop of the whole body. But if you do remember, I send it through the rivers of your blood, Even to the court, the heart, to th' seat o' th' brain; And, through the cranks and offices of man, The strongest nerves and small inferior veins From me receive that natural competency Whereby they live" Each of the parts of the body were represented by parts of the state, "The kingly crowned head, the vigilant eye, The counselor heart, the arm our soldier, Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter..." (I,i,94ff.) The basic image can be found through out the literatures of the world.

subordinate parts. In the eighteenth century this theme echoed with increasing resonance. Alexander Pope's Essay on Man is a typical expression of the mood of the age, "Vast Chain of Being! which from God began,/ Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,/ Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,/ no glass can reach! from Infinite to thee,/ From thee to nothing."(lines,237-241). Of the theme in the eighteenth century, Arthur Lovejoy wrote, "There has been no period in which writers of all sorts -- men of science and philosophers, poets and popular essayists, deists and orthodox divines -- talked so much about the Chain of Being, or accepted more implicitly the general scheme of ideas connected with it, or more boldly drew from these their latent implications."³¹

A third metaphor, more Aristotelian than Platonic, imagined the triumph of order over disorder in terms of a precarious balance of parts. As a political philosophy this metaphor and the vocabulary associated with it have been described by a large number of historians as "classical republicanism."³² The expression certainly over-emphasizes

³¹. Arthur Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (1936). (citation from Stuart Gerry Brown, "Dr. Johnson and the Old Order," Marxist Quarterly, #1 (Oct/Dec. 1937), also in Donald J. Green, ed., Samuel Johnson, A Collection of Critical Essays (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1965). See also E.M.W.Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, c.1943).

³². On "classical republicanism" see; J.G.A.Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law, a Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, England, 1957), The Machiavellian Moment; Bernard Bailyn, The

the coherence of ideas and their sources, but it aptly suggests the galaxy of thoughts which came together in the eighteenth century.

Central to this philosophy was a dread of change which can be traced directly to the political and social events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, civil war, popular rebellions, an increasing division of society into haves and have-nots. To a rising class of urban merchants and rural gentry, life had become a continual battle to separate themselves from an unruly populace. They sought refuge from this "beast with many heads" in a system of laws and government that circumscribed the enthusiasms, passions and violence of the mob. Although language reformers,

Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1967); Gordon Wood, Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1969); see also J.G. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, III, 1 (Summer, 1972); Pocock, "Machiavelli, Harrington, and English political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," WMO, 3d Ser., XXII, 2 (1965), 549-583. A good introduction is in Robert Shallope's, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," WMO, 3d. Ser., XXXIX, 2 (1982), 334-356. For the application of the idea to Jeffersonian political theory see Drew McCoy, The Elusive Republic. Political Economy in Jeffersonian America (New York, 1980) (one of the few writers using the term who suggests its imprecision, and its contingency to social events); Lance Banning, The Jefferson Persuasion. Evolution of a Party Ideology (Ithaca, 1978).

The enormous claims made by some of these writers on the monolithic nature of a "classical republican" philosophy have been criticized by Joyce Appleby in Capitalism and a New Social Order. The Republican Vision of the 1790s (New York, 1984); Joyce Appleby, "The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology," Journal of American History, 64, (1977-78); and Isaac Kramnick, Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism. Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America (Ithaca, 1990).

architects, and neo-Platonic philosophers continually praised stasis and harmony, their new faith expressed itself in a political vocabulary which imagined the world divided between two opposing ideologies. One was characterized by rationality, objectivity, emotional restraint, simplicity, and civic responsibility -- summed up in the single word "virtue." The other was marked by enthusiasm, passion, violence, and the whole set of arbitrary relations which they labelled licentiousness, slavery and tyranny.

The paradox of "classical republicanism" is that by elevating the authority of reason it implicitly challenged all other forms of authority. Since most authority in the eighteenth century was pragmatic and personal, also described as "arbitrary" or "prerogative" authority, classical republicanism was simultaneously a deeply conservative and a potentially radical philosophy.

The end of "classical republicanism" was probably reached in the philosophy of John Locke, who addressed the central problem created by the tension between order and authority by redefining all the terms in the political vocabulary of his day. But before Locke's victory became complete in the last decades of the eighteenth century, a number of writers had already turned the vocabulary of "order, harmony and proportion" into a critique of the king, his ministers, and the court. Their chief target was the rising power of a centralized state headed by the King's

first minister, Robert Walpole. Under Walpole, the English government achieved a power previously undreamed of through the distribution of royal patronage, a standing army, and a publicly funded debt.

Walpole's republican critics argued that this new governmental structure represented a threat to a stable social order by depending on a commercial structure in which the demons of pride, envy, greed and luxury would be victorious over virtue. Inherent in the philosophy of "classical republicanism" was a critique of slavery, which was the inevitable result of this failure of virtue. This critique was both abstract and specific. The "classical republicans" saw in activities of the merchants of the East African Company (who controlled the African slave trade) and the West Indies planters (who had a dominating influence on the councils of government), a pattern of exploitation and irrational behavior which subjugated Englishmen as well as Africans.

The "classical republicans" were trying to apply a brake to what they saw as a precipitous fall into chaos. The edifices of their houses are symbols of a stability and a stoicism which was hoped for rather than real.³³ As John

³³. It is not meant to suggest that only the members of a certain political party built classical houses. The prevalence of classical houses are merely indicative of the ubiquitousness of the ideas, some of which were appropriated to defend the ideals which twentieth century historians have described as "classical republicanism."

Pocock has reminded us, their power was evanescent, lasting for only a "moment," and the American Revolution may have represented its last great act. As soon as the ideas were formed they began to deconstruct.³⁴ The balance which the Augustans grasped for so frantically had already eluded them. The "machine" which William Byrd II and others had built, and which was maintained only by "continual exercise," of personal authority, was based on a fragile balance that William Byrd III memorialized in his monument to a passing order in his house at Westover.

³⁴. Pocock calls the American revolution, "the last great act of the Renaissance, see Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, 462; the quote is from "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, III, 1 (Summer, 1972).

WILLIAM BYRD III AND THE AUGUSTAN MOMENT IN VIRGINIA

William Byrd III was sixteen years old when his father died in 1744. In many ways they were exactly alike. Like his father, William Byrd III was an important actor in the politics, economy and society of colonial Virginia. Following in a path well trod by his father and other members of the Virginia colonial elite, he studied law at the Middle Temple in London, returned to Virginia, and became a member of the governor's council and a leader in the colonial militia. The third William Byrd, like his father, married twice, the first time to a local heiress who has been described by historians as "immature and spoiled,"¹ and the second time to a younger woman from outside Virginia society, who was considerably more stable emotionally but less well endowed financially. Unlike his father, who seems to have remained in comparatively firm control of his affairs and optimistic throughout his life, William Byrd's life reads like a catalogue of troubles, and his few letters often have a tone of despair. To a large extent, William Byrd's situation was typical of the circumstances that confronted the Virginia Revolutionary-era elite. The delicate balance between a personal world and a

¹. Correspondence, 606.

larger society, which William Byrd II had spent his whole lifetime trying to maintain, was no longer possible to William Byrd III. The society of colonial Virginia was changing at a speed that was much faster than William Byrd III could maintain. He clung desperately to his old world while a new world raced past.

A large part of his problems stemmed from his relations with the three most important women in his life, his two wives and his mother. His marriage in 1748 to his first wife, Elizabeth Hill Carter, was certainly a major coup. She was a descendent of the legendary "King" Carter, who had established what has been described as the largest fortune in the American colonies in the seventeenth century. The heirs of King Carter during the following century built some of the most notable mansions in colonial Virginia (including Nomini Hall, Carter's Grove, Shirley, Sabine Hall). Unfortunately, relations between Byrd and his wife were often as turbulent as his father's relations with Lucy Parke Byrd. This situation was complicated by the fact that relations between the two Mrs. Byrds, II and III, were often almost equally as strained. Both women could lay claim to a dominant role in the family, and as a result they criticized each other over household economy, relations with servants and the education of the rising generation of Byrd children

(Byrd III and Elizabeth H.C. Byrd had five children).²

Perhaps to alleviate this situation, sometime in the 1750s, William Byrd built both the present Westover, which continued to be the home of Byrd III's mother, and a large house at Richmond, named Belvidera, for his wife.

Ultimately, in 1756, William Byrd III deserted his wife and shortly thereafter joined the effort to repulse the French from North America during the Seven Years' War. With the rank of colonel he commanded the Second Virginia Regiment, and for a brief time, after George Washington resigned his command of the First Virginia regiment, Byrd was the commander of all of Virginia's forces. Byrd's desertion from his wife, and the resulting uncertainty of her position, led Elizabeth Hill Carter Byrd increasingly into an emotionally unbalanced state, and her death in 1760 from a falling piece of furniture has been widely described as a suicide.

Byrd seems to have been uncertain about returning to Virginia, and the following year he married Mary Willing, the daughter of a Pennsylvania merchant. They resided in the third house Byrd built, on Third Street in Philadelphia. Meanwhile, his relations with his mother continued to deteriorate, and upon her death in 1771, she left the remainder of her estate from William Byrd II, not to Byrd

². See, for example, Correspondence, Feb 1760 Maria Taylor Byrd to William Byrd III, 682.

III, but to John Byrd, Byrd III's son (William Byrd IV died before becoming eligible for the estate). His disappointment at having been excluded from his mother's will embittered him and led him to describe her as "deluded and superannuated," and "insane."³

Unable to imitate his father's balance between public and private worlds, William Byrd III allowed his social and public responsibilities to dominate his domestic concerns. His military service represented both an escape from his escalating domestic problems and a refuge into a world in which he could exercise his accustomed authority. Similarly, the three houses that he built during his lifetime served the dual functions of separating domestic factions and of walling them off from a public who saw only their impressive facades. Gambling at cards, horse racing, and cock-fighting, activities which made his generation famous to later historians, served similar roles. The excesses of gambling served Byrd and the Virginia elite as a way of maintaining authority by overawing the populace with their vast wealth. But they served as well to mark an identification between the elite and the populace. Risking all on the throw of a dice was one way in which the elite could signal to their neighbors that they too suffered from the capricious shifts of fortune, that they like all of their neighbors were subordinate to the arbitrary authority

³. Correspondence, 613.

of forces greater than themselves.⁴

Unfortunately, all of these activities only exacerbated his overall problems, because they increased his staggering load of debts. The expenses incurred from supplying troops, gambling losses, and grand construction projects, coinciding with the contraction of English credit in the middle of the century, forced Byrd into various schemes for selling off slaves and land.

William Byrd's situation was not unique in colonial Virginia. The "golden age" of Virginia's colonial aristocracy, which once seemed to historians to stretch throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, now seems to have been more like a momentary shimmer.⁵ After a century of conflicts between big planters, little planters, servants, slaves, the Anglican church, and the royal

⁴. The role of gambling as a tool for maintaining hegemonic authority in colonial Virginia is described by T.H. Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia," WMO, 3d Ser., XXXIV (1977), 239-257. The idea that games of chance serve the larger social functions of subordinating everyone within a community to the same laws, is the theme of the important article by Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973). For a useful interpretation of the social function of games see, David Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (Oxford, 1985). Many of the tales of Wm. Byrd III's excesses were no doubt elaborated on over the years, as for example the fictitious story that he lost 10,000 acres in Lunenburg county to Peyton Skipwith during a card game.

⁵. See, Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby and Thad W. Tate, Colonial Virginia, 251-283; Thad Tate, "Coming of the Revolution in Virginia: Britain's Challenge to Virginia's Ruling Class, 1763-1776," WMO, 3d Ser., IXX (1962), 323-343.

administration in Virginia, the great families of Virginia - the Byrds, Carters, Lees, Randolphs and Pages -- finally gained almost complete control of the politics, economy and society of Virginia in the early eighteenth century, and lost it after only a few decades of power.⁶

Their rise to power was marked by a series of conflicts which were marked at least once by armed rebellion (Bacon's Rebellion, 1676⁷), but more often by a series of legislative battles over land policy, the codification of the laws, establishment of towns, duties on slaves, the structure of militia, requirements for the franchise, and the inspection of tobacco.⁸ Despite the lack of clear lines distinguishing opposing factions in each of these issues, and a general policy of the royal administration to

⁶. For a nineteenth-century description of the Virginia tidewater aristocracy see Thomas Jefferson Randolph's *Memoirs at the Alderman Library, University of Virginia*, Accession number 5454-c, p9-10, "The aristocracy of Virginia rarely extended above tide water..." lived on the James, educated in England and at the College of William and Mary, resided in Williamsburg, commanded deferential behavior, etc.

⁷. On Bacon's rebellion and seventeenth century Virginia in general the best book, to my mind, is Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery/American Freedom, the Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975). For a "consensus" view see Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel, a History of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia* (New York, 1957). For the seventeenth century see the articles in Thad Tate and David L. Ammerman, *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century, Essays on Anglo-American Society and Politics* (New York, 1979).

⁸. These events can be followed in Warren M. Billings, John E. Selby, and Thad W. Tate, *Colonial Virginia, a History* (White Plains, New York, 1986). For a good brief overview see Tate, "The Coming of Revolution in Virginia," WMO, 3d. Ser., XIX (1962), 323-343.

support small planters against larger planters, the result was the eventual triumph of the tidewater aristocracy. The critical elements which led to the construction of the eighteenth century aristocracy, however, were more general conditions, many of which were outside of the control of Virginians themselves. These included fluctuations in the price of tobacco, changing imperial policy, changing immigration patterns, the nature of the boundary between European (and African) settlement and Indians, the unpredictability of harvests due to soil and weather, and unprecedented mortality rates among the first generations of Virginians.

By the end of the seventeenth century, many English settlers had been reduced to perpetual tenantry and had little hope of establishing independent households, and nearly all African immigrants had been similarly reduced to perpetual slavery. For both groups this represented a change in position. For both blacks and whites in the middle of the seventeenth century release from bondage and the establishment of independent land holdings was a real possibility. These opportunities for both groups were nearly extinguished by the end of the century.⁹

⁹. On blacks see; Timothy Breen and Stephen Innes, "Myne Owne Ground," Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676 (New York, 1980). On Whites see; Willard F. Bliss, "The Rise of Tenancy in Virginia," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LVIII (1950), 427-441; Russell Menard, "From Servant to Freeholder: Status Mobility and Property Accumulation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," WMQ, 3d Ser.,

"The most fundamental dichotomy within the society," Lawrence Stone wrote about England, and it can also be said for mid-eighteenth-century Virginia, "was between the gentleman and the non-gentleman, a division that was based essentially upon the distinction between those who did, and those who did not, have to work with their hands." As Peter Laslett explained it, "If you were not a gentleman, if you were not ordinarily called 'Master' by the commoner folk, or 'Your Worship'; if you, like nearly all the rest, had a Christian and a surname and nothing more; then you counted for little in the world outside your own household, and for almost nothing outside your small village community and its neighborhood."¹⁰

The major event which allowed the Virginia gentry's grasp of power was the passage of the Tobacco Inspection acts of 1730.¹¹ The requirement that all tobacco had to

XXX (1973), 37-64; Russell Menard, P.M.G. Harris, and Lois Green Carr, "Opportunity and Inequality: The Distribution of Wealth on the Lower Western Shore of Maryland, 1638-1705," Maryland Historical Magazine, LXIX, (1974), 169-184. See also; Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together, Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia. On the process of "Anglicization" in the colonies in mid-eighteenth century see; Rowland Berthoff and John Murrin, "Feudalism, Communalism and the Yeoman Freeholder, The American Revolution Considered as a Social Accident," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, Essays on the American Revolution (New York, 1973), 256-288.

¹⁰. Lawrence Stone, Past and Present, #33, 1966 17-20; Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost, England Before the Industrial Age (New York, 1965); both cited in Breen and Innes, *ibid*, 124-25.

¹¹. See Allan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves, 108-117.

pass through inspection stations was a blow to the smaller planters most likely to have their tobacco rejected and most affected if it was. The inspection stations, often selected to be near the estates of wealthy land holders, and the increasing density of the population in general, all worked to the benefit of that class which was nearest the top of the social pyramid.

The Anglican clergy, who conceivably might have ameliorated the conditions of the smaller planters, servants, and slaves, during this same time gradually fell under the control of Virginia's wealthy planters. By the time of the death of James Blair in 1744, the most vocal and powerful supporter of the Anglican cause in Virginia, most churches had already become the mere proprietary concerns of the great planters who dominated their parish vestries. Services increasingly lost their spiritual significance and gained a role as a support of the existing status quo. Every aspect of the worship from the procession into the church to the location of family pews to the use of silver and furniture supplied by and often inscribed with the patron's name, reinforced an impression of the planter's earthly and, by implication, spiritual powers.¹²

¹². See especially; Rhys Isaac, Rhys, Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1982); Dell Upton, Holy Things and Profane, Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia (Cambridge, Mass., 1986). At the same time as the service and physical settings of the Anglican church became more materialistic, theologies which were grounded in Deism and Arminianism were on the rise. The influence of the

As the limited resources of the tidewater came increasingly under the control of the Virginia elite, thousands of families moved west.¹³ Conflicts such as Bacon's Rebellion were largely avoided in the eighteenth century by an implicit policy that encouraged expansion in to lands which had previously been, and in many cases still were, inhabited by Indians. As a consequence, the demographic character of the tidewater changed dramatically during the first half of the eighteenth century, as African-Americans gradually filled the places of emigrating whites. By 1755 the majority of the Tidewater population was African-American.¹⁴ The demographic divisions gradually coincided with social divisions as the western population gained a level of independence from the authority of the elite, while the remaining population (mostly slaves) came increasingly under the arbitrary authority of the old social

Reverend John Tillotson who was a friend of James Blair, and who was read avidly by William Byrd was especially important in this. See, Norman Fiering, "The First American Enlightenment: Tillotson, Leverett, and Philosophical Anglicanism," The New England Quarterly, LIV, #3 (Sept. 1981) 307-344. For Byrd's references to Tillotson see, Diaries, May 7, 1710; Feb 13, 20, April 3, 1709; May 21, June 18, July 2, 30, Sept 10 1710.

¹³. See Billings, Selby, Tate Colonial Virginia, "The Troubled World of Mid-Century Virginia," 251-283; also Kulikoff, "The Decline of Opportunity in Tidewater," in Tobacco and Slaves, 131ff.

¹⁴. See Richard Dunn, "Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1176-1810," in Ira Berlin, and Ronald Hoffman, Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1983), 55.

order.

Many of the factors, however, which helped to stabilize the authority of Virginia's aristocracy -- the establishment of towns, westward expansion and the decline of the church - - ultimately led to conditions that threatened their hegemony. In the west, particularly, a "new American" was born who stood in an ambiguous relation to the authority of the East. At the meeting place between the Old World and the New, the infant communities in the west encouraged a communal ethos and an aggressive individualism, an emphasis on the imitation of old ways and on the invention of new ones. The events of the eighteenth century would be critical in establishing a new accommodation of these different elements.

A central role in all of the great alterations in life in eighteenth-century Virginia was played by Scottish merchants, who, during the period before the Revolution, gradually replaced the London factors as the principal carriers of the tobacco trade.¹⁵ In the early eighteenth century all trade in Virginia was dominated by the great planters and their London factors. Just as grains of sand pass through the thin neck of an hour glass, all colonial goods, from agricultural tools, to slaves, to credit for

¹⁵ The discussion which follows is largely based on Jacob Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775," WMQ, 3d Ser., XI, #2 (April 1954) 179-199; and, J.H.Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775," Econ. History Review, XII, #1 (Aug. 1959) 83-98.

land or consumer goods had to pass through the Virginia elite and their factors.¹⁶ The London factors acted not just as commercial agents for the large planters but were in many cases their eyes and ears in the mother country, dispensing both political gossip and information on the conditions of the market, giving advice on everything from the packing of tobacco to the education of children.

During the early years of the eighteenth century, Scottish mercantile firms began setting up stores that bypassed the large planters. These stores were staffed with salaried agents who engaged in the direct purchase of tobacco at established prices instead of acting merely as consignment agents as the large planters and ship's captains had done. The greater efficiency of the Scottish firms allowed them virtually to finance the opening of the Virginia Piedmont.¹⁷ Their stores became the nuclei of small towns, and their credit allowed small planters to purchase land, slaves and a wide variety of consumer goods previously available to only the very wealthy. It was the money, credit, and goods of the Scottish merchants that fueled the clearing of the wilderness. The whole process was stimulated by the aggressive competition among merchants which encouraged the rising price of tobacco and led to a

¹⁶. See Aubrey C. Land, "Economic Base and Social Structure: The Northern Chesapeake in the Eighteenth Century," Journal of Economic History, 25 (1965), 639-654.

¹⁷ Price, 197.

dramatic expansion of credit.

The Scottish traders brought more than goods and credit to Virginia's expanding frontier; they brought new ideas in every mail pouch that contained letters and newspapers from Glasgow and Edinburgh. They brought also a new system of rationalized commerce. Rules of business directed from a central control and not personal relationships guided the salaried agents. Set prices allowed them to conduct their work efficiently without bargaining with each customer, and they were often advised against "too great an Intimacy" which might arise from visiting with planters and their homes which would give them "a pretence of taking great liberties at the Store."¹⁸

It was not a system without attending difficulties. Animosities quickly developed between the Scottish merchants and their clients. William Lee described the Scottish merchants as "something like the stinking and troublesome weed we call in Virginia wild onion. Whenever one is permitted to fix, the number soon increases so fast, that it is extremely difficult to eradicate them, and they poison the ground so, that no wholesome plant can thrive."¹⁹ One of the points of conflict was Virginia planters' unhappiness with the increasingly impersonal action of the marketplace

¹⁸. Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia," 88.

¹⁹ Quoted in J.H. Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775," 83.

which determined prices, paid for tobacco and charged for goods "without reference to their needs or their deserts, without prejudice or favor."²⁰ It was a system that led more than one Virginian to make a connection between their situation and slavery. "We are slaves to the power of the merchants," declaimed one planter, "for who can truly say he is free, when there is a fixed price set upon his tobacco, and the goods he purchases, at rates he does not like? Long custom makes that seem tolerable, which in reality is a great imposition. . . . What a blind infatuated multitude must we be, to suffer those who ought to be dependent on us, to become our masters?"²¹

Not surprisingly, the disadvantages of the system were felt most during those periods when overexpansion led to severe credit restrictions, particularly in the years 1761-1765, in 1772-1773 and in 1775.²² The specialization that was the key to the system's success was ultimately one of the causes of its problems. While it built up the economy of the region, it also limited its ability to diversify.²³ Increasingly, many westerners felt the strains placed on

²⁰ Soltow 97.

²¹ Soltow, 83.

²² Kulikoff, 129. For the period from the revolution to 1820 see, Kathryn Malone, "The Fate of Revolutionary Republicanism in Early National Virginia" Jo of Early Republic, 7 (Spring, 1987) 27-51.

²³ Price, 198.

them by the confrontation between their old values and new economic realities.

It was in this environment of financial uncertainty, of independence from traditional controls, and the absence of an established religious authority, that a series of evangelical movements arose after mid-century that would pose a striking challenge to the bases of the colonial social order.

The Great Awakening in Virginia, as one scholar has put it, "posed not simply a religious challenge -- though it was that in a profound way -- but a wider social and cultural challenge, nothing less than a repudiation of the entire world of the planter elite."²⁴ The evangelical movement of New Light Presbyterians and Separate Baptists emphasized rigid conformity to a strict moral code which included the condemnation of gambling, swearing, drinking, ostentatious dress, and all forms of conspicuous display. Evangelical churches, which were practically non-existent two decades earlier, by the time of the American Revolution could claim one third of all the families of the piedmont as members.²⁵ The growing strength of the Baptists became a cause for alarm among some of defenders of the older order and the

²⁴. Thad Tate in Billings, Selby, and Tate, Colonial Virginia, 277. On the movement see Rhys Isaac, Transformation of Virginia; Rhys Isaac, "Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptist's Challenge to the Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765-1775, WMO, 3d Ser., XXXI (1974), 345-368.

²⁵. Allan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves, 236.

growing conflict sometimes led to violent confrontations, as John Williams noted in his journal in 1771,

Brother Waller Informed us. . . [that] about 2 Weeks ago on the Sabbath day Down in Caroline County he Introduced the Worship of God by Singing[.]. . . While he was Singing the Parson of the Parish [who had ridden up with his clerk, the sheriff, and some others] would Keep Running the End of his Horsewhip in [Waller's] Mouth, Laying his Whip across the Hym Book, &c. When done Singing [Waller] proceeded to Prayer. In it he was Violently Jerked off of the Stage, [they] Caught him by the Back part of his Neck[,] Beat his head against the ground, some Times Up[,] Sometimes down, they Carried him through a Gate that stood some Considerable Distance, where a Gentleman [the sheriff] Give him. . . Twenty Lashes with his Horse Whip. . . Then B[rother] Waller was Released, Went Back Singing praise to God, Mounted the Stage & preached with a Great Deal of Liberty.²⁶

For Baptists a rejection of gentry culture went hand in hand with an affirmation of the equality of true believers. In Separatist congregations whites and blacks, slave-owners and slaves, worshipped together, preached to each other, called each other "brother" and "sister," and had caucuses which chastised errant members regardless of skin color or social status. The churches supported the sanctity of slave marriages, proscribed harsh or brutal punishment of slaves, and often encouraged manumissions. Black members were often at the core of these congregations both as participants and

²⁶. From Rhys Isaacs, Transformation of Virginia, 162-163.

as leaders, and their passionate involvement in such churches, then and since, has helped to shape both Southern and American culture into the twentieth century.²⁷

Most of this activity in the eighteenth century was focused on the newly settled lands in the piedmont and south of the James River, lands owned by the Byrds and Randolphs, a portion of which ultimately descended into the hands of Thomas Jefferson.²⁸ Many of William Byrd's slaves were apparently involved in these religious upheavals, and their ultimate dispersal, as a result of Byrd's financial problems, is said to have been a major factor in the spread of evangelicalism in Virginia.²⁹

Although the differences between eighteenth century secular philosophy and the evangelical religious communities are most striking, the two movements shared some similarities as well. They both founded their philosophies upon an appeal to higher law and a rejection of arbitrary authority. The great social division of the "classical republicans" between gentry and commoners, similarly, finds a parallel in the sacred division of the evangelicals

²⁷. Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together, 178-203, and passim.

²⁸. Billings, Selby and Tate, Colonial Virginia, 279. For the Southside see Richard Beeman, The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry. A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832 (Philadelphia, 1984).

²⁹. Rhys Isaacs, Transformation of Virginia, 172.

between saints and sinners. Both groups imagined an enormous gulf separating the virtuous from the rest of society, and both groups became increasingly aggressive in maintaining that distinction. The evangelicals established that distinction, however, not in a real world of sense perceptions or in reason but in a spiritual and direct relationship to a personal god. This conviction had none of the neat closure of a more formal system of philosophy, and ambiguous attitudes toward private property and the role of the individual in the community created tensions which lay at the heart of the evangelical experience that continue to influence American social as well as religious thought.³⁰

The evangelical movement was partly a cause and partly a symptom of the declining status of Virginia's colonial gentry. This decline was marked by a multitude of structural flaws in the tidewater hegemony. Some of these problems were rooted in a drastic decline in tobacco prices and a consequent contraction of credit, which set in after 1760.³¹ These problems were aggravated by a burden of debts left from the wars against the French and Indians, which had been largely supported by the issuance of paper money and which at its close had to be retired. The speaker of the House of Burgesses and the treasurer of the colony,

³⁰. Helpful to me in reaching these conclusions was Michael Zuckerman, "The Fabrication of Identity in Early America," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXXIV (1977), 183-214.

³¹. Billings, Selby and Tate, Colonial Virginia, 296.

John Robinson, the voice of the old elite in the capitol, tried to alleviate the problem by returning these notes to circulation in the form of loans to his friends and allies. His untimely death in 1766 brought to light these improprieties. Implicated in the scandal was one of the prime beneficiaries of the scheme -- William Byrd III.

Although no evidence that Byrd was involved in wrongdoing was brought forward, Byrd was required to return over £17,000 to the public treasury. The same year Colonel John Chiswell, a business associate of Byrd, and Robinson, in a rage stabbed and killed a drunken backcountry merchant. That he had done so with a sword delivered by his servant (two accoutrements of gentry status) and had celebrated afterwards by treating the witnesses to a bowl of toddy was probably not lost on readers who followed the events in the Virginia Gazette. Chiswell was charged with murder and held in custody without bail, but was able to gain his release from custody when Byrd and two other justices of the General Court at Williamsburg intervened. Chiswell was unable to escape the general outrage which his affair had raised, however, and shortly thereafter was found dead, possibly a suicide.³²

The changing mood in the colonies that these events reflect was part of the readjustment of customary relations underway in Virginia in the years preceding the Revolution.

³². Billing, Selby, and Tate, Colonial Virginia, 312-3.

The House of Burgesses, who were more closely tied to the interests of their local districts, had been steadily increasingly in power at the expense of the governor and his Council. At the same time the royal government was trying to tightening imperial control over the colonies. To do so, the crown often tried to play small planter off against big planter -- supporting the causes of small planters one day, and big planters the next -- undercutting in the process any chance for political stability.

Another factor in the political calculus of eighteenth-century Virginia was the increasing disparity of its regions. While the tidewater danced to music played in London, other areas of Virginia listened to different tunes. The population of the backcountry west of the piedmont, for example, continued a virtual "Lubberland" as described by William Byrd II. While planters in the piedmont were locked into the production of tobacco, in Virginia's northern neck and eastern shore, planters had already abandoned tobacco planting for the production of wheat. In those areas the transformation of agriculture from the intensive, small-scale, labor-intensive production of tobacco to the economies of scale practical on wheat farms had enormous consequences on life and society. There the transportation and processing needs of grains stimulated the development of towns, and the seasonal requirements of small-grain production encouraged a growing force of wage laborers who

could be hired for limited periods of time.³³

William Byrd in the 1760s had already experimented with wheat production but his efforts were insufficient to alleviate his rapidly deteriorating financial circumstances.³⁴ By 1757 his situation was already critical, and he had begun the process of selling off land and slaves which would continue for the next two decades. By 1768 he grasped at the idea of holding a public lottery for his property in Richmond, including lots, a ferry, a mill, a fishery, and a forge. The plan, however, like later attempts at lotteries in Virginia, was doomed to failure. Family quarrels which led to Byrd's exclusion from his mother's estate, the Robinson and Chiswell scandals, and the mounting calls of his creditors all compounded Byrd's economic and emotional despair. As the political conflict between the colony and England intensified, his problems mounted. Byrd was offered an appointment in the colonial forces but, uncertain of his loyalties, he declined. When he finally decided to join the colonists, the offer was

³³. See; Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-Century South," Perspectives in American History, (1976), 7-78; Paul Clements, The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain (Ithaca, 1980); Timothy Breen, Tobacco Culture, The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution (Princeton, 1985); Gloria Main, Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720 (Princeton, 1982).

³⁴. William Byrd's experiments with tobacco production, per conversation with John Selby, College of William and Mary.

withdrawn.³⁵ Reflecting his own indecision, his family took opposing sides. One son, Thomas Byrd, gained a commission in the British army (for which Byrd paid L400). Another, Otway Byrd, became aide-de-camp to General Charles Lee in the colonial army (he was written out of Byrd's will). The final straw might have been the royal governor Lord Dunmore's evacuation from Williamsburg and his declaration freeing any slaves who would come to his aid in November of 1775, which prompted fifty of Byrd's servants at Westover to run to the British lines.

In 1776, William Byrd III was economically destitute, at war with himself, his family, his community and his country. In his will Byrd tried to apportion responsibility for his situation. His indebtedness, which he said "embitters every moment of my life," were caused "thro' my own folly & inattention to accounts, thro' carelessness of some interested in the management thereof & the villany of others." Byrd's situation was not unique in colonial Virginia. The authority and control, which he imagined should have been his due, he saw gradually over the course of his life slip away. In one final moment he could exercise his last act of authority. On January 1, 1777, Byrd committed suicide by shooting himself. With his death a whole way of life in Virginia passed away. With the collapse of the old order, Virginia would be forced to

³⁵. June, July, 1775; see Correspondence, 613, 812-13, fn.

create a new formula to explain the relationships of power.

LOCKE'S LEGACY

The single most influential person in devising a philosophical rationalization for the new social and political order was John Locke. His political philosophy in his Two Treatises on Government represented a complete re-writing of the traditional ways in which society explained itself. Central to Locke's philosophy was his critique of Robert Filmer, which occupies all of the First Treatise and much of the Second Treatise. In opposing Filmer's argument for the supremacy of the monarch based on patriarchal authority, Locke virtually re-invented the whole vocabulary of political and social relationships. His attack on Filmer was to a large degree an attack on Filmer's language. All of the terms and concepts which were critical to Filmer's philosophy -- family, property, slavery, freedom -- in Locke's Two Treatises took on new meanings.

Locke was quite clear about his manipulation of the political vocabulary and could be apologetic about it, "It may perhaps be censured as an impertinent Criticism in a discourse of this nature, to find fault with words and names that have obtained in the World: And yet possibly it may not

be amiss to offer new ones when the old are apt to lead Men into mistakes."¹ Or he could be rather cavalier, "So the thing be understood, I am indifferent as to the Name."²

To a large degree the words and the meanings which Locke used in his Two Treatises on Government are the same as those we commonly use today. Imbedded in Locke's vocabulary is a conception of society which values freedom, toleration, equality, and the rights of the individual. For these reasons Locke's philosophy is so ubiquitous that it is easy to fail to understand the vast extent of his influence or to understand why he has sometimes been called "America's Philosopher."³

¹. Book II, Chapter VI, paragraph 52, lines 1-5. All citations from Two Treatise are from, Laslett, Peter, (ed.) John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, Cambridge University Press, 1960.

². II, Chapter XII, p.145, 4-5. See also; John Locke, "Of Words or Language in general," and "Of the Signification of Words," in An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding, Book III, Chapters i and ii.

³. Merle Curti, "The Great Mr. Locke, America's Philosopher, 1783-1861," Huntington Library Bulletin, #11, (1939) 107-51. An interpretation which is seconded by Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America. An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1955; and Carl Becker, The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas, New York, 1922. Locke's significance has been disputed by J.G.A.Pocock (among others) in his, Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition, Princeton, 1975, and in "Early Modern Capitalism -- The Augustan Perception," in Eugene Kamenka and R.S.Neale, eds., Feudalism, Capitalism, and Beyond (Canberra, 1975), 62-83. The current tendency to question Locke's centrality in the formation of modern political ideologies seems to me to be entirely quixotic. For a good discussion see, Isaac Kramnick, Republicanism and Bourgeois

To understand John Locke's philosophy we must look beyond the words he used to the social realities which they often failed to adequately express, and there we find a great paradox which lies at the heart of Locke's philosophy and is integral to the very foundation of his work. Locke writing in the 1680s⁴ was trying to justify a government based on the supremacy of Parliament and opposed to monarchical authority. The central question that confronted him was how to construct a system of government which included a right of resistance to authority. It was Locke's task to create a via media between absolute authority and absolute anarchy.

Necessarily, Locke's target was a traditional, holistic conception of the social order, which imagined the world as a succession of microcosms and macrocosms. Filmer's world, in which biblical reality, the structure of government, and the order of the family were all identical versions of a universal cosmic order, and its implicit assumption of an identity of interests between the highest and the lowest ranks of society, had no place in Locke's scheme. In striking a blow against monarchy, Locke necessarily struck a blow at its defenses in a mystical conception of mutual

Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1990), 163-199.

⁴. For a discussion of the dating of the Two Treatises, see "'Two Treatises of Government' and the Revolution of 1688," in Laslett, Two Treatise, 45-66.

rights and obligations.

The state that Locke conceived was based, not on the personal authority of the king, nor on the king's ability to use force, nor on divine injunction, but on natural law and on reason.⁵ But reason, as Locke knew, not being universal, could be a flimsy reed upon which to support a state. It was Locke's achievement to describe a system of government in which the state, the rights of individuals and property formed a unity of interest. Of these the greatest was property. As Locke frequently noted "Government has no other end but the preservation of Property."⁶ By identifying the interests of property, the state and individual rights, Locke was able to embed the rationalism which was inherent in property relations within the structure of the state and a conception of individual rights. This differed from traditional conceptions of the state which, although recognizing commonalities, nevertheless saw property, the state, and the aspirations of the populace as distinct and often conflicting entities.⁷ In Locke's philosophy, rights, the state, and property were

⁵. II, Chapter II, p.6,6-8.

⁶. II, p.94, 22-23. See also; p.124, 1-3.

⁷. It may be imagined that Locke's association of rights, property and the state, was an echo of the feudal balance between those who work, those who pray, and those who fight. The state taking the part of the king, "those who fight;" rights taking the part of the populace, "those who work;" and property taking the part of the church, "those who pray."

all united in a single association of interests in opposition to an imaginary state of nature.

The basic paradox which impelled Locke's philosophy located itself precisely here in his conception of the state of nature.⁸ Depending on his purpose the state of nature could be described in various, often contradictory ways to either justify or critique the exercise of authority. We are most apt to remember Locke's descriptions of the state of nature as a positive condition. Locke describes it as a "State of perfect Freedom," and, "A State of Equality,"⁹ and as a "State of Peace, Good Will, Mutual Assistance, and Preservation."¹⁰ But in other contexts, Locke's state of nature can be very similar to the state of nature described

⁸. The argument which follows, contrasting Locke's two descriptions of the state of nature, and the implications of that contrast is that of MacPherson, C.B. Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, Hobbes to Locke (Oxford University Press, 1962), Chapter V, "Locke: The Political Theory of Appropriation," 194-262.

⁹. As Locke describes the State of Nature; "...all Men are naturally in... a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man.

A State of Equality, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection, unless the Lord and Master of them all, should by any manifest Declaration of his Will set one above another, and confer on him by an evident and clear appointment an undoubted Right to Dominion and Sovereignty." Chapter II, paragraph 4, 2-16.

¹⁰. II, Chapter III, p.19, 1-8.

by Hobbes as a continual state of war of "all against all," in which most persons led lives which were, "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short."¹¹ As Locke explained,

though in the state of Nature he [Man] hath such a right [to freedom], yet the Enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the Invasion of others. For all being Kings as much as he, every Man his Equal, and the greater part no strict observers of Equity and Justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure.¹²

The State of Nature, furthermore, "is full of fears and continual danger," and is spoiled by "the corruption and vitiousness of degenerate Men."¹³

The contradiction between Locke's two conceptions of the state of nature is not merely an oversight. Both were necessary and integral parts of Locke's philosophy. According to C.B. MacPherson, the contradiction is part of a larger paradox in Locke's philosophy, which in espousing a natural right of the individual to unlimited appropriation, in effect, condemns the mass of mankind to poverty. For MacPherson, "Locke's whole theory of limited and conditional

¹¹. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, C.B. MacPherson (ed.), Penguin Books, 1968 (first published, 1651), Chapter 13, page 186.

¹². II, Chapter IX, p.123, 1-17.

¹³. II, Chapter IX, p.128, 7-10. See also paragraphs 21, 124, 125, 128, 131, 137.

government was essentially a defence of property."¹⁴

Locke's philosophy, to MacPherson and others,¹⁵ is a class-based argument, a defense of a bourgeois theory of capital accumulation, and a justification of an expanding market economy.

This conclusion is supported by what we know of Locke's attitudes toward the lower classes from his other writings. Despite his pronouncements of liberty and equal rights, his attitudes toward the disadvantaged were typical of his times, and far from benign. Fearful of the expansion of the numbers of the poor which Locke had witnessed in his lifetime, Locke traced their degenerate position back to "nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners."¹⁶ As a solution he advocated the forced labor of the idle poor in work houses which would operate to turn a profit. Such institutions would house even children above the age of three who would be employed

¹⁴. Possessive Individualism, p195.

¹⁵. McNally, David, Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism, a Reinterpretation (University of California Press, 1988), 58-63; Appleby, Joyce, "The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology," Journal of American History, LXIV, 4 (March 1978), 935-958, e.g. p947; Kramnick, Isaac, Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism, Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1990, e.g. 7.

¹⁶. C.P. MacPherson, Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, 223, cites H.R. Bourne, The Life of John Locke (1876), II, 378.

in spinning and knitting.¹⁷

That Locke held a view of a two-tiered social hierarchy, and even that he wrote as if he were describing the conditions and status of "all men" when he was actually describing the condition of only a privileged few, should not be surprising. Such attitudes and rhetoric have perhaps always been part of the political theorist's bag of tricks. Locke's great innovation is the way in which he imagined a permeable boundary between the two estates. Civil society could be entered into according to a set of rules (not all of which are entirely compatible) which are catalogued in Locke's second Treatise. Locke's conception of society was thus dependent on a chronology that was basically optimistic. It rejected a temporal conception of mystical cycles (such as that described by Ben Jonson in "To Penshurst"), and an idealized conception of stasis in opposition to inevitable decay and corruption (which lay at the heart of classical political theory). Improvement, moreover, became in Locke's writings not just a possibility, but a moral injunction. Man not only could progress; he must progress. It was this dynamic element in Locke's philosophy which blurred the distinctions between his two contrasting ideas of the state.

Unfortunately, and necessarily, neither Locke nor

¹⁷. Discussed, among other places, in, Kramnick, Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism, 192-193.

anyone since him has been able to define clearly the boundary which separated civil society from a state of nature. It was at its conception, and continues to be, a hotly contested battleground.¹⁸ This uncertainty drives Locke's whole system of thought, for, as Locke wrote, "the chief, if not the only spur to human industry and action is uneasiness."¹⁹

According to Locke, entrance into civil society was marked by a social contract under which individuals joined together to accept certain rules that would lead to the secure possession of their lives, liberties and estates, all of which Locke commonly conflated into a definition of property.²⁰ Acceptance of the contract was not a single historical event but could take a variety of forms, and consent to the social contract could be either explicit or tacit. As Locke explains tacit consent, "every Man, that

¹⁸. For an interesting discussion of the importance of inclusion in the political society see Richard L. Rubinstein, The Cunning of History, the Holocaust and the American Future (Harper, New York, 1975).

¹⁹. John Locke, An Essay on Human Understanding, ed. A.C. Fraser, Oxford, 1894, bk20, sec.6. Cited in Kramnick, Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism, 13. For a modern explanation (labelled the theory of cognitive dissonance) see Festinger, Leon, Henry W. Riecken, Stanley Schachter, When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World (Harper, New York, 1956).

²⁰. "Property, that is, ... Life, Liberty and Estate" II, Chapter VII, P.87,5; See also P.123, 16-17. -- Locke's definition of property has never ceased to be a source of confusion.

hath any Possessions, or Enjoyment, of any part of the Dominions of any Government, doth thereby give his tacit consent, and is as far forth obliged to Obedience to the Laws of that Government, during such Enjoyment, as any one under it." Such "Enjoyment" as Locke described it could be a the possession of land, or merely "travelling freely on the Highway." Tacit consent as well could be assumed from the acceptance of an inheritance, or the use of money.²¹

From these examples it should appear that virtually everyone was included within Locke's civil society, but such was not the case. For the purposes of determining those who were "obliged to obedience," nearly everyone qualified; but many people were simultaneously, either explicitly or implicitly, excluded from full participation in civil society. Most notably, Locke's new vocabulary of political and social relations established new categories which marginalized women, children, the inhabitants of other lands (especially the "waste" lands of America), and slaves -- all of whom became part of a large "invisible population."

The ambiguity of Locke's social philosophy is especially notable in his discussions of women.²² Here,

²¹. Quote is from II, P.119, 13-20. Inheritance, II, P.117. Money, II, P.45, P.50.

²². For a positive interpretation of Locke's position see, Kathy Squadrito, "Locke on the Equality of the Sexes," Journal of Social Philosophy, X, #1 (January 1979); Linda Kerber, Women of the Republic, Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (Norton, 1980), 17-18, 20. For critical interpretations see Linda J. Nicholson, Gender and History,

especially in the Two Treatises, are some of the most basic intellectual origins of a new and modern conception of women and the family. The first Treatise is nothing less than a complete attack on Filmer's Patriarcha. Locke particularly criticizes Filmer's argument that the subordination of women and children to their husbands and fathers is the model and the justification for the subordination of citizens to the state. Filmer's argument, rooted in a very specific family structure,²³ was no longer appropriate to modern realities. Locke's argument, based on the Bible, but also reflecting new family structures, insisted on the equality of women. The fifth commandment was to honor "your father and your mother," not just "your father," as Filmer had quoted it.²⁴ This, Locke pointed out, was, "so far from Establishing the Monarchical Power of the Father, that it set up the Mother equal with him."²⁵ Locke repeated argued that, "if we consult Reason or Revelation, we shall find she [Woman] hath

the Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family (Columbia University Press, New York, 1986), 133-166; and Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (Stanford University Press, 1988).

²³. As Peter Laslett has argued in, "Sir Robert Filmer: The Man versus the Whig Myth," W&MO, V, #4 (Oct, 1948), 544 et passim; and, "Introduction" to Patriarcha and the other Political Works of Sir Robert Filmer (Oxford, 1948), 22, 24, et passim.

²⁴. Book I, P.60-66. Book II, P.52.

²⁵. I, P.61,4-5. See also I, P.11, 27-31.

an equal Title," to her share of paternal authority.²⁶

Locke's egalitarian attitude toward women was not, however, entirely benign. In criticizing Filmer, Locke was led to argue that there was an important distinction between civil and domestic society. Locke's argument that the "two Powers, Political and Paternal, are . . . perfectly distinct and separate,"²⁷ had enormous implications. With this single blow, John Locke split the closed, holistic world of analogic reasoning into an infinity of increasingly smaller fragments. More immediately he helped to create an image of the family as distinct and separate from the public sphere -- the safe haven, the refuge from the materialistic and competitive world and the nursery for the expanding middle class. Throughout the succeeding two centuries the women who were imprisoned within this narrow sphere began to be imagined as increasingly distinct from the members of civil society. Scientifically, as well as emotionally and politically, they came to be described virtually as a species apart.

The conjugal relationship described by Locke was established by a contract, the goals of which were procreation and the raising of children.²⁸ Since husbands and wives have different understandings and different wills,

²⁶. II, P.52,7-9.

²⁷. II, P.71,8-9. See also, II, P.2.

²⁸. II, P.78.

however, "it therefore being necessary, that the last Determination, i.e. the Rule, should be placed somewhere, it naturally falls to the Man's share, as the abler and the stronger." But the superior position of the male reaches only to "their common Interest and Property, [and] leaves the Wife in the full and free possession of what by Contract is her peculiar Right." This freedom for the woman to control her own property could lead eventually to the separation of the husband and wife since, "as well as any other voluntary Compacts, there being no necessity. . . that it should always be for Life."²⁹ This abstract freedom to divorce, however, could have different results in different circumstances. For a woman who had an estate and property to protect, it might well be a valued privilege. But for the vast majority of women, then and now, divorce could mean the loss of social status, civil protection and ultimate destitution.

The social implications of Locke's philosophy were similarly pronounced for the status of children. Again Locke's argument was rooted in his critique of Filmer who imagined that children were a part of the social order immediately upon their birth as required by the rules of monarchical succession and of primogenitor. Children, in

²⁹. II, P.81, 7-9.

effect, in Filmer's argument were merely "little adults."³⁰

For Locke, however, children were within the government of the family in a status which Locke called "nonage." Children Locke placed in the same category as "lunaticks and ideots" and "Madmen,"³¹ who were without reason and therefore could be neither equal nor free. Their government should not be severe, Locke argued, but should be characterized by the parent's nourishment, protection, and - of central importance -- education of their children.

Inheritance plays a central role in Locke's scheme, for the cash nexus plays the identical role in the relationship between parent and child as it performs in the relationship between husband and wife, and between civil society and the state of nature. It acts both as an incentive and as a mark of ultimate entry into the polity. The obedience of children is maintained in part by "the Power Men generally have to bestow their Estates on those, who please them best. The Possession of the Father being the Expectation and Inheritance of the Children . . . is commonly in the Father's Power to bestow . . . with a more sparing or liberal hand, according as the Behaviour of this or that

³⁰. The phrase, of course, is that of Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood, A Social History of Family Life, Robert Baldick, transl. (Vintage, New York, 1962).

³¹. II, P.60,9-12. For Locke's discussion of children and the family, see second Treatise, Chapter VI, "Of Paternal Power," P.52-76; and Thoughts concerning Education, which discusses the upbringing of "sons of gentlemen."

Child hath comported with his Will and Humour."³²

Finally, it is by accepting an inheritance that a child gives his tacit consent and enters civil society for, "if they will enjoy the Inheritance of their Ancestors, they must take it on the same terms their Ancestors had it, and submit to all the Conditions annex'd to such a Possession."³³ It is perhaps redundant to point out again that such entry into the public sphere is reserved for those fortunate enough to receive an inheritance.

Central to John Locke's political philosophy, and to our own, is his attitude toward slavery. His ideas on slavery form the model and the vocabulary for virtually all the social and political relationships described in his writings -- and to eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century conceptions of the government and the state. Locke began his Two Treatise of Government, Book One, Chapter one, with a sentence which has been acclaimed as one of the earliest and clearest statements against slavery in the history of mankind. It is quoted here with the beginning of the sentence which follows it which is usually not cited.

"Slavery is so vile and miserable an Estate of Man, and so directly opposite to the generous Temper and Courage of our Nation; that 'tis hardly to be conceived, that an Englishman, much less a Gentleman, should plead for't. And

³². II, P.72, 10-17.

³³. II, P.73, 14-17.

truly, I should have taken Sr. Rt: Filmer's Patriarcha as any other Treatise, which would perswade all men, that they are Slaves, and ought to be so . . ."³⁴

It is important to locate Locke's critique of slavery within its context of a critique of Filmer because it is clear that Locke is using the term "slavery" in a much different way than had Filmer. Here, as in Locke's discussion of the family, women, children and the state, Locke is engaged in creating a new vocabulary. Slavery to John Locke was not a general category to which all men were susceptible, as it was to nearly all political and religious writers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Slavery was a special category, unique and outside the normal realm of rational and civil society.

The distinction between slavery as a general and a specific term had important political implications. The use of slavery as a specific term, as Locke commonly used it, has always contained an implicit justification for the author's political order, which was presumably distinct from slavery. The general term, on the other hand, implicitly criticizes the political order. Locke's use of the term in the narrow sense has been the most common for the last two

³⁴. Book I, Chapter 1, 1-7; in John Locke: Two Treatises of Government, Peter Laslett, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1960).

centuries.³⁵

Far from being a critique of slavery, John Locke's Treatises are a defense of a society that finds its opposite mirror image in slavery. The Treatises describe a society whose rational rules require that its basis in a complex, physical, and non-rational reality (e.g. a "state of nature") be cloaked behind a veil and that the workers whose labor supports it be made invisible.

Locke's actual support for slavery, despite his rhetoric, should not be surprising in light of his substantial interest in colonial expansion and the slave trade. By the end of the century, his concerns and expertise led him to one of the most active and influential positions on the newly formulated Board of Trade, which oversaw all of Britain's foreign trade.³⁶ But long before that, Locke had been engaged, with his patron Anthony Ashley Cooper, in the establishment of the colony of Carolina for which he assisted in the formulation of the "Fundamental

³⁵. See e.g. Rodney Hilton, "Freedom and Villeinage in England" Past & Present, 31 (July, 1965), 3-19. American Revolutionaries were definitely using the term in its general sense, Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967), 232-246. As was The Workingman's Advocate, (New York, Oct 29, 1829), "[The rich] are the enemies of the poor, since they compel them to sell themselves as slaves to their oppressors," in James D. Watkinson, "Useful Knowledge? Concepts, Values, and Access in American Education, 1776-1840," History of Education Quarterly, Vol 30, #3 (Fall, 1990), 351-370.

³⁶. Ver Steeg, Clarence L., The Formative Years, 1607-1763 (Hill and Wang, New York, 1964), 256.

Constitutions." These documents, which established the political power of the colony firmly in the hands of its largest land-owners, and contained the provision that "every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slave of what opinion or religion soever."³⁷ Nor was Locke's interest purely theoretical. He was an investor in the Royal African Company, and in a group of "Adventurers to Bahamas." The slave trade was the primary interest of the Royal African Company and was a necessary component of the early settlement of the Bahamas. These activities have led Peter Laslett to describe Locke as a major "architect of the old Colonial System."³⁸

The establishment of American settlements, with all that that entailed, from wresting land from Indians to enslaving Africans, played a central role in Locke's political philosophy. As Locke argued, "in the beginning

³⁷. The Works of John Locke (London, 1801), Volume X, 196. Cited in Wayne Glausser, "Three Approaches to Locke and the Slave Trade," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol 51, #2 (April-June, 1990), 199-216, 203. In addition to this excellent article see Richard H. Popkin, "Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism," in Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts, Essays presented to Herbert W. Schneider, Craig Walton and John P. Anton, eds., (Athens, Ohio, 1974), 126-165; H.M. Bracken, "Essence, Accident and Race," Hermathena, CXVI (Winter, 1973), 81-96; James Farr, "Consent and Slavery in Locke, I. 'So Vile and Miserable and Estate,' The Problem of Slavery in Locke's Political Thought," Political Theory, Vol. 14, #2 (May, 1986), 263-289; David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery, in Western Culture (New York, 1966), 118-121.

³⁸. Cited in H.M. Bracken, "Essence, Accident and Race," 85.

all the World was America,"³⁹ and he described "the wild woods and uncultivated wast of America," as a place "left to Nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry," and, worse, without the use of money and without commerce. It was the physical equivalent of the tabula rasa of the mind before it had been improved through education. As Locke explained, "God gave the World to Men in Common; but since he gave it them for their benefit, and the greatest Conveniences of Life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational, (and Labour was to be his Title to it;) not to the Fancy or Covetousness of the Quarrelsom and Contentious."⁴⁰

Locke's famous justification of slavery as a "State of War, continued,"⁴¹ had the great advantage of insuring that most Englishmen, who enjoyed the protection of the state, would never be subject to the condition of slavery. It was this linguistic legerdemain which became the guarantee of their liberty. The exclusion of slavery from the social order was the basic requirement for freedom, and it was accomplished first in the vocabulary of political theory.

³⁹. II, Chapter V, P.49, 1.

⁴⁰. II, Chapter V, P.34, 1-7.

⁴¹. II, P.24,2. See Chapter IV, "Of Slavery" P.22-24, in Appendix.

The definition, however, was ambiguous enough to allow the American colonies to fulfill their labor requirements without great moral or linguistic confusion. Locke specified that enslavement could be condoned only as a result of a "just war," which he described as a response to an aggressor who threatens one's self-preservation, in which case enslaving an enemy rather than killing him could be an act of compassion.⁴²

Whether or not the actions of the Royal African Company could be considered as a part of a "just war" was never directly addressed by Locke, but it is clear that he identified the state of war with the state of nature⁴³ and that the requirements of civil society for improvement, which Locke associated with self-preservation,⁴⁴ predominated over the negligible rights of people in either a state of war or a state of nature. Moreover, "all Commonwealths are in the state of Nature one with another," which often "comes to a state of War."⁴⁵

An African captive would hardly be able to defend his

⁴². Locke doesn't actually say enslavement was a compassionate act, but that is the implication.

⁴³. "To avoid this State of War... is one great reason of Mens putting themselves into Society, and quitting the State of Nature." II, P. 21, 1-5. But not always, see P. 19, on "the plain difference between the State of Nature, and the State of War...."

⁴⁴. II, P.25, 2.

⁴⁵. II, P.183, 7-10.

natural rights to freedom and equality in a state of nature by using Locke's terminology. The ultimate conclusion of any such imaginary dispute could end anytime that the captive, whose deserved death thus far had only been delayed, "finds the hardship of his Slavery out-weigh the value of his Life. . . [and] by resisting the Will of his Master. . . draw on himself the Death he desires."⁴⁶ The "Master of a Family" would be justified in this action since slaves were the sole exception to Locke's denial of the master's "legislative power of Life and Death" over members of his family.⁴⁷

The actual status of Africans in the Americas, and that of other groups excluded from the social order, however, has always owed more to Locke's theories of property, labor, and epistemology than to his specific statements on the status of blacks, women, and children.

Locke's theory of property is based on man's property in his own person and his right to preserve it by "mixing his labour" with the products of the State of Nature.⁴⁸

⁴⁶. II, P.23, 13-15.

⁴⁷. II, P.86, 9-14. This rather garbled passage contains an interesting definition of what might constitute a family.

⁴⁸. See Chapter V, "Of Property;" "Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has A Property in his own Person. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The Labour of his Body, and the Work of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and therby makes it his Property."

Locke gives the following example:

He that is nourished by the Acorns he pickt up under an Oak, or the Apples he gathered from the Trees in the Wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself. No body can deny but the nourishment is his. . . 'tis plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. That labour⁴⁹ put a distinction between them and common.

As obvious as this appears, it is worth comparing this to the situation which was imagined by Ben Jonson to prevail at Penshurst. There the fish "leap on land, Before the fisher or into his hand." The whole earth offers its bounty freely; even the walls of the mansion itself were "reared with no man's ruin, no man's groan."⁵⁰ A natural right to sustenance was so basic in this conception of the world that it did not need volumes to justify it. To Jonson and his contemporaries, a distinction between man's property in his person and in his labor would have seemed quixotic at best. The distinction that Locke drew was a part of the continuing fragmentation of the concept of the natural order which coincided with an increasingly alienation of the individual from the world. An organic, holistic view of the world deteriorated throughout the early modern era, and this allowed for the proliferation of new distinctions and

II, P.27, 1-7.

⁴⁹. II, P.28, 1-9.

⁵⁰. Ben Jonson, "To Penshurst," 37-38, 46. See above.

categories which are central to Locke's social and political philosophy. Locke's "labor theory of property" was central to new economic realities in which a man could buy and sell labor like any other commodity. The day of the wage laborer and the slave was replacing an era in which the relations between employer and employee were imagined in social and religious terms, not just in economic.

Locke's social theories (for all of their inconsistencies) are entirely consistent with his theories of epistemology. Instead of a great wasteland, Locke begins his understanding of human knowledge with a great tabula rasa, a blank slate, waiting for improvement. Locke denied the existence of platonic "innate ideas" and argued that knowledge of real essences was beyond human power. Understanding was the result of sense perceptions and reflection. This is basically a restatement of the scientific, empirical method propounded by Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. The resulting emphasis on the purely secondary characteristics, the "accidents" of form and color, represented a radical break not only with older conceptions of the source of knowledge, but also with conceptions of the human community. It was a practical conclusion, from Locke's epistemology, that a conception of humans sharing a common identity within a universal brotherhood might be denied. There being no essential qualities which all mankind held in common, it was easy to

argue that there was no real boundary between men and other species, "Wherein then, would I gladly know, consists the precise and unmoveable Boundaries of that Species? 'Tis plain, if we examine, there is no such thing made by Nature, and established by her among Men. . . . The boundaries of the Species, whereby Men sort them, are made by Men."⁵¹ The divisions between members of the human species were increasingly analyzed, following Locke, according to their superficial characteristics, which led to ever more rigid categories of race and gender based upon natural law.⁵²

Locke never directly addresses the question of racial differences, but he was aware of some of the implications inherent in the problem of harmonizing knowledge gained through reason with knowledge gained via sense perception.

First, a Child haveing framed the Idea of a Man, it is probable, that his Idea is just like that Picture, which the Painter makes of the visible Appearances joyned together; and such a Complication of Ideas together in his Understanding makes up the single complex Idea which he calls Man, whereof White or Flesh-colour in England being one, the Child

⁵¹. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, P.H. Nidditch, ed. (Oxford, 1975), 454, 462; cited in Wayne Glausser, "Three Approaches to Locke and the Slave Trade," 212.

⁵². It is probably not accidental that Locke argued that Reason and Revelation, the two least reliable methods of understanding, supported female equality. ("If we consult Reason or Revelation, we shall find she hath an equal Title." II, P.52,7-9.) Similarly, Locke is not content to ground the origins of property solely in reason and revelation. See II, P.25.

can demonstrate to you, that a Negro is not a Man.⁵³

Encouraged by the enormous popularity of Lockes's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, other eighteenth-century philosophers were even more candid in discussing racial differences.

Hume's opinion, stated in his essay "Of National Characters," was typical:

I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men.⁵⁴

Hume's opinion was widely known and discussed by enlightened readers in the later part of the eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Locke's empiricism, did not lead him, as it did many

⁵³. Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 4.7.16; cited in Wayne Glausser, "Locke and the Slave Trade," 213.

⁵⁴. Hume's Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary, T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, eds., (London, 1875), I, 252; cited in H.M. Bracken, "Essence, Accident and Race," 82. I have modernized the capitalization.

later English philosophers, down the road to complete skepticism. His was a practical philosophy with specific social aims. Ultimately, however, its utility rested firmly upon the greatest of Locke's abstractions -- equality. More ethereal than any Platonic Idea, a natural equality was the sine qua non of Lockes' whole scheme of improvement and progress. Only by imagining a natural equality of original condition could the fierce competition of the market place be justified. At the same time by alienating the mind from the accidental characteristics of race, class and gender, and the circumstances of history, biology and society, the physical links which tied mankind together in a unity of interests were broken. Individuals were free to compete against one another and to conquer each other.

The importance of all of this to American history is that Locke's philosophy is the major intellectual formulation for an American social, economic and political system. It found its most explicit expression in the Declaration of Independence, which is a concisely worded re-statement of Locke's contract theory of government. The first sentence of the second paragraph, America's most fundamental sacred text, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, That all men are created equal; that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," is lifted practically verbatim from Locke's Two

Treatise.

Jefferson's significant innovation is his substitution of "the pursuit of happiness," into the triad which Locke defined as "property." Far from describing a civil order independent of property, as has sometimes been argued,⁵⁵ Jefferson succeeded in this stroke in making property itself an invisible category, like those categories which contained women, children, the poor, and people of color. By such changes in the vocabulary all these had been excluded from the realm of analysis, and there was nothing left upon which to build a state other than the ancient Epicurean doctrine of "the pursuit of happiness."

⁵⁵. For example by Herbert Aptheker, "A Marxist Interpretation " of the Declaration of Independence, in Robert Ginsberg, ed., A Case Book on the Declaration of Independence (New York, 1967), 6-9.

THE BOURGEOIS MR. JEFFERSON

Although Thomas Jefferson was born in 1743, one year before William Byrd II died, and was a familiar acquaintance of William Byrd III, Jefferson and the Byrds lived in practically two different worlds. An enormous gulf separated them intellectually, emotionally and socially. This contrast is perhaps most obvious in their family lives. William Byrd's family would not have been out of place in medieval Europe.¹ Thomas Jefferson's family, however, was a virtual model of a contemporary middle-class family, which is, not incidentally, an ideal political unit for a modern nation-state. The major characteristic of Jefferson's family is its nuclear structure. In Jefferson's family, unlike the Byrds', kinship lines were very rigidly identified and maintained; "peripheral" members - cousins, servants, and slaves - were excluded. For Jefferson and his family, as for most of us today, an emphasis on emotional restraint, at least in public, accompanied an increase in private, affectionate ties between husband and wife, and

¹ See Michael Zuckerman, "William Byrd's Family," and the discussion above.

parents and children. Jefferson's family was an emotional refuge from a harsh public world. Within that haven children were taught the values of continuing self-improvement, the evils of idleness and the importance of education. This new family structure reflected new inheritance strategies that had the effect of bringing all the members of the family together as an identifiable closed economic unit. Intellectually, Jefferson's family found its justification in a combination of scientifically "self-evident" truths based on natural law, and in a mythological image of an ancient, Anglo-Saxon past. Jefferson's family had a self-conscious awareness of itself as belonging to a class which defined itself more in terms of its common ideas than in terms of economics. Pointedly rejecting feudal and aristocratic government; they were a part of a growing bureaucracy of lawyers, politicians and other middle-men whose interests were identical to neither those of laborers nor land-holders. They were in constant war against the arbitrary power and the passions endemic to an older system of personal and civic government. Jefferson's family found its basic philosophical rationalizations in the doctrines of John Locke while its physical realities were defined by a new market economy. In addition, Jefferson's modern, middle-class family encompassed entirely new conceptions of the self, the status of women, of children and of blacks. The entire construction of the world, between the lifetimes

of William Byrd II and Thomas Jefferson, including the most basic notions of space and time, underwent a radical transformation.

This process of middle-class formation was not unique in America to Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia piedmont. Recent historical studies have described the process in urban areas in the colonial period and in upstate New York, and in New England throughout the nineteenth century.² What made the process appear to be different in Virginia was that the lowest class in the South was composed of Africans rather than Irish, and their work was titled slavery rather than wage labor -- distinctions which were originally of little significance but which would become increasingly relevant as the nineteenth century progressed.

Although Jefferson praised "those who labor in the earth," and called them "the chosen people of god," it is clear that he was not describing the slaves who were the

². Gary Nash The Urban Crucible. The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, 1986); Paul Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York, 1978); Stuart M. Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience of the Middle Class (Cambridge, 1989); Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge, 1981); Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870 (New Haven, 1982); For good discussions see; Isaac Kramnick "Liberalism, the Middle Class and Republican Revisionism," in Kramnick, Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism. Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America (Ithaca, New York, 1990), esp. 18-35; and, Stuart M. Blumin, "The Hypothesis of Middle-Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: a Critique and Some Proposals," American Historical Review, 90, #2 (April, 1985), 299-338.

primary source of labor on the larger plantations of the Chesapeake, including his own.³ Nor was Jefferson himself one "who labored in the earth." He is best described perhaps as a "weekend farmer," a zealous amateur, rather than one who was ever successful at maintaining himself on the produce of his lands. This was a fact which he frequently admitted, "In agriculture, I am only an amateur, having only that knowledge which may be got from books."⁴ It was a judgment that was shared by most who knew him. La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, after a week's visit in 1796 (when Jefferson's farming activity was at its peak), noted that "Mr. Jefferson. But little accustomed to agricultural pursuits, he has drawn the principles of culture either from works which treat on this subject, or from conversation."⁵

Although Jefferson's lands in Bedford county, which were the furthest from his control, generally turned a

³. A discussion of Jefferson's attitudes toward slavery and race will follow later in this chapter.

⁴ T.J. to Philip Tab, June 1, 1809, Edwin Morris Betts, Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book (Philadelphia, 1944), 412-13. T.J. to W.B. Giles April 27, 1795, "As a farmer...I am but a learner..." Garden Book, 235. T.J. to Jean Baptiste Say, Mar 2, 1815, "Our best farmers (such as Mr Randolph, my son-in-law) get from ten to twenty bushels of wheat to the acre; our worst (such as myself) from six to eighteen..." Garden Book, 544. T.J. to J.W.E. (March?), 1816, "I am indeed an unskillful manager of my farms, and sensible of this from its effects." Garden Book, 552;

⁵ In Merrill D. Peterson, ed., Visitors to Monticello (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1989) 23. For an opposite opinion see, August C. Miller Jr., "Jefferson as an Agriculturist," Agricultural History, Vol 16, #2 (April, 1942), 65-78.

profit, his lands in Albemarle and his seat at Monticello probably never did. His salaries as a public officer, first as a lawyer, and later as governor of Virginia, ambassador to France, Secretary of State, and President, and his relatively easy access to credit supported his style of life at Monticello. For at least a part of his lifetime he was financially dependent on hiring out his more skilled slaves to local tradesmen,⁶ but generally, Jefferson's public activities supported his domestic establishment, rather than the other way around.

Jefferson was neither a democrat nor an aristocrat, if we mean by these terms an implicit philosophy of government originating in the powers of the people or in the hands of a well-born few. Jefferson spent his political career in battle against aristocracy. The constant political question, as he frequently argued, was "whether the power of the people or that of the aristoi should prevail."⁷ But

⁶. T.J. to Nicholas Lewis, July 29, 1787, in Edwin Morris Betts, Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book with Commentary and Relevant Extracts from Other Writings (Charlottesville, 1987), 161-3.

⁷ T.J. to John Adams, June 27, 1813. See also T.J. to Marquis de Lafayette, Nov 4, 1823, "For in truth, the parties of Whig and Tory, are those of nature. They exist in all countries, whether called by these names or by those Aristocrats and Democrats, Cote Droite and Cote Gauche, Ultras and Radicals, Serviles and Liberals. The sickly weakly, timid man, fears the people, and is a Tory by nature. The healthy, strong and bold, cherishes them, and is formed a Whig by nature." I have used A.A. Lipscomb and A.E. Bergh, eds., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (20 Volumes, Washington, 1903) unless otherwise noted. Other collections of Jefferson's writings include Paul Leicester Ford, ed., The Writings of

Jefferson's faith in the people was not absolute. He made the distinction between what he called "an artificial aristocracy founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents," and a "natural aristocracy." As Jefferson expressed himself, "The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society." "that form of government is the best which provides the most effectually for the pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government."⁸

Even in his choice of social companions Jefferson sought out the members of this intermediate rank. As he wrote to his daughter Martha from Philadelphia in 1800, "I have changed my circle here according to my wish; abandoning the rich, and declining their dinners and parties, and associating entirely with the class of science."⁹

Thomas Jefferson (10 volumes, New York, 1892-99); and Julian P. Boyd et al. The Papers of Thomas Jefferson (23 volumes up to 1792, 1950-).

⁸. T.J. to John Adams, June 27, 1813. According to James Ogilvie's Cursory Reflections on Government, Philosophy and Education, there were "three great parties... monopolists of power... authors and inventors... and the infinite multitude." (in Adrienne Koch, Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson [New York, 1943], 120). It was this second group to which Jefferson imagined he belonged.

⁹. T.J. to Martha Feb 11, 1800; in Edwin Morris Betts and James Adam Bear, Jr., eds., The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson (Charlottesville, 1966), 184. The idea that Jefferson was a synthesis of aristocrat and rustic, or "Tuckahoe" and "Cohee" (after the Randolph homestead and the population of the western part of the state), has been a continuing theme of Jefferson scholarship, discussed by

Jefferson was entirely conscious that the class structure in America was substantially different from that in Europe where every man "must be either the hammer or the anvil."¹⁰ As he explained:

first, we have no paupers, the old and crippled among us, who possess nothing and have no families to take care of them, being too few to merit notice as a separate section of society, or to affect a general estimate. The great mass of our population is of laborers; our rich, who can live without labor, either manual or professional, being few, and of moderate wealth. Most of the laboring class possess property, cultivate their own lands, have families, and from the demand for their labor are enabled to exact from the rich and the competent such prices as enable them to be fed abundantly, clothed above mere decency, to labor moderately and raise their families.... The wealthy, on the other hand, and those at their ease, know nothing of what the Europeans call luxury. They have only somewhat more of the comforts and decencies of life than those who furnish them. Can any condition of society be more desirable than this?¹¹

This was the social base upon which republican government was founded, "the only form of government which is not

Merrill Peterson in The Jefferson Image in the American Mind (New York, 1960), 248-250.

¹⁰. T.J. to C. Bellini, September 30, 1785.

¹¹. T.J. to Dr. Thomas Cooper, September 10, 1814. Jefferson was one of the earliest to use the phrase, "middle class," describing conditions in Europe he observed; "There are no chateaux, nor houses that bespeak the existence even of a middle class, Universal and equal poverty overspread the whole." Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography (Oxford, 1970), 365.

eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind."¹²

A key element in the construction of this middle class in Virginia was the activity of the Scottish merchants who established a new system of trade in the piedmont encouraging the direct participation of individual households in the market and eliminating the dependence on London factors and large landholders. It is not surprising that Virginia should have been so influenced by Scotland. These two provinces of England had a great deal in common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both were outposts of London's cosmopolitan world, on the margin between, as they imagined it, civilization and savagery. Both had a new and powerful aristocratic class which was striving to establish its position socially and intellectually. The conflicts between the Scottish highlands and lowlands, and the tensions between the Anglican and Presbyterian churches had direct parallels in Virginia's turbulent colonial society. In both places education, philosophy, and the study of the law were esteemed as the keys to establishing social position. In both places newly created wealth attempted to find a justification for itself within a larger society which was still based primarily on

¹² T.J. to W. Hunter, March 11, 1790.

landed relationships and which disparaged commerce.¹³

For the philosophers of the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment, especially for Frances Hutcheson and Adam Smith, the central issue was "the problem of reconciling the new economics with the old ethics."¹⁴ To do this they rejected both the neo-platonic philosophy of stasis and complacency, which argued essentially that "whatever is, is right," and a more dynamic philosophy of materialism and anarchic self-interest which argued that "private vices make public virtues."¹⁵ Building on the philosophy of John Locke,¹⁶ they rejected large metaphysical systems and grounded their philosophy on "common sense," benevolence,

¹³. See; John Clive, "The Social Background of the Scottish Renaissance," in N.T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison, eds., Scotland in the Age of Improvement, (Edinburgh, 1970), reprinted in John Clive, Not by Fact Alone, Essays on the Writing and Reading of History (Boston, 1989), 149-165; John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces; Scotland and America," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., II,2 (April, 1954), 200-213; David McNally, Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism, a Reinterpretation (Berkeley, California, 1988), esp. 154-174.

¹⁴. McNally, Political Economy, 174, and passim.

¹⁵. Alexander Pope's Essay on Man and Bernard Mandeville, Fable of the Bees.

¹⁶. The relationship of the Scottish philosophers to John Locke is complex. Scottish philosophers took issue with much of Locke's philosophy, but were nevertheless very much indebted to his work. The relationship of Hutcheson et al. and John Locke was not simply one of anti-thesis, as argued by Garry Wills in Inventing America. See Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic, 97-102, et passim.; David MacNally, Political Economy, 199; Henry May, "The Enlightenment," in Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson: A Reference Biography, 47-58, 50.

utility, and optimism in the future.

For the Scottish philosophers, truth did not reside in an ethereal cosmic scheme but in the common sense of individuals. This common-sense philosophy accepted a classical, platonic notion of absolute truth but located it in an "innate moral sense," in conformity with a Lockean epistemology. Jefferson summed up this idea of an "innate moral sense," when he wrote,

He who made us would have been a pitiful bungler if he had made the rules of our moral conduct a matter of science. For one man of science, there are thousands who are not. What would have become of them?... State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules."¹⁷

Individuals would not fall into error by following common sense, according to Jefferson and the Scottish philosophers, because people have an innate sense of compassion. As Jefferson described this impulse to benevolence, "Nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and to succor their distresses."¹⁸

¹⁷ T.J. to Peter Carr Aug 10, 1787. For a more complete statement of Jefferson's idea of an innate moral sense, and its distinction from an innate sense of beauty which is based on self-love, see T.J. to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814.

¹⁸ T.J. to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814, in Lipscomb and Bergh, XIV, 141. For a discussion of the philosophy of benevolence in the eighteenth century see, Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: an aspect of Eighteenth-Century

The common-sense doctrine was not an abstract, idealist philosophy. Benevolence ultimately had its roots in the wants and needs of individuals. Benevolence was not disinterested but was based on the most elemental appetites. As Jefferson described it, "nature has constituted utility to man, the standard and test of virtue."¹⁹

This identity of interest and morality could be expressed by Jefferson in a wide variety of contexts, such as his instructions to an overseer at Monticello, "I consider the labor of a breeding woman as no object, and that a child raised every 2. years is of more profit than the crop of the best laboring man. in this, as in all other cases, providence has made our interests & our duties coincide perfectly."²⁰

Foremost among the self-interested forces which were the engines of virtue, according to the Scottish philosophers, were the passion and love expressed within a family.²¹ The mutual love of family members the "highest form of benevolence" would inevitably spread out from the

Sympathy and Humanitarianism," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXXVII, 2, (April/June, 1976), 195-218.

¹⁹. T.J. to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814; Lipscomb and Bergh, XIV, 143. Jefferson's emphasis.

²⁰. T.J. to Joel Yancey, January 17, 1819; in Betts, Farm Book, 43.

²¹ G. Wills, 252.

family in increasingly larger circles into society at large.²²

Hutcheson described the movement of goods and services as the basis of this process.²³ At the heart of the system, as a part of the innate moral sense, was a sense of "fidelity," which Hutcheson described as the "virtue of honoring contracts." It was on this ground that all human kindness was founded, marriage, friendship and patriotism.²⁴

Garry Wills has described the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment upon Thomas Jefferson, who was exposed to it through his studies with William Small (the Scottish professor of mathematics who befriended the young Jefferson at the College of William and Mary) and through his reading of Hutcheson.²⁵ But the Scottish Enlightenment was carried to Virginia not only by professors and by books. Its direct

²² G. Wills, on family 285, and the spread of benevolence 287.

²³ G. Wills, 235-6.

²⁴ G. Wills, 316. on the rise of "humanitarianism" see also, Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: an Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXXVII, 2 (April-June 1976); and the discussion between Haskell and D.B. Davis, Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1," AHR, 90 (April, 1985), 339-61; and "Part 2", AHR, 90 (June, 1985), 547-568; and David Brion Davis, "Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony," AHR, 92, #4 (Oct, 1987), 797-812.

²⁵. On William Small, see 176-180. For Hutcheson see, esp. 193-217.

mode of transit was not by philosophers but by merchants, not by abstract philosophy but by daily practice.

Jefferson's world was intimately bound to the fortunes of the Scottish trading firms in the piedmont. As a lawyer, Jefferson frequently acted on behalf of Scottish merchant firms against renegeing planters.²⁶ In addition, Jefferson's plantations were largely supplied by the Scottish firms of McClure, Brydie & Company in Richmond and by Fleming & McLanahan of Milton.²⁷

Relations with these importing houses, however, were not always amicable, and Jefferson was critical of their "general System of Scotch Policy to suppress every attempt at domestic manufacture."²⁸ The "Scotch Policy" discouraged home production and was opposed to the whole spectrum of feudal practices that hindered the development of an emerging market society. These merchants wanted to act as the suppliers of goods which were produced elsewhere

²⁶ Price, 196. In addition Jefferson hired a Scottish mason and a Scottish house-joiner in 1793 (giving specific instructions that "they do not remain 24 hrs in Richmond to be spoiled") T.J. to Martha May 12, 1793.

²⁷ I am guessing, from their names that these firms were headed by Scotsmen. For mentions, see, Betts Farm Book, in 1792-94 purchased cotton, hose, blankets, oznaburg, salt, steel, iron, nails, from Brydie & Co., plate 40; and in 1794, purchased cotton for slave's clothing, plate 42 from Fleming and & McLanahan; 528. Fleming & McLanahan are mentioned frequently in Jefferson's Account Books, at Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

²⁸ T.J. to Thomas Mann Randolph, Jan 11, 1796; in Betts, Farm Book, 432-3.

and purchased by consuming households.

The social division implicit in this system required new ways of thinking about human relationships and particularly about the nature of the individual. The household, which first became the basic economic unit, subsequently became the basic political unit with the enlargement of the franchise in the early nineteenth century. The status of the male head of the household rose accordingly. But as his status rose, uncertainties crept in. Individual identity ceased to be defined by a close network of social ties and was instead increasingly defined by the number and quality of the things one possessed.

This cycle of participation in the market, rising status, increased uncertainty, and its resolution by more participation in the market stimulated what has been described as the "consumer revolution" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁹ This revolution, as significant as the political revolution it inspired, can be measured in the vast proliferation of items that were manufactured outside the home such as clothing, cooking and serving utensils, tools, books, and newspapers. Competition among manufacturers and merchants stimulated an economy which was

²⁹. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England (London, 1982); Colin Campbell, The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism (Oxford, 1987). For the philosophical background to these events see, C.B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke (Oxford, 1962).

dependent not only on the kinds of goods they sold but also on ephemeral characteristics of style.

The contrast between William Byrd, who likened his plantation empire to a machine that required his constant attention, and Thomas Jefferson's alienation from his own estates is a striking example of the new image of personhood which had its roots in a market economy. Both modern historians and Jefferson's contemporaries have described the impenetrable, "invisible wall" that Jefferson constructed between his public and private selves. Chastellux's description of Jefferson's manner as "grave and cold" has been echoed many times.³⁰

An example of Jefferson's reticence can be found in his advice to his grandson Thomas Jefferson Randolph: "In stating prudential rules for our government in society I must not omit the important one of never entering into dispute or argument with another. . . . When I hear another express an opinion, which is not mine; why should I question it. His error does me no injury, and shall I become a Don Quixote to bring all men by force of argument, to one opinion? . . . Be a listener only, keep within yourself, and endeavor to establish with yourself the habit of silence, especially in politics."³¹ This is judicious

³⁰ Merrill Peterson, ed., Visitors to Monticello (Charlottesville, 1989), 12.

³¹ T.J. to T.J.R. Nov 24, 1808, Family Letters, 362.

advice for a statesman -- or a merchant. Similar advice was given by a Scottish merchant house to a new storekeeper in Virginia, in 1767: "I hope you'll be careful to be as Oblidging as in [your] power, to the Gentlemen in Shipping of the Cargo; don't by any means stand on triffels to Carrie any dispute. . . . To be obliging and good Naturd always gains friends and Esteem, but to act a Contrary part will be hindering yourself and us too. Be not too prone to Passion, weight a matter thoroughly before you venture to dispute, and even if you are right, do not glory too much in having the advantage. . . . I hope you'll be on your guard, and shun the Rack that many young men has Splitt upon."³²

William Byrd's intense involvement with his world was expressed in nearly everything he did. His virtue found physical expression in his hospitality to his neighbors and, he imagined, in the health of his slaves. Epidemics could strike if Byrd's religious devotion wavered. Workers might die if Byrd failed to pray for them. Dispensing medicines and advice on health were a part of Byrd's extensive system of benevolence and hospitality, and he prided himself on his abilities and knowledge. Byrd understood the body as a balance of humors. If the balance was in danger, Byrd had the power to correct it by administering the deficient

³² J.H.Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775," Economic History Review, XII,1 (Aug 1959), 88.

substance or by bleeding or purging an excessive one.³³

Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, was skillful in such strictly physical adjustments as setting a broken bone, lancing an abscess, or stitching a wound, but believed that the best cure was generally to let nature take its course. As he wrote to Martha about his grandchildren's various illness, "I am sorry to hear of Jefferson [Thomas Jefferson Randolph]'s indisposition, but glad you do not physic him. This leaves nature free and unembarrassed in her own tendencies to repair what is wrong."³⁴ or "...let me beseech you not to destroy the powers of her [Anne Cary Randolph's] stomach with medicine. Nature alone can re-establish infant-organs."³⁵

Jefferson practiced a non-intrusive policy even in his plantation management. When John Oldham, one of the workmen at Monticello, had a disagreement with Gabriel Lilly, Jefferson's overseer, Jefferson refused to pass judgment. Oldham wrote Jefferson that Lilly had whipped Jefferson's slave James Hemings so thoroughly that "Jimmy was sick for thre nights and the most part of the time I rely thot he would not of Livd," In addition, Lilly was accused of plotting to kill one of Jefferson's tenant farmers, with stealing Jefferson's flour and pork, and with lying about

³³ See above on William Byrd.

³⁴ T.J. to Martha J. R., May 31, 1798.

³⁵ T.J to Martha, Dec 6, 1792, Family Letters, 107.

prices of supplies for the plantation. Jefferson replied philosophically, "It is my rule never to take a side in any part in the quarrels of others, nor to inquire into them. I generally presume them to flow from the indulgence of too much passion on both sides, & always find that each party thinks all the wrong was in his adversary. These bickerings, which are always useless, embitter human life more than any other cause: and I regret that which has happened in the present case."³⁶

It is clear where the philosophy of the Scottish enlightenment had led Jefferson. The division of labor also necessitated a division of responsibility. The ultimate course of good and evil now lay outside of an individual's efforts. An "invisible hand," as Adam Smith described it, working through the principles of natural law, would ultimately set all things right.

Individual property holding, most generally in the form of household farms, which Jefferson imagined would be available to nearly every one and their descendants in America "to the hundredth and thousandth generation,"³⁷ was the physical basis upon which Jefferson built his whole philosophy of government. As Jefferson expressed himself,

³⁶ Jack McLaughlin, Jefferson and Monticello, the Biography of a Builder (New York, 1988), 113, 314-315.

³⁷. Inaugural address, 1800.

Here every one may have land to labor for himself, if he chuses; or, preferring the exercise of any other industry, may exact for it such compensation as not only to afford a comfortable subsistence, but wherewith to provide for a cessation from labor in old age. Every one, by his property, or by his satisfactory situation, is interested in the support of law and order. And such men may safely and advantageously reserve to themselves a wholesome controul over their public affairs, and a degree of freedom, which in the hands of the Canaille of the cities of Europe, would be instantly perverted to the demolition and destruction of every thing public and private.³⁸

Ultimately, the availability of land holding in America, and particularly in Virginia, in Jefferson's view, affected nearly every aspect of society.³⁹ It allowed a new sense

³⁸ T.J. to J.Adams Oct 28, 1813.

³⁹ On the importance of land to the development of Jefferson's thought see, Gilbert Chinard, The Commonplace Book of Thomas Jefferson (1926); Trevor H. Colbourn, "Thomas Jefferson's Use of the Past," WMQ, 3d Ser., XV, 1, (Jan 1958), 56-70; Douglas L.Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson's Early Notebooks," WMQ, 3d Ser., XLII, 4 (Oct 1985), 433-452; and on the continuing importance of land and property to Jefferson, see Stanley Katz, "Thomas Jefferson and the Right to Property in Revolutionary America," Journal of Law and Economics, XIX, 3 (Oct, 1976), 467-488; Dumas Malone, Jefferson, the Virginian (Boston, 1948), chapter XVIII, "The Way of a Legislator: Freeing the Land, 1776-1779," 247-260; and Frank Bourgin, The Great Challenge, the Myth of Laissez-Faire in the Early Republic (New York, 1989), Chapter 8 "Public Land Policies," and chapter 9, "Internal Improvements" 113-158; for the importance of lawyers in forming early concepts of land tenure see John G.A.Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1957); and for a good general discussion of feudal tenures in colonial America see Rowland Berthoff and John M. Murrin, "Feudalism, Communalism and the Yeoman Freeholder, the American Revolution Considered as a Social Accident," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., Essays on the American Revolution (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1973), 256-288.

of independence, and it permitted the freedom of forming families unobstructed by the obligations which an aristocratic society might impose. In America a man can easily find "some employment so profitable, that he can soon lay up money enough to buy fifty acres of land, to the culture of which he is irresistibly tempted by the independence in which that places him, and the desires of having a wife and family around him."⁴⁰ If this was not easy enough, Jefferson's revision of Virginia's laws following the Revolution contained the provision for the distribution of "fifty acres of land to every person of full age who did not already have that many."⁴¹

The aristocratic system of Europe which had been supported by the structure of land tenures would be prevented in Virginia by laws forbidding the entailing of land and slaves and limiting primogeniture. These laws, Jefferson believed "laid the axe to the root" of aristocracy in Virginia.⁴²

⁴⁰ T.J. to ?, June 18, 1788 (Writings, VII, 48, Boorstin 285).

⁴¹ D. Malone, Jefferson, the Virginian, 238.

⁴² T.J. To John Adams, Oct 28, 1813. It has been argued by Clarence Ray Keim in, "Primogeniture and Entail in Colonial Virginia," WMO, 3d Ser., XXV (1968) 545-586, that primogeniture and entail were already on disappearing in Virginia, and that Jefferson's laws had little effect. Keim, however, seems to have missed the point that the effect of entails could be far-reaching, tending to the preservation of the dominance of a few families. Certainly first born sons were being favored in wills in Jefferson's Albemarle county throughout the period, see Alan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves:

Jefferson based his critique of primogeniture and entail on ancient Anglo-Saxon legal practices. "Our Saxon ancestors" Jefferson wrote, "held their lands, as they did their personal property, in absolute dominion, disencumbered with any superior, answering nearly to the nature of those possessions which the feudalists term allodial." Jefferson encountered this opinion during his studies of law with George Wythe,⁴³ and it formed the basis of his argument in the Summary View of the Rights of British America in 1774, which was the fullest explanation of Jefferson's political philosophy before the Declaration of Independence.

The Summary View and its philosophy is only one of many historical expressions of the "Saxon myth" which described pre-Norman England as an Eden uncorrupted by feudalism. The natural rights of the Angles and the Saxons could be traced back to Tacitus's descriptions of Germanic tribes. The natural rights exercised by these groups were further protected by the immigration of these groups to England which separated them from any claims upon them made by continental governments until the Norman conquest reduced the Anglo-Saxons to slavery. According to Jefferson, the

The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800 (Chapel Hill, 1986), 201. Jefferson himself was the recipient of the larger share of his father's estate. Jefferson's laws certainly made the transfer of land and slaves easier by limiting the number of possible restrictions.

⁴³. See, Douglas L. Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson's Early Notebooks," WMQ, 3d Ser., XLII, 4 (Oct 1985), 433-452.

"Glorious Revolution" of 1688 had been only a temporary victory for natural rights which were once again on the decline in England.

The households of domestic farmers, whom Jefferson imagined as an ethnic community whose continuity could be traced over the course of a thousand years of history, formed the basis of the government that Jefferson imagined for Virginia. Of this community only land-owners, i.e., heads of households, were entitled to citizenship and the vote. In Jefferson's political economy, many households joined together would constitute "hundreds" or "wards," "of such size that all the children of each will be within reach of a central school in it. . . . Every hundred, besides a school, should have a justice of the peace, a constable and a captain of militia. These officers, or some others within the hundred, should be a corporation to manage all its concerns, to take care of its roads, its poor, and its police by patrols. . . . These little republics would then be the main strength of the great one."⁴⁴

Political authority, in this scheme, would resonate between two poles. On the one hand, it would originate "in the administration of every man's farm by himself; by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend."⁴⁵ On the other hand, "General orders" could

⁴⁴ T.J. to John Tyler, May 26, 1810.

⁴⁵ T.J. to Joseph C. Cabell, Feb 2, 1816.

be "given out from a center to the foreman of every hundred, as to the sergeants of an army, and the whole nation . . . thrown into energetic action."⁴⁶

The families which Jefferson imagined forming the political nation were distinctly unlike any family with which William Byrd would have been familiar. Instead of being an entity that had no clear boundaries between public and private spheres, the new American family was much more distinct. Instead of being a part of the public world, the new family was a haven from it, a place of solace and refuge.

Jefferson's feelings for his own family set the pattern. "I employ my leisure moments," he wrote to his daughter Mary from Philadelphia, "in repassing often in my mind our happy domestic society when together at Monticello, and looking forward to the renewal of it. No other society gives me now any satisfaction, as no other is founded in sincere affection."⁴⁷ To his older daughter Martha he wrote, "Worn down here with pursuits in which I take no delight, surrounded by enemies and spies, catching and perverting every word which falls from my lips or flows from my pen, and inventing where facts fail them, I pant for that society where all is peace and harmony, where we love and are loved

⁴⁶ T.J. to Governor John Tyler, May 26, 1810.

⁴⁷ T.J. to Mary, Jan 17, 1800, Family Letters, 179-180.

by every object we see."⁴⁸

The liberal hospitality which played an integral role in maintaining William Byrd's role in his community was merely a nuisance to Thomas Jefferson. The earliest letter of his which has survived, written when he was sixteen years old, is a request to attend the College of William and Mary because while at home "the loss of one fourth of my Time is inevitable, by Company's coming here and detaining me from School."⁴⁹ For in life he was to balance the necessity of entertaining with his needs for the comforts of his family,

... to have that intercourse of soft affections [within his family] hushed and supported by the eternal presence of strangers goes very hard indeed, and the harder as we see the candle of life burning out, so that the pleasures we lose are lost forever. But there is no remedy. The present manners and usages of our country are laws we cannot repeal. They are altering by degrees, and you will live to see the hospitality of the country reduced to the visiting hours of the day, and the family left to tranquility in the evening.⁵⁰

Although the family and the state were imagined by Jefferson as distinct and separate entities, they shared many similarities. The structure of the society at large, based

⁴⁸ T.J. to Martha Feb 5, 1801, Family Letters, 194-5.

⁴⁹ T.J. to John Harvie, Jan 14, 1760.

⁵⁰ T.J. to Martha, Feb 5, 1801, in Family Letters, 194-5.

upon inherent equality, natural law, and upon the competition of individuals to secure and preserve property was reflected in all of Jefferson's ideas on the structure of family relationships, and his ideas on the status of women, children and slaves. In both the domestic and the public sphere resorts to power and direct accommodations of interest were rejected and supplanted by mystical cords of affection. Love of family and love of country were imagined to transcend a materialistic calculation of profits and losses and rights and wrongs.

Jefferson's great love for his wife, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson, is a centerpiece of the many of the biographies written of Jefferson, especially during the nineteenth century. Jefferson's appraisal of her written in 1771 seems never to have varied, "In every scheme of happiness she is placed in the foreground of the picture, as the principal figure. Take that away, and it is no picture for me."⁵¹

The scene of her death on September 6, 1782, after ten years of marriage to Jefferson, has been burdened with all the sentimental baggage with which Victorians liked to indulge the rituals of death: the stricken wife extracting a promise from her husband never to remarry, servants filing past the near lifeless body, the insensible husband led from

⁵¹. T.J. to Robert Skipwith, August 3, 1771.

the room stricken by grief, followed by months of mourning.⁵² By mid-October Jefferson wrote that he was just emerging from a "stupor of mind which had rendered me as dead to the world as was she whose loss occasioned it....Before that event, my scheme of life had been determined. I had folded myself in the arms of retirement, and rest all prospects of future happiness on domestic and literary objects. A single event wiped away all my plans, and left me a blank which I had not the spirits to fill up."⁵³

Unlike the William Byrds (father and son), Jefferson never remarried. Whether this was because of a death-bed

⁵² The earliest record is in Henry S. Randall, The Life of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1858), I, 382; also in Sarah N. Randolph, The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1871), 62-3; the other major version is in Hamilton W. Pierson, Jefferson at Monticello: The Private Life of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1862), 99-100. Elizabeth Langhorne in Monticello: A Family Story (Chapel Hill, 1989) calls the deathbed promise "apocryphal" 25. Jack McLaughlin in Jefferson and Monticello: The Biography of a Builder (New York, 1988) [I imagine following Brodie, whom he typically doesn't cite] points out that the presence of house servants can be explained by the fact that many of them were presumably her half-brothers and sisters. On the rituals of death in the nineteenth century see David Stannard, Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change (Oxford, 1977).

⁵³ T.J. to Chastellux, Nov 26, 1782. It is interesting to compare T.J.'s attitude to his wife's death to that of William Byrd to his wife's death (see above) and that of Ben Jonson to his son's death ("To Ben"). To both Byrd and Jonson, the death of their loved ones was an act in which their pride and happiness was an implicit cause. The death of Martha W.S. Jefferson, on the other hand, was a purely meaningless act, ameliorated only by the fact, Jefferson believed, that they would be re-united after death.

promise or because wealthy heiresses were in short supply in the Virginia piedmont (as his bachelor friend, James Madison well knew) is perhaps unimportant, for the memory of Jefferson's great love became an article of faith to his children.

In general, Jefferson's attitudes toward women were notably more complex than those of William Byrd. Byrd's attitudes seem to have been driven primarily by his expectations of practical advantage, sexually or financially. Jefferson, however, saw women as a separate category of persons, whose activities were to be guided by a different set of rules.

Ideas on the social status of women, then and now, are often revealed in the complex choreography of males and females at the dining table. In Washington, when Jefferson was first elected president, a tradition of male-only dinners seems to have been prevalent.⁵⁴ This may have been due as much to the fact that women infrequently visited the new and still primitive city of Washington, as to any established ideas of gender roles. Nevertheless, it is clear that Jefferson never mastered the politics of gender at the dinner table while at the White House.

⁵⁴. As Jefferson wrote to Martha from Washington, "Mrs Madison's stay here enabled me to begin an acquaintance with the ladies of the place, so as to have established the precedent of having them at our dinners..." T.J. to Martha, May 28, 1801, Family Letters, 202.

At a dinner party in December of 1803, the "absolute omission of all distinction" shocked Anthony Merry, the recently arrived British envoy to the new nation. His confusion apparently began when Jefferson offered his arm to Dolley Madison and ushered her into the dining room, where he sat down at the head of the table with Mrs. Madison at his right. The rest of the guests, uncertain of their positions, scurried for seats. The British envoy's wife in the scramble ended up in the third seat down on Jefferson's right. The Spanish minister won the number two spot. Immediately to Jefferson's left was the wife of the Spanish minister, while an "agile congressman" edged out envoy Merry for the second seat, leaving him opposite his wife. The situation was not improved, in Merry's eyes, by the inclusion of the ambassador of France with whom Great Britain was currently at war.

Whether or not this event was a studied insult, as Merry charged, or the result of Jefferson's egalitarian theories, as Jefferson and his followers responded, or simply due to naiveté (or some combination of all three) is impossible to determine. "In this country," James Madison informed Merry several days later, "people were left to seat themselves at table with as little rule as around a fire."⁵⁵ As Jefferson explained in a letter to his

⁵⁵ D. Malone, Jefferson the President, the First Term (Boston, 1970), 385. The description here is largely taken from Malone's discussion of the events, 367-392.

daughter, foreign ministers must, "acquiesce in our principles of the equality of all persons meeting together in society, and not to expect to force us into their principles of allotment into ranks and orders."⁵⁶

Nevertheless, Jefferson sought information on the social practices in effect in England and had rules of etiquette drawn up for the guidance of the executive officers.⁵⁷

The women at Monticello -- Jefferson's two daughters, Martha and Maria, and their own daughters -- were well-known in their day for being exceptionally well-educated. As one visitor remarked of them with apparent surprise, they "are obviously accustomed to join in the conversation, however high the topic might be."⁵⁸

While the major duty of a wife for William Byrd was reproduction, the catalogue of duties for a female member of Jefferson's closed family was considerably more extensive. The primary duty was that of education. Jefferson aptly

⁵⁶ T.J. to Martha, Jan 23, 1804, Family Letters, 254-5. A writer to The Washington Federalist made the suggestion that at official functions the ladies should be led into the dining room "according to seniority, the oldest first." D.Malone, Jefferson the President, the First Term, 387.

⁵⁷ D. Malone, Jefferson the President, the First Term, 385. For these rules of etiquette, see Saul Padover (ed.), The Complete Jefferson, Containing His Major Writings, Published and Unpublished, Except his Letters (New York, 1943), 309. Among these rules is one which recommends, "an adherence to the ancient useage of the country, of gentlemen in mass giving precedence to the ladies in mass, in passing from one apartment where they are assembled into another."

⁵⁸ George Ticknor in 1815, in Peterson Visitors to Monticello, 64.

described his daughter Martha Jefferson Randolph, as "the mother of many daughters as well as sons, [who] has made their education the object of her life." Martha herself remarked that she had lost all enthusiasm for the pleasures of company and found her sole comfort in, "the education of my children to which I have long devoted every moment that I could command."⁵⁹

In her role as the tutor of the little circle of scholars at Monticello, Martha guided her children in the study of literature, language and the arts. This education seems to have been more effective with her daughters, some of whom could write in French and read Latin, than with her son, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, who in his memoirs commented on his lack of education.⁶⁰

Jefferson believed that it was essential that his daughters receive a "solid education" and constantly encouraged them, and their daughters, to follow a rigorous schedule of studies.⁶¹ In a letter he wrote from the White House to Ellen Randolph, he expressed the opinion, "When I left Monticello you could not read, and now I find you can not only read, but write also. I enclose two little books

⁵⁹. Martha to T.J., Jan 31, 1801, in Family Letters, 192-3.

⁶⁰. "Thomas Jefferson Randolph Memoirs" at Alderman Library University of Virginia (Accession Number 5454-c, Box number c.f.).

⁶¹. See Appendix for an example.

as a mark of my satisfaction, and if you continue to learn as fast, you will become a learned lady and publish books yourself."⁶²

In addition to their role as educators of children, according to Jefferson, women were expected to practice the art of "household economy, in which the mothers of our country are generally skilled, and generally careful to instruct their daughters."⁶³

In this Jefferson perceived a clear division between male and female spheres. "The order and economy of a house are as honorable to the mistress as those of the farm to the master, and if either be neglected, ruin follows, and children destitute of the means of living."⁶⁴

The gender line did not stop at the front door of Monticello. It was perhaps the "ancient practice of the country" that women and men congregated and moved through the household in gender specific groups.⁶⁵ After dinner the "ladies sat until about six, then retired, but returned

⁶². T.J. to Ellen Wayles Randolph, Nov. 27, 1801, Bear, Family Letters, 212-213.

⁶³ T.J. to Nathaniel Burwell, March 14, 1818.

⁶⁴ T.J. to Nathaniel Burwell, March 14, 1818.

⁶⁵. T.J.'s "Rules of Etiquette in Washington," November, 1803, in Saul Padover, The Complete Jefferson; Containing His Major Writings... (New York, 1943), 309. Times such as that mentioned in a letter from Maria Jefferson Eppes to her husband John Wayles Eppes, when "the drawing room is full of ladies," were perhaps common; Nov. 25, 1802, in Eppes-Randolph Papers, U.Va. cited in Langhorne, Monticello, a Family Story, 102.

with the tea-tray a little before seven."⁶⁶ When Lafayette came to visit, nobody thought it strange that the four hundred guests invited to dine with him in the Rotunda at Jefferson's University of Virginia were all men.⁶⁷

The line dividing the sexes was not to Jefferson an entirely artificial one but seems to have reflected natural capabilities. As Jefferson expressed it, "the tender breasts of ladies were not formed for political convulsions."⁶⁸ Or, at another time, "Our good ladies have been too wise to wrinkle their foreheads with politics. They are contented to soothe and calm the minds of their husbands returning ruffled from political debate."⁶⁹

Despite Jefferson's encouragements to his daughters and

⁶⁶ George Ticknor, 1815, in Peterson, Visitors to Monticello, 64. This may have been so that gentlemen could relieve themselves, which they did in England according to Bevis Hillier in A Social History of Pottery, 1700-1914, in chamber pots, carried by servants. The "drawing room" at Monticello seems to have been the place to which women would have commonly "withdrawn" as it was in other elegant houses in the early nineteenth century. "the drawing room is full of ladies..." (Mary Jefferson Eppes to John Wayles Eppes, Nov 25, 1802, cited in Langhorne, 102.) See the paintings by John Singer Sargent, discussed in Antiques (May 1982), 1172-1183. See also Alexander O. Boulton, "Behind the Federal Facade," American Heritage, 40, 4, (May/June 1989), 68-75.

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Langhorne, in Monticello, a Family Story, seems to have been the first, 239; D.Malone, The Sage of Monticello (Boston, 1981), 405n.

⁶⁸ T.J. to Angelica Schuyler Church, Sept 21, 1788, in McLaughlin 192.

⁶⁹ T.J. to Mrs. William Bingham, May 11, 1788 (Boyd, 13:151-52), also Langhorne, Monticello, a Family Story, 36.

granddaughters to serious study, the education of women in general, he declared, should have an emphasis on the "ornaments" and the "amusements of life." "These, for a female, are dancing, drawing and music." To this Jefferson added the advice that "the French rule is wise, that no lady dances after marriage. This is founded in solid physical reasons, gestation and nursing leaving little time to a married lady when this exercise can be either safe or innocent."⁷⁰

To Jefferson it was written in nature and not a question for dispute that a woman must place herself in subordination to her husband's will in all things. He gave the same advice to each of his daughters when they got married. To Martha he wrote, "The happiness of your life depends now on the continuing to please a single person. To this all other objects must be secondary,"⁷¹ and to Maria, "Harmony in the marriage state is the very first object to be aimed at. Nothing can preserve affections uninterrupted but a firm resolution never to differ in will."⁷²

Children played a key role in the construction of Jefferson's social reality for Jefferson founded his *raison d'être* not in the pleasures of the present but in his hopes for the future. The progress of mankind, which he surely

⁷⁰ T.J. to Nathaniel Burwell, March 14, 1818.

⁷¹ T.J. to Martha April 4, 1790, Family Letters, 51.

⁷² T.J. to Mary Jan 7, 1798, Family Letters, 152.

expected, was dependent on the education of children. Within his own family, and within the society at large, education and progress relied on both material incentives and bonds of affection. Jefferson's letters to his seven-year-old daughter Maria, encouraging her to join him in France, reveal how all these could be combined at an early stage of a child's development. When she comes to France, Jefferson pleads,

...you shall be taught here to play on the harpsichord, to draw, to dance, to read and talk French and such other things as will make you more worthy of the love of your friends. But above all things, by our care and love of you, we will teach you to love us more than you will do if you stay so far from us. I have no opportunity since Colo. LaMaier went, to send you any thing: but when you come here you shall have as many dolls and playthings as you want for yourself, or to send to your cousins when ever you shall have opportunities. I hope you are a very good girl...[There follows, inevitably, a list of things to do and not do, ending with,].... If you will always practice these lessons we shall continue to love you as we do now, and it is impossible to love you more.

A constant shower of presents insured the affection of Jefferson's children and grandchildren. His granddaughter Virginia Randolph Trist would remember in 1839 that "often he discovered, we knew not how, some cherished object of our

⁷³ T.J. to Mary, Sept 20, 1785, Family Papers, 29-30. Maria Jefferson, in fact, throughout her life in her letters to Jefferson almost invariably closes with a request for Jefferson to obtain for her some object.

desires, and the first intimation we had of his knowing the wish was its unexpected gratification." On one occasion "Cornelia (then eight or ten years old) . . . involuntarily expressed aloud some feelings which possessed her bosom, by saying, 'I never had a silk dress in my life.' The next day a silk dress came from Charlottesville to Cornelia and (to make the rest of us equally happy) also a pair of pretty dresses for May and myself." Another time, "A lady of our neighborhood was going to the West, and wished to part with her guitar, but she asked so high a price that I never in my dreams aspired to its possession. One morning, on going down to breakfast, I saw the guitar . . . grandpapa told me that if I would promise to learn to play on it I should have it."⁷⁴ Ellen Randolph Coolidge gave other examples, "When about fifteen years old, I began to think of a watch, but knew the state of my father's finances promised no such indulgence. One afternoon the letter-bag was brought in. Among the letters was a small packet addressed to my grandfather. It had the Philadelphia mark upon it. I looked at it with indifferent, incurious eye. Three hours after, an elegant lady's watch, with chain and seals, was in my hand, which trembled for very joy. My Bible came from him, my Shakespeare, my first writing table, my first handsome writing desk, my first Leghorn hat, my first silk

⁷⁴. Sarah N. Randolph, The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson, 347-8.

dress. What, in short, of all my small treasures did not come from him?"⁷⁵

Jefferson's purposes in these extravagances cannot be determined, but it is clear that his children and grandchildren often failed to distinguish between Jefferson's tangible and intangible gifts.

Jefferson frequently encouraged competitions between his children. Some times these were innocent games led by Jefferson and played on Monticello's lawn. But the frequency with which he encouraged his children with such phrases as "when we meet at Monticello, let me see who has improved the most," suggests that Jefferson was not simply being frivolous.⁷⁶

⁷⁵. Randolph, Domestic Life, 345.

⁷⁶ "My dear children, I am very happy to find that two of you can write. I shall now expect that whenever it is inconvenient for your papa and mama to write, one of you will write on a piece of paper these words 'all is well' and send it for me to the post office. I am happy too that Miss Ellen can now read so readily. If she will make haste and read through all the books I have given her, and will let me know when she is through them, I will go and carry her some more. I shall now see whether she wishes to see me as much as she says. I wish to see you all: and the more I perceive that you are all advancing in your learning and improving in good dispositions the more I shall love you, and the more everybody will love you. It is a charming thing to be loved by everybody; and the way to obtain it is, never to quarrel or be angry with anybody and to tell a story. Do all the kind things you can to your companions, give them every thing rather than to yourself. Pity and help any thing you see in distress and learn your books and improve your minds. This will make every body fond of you, and desirous of doing it to you. Go on then my dear children, and, when we meet at Monticello, let me see who has improved the most." T.J. to Anne Cary, Thomas Jefferson, and Ellen Wayles Randolph, Mar 2, 1802; Family Letters, 218. For mention of a "race in writing

The final prize, for Jefferson's daughters and granddaughters was to be Jefferson's favorite, and it was no secret to anyone in the family who was so honored. Between his daughters, Martha, the elder, held the spot closest to Jefferson's heart. The relationship between father and daughter was so strong that even when married Martha commonly would write such sentiments as, "I feel every day more strongly the impossibility of becoming habituated to your absence. Separated in my infancy from every other friend, and accustomed to look up to you alone, every sentiment of tenderness my nature was susceptible of was for many years centered in you, and no connexion formed since that could weaken a sentiment interwoven with my very existence."⁷⁷

Maria herself acknowledged her secondary position in her father's affections in a letter in 1801, "I rejoice that you have in her [Martha] so great a source of comfort and one who is in every way so worthy of you, satisfied if my dear Papa is only assured that in the most tender love to him I yield to no one."⁷⁸ Among the next generation Ellen

between Virginia and Francis," see T.J. to Anne Randolph Bankhead, Dec 29, 1809, Family Letters, 394.

⁷⁷. Martha to T.J., Jan.22, 1798, Family Letters, 153-54.

⁷⁸ Mary to T.J. Feb 2, 1801 on Martha, Family Letters, 194. A portrait of Maria as shy, and suffering from feelings of inferiority is also depicted by Langhorne, 97-103, 120-126. Mary's niece Ellen W. Coolidge, commented on the competition of the sisters for their father's affection in a letter cited in Sarah N. Randolph, Domestic Life, 302.

would be the favorite.

Among the males in the family, the competition had a more material goal. As Locke had argued, "the Power Men generally have to bestow their Estates on those, who please them best . . . is no small Tye on the Obedience of Children."⁷⁹ Wherever primogeniture was the common practice, relations between parent and child were necessarily based on immediate estimations of gains or losses since the ultimate disposition of a father's estate was never in doubt. Partible inheritance, on the other hand, could be used a continual carrot to encourage obedience, giving the father much greater powers over his family than those of a classical patriarch. The uncertainty of the ultimate disposition of Jefferson's estate played an important role in the dynamics of Jefferson's family and shaped the lives of all his dependents.⁸⁰

⁷⁹. John Locke, Two Treatise on Government, Peter Laslett, ed., (Cambridge, 1960), II,72,10-73,1.

⁸⁰. For the importance of inheritance in family formation see; Richard M. Smith, ed., Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle (Cambridge, 1984); Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and E.P. Thompson, Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800 (Cambridge, 1976); Carole Shammas, Marylynn Salmon and Michel Dahlin, Inheritance in America, from Colonial Times to the Present (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1987). For a New England study see; Philip J.Greven Jr., Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, New York, 1970). Favoring the eldest son was a common practice in late eighteenth-century Albemarle county (Alan Kulikoff, Tobacco and Slaves, The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1986), 201, and Jefferson himself received a double portion of his father's estate (Dumas Malone, Jefferson the Virginian, 435ff), as per Locke Two Treatises,

Jefferson's letters to Martha in the final months of his presidency make the connection explicit. It was Jefferson's "wish and expectation, that when I return to live at Monticello, Mr. Randolph, yourself and family would live there with me, and that his estate being employed entirely for meeting his own difficulties, would place him at ease. Our lands, if we preserve them, are sufficient to place all the children in independence."⁸¹ And, a month later, "My only reason for anxiety to keep my property unimpaired is to leave it as a provision for yourselves and your family. This I trust I shall be able to do, and that we shall be able to live in the meantime in love and comfort."⁸²

The final disposition of Jefferson's estate did not become clear until the last years of his life, by which time it had become obvious that Jefferson was overwhelmed by debts. Jefferson's grandson (through the marriage of Maria to John Wayles Eppes) Francis Wayles Eppes was probably the only person to have benefitted from Jefferson's patrimony.⁸³ This at one time might have seemed like an

I, para.115,1-2.

⁸¹ T.J. to Martha, Jan 5, 1808, Family Letters, 319.

⁸² T.J. to Martha, Feb 6, 1808; Family Letters, p327. See also, T.J. to Martha, Feb 27, 1809, 385-6; Martha to T.J. Mar 2, 1809, 386-8.

⁸³ This discussion of events surrounding the Eppes claim to Jefferson's estate is largely taken from D. Malone The Sage of Monticello, 285-289; and the relevant letters in Family

unlikely event. A breach in relations between John Wayles Eppes and the clan at Monticello stemming from a rivalry between him and Thomas Mann Randolph (Martha's husband), and exacerbated by Eppes remarriage following Maria's death, prevented Eppes from visiting Monticello from 1812 to 1819. His son, Francis Wayles Eppes, however was able to maintain his position in Jefferson's affections through his correspondence. Typical perhaps is this early (1813) letter, written when Francis Eppes was eleven:

Dear Grand Papa, I wish to see you very much. I am Sorry that you wont Write to me. This letter will make twice I have wrote to you and if you dont answer this leter I Shant write to you any more. I have got trough my latin Gramer and I am going trough again. I enclose a leter in this from My Cousin Wale Baker. Give my love to all of the family. Believe me to remain with the filial love your most affectionate Grand Son; Francis Eppes.

As Francis grew up, he penned a succession of such letters which rarely failed to mention his affection for his grandfather, his continuing education, requests for advice - and an update on his financial situation.⁸⁵ It is

Letters. Also relevant is Norma B. Cuthbert, "Poplar Forest: Jefferson's Legacy to His Grandson," Huntington Library Quarterly, VI (May, 1943).

⁸⁴ Francis Eppes to T.J., April 11, 1813, Family Letters, 402. "Big, childish script," D.Malone, The Sage of Monticello, 288.

⁸⁵ See Family Letters, 401-408.

difficult to read Jefferson's correspondence with his grandson without getting the feeling that the two had established a tacit contract. If Eppes continued his studies and his professions of affection for Jefferson, then Jefferson, when the time was appropriate, would settle a portion of his estate upon the youth. The time came in 1824, when Jefferson revealed that a settlement had previously been agreed upon in negotiations (of which only Jefferson was aware) between Jefferson and Eppes's father, Maria Jefferson's husband, John Wayles Eppes. As a result, Eppes came into possession of Poplar Forest, Jefferson's estate in Bedford county (which was at the same time protected from Jefferson's creditors).⁸⁶

Jefferson's other major heirs did not fare quite so well. Thomas Mann Randolph, Martha's husband, seemed to have established a similar tacit contract with Jefferson, and seemed to be directly in line for a major share of Jefferson's estate. Visitors to Monticello, observing the close comradery of the two men during the early years of Randolph's marriage to Martha, described Randolph's status

⁸⁶. This can be traced in Family Letters; Francis Eppes to T.J. Dec 28, 1819, 432. F.W.E. to T.J. Oct. 31, 1822, 446-48. T.J. to F.W.E., Apr 22, 1823, 448. F.W.E. to T.J., April 23, 1824, 448-49. T.J. to F.W.E. May 6, 1824, 450-51. F.W.E. to T.J. Feb 23, 1826, 470 For more see T.J.'s will March 16-17, 1826, reproduced in Randall III, 665-67; Family Letters, Note #1, 451.

in Jefferson's eyes as "more his son than his son-in-law."⁸⁷

Randolph's position, however, was not as secure as it appeared. Despite the advantages of being Jefferson's son-in-law, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and three times governor of Virginia, his life seems to have been shadowed by failure. Throughout his career he was caught in a cycle of credit and debt familiar to many Virginia planters. His position as Jefferson's heir-apparent had both positive and negative aspects. At critical points Randolph's plans for resolving his financial problems by consolidating his estates or by moving west were stymied by Jefferson's and Martha's resolution that the family should not be dispersed.⁸⁸ Jefferson's encouragements to Randolph were both emotional and material. During one of Randolph's financial crises, Jefferson suggested selling some of his own land, stating that the proceeds, "whether they go to pay your debts or mine is perfectly equal to me, as I consider our property as a

⁸⁷ The statement made by Duc de La Rouchfoucauld Liancourt, in Voyages dans les Etats-Unis d'Amerique, V, 32-33, is quoted in William H. Gaines, Jr. Thomas Mann Randolph, Jefferson's Son-in-Law, (Baton Rouge, 1966), 40.

⁸⁸ See; Gaines, Thomas Mann Randolph; Elizabeth Langhorne, Monticello, a Family Story 114-120. On consolidating estates, Martha to T.J. April 25, 1790, Family Letters, 52-3,; on moving west see T.J. to Mary, March 29, 1802, Family Letters, 220-21.

common stock for our joint family."⁸⁹

As the true extent of Randolph's difficulties began to emerge, it became obvious that Jefferson's estate had to be put beyond the reach of Randolph's creditors. The first act in this design was Jefferson's decision in 1815 to name Thomas Mann Randolph's son, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, as the manager of Jefferson's plantations. From that point on, relations between the Randolphs, father, wife and son, and Jefferson skidded down a slippery course.

The relation of father and son soon deteriorated into what Thomas Mann Randolph's biographer has called an "open war" that on at least one occasion led to blows.⁹⁰ Randolph, falling deeper into melancholy, ceased conversations with the household and visitors to Monticello; then he left the mountain during the day, returning only at night; and finally he left the mountain, and his family altogether, to live in the nearby village of Milton. In 1828, Thomas Mann Randolph, died penniless, without land or property, denied the right to vote or to serve as an elected official in the state of Virginia.

The benefits to Randolph's son, Thomas Jefferson

⁸⁹ T.J. to T.M.R. Jan 31, 1809.

⁹⁰ Gaines, 156. Edmund Bacon reminiscences in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 94; "I have seen him cane his son Jeff after he was a grown man. Jeff made no resistance, but got away from him as soon as he could." Thomas Jefferson Randolph in his "The Last Days of Jefferson," refuted the charge (at the Alderman Library).

Randolph, Thomas Jefferson's "sole executor" are exceedingly dubious however. In 1819, Jefferson's own financial affairs, always precarious, came apart. Jefferson's debts upon his death in 1826 totaled over \$100,000. On the other hand, Jefferson's major creditor was Thomas Jefferson Randolph, to whom he apparently owed \$60,000.⁹¹

The result of Jefferson's techniques of family management was that he was able to command complete obedience from both the male and female members of his family. Martha Jefferson Randolph's devotion to Jefferson was obsessive, but among all his dependents it was a virtual article of faith. At Monticello at least, Jefferson was right when he explained that "Nature knows no laws between

⁹¹ For a discussion of Thomas Jefferson's final estate see D. Malone, The Sage of Monticello, Appendix II, E., 511-512. The final word on Jefferson's finances has yet to be written. Malone's figures and Jefferson's will and family papers suggest a variety of speculations on Jefferson's attempts to protect his family members from his creditors, apparently successfully in the case of Francis Wayles Eppes. The unusual circumstances of Thomas Mann Randolph's death take on an interesting perspective in light of Jefferson's wishes described in his will in the event of his remaining son-in-laws' demise.

On T.J.'s, and Martha's evaluations of T.J. Randolph's character see, Family Letters 360 Martha to T.J. Nov 18, 1808 on T.J.R.; "His understanding I have for many years thought favorably of. His judgement when not under the influence of passion is as good as can be expected at his age but he is indolent impatient of reproof and at times irritable. He is anxious to learn rigidly correct in his morals and affectionate in his temper. I see enough of the Randolph character in him to give me some uneasiness as to the future..." [See also T.J. to J. Adams Oct 28, 1813, on Randolph character].

parent and child, but the will of the parent."⁹²

The government of Jefferson's family by a combination of incentives, competition and affection, grounded in a theory of "natural law," had parallels in the constructions of other social relationships that Jefferson imagined. Jefferson's plan of educational reform was in many ways only an extension of the design for self-improvement instigated by him within his family.

Jefferson's "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," which he described as the most important part of his proposals for the revision of Virginia's constitution,⁹³ proposed to "lay off every county into small districts of five or six miles square, called hundreds, and in each of them to establish a school for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic." All the children in a district would receive three years of elementary education at the public expense. In addition to the three R's, "the first elements of morality too may be instilled into their minds. . . by shewing them that it does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed them, but is always the result of a good conscience,

⁹² T.J. to T.M.R.Sr. Oct 22, 1790; in Langhorne, 60.

⁹³ William Peden, ed., Thomas Jefferson: Notes on the State of Virginia (Chapel Hill, 1954), 289n; Jefferson's system of education is described in Notes, 146-7; and in his Autobiography, in Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds., The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1944), 49-51.

good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits." At the end of each year "the boy of best genius in the school" would be sent to one of twenty grammar schools in the state to learn "Greek, Latin, geography, and the higher branches of numerical arithmetic. Of the boys thus sent in any one year, trial is to be made at the grammar schools one or two years, and the best genius of the whole selected, and continued six years, and the residue dismissed. By this means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually. . . . At the end of six years instruction, one half are to be discontinued. . . and the other half, who are to be chosen for the superiority of their parts and disposition, are to be sent and continued three years in the study of such sciences as they shall chuse," at a state university.

Although all children presumably had an equal opportunity for education, the goal of this system was not the universal distribution of knowledge. Jefferson's scheme of education was not basically democratic, for it's primary goal was the establishment of a "natural aristocracy." This would have the effect of substituting effort, chance, and deference, for birth as qualifications for success. It is difficult to imagine that such an aristocracy would be particularly enlightened. Taught from infancy that education and personal advancement was dependent on aggressive competition, deference to superiors and a lack of

critical initiative, the class of mandarins so formed would be small improvement upon any other form of aristocracy.

Jefferson's attitudes toward slavery and race are entirely consistent with the rest of his social philosophy. The major characteristics of his attitudes toward education, the family, women, slavery, and race are identical. The great paradox of Jefferson's life and thought -- the contradiction between his egalitarianism and his slaveholding, and between his humanitarianism and his racism -- was (like Locke's paradox) not an aberration from his theories but integral to them.

Jefferson's lifelong opposition to slavery is a matter of record in his public actions and in his private letters. As a member of the House of Burgesses he introduced a bill to allow manumission. Later, his indictment of the slave trade was so strident that congress had it excised from the Declaration of Independence. In his Notes on the State of Virginia Jefferson noted that, "the whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other."⁹⁴ His

⁹⁴ "The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards

efforts to have slavery prohibited in the Northwest Territories, codified in the Ordinance of 1787, and to have the foreign slave trade outlawed in 1808, set the course which ultimately ended in complete emancipation in the thirteenth amendment. His private letters indicate that he never wavered in his belief that slavery was wrong. Although Jefferson regularly avoided taking unpopular stands that might jeopardize his political support, he was commonly criticized by his Federalist opponents in elections in both Virginia and South Carolina for his anti-slavery views. In the early days of the two-party system the Jeffersonian Republicans seemed the better defender of the freedom of the common worker, white or black.

Jefferson's criticisms of slavery read like a litany of middle-class values. The (white) child watching his parent is educated in the exercise of tyranny, his worst passions are let loose, his industry is destroyed. Finally, even the authority of the state is brought into question since "the

his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities." Notes on The State of Virginia, 162. It is interesting to note that the passage reflects Jefferson's concerns with the themes of family, emotional restraint, and education. Compare it with Byrd's opinions on slavery, see above. A good introduction to Jefferson's ideas on slavery is John C. Miller, The Wolf By The Ears, Thomas Jefferson and Slavery (New York, 1977).

liberties of a nation [can only] be thought secure when . . . their . . . firm basis, [is] a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God."⁹⁵ As Jefferson, realized the existence of slavery represented a constant threat to the rights of all citizens to the secure possession of their liberties and estates.

In this imperfect situation, it is not surprising that Jefferson's system of plantation management exhibited characteristics of two disparate world views. In many ways, Jefferson's slave community was similar to a village community in England before the tumults of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; before the widescale enclosure of lands, before the breakdown of a traditional social organization, and before Locke, Hutcheson, and Adam Smith redefined the nature of the social and physical world.

Slaves, like English peasants, inhabited a spiritual universe in which they were interconnected by a complex network of relationships. They practiced a form of communal ownership of property. Like English villagers, they divided their time between cultivating their own plots of land and working the cash crop on their lord's desmaine. Although they lived in impermanent houses scattered around the big house, many of them passed at least a part of their lives at the big house. They established their personal identities partly from their relations with the land owner, partly

⁹⁵. Peden, Notes on The State of Virginia, 162-3.

through their variety of talents and personal attributes, and partly through the network of family relations which they generally traced through both the male and female branches of the family.⁹⁶

At Monticello, marital ties were respected by Jefferson's slaves, even if they were not recognized by the law. Consequently, families and their descendants can frequently be traced in Jefferson's Farm Book and Garden Book through several generations. Children, however, were a community resource, and the responsibility for their care was dispersed throughout the community, a fact which Jefferson acknowledged in his instructions to his overseer to "build the Negro houses near together that the fewer nurses may serve & that the children may be more easily attended to by the superannuated women" and in his instructions that "children till 10 years old to serve as nurses."⁹⁷

Jefferson respected this world of traditional relationships but realized that the success of his estates depended on his ability to institute new relationships which would supersede the older ways. The traditional community was Jefferson's tabula rasa upon which he wrote his modern philosophy of labor management. To do this Jefferson

⁹⁶. See Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together, Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia (Princeton, 1987).

⁹⁷ Farm Book, plate 77.

created his own "natural aristocracy" among his slaves, a hierarchy based upon both natural talents and family relationships, which he encouraged by liberal incentives, and which was characterized by ample deference to Jefferson and his family.⁹⁸

At the top of his hierarchy were Jefferson's personal body servants, Jupiter and, after his death in 1800, Burwell. Jupiter, whom Jefferson inherited from his father, and presumably knew as a child, held this position until his death in 1800. Jupiter's favored position is attested to by the fact that he sometimes carried the keys to Jefferson's storage rooms at Monticello and by his ability upon occasion to lend Jefferson money (at one time the total amounted to over L.50.⁹⁹) To Jefferson's granddaughter, Ellen, all others were counted second "as the object of affection after her Mama and uckin Juba."¹⁰⁰ After Jupiter's death, Burwell (a grandson of Betty Hemings) held the favored

⁹⁸. This interpretation was influenced by Malcolm X's observation that in slavery, "there were two kinds of Negroes. There was... [the] old house Negro and the field Negro." Malcolm X on Afro-American History, (Pathfinder, New York, 1967; second edition, 1970), 63 (See also Alex Haley, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, [New York, 1964], p239); and by W.E.B. Dubois discussion of "twoness" in The Souls of Black Folk, (1903), 45-46.

⁹⁹ Keys, T.J. to T.M.R. Feb 4, 1800, in Farm Book, 17; Debts, see Account Book in Alderman library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, passim; L.50 on May 2, 1781.

¹⁰⁰ T.J. to Mary Apr 13, 1799, Family Letters, 177.

position and was trusted with the keys.¹⁰¹

Outside the immediate household, "Great" George and his wife Ursula (sometimes called "King" and "Queen") were equally important. Great George, the blacksmith responsible for Jefferson's nailery, was credited with having saved the family silver when the British overran Monticello in 1781 and possibly gained his freedom as a result.¹⁰²

Descendants of Betty Hemings always were near to the center of power at Monticello, especially after Jefferson's return to Monticello following his terms as president, by which time many of the slaves who had come to him from his father, and who had obtained relatively high positions, had died. Betty Hemings had come to Jefferson with his wife's inheritance from her father John Wayles, and most scholars agree that she was the mother of six children by Wayles. These six, Martha Jefferson's brother's and sisters, with their children and kin dominated the ranks of Jefferson's domestic staff and artisans.

Robert Hemings, the eldest of Betty's children with

¹⁰¹ Keys see Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, E. Bacon's reminiscences, 99.

¹⁰² "Memoirs of a Monticello Slave[Isaac Jefferson]" in Bear Jefferson at Monticello, 8, and see 124, note 27. Ursula may have been named after William Byrd's daughter Ursula, see 5, and 124, note 18. Isaac Jefferson's version differs from that of the family as repeated in Sarah Randolph, The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson, which credits Martin Hemings and Caesar with saving the family silver, 56. No doubt both versions had been the subject of much elaboration over the years.

John Wayles, seems to have been virtually unrestricted in his movements throughout Virginia, and Jefferson in his letters is constantly trying to discover his whereabouts.¹⁰³ He was eventually freed and lived in Richmond where he worked as a smith and owned some property.¹⁰⁴ James Hemings, who studied cooking in Paris while Jefferson was French ambassador, was granted his freedom in 1796 but, unable to adjust to his new situation, he killed himself in Philadelphia in 1802.¹⁰⁵ John Hemings stayed with Jefferson and was perhaps, in Jefferson's later years, as close to Jefferson as Burwell (who was also a Hemings, although not a descendant of John Wayles). A carpenter, credited with much of the woodworking and furniture at Monticello, John Hemings and four other slaves (all descendants of Betty Hemings, two of them descendants of Sally Hemings) were eventually freed according to the terms of Jefferson's will. Of Betty Hemings's twelve children and nineteen grandchildren, nine gained their freedom, two by running away, two in Jefferson's lifetime, and five in Jefferson's will.

¹⁰³ For example, "If you know any thing of Bob [Hemings], I should be glad of the same notice to him, 'tho I suppose him to be in the neighborhood of Fredericksbg, and in that case I will have him notified thro' Mr Fitzhugh." T.J. to Martha, Aug 8, 1790, Family Letters, 63. See also: T.J. to Martha, Feb 24, 1793, 111; Martha to T.J. Jan 15, 1795, 131; T.J. to Martha, Jan 22, 1795, 132-3.

¹⁰⁴ See Langhorne, 75-6

¹⁰⁵ Langhorne 104-108, McLaughlin 222.

Life at the top of the slave hierarchy may have been relatively pleasant, and, at least at this level, the system seems to have been characterized by the permeability of the boundary between slave status and free, and black and white. The bonds uniting black slaves and Jefferson's white family could be shown in the affectionate titles sometimes bestowed on certain slaves. "Daddy" (John) Hemings was one of the favorites of the children at Monticello.¹⁰⁶ "Mammy" Ursula (the granddaughter of "Queen" and the wife of Wormley, the gardener and grandson of Betty Hemings) was Martha Jefferson Randolph's nurse, responsible for all the pre-school Randolphs, and was said to be the only one who ever switched the Jefferson grandchildren.¹⁰⁷ The familiarity between whites and blacks was such that Jefferson's brother, Randolph Jefferson, as one of Jefferson's slaves remembered, was known to "come out among the black people, play the fiddle and dance half the night." Martha Randolph was sufficiently familiar with slave folk tales and songs that she was able to recite several at length to a visitor who

¹⁰⁶ McLaughlin, Jefferson and Monticello, from reminiscence by Ellen Randolph Coolidge, probably in Sarah Randolph, Domestic Life.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Bacon's Reminiscences, in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 101. Ursula was perhaps originally one of William Byrd's slaves, named after his daughter, and sold to John Wayles, who willed her to his daughter Martha.

wrote them down.¹⁰⁸

The ties between Jefferson's black and white families often had a material basis. John Hemings and Burwell, in Jefferson's last years received annual gratuities for their services.¹⁰⁹ Other slaves as well were recipients of money either as tips from visitors, which was a common practice,¹¹⁰ or as payment for goods or services. Jefferson's Account Book mentions numerous payments to slaves for chickens, eggs and vegetables produced by his slaves, while Moses and other slaves were paid for cleaning the Monticello sewers.

Such rewards were not solely spontaneous gestures of good will. A system of incentives was integral to Jefferson's plantation management. Jefferson realized that maintaining authority over slaves depended either on the immediate and continual application of force or the promise of compensation, and Jefferson used both. Despite his wish to avoid the use of the whip, there is evidence that it was never far from hand at Monticello. The duty was generally delegated to one of Jefferson's overseers, who were

¹⁰⁸ Eugene Vail, De la Literature et des hommes de lettres des Etats Unis d'Amerique, discussed, with examples, in Langhorne, Monticello a Family Story, 168-175.

¹⁰⁹ \$20 each, see Account Book.

¹¹⁰ See for example Isaac Jefferson in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 16-17.

cautioned to exercise it sparingly.¹¹¹ Ultimately, when it came to disciplining slaves, Jefferson believed in no half-measures. As Edmund Bacon, one of his overseers, remarked, Jefferson preferred to have a slave sold than whipped: "His orders to me were constant: that if there was any servant that could not be got along without the chastising that was customary, to dispose of him." For Jefferson the best way of handling a discontented slave (beyond the customary chastising) was total exclusion.¹¹²

But the heart of Jefferson's system of plantation management lay his system of rewards according to a graduation of tasks based on, first, distinctions of age and sex, and, later, on individual talents. As described in Jefferson's Farm Book, "children till 10 years old to serve as nurses. from 10 to 16 the boys make nails, the girls spin. at 16 go into the ground or learn trades."¹¹³

The nailery, established at Monticello in 1794 and continued till almost the end of Jefferson's life, was

¹¹¹ See, e.g. E. Bacon's reminiscences in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 98. Burwell was the only slave specifically identified as one who should not be whipped, see T.M.R. to T.J., Jan 31, 1801, in Farm Book, 443. See also, T.J. to T.M.R. Jan 23, 1801, the whip "must not be resorted to but in extremities. as they will be again under my government, I would chuse they should retain the stimulus of character." Farm Book, 442. See also T.J. to Reuben Perry, April 16, 1812, Farm Book, 34-35.

¹¹² See also T.J. to T.M.R., June 8, 1803, in Farm Book, 19.

¹¹³ Farm Book, plate 77.

perhaps the most important part of this system. Children from each of Jefferson's plantations in Albemarle and Bedford county were brought to Monticello to make nails. In this way Jefferson could make a profit while at the same time he could oversee the talents of his young slaves, who, if they fared well, could look forward to an apprenticeship with one of the Monticello artisans. According to one of Jefferson's slave's reminiscences, Jefferson "Give the boys in the nail factory a pound of meat a week, a dozen herrings, a quart of molasses, and peck of meal. Give them that wukked the best a suit of red or blue; encouraged them mightily."¹¹⁴

Jefferson did not leave to chance a just appraisal of each of his young nailers' work. He commonly kept track of their output. In 1794, for example he noted that out of a hundred pounds of nail rod, Moses wasted 15 pounds; Sheperd, 18; Barnaby, 22; Davy, 18.2; Jamey, 29.83; Ben, 28; Joe, 19; Wormely, 16.25; and Burwell, 29.

Jefferson noted as well that Great George, who managed the nailery, was to receive 3 percent of the nails sold or 6 percent of the clear profits.¹¹⁵ Incentives to workmen of a percentage of their product was a commonplace on Jefferson's estates. To encourage slave women's spinning

¹¹⁴ Isaac Jefferson, "Memoirs of a Monticello Slave," in Bear Jefferson at Monticello, 23.

¹¹⁵ Farm Book, plate 111. Such note-taking is typical of Jefferson's obsession for record keeping.

and weaving, he gave to each of them a "proportion of her time," which was to be greater during their period of apprenticeship.¹¹⁶ At Monticello the cooper, Barnaby, received one barrel out of every thirty-one he produced, and Nace received a similar percentage.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Jame Hubbard and Hal, the hog keepers at Poplar Forest, were to retain 2 hogs (of the total 75) for themselves.¹¹⁸ The production of crops was no different. As Edmund Bacon noted, "we used to get up a strife between the different overseers, to see which would make the largest crops, by giving premiums. The one that delivered the best crop of wheat to the hand had an extra barrel of flour; the best crop of tobacco, a fine Sunday suit; the best lot of pork, an extra hundred and fifty pounds of bacon. Negro Jim [overseer at Monticello] always had the best pork, so that the other overseers said it was no use for them to try any more, as he would get it anyway."¹¹⁹

The best jobs at Monticello were always filled by those slaves with "family connections." John Hemings was

¹¹⁶ T.J. to Jeremiah a Goodman, Dec 1811, in Garden Book, 466,

¹¹⁷ Account Book Mar 17, 1813. June 26, 1821. Cited in Farm Book, 463.

¹¹⁸ T.J. to Jeremiah Goodman, Dec 1811, in Garden Book, 467.

¹¹⁹ E. Bacon reminiscences in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 51. A slave named George was also an overseer at Monticello in 1797-99, See Farm Book, 149; T.M.R. to T.J. Feb 3, 1798, 152; T.M.R. to T.J. June 3, 1798, 268.

apprenticed to the carpenter James Dinsmore, Joe Fosset (a grandson of Betty Hemings) was apprenticed to William Stewart the blacksmith. Bedford Davy, Bedford John, Bedford Phil and Bedford Moses, however, as their names indicate, did make at least some part of the transition from distant quarter to home plantation.

Jefferson's system of incentives was not only directed at the production of material goods. Jefferson encouraged the formation of slave families. Slaves in families, as he knew, were more tractable, and their offspring would increase his estate. Far from leading to the destruction of families, the institution of slavery, as practiced at Monticello, gave positive encouragement to the formation and maintenance of families.

Central to his plan were encouragements for slaves to marry other slaves whom Jefferson owned, rather than slaves on others' plantations. As he explained to an overseer, "Certainly there is nothing I desire so much as that all the young people in the estate should intermarry with one another and stay at home. They are worth a great deal more in that case than when they have husbands and wives abroad."¹²⁰

To this purpose Jefferson rewarded his slaves who found mates on his plantation, "I would wish you to give to

¹²⁰ T.J. to J.A. Goodman Jan 6, 1815, in Garden Book, 539-40.

Dick's Hanah a pot, and a bed, which I always promise them when they take husbands at home, and I shall be very glad to hear that others of the young people follow their example."¹²¹ Jefferson seems to have tried to provide his slave families with houses of their own as well. "Maria [a slave at Poplar Forest] having now a child," Jefferson wrote to his overseer, "I promised her a house to be built this winter, be so good as to have it done."¹²²

Despite Jefferson's liberal incentives, and humane attitudes toward his slave population, Jefferson was a firm and vociferous believer in their natural inferiority. Jefferson's racism is sometimes blamed on the social values of the community in which he lived, but he was far ahead of his contemporaries in fashioning an argument of racial superiority. His racist beliefs were rooted in the most advanced scientific and philosophical learning of his day. Jefferson's racism was inspired by the epistemology of John Locke, the political theory of David Hume, the "celtic revival" of Scotch writers, the "Saxon Myth" of Enlightenment political theorists, and the scientific theories of a school of French biologists.

The result of Jefferson's great learning is found in his Notes on the State of Virginia. There he speaks of

¹²¹ T.J. to J.A. Goodman Jan 6, 1815, Garden Book, 539-540.

¹²² T.J. to Joel Yancey, Nov 10, 1818.

"that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions" of the negro. In contrast to these Jefferson praised the white's "flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, [blacks] own judgment in favour of the whites, declared in their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species." In addition, Jefferson remarked that blacks, "have less hair on the face and body, They sweat less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin, which gives them a very strong and disagreeable odour. This greater degree of transpiration renders them more tolerant of heat, and less so of cold, than the whites." They "require less sleep." "They are at least as brave, and more adventuresome. But this may perhaps proceed from a want of forethought, which prevents them from seeing a danger till it be present. . . . They are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. Their griefs are transient. . . . Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior."¹²³ These evidences, based upon empirical observation, led Jefferson to conclude that distinctions between blacks and whites were founded in natural law.

¹²³ Peden, Notes, 138-9.

Jefferson wrote about the "real distinctions which nature has made," and argued that, "It is not their condition . . . but their nature, which has produced the distinction."¹²⁴

A racial theory, stated so explicitly in this passage, lies at the heart of all of Jefferson's "science" as expressed in the Notes on the State of Virginia. His concept of the fixity of species in his discussion of mammoth bones found in America,¹²⁵ and his arguments against a single creation, which are found in his description of the passage of the "Patowmack through the Blue ridge" mountains,¹²⁶ are all in conformity with eighteenth-century theories which argued for a separate creation of black and white races.¹²⁷ Jefferson seems to have seen all of Virginia from its mountains and rivers to its "Productions, Mineral, Vegetable and Animal," through a prism of race.

Winthrop Jordan, in an important study of the origins of American racial attitudes, points out how much of

¹²⁴. Peden, Notes on the State of Virginia, 138, 142.

¹²⁵. Answer to Query VI, Peden, Notes on the State of Virginia, 53-54.

¹²⁶. Query IV, Peden, Notes on the State of Virginia, 19.

¹²⁷. See Richard H. Popkin, "The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism," in Craig Walton and John P. Anton, Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts, Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider (Athens, Ohio, 1974), 126-165. For a similar argument made by New England Federalists, see Linda Kerber, Federalists in Dissent, Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America (Ithaca, New York, 1970), 53-56.

Jefferson's descriptions of blacks is sexual in nature.¹²⁸ Jefferson argues at length that blacks are less beautiful than whites. Furthermore, among blacks "love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation. . . . Their love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination."¹²⁹ Jefferson, according to Jordan, was acutely ambivalent toward sex and power, and his ambivalence influenced his general indictment of blacks.

At the root of Jefferson's attitudes toward race, however, is his practical concern for the integrity of the family. The main object of Jefferson's comments on race in Notes on the State of Virginia, and in most of his writings, is to set out the case against racial mixture. The conclusion of his discussion of racial characteristics, drawing upon the eighteenth-century theory of the "fixity of species," is typical:

Will not a lover of natural history then, one who views the gradations in all the races of animals with the eye of philosophy, excuse an effort to keep those in the department of man as distinct as nature has formed them? This unfortunate difference in colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people. . . . Among the Romans emancipation required but one

¹²⁸. Winthrop Jordan, White over Black, American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (New York, 1968), 429-481.

¹²⁹. Peden, Notes on the State of Virginia, 139,140.

effort. The slave, when made free, might mix without staining the blood of his master. But with us a second is necessary, unknown to history. When freed, he is to be removed beyond the reach of mixture.¹³⁰

Jefferson summed up his argument again in a letter in 1814 to Edward Coles, a neighbor who later moved to Ohio and emancipated his slaves:

Man, probably of any colour, but of this color [black] we know, brought up from their infancy without necessity for thought or forecast, are by their habits rendered as incapable as children of taking care of themselves, and are extinguished promptly wherever industry is necessary for raising the young. in the meantime they are pests in society by their idleness, and the depredations to which this leads them. their amalgamation with the other colour produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent.¹³¹

It was probably to proselytize upon this theme, that Jefferson decided to offer copies of Notes on the State of Virginia to all the students at the College of William and Mary.¹³²

¹³⁰ Peden, Notes, 143. On the "fixity of the species" see Boorstin. Jefferson could be quite equivocal about the fixity of the species, see, e.g., T.J. to Dr. John Manners, Feb 22, 1814, in Garden Book, 528-31.

¹³¹ T.J. to Edward Coles, Aug 25, 1814, in Farm Book, 37-39. For a discussion of Edward Coles see Langhorne, et al., A Virginia Family and Its Plantation Houses (Charlottesville, 1987), 132-141.

¹³² On this subject see Bernard Bailyn "Boyd's Jefferson: Notes for a Sketch," New England Quarterly, 33, 1960, 386-7. Bailyn argues that sexual promiscuity was the

It has been argued that Jefferson had first hand knowledge of interracial sexual unions. It is nearly certain that Jefferson's wife was surrounded by her black brothers and sisters at Monticello. Her father, John Wayles, had had perhaps as many as six children with Betty Hemings (herself the daughter of an African mother and English sea captain.) One of these was Sally Hemings, the "dusky Sal" famous for over a century as Jefferson's reputed lover.

Sally Hemings, from what little the historical record actually reveals about her, was almost certainly a plantation concubine at Monticello. She was described by another slave at Monticello as "mighty near white [She] was very handsome, [with] long straight hair down her back." Sally is listed in Jefferson's Farm Book as the mother of five children, all of whom resided at Monticello, but no father is listed for them. Of these five, one died in infancy, two ran away, and two were freed in Jefferson's will.

The historical record is silent on the paternity of these children. Historians and popular opinion have formed two opposing theories. Traditional scholars of Jefferson suggest that one of his nephews, either Peter or Dabney Carr, was the father of Sally's children. Many others have argued that Jefferson himself was the father.

ultimate corruption of classical virtue.

Incontrovertible evidence to support either position is lacking, and it is likely that the question will continue to play a role as a Rorschach test of popular and historical attitudes toward race and the founding fathers for a long time to come.¹³³

Just as uncertain is the question of Sally Hemings's role in her situation. Whether she was a victim of rape by her licentious slave-masters, or whether her affair with a white man was a union of love, or whether she was pursuing her own strategy of personal advancement are questions, like that of the paternity of her children, which the historical sources are unlikely to ever answer.

Jefferson's explicit racism and the value which he placed on the restraint of emotions and the integrity of the

¹³³. Fawn Brodie, in Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History, is the most recent historian to bring up the charge. Her work has been popularized in the novel Sally Hemings by Barbara Chase-Riboud. For the establishment response see D. Malone, Jefferson the President, First Term, Vol 4, Appendix II, 494-498; Malone, The Sage of Monticello, Appendix III, 513-14; James A. Bear Jr. "The Hemings Family of Monticello," Virginia Cavalcade, XXIX, (Autumn, 1979), 78-87; Virginus Dabney and John Kukla, "The Monticello Scandals: History and Fiction," Virginia Cavalcade, XXIX (Autumn, 1979) 52-61; Virginus Dabney, The Jefferson Scandals, A Rebuttal; Merrill Peterson, The Jefferson Image in the American Mind, 181-187; Douglas Adair, "The Jefferson Scandals," in Douglas Adair, Fame and the Founding Fathers, (New York, 1974), 160-191. On sexual activities at Monticello see E. Bacon reminiscences, in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 88, 102. Jefferson's defenders generally accuse Peter Carr of being the father of Sally's children, but the evidence for this is weak. The most likely candidate, it seems to me, is Thomas Mann Randolph, famous for his lack of self-control, well-known for his familiarity with his slaves, with ample opportunity, and whose relations with his wife deteriorated at the same pace as Sally Hemings' pregnancies.

family form a strong argument against Jefferson having had any physical relationship with Sally Hemings. In addition, such a relationship would have jeopardized Jefferson's attempts to maintain control over his slaves, threatened the affections of his family, could have confused the lines of the devolution of his estate, and was in opposition to his whole political philosophy dependent as it was on the nuclear family as the basic political unit. This whole argument could be reversed, however. People do not always act logically. Jefferson may well have formulated his social philosophy out of the anxiety he experienced (or the temptations he contemplated) from such a relationship.

The most important thing about the Sally Hemings story may be the way it has developed over the years. From its first expression by a newspaper publisher during the political battles of Jefferson's first term in office, down to the present, it has reflected, and in some ways helped to shape, American ideas about race and the family. During the nineteenth century a fascination with Jefferson's family (pointedly ignoring Sally Hemings) developed which was not equalled by the attention paid to any other American president and his family until perhaps John F. Kennedy. This attention reached its peak with the family memoir of Sarah N. Randolph, Jefferson's great granddaughter, The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson (1871). This work and others like it helped to define the boundaries of the

American family, glorifying in the process what has been called a "cult of domesticity," which described a role for women and the family transcending the concerns of politics and economy.

The end result was a political philosophy embedded in the "self-evident" laws of Nature, reflecting a new construction of the family, new economic realities, and new ideas of class, gender and race. The idealized family was an escape from the pressures of society and economy. This independent status made the household the perfect political unit in a representative system of government, for the opinions of independent households could not easily be coopted by local interests. Loyalty more naturally was directed toward the state than toward an employer or large land holder. The political system that consisted of many households was based on ties of affection, material incentives, and an egalitarian philosophy of aggressive competition -- virtues identical to those taught within the independent families themselves. Most ideally for a philosophy of government, the society at large had no responsibility for those who failed. The predicaments of Maria Jefferson Eppes, Thomas Mann Randolph, and all of Jefferson's slaves was not due to any flaw in the system. They had each failed because of their own inadequacies, established in their natures by natural law.


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THE HEAD AND THE HEART

I am but a son of nature, loving what I see
and feel without being able to give a reason,
nor caring much whether there be one.

-- Thomas Jefferson¹

Jefferson's ideas on aesthetics, which were embodied in his building at Monticello, represent the meeting place for his theories of government and his social practice. Jefferson was not unique in this. Throughout the eighteenth century learned men sought to base their theories of government upon a firm epistemology and to do this they turned to the study of aesthetics, which they imagined encompassed both theories of society and theories of knowledge.² Seeking an alternative to a traditional conception of analogies between mind and body, and state and cosmos (as in Jonson and Filmer), eighteenth-century philosophers faced a choice between a Platonist metaphysics of mimesis, and the materialistic skepticism of a Hobbes, Hume or Kant. Each of these alternatives, however, had the

¹. T.J. to Maria Cosway, 1788, in Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation (New York, 1970).

². Typical are Anthony Ashley Cooper (third earl of Shaftesbury), Characteristics of Men, Man, Manners, opinions, Times... (1711); Francis Hutcheson, Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (1725); David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (1757); Henry Home (Lord Kames) elements of Criticism (1761); Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757).

supreme disadvantage to Jefferson and certain other students of aesthetics of lending support to an authoritarian status quo.

The major personalities in this discussion were John Locke, the earl of Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, and Edmund Burke.³ Jefferson's philosophy was very much influenced by the writings of these men, but to him belonged the task of translating abstract philosophy into social practice, and social practice into abstract philosophy. The physical result was Monticello, perhaps the first expression in America of a wholly modern style in architecture, a reflection of an entirely new set of ways of thinking about the world.

The eighteenth-century debate on aesthetics began with Locke's Essay on Human Understanding, which argued against the Platonic notion of innate ideas which corresponded to the noumenal essences found in concrete objects. According to a Lockean psychology, knowledge of the world comes from sense impressions and subsequent reflection upon them. There was little room in Locke's philosophy for a transcendent order of truth. Human social relations were

³. Good introductions to this work are in; W. Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic, Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England (New York, 1961, originally, 1946); Martin C. Battestin, The Providence of Wit, Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1989); and Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, Basil Blackwell, 1990; Ernest Tuveson, Imagination as a Means of Grace, Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism.

dependent on their own devices, as Locke made clear in his Two Treatises on Government, not on some pre-ordained universal doctrine. Even the state was, in effect, a work of art, which people could shape to their own needs.

Locke's student, the third earl of Shaftesbury (grandson of Locke's patron, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first earl of Shaftesbury), reacted against Locke's materialism by arguing that there was indeed an absolute truth, which was identical to the laws of harmony, order and proportion which governed beauty and virtue.⁴ Furthermore, Shaftesbury argued (borrowing from Locke's philosophy of senses), people had access to this truth because implanted in their breasts was a "sixth sense," through which truth could be recognized. Shaftesbury's philosophy was a not very subtle justification for the aristocratic classes which were most likely to be able to exercise this aesthetic sense, and his philosophy was the intellectual basis for the eighteenth-century ideal of the "man of taste" and the "man of sensibility."

Shaftesbury's admirer, Francis Hutcheson, took this philosophy one step further by identifying it with an innate moral sense which everyone had. This "common sense" philosophy located the seat of moral decisions within the

⁴. For Shaftesbury see the works cited above, and; Robert Markley, "Sentimentality as Performance: Shaftesbury, Sterne, and the Theatrics of Virtue," in F. Nussbaum and L. Brown, eds., The New Eighteenth Century (New York, 1987), 210-230.

common man and supported an idealization of individualism and a philosophy of benevolence which were hallmarks of the revolutionary and anti-slavery movements of the later part of the century.⁵

A final step in this process of relating aesthetic and political philosophy was taken by Edmund Burke.⁶ In his Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, Burke offered a radical critique of the classical idea of beauty, in effect re-writing the entire vocabulary of aesthetics. For Burke, man was a much more complex being than previous philosophers had ever imagined.

Central to his analysis was his distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Beauty, which Burke saw as "acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention

⁵. On Hutcheson, see the works cited above and; Wylie Sypher, "Hutcheson and the 'Classical' Theory of Slavery," Journal of Negro History, 24 (July, 1939), 263-280. For Locke's influence on F. Hutcheson see; J. Stolnitz "Locke, value and aesthetics," Philosophy, Vol 38, #143 (1963), 40-51.

⁶. See introduction by in James T. Boulton in J.T. Boulton, ed., Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1968, orig. 1757); Neal Wood, "The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought" Journal of British Studies #4 (1964), 41-64; Ronald Paulson "The Sublime and the Beautiful" in Representations of Revolution (New Haven 1983); W.J.T. Mitchell, "Eye and Ear: Edmund Burke and the Politics of Sensibility" in Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago, 1986), 116-150.

of the senses,"⁷ "is a name I shall apply to all such qualities in things as induce in us a sense of affection or tenderness."⁸ These emotions Burke identified as having as their final cause, society. The sublime, on the other hand, was associated with emotions primarily related to self-preservation, most notably pain and terror.⁹

The beautiful and the sublime were each associated in a dualistic system with a constellation of other opposing characteristics. As Burke explained it, sublime objects are vast in size, rugged, rectilinear, dark, gloomy, solid and massive. Beautiful objects, on the other hand, are small, smooth, polished, curvilinear, light, and delicate. "They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure," according to Burke there is an "eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions."¹⁰

The extent to which Burke's system differed from a classical system of aesthetics is made clear in the last

⁷. Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, James T. Boulton, ed., (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1968, orig. 1757), 112.

⁸. Burke Enquiry, 51.

⁹. The idea of a calculation of pleasure and pain as the dynamic for human activity is integral to Hobbes's science of politics. See C.B. MacPherson Introduction to Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, C.B. MacPherson. ed., (Penguin, London, 1968).

¹⁰. Burke Enquiry, 124.

phrase of this passage. It was the constant emphasis of classical aesthetics that the passions should be restrained, but to Burke, and to his new bourgeois audience which included merchants, lawyers and politicians, the emotions were to be molded and directed.

In addition, Burke's system was not based on an imagined harmony or proportion of parts. Beauty was not something which could be calculated by mathematics. Do we say that a vegetable is pleasing because of its proportions? Burke asked and responded "no."¹¹ Neither was there a correspondence, as classical philosophers assumed, between the proportions of a building and the proportions of the human body. This Burke calls a "forced analogy," since "no two things can have less resemblance or analogy, than a man, and an house or temple."¹² Rejecting "the Platonic theory of fitness and aptitude,"¹³ Burke locates the origins of beauty in "good sense and experience."¹⁴

The Enquiry's final section on "words" sums up his attitudes toward the classical theory of beauty. Burke distinguishes between words (actually only nouns) which "represent many simple ideas united by nature to form some one determinate composition, as man, horse, tree, castle

¹¹. Burke Enquiry, 92-5.

¹². Burke Enquiry, 100.

¹³. Burke Enquiry, 101.

¹⁴. Burke Enquiry, 109.

&c." (i.e., words which have a direct referent), and more abstract words which, "whatever power they may have on the passions . . . do not derive it from any representation raised in the mind of the things for which they stand."¹⁵ This second category includes for Burke such words as virtue, honour, liberty, and justice. Since such words often "have no sort of resemblance to the ideas for which they stand,"¹⁶ the idea that the arts are an imitation of an ideal realm, a mimesis, is not possible. Indeed, Burke argues in an earlier section that "No work of art can be great, but as it deceives."¹⁷

As radical and innovative as Burke's ideas on the beautiful were, it is his idea of the sublime for which he is best known among students of aesthetics. It was within the realm of the sublime that Burke located our perceptions of impending pain and danger, the sources of our "passions which belong to self-preservation." Feelings "are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us." But,

¹⁵. Burke Enquiry, 163-4. A distinction J.T. Boulton says is "reminiscent of Locke's (Essay, II, iv-v)."

¹⁶. Burke Enquiry, 173. Burke's ideas are somewhat more complex than I am presenting them here, but I believe the gist of his ideas is intact.

¹⁷. Burke Enquiry, 76. Burke realized as well that the classical concept of imitation was tied to a specific view of time and progress, "Although imitation is one of the great instruments used by providence in bringing our nature towards its perfection, yet if men gave themselves up to imitation entirely, and each followed the other, and so on in an eternal circle, it is easy to see that there never could be any improvement amongst them." 50.

"they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances. . . . Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime."

Those things which excited such delight form a surprising list which includes horror, terror, tragedy, astonishment, sudden changes in light and sound, disorder, vast size, and even, "intolerable stenches," and the "cries of animals."

Implicit in Burke's aesthetics is a social philosophy. The "passions" are no longer to be restrained, but manipulated. Society and the individual are no longer imagined as harmonious, unified wholes, but tension and conflict are critically important. Indeed, at least in the works of art, society itself (i.e., the beautiful) is subordinated to self-preservation (i.e., the sublime). In Burke's philosophy of the calculation of pain and pleasure, in his emphasis on sense perception, and in his justification of self-interest his philosophy is in a direct line with that of Hobbes and Locke, and opposed to the classical "humanist" tradition.

Embedded in Burke's aesthetic philosophy is a conception of the natural superiority of white males. Since "blackness and darkness are in some degree painful by their natural operation," it seems natural to Burke that a man recently cured of blindness, "upon accidentally seeing a negro woman . . . was struck with great horror at the

sight."¹⁸ According to Burke's aesthetics, "the colours of beautiful bodies must not be dusky or muddy but clean and fair."¹⁹

The beautiful and the sublime Burke further associates with distinctions between the sexes. The characteristics of beauty, for Burke, are distinctly feminine. He illustrates the characteristics of beauty, smoothness and variation of line, thus:

Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible swell; the variety of surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried. Is not this a demonstration of that change of surface continual and yet hardly perceptible at any point which forms one of the great constituents of beauty.

The sublime, on the other hand, was always associated with male characteristics. Not incidentally it was characterized by vast size, straight lines, right angles and perpendiculars, and by motion. The sublime, "produces a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind."²⁰ In addition, according to Burke:

¹⁸. Burke Enquiry, 144. Burke devotes seven pages to the subject, 143-149.

¹⁹. Burke Enquiry, 117.

²⁰. Burke Enquiry, 50.

a successive disposition of uniform parts in the same strait line should be sublime. . . let us set before our eyes a colonade of uniform pillars planted in a right line; let us take our stand, in such a manner, that the eye may shoot along this colonade, for it has its best effect in this view. In our present situation it is plain that the rays from the first round pillar will cause in the eye a vibration of that species; an image of the pillar itself. The pillar immediately succeeding increases it; that which follows renews and enforces the impression; each in its order as it succeeds, repeats impulse after impulse, and stroke after stroke, until the eye long exercized in one particular way cannot lose that object immediately; and being violently roused by this continued agitation, it presents²¹ the mind with a grand or sublime conception.

This is certainly sublimation in the Freudian as well as the Burkean sense.

More directly, the sublime which is associated with masculine activities, strength, and courage necessary for self-preservation and social progress, is constantly contrasted by Burke with the beauty and weakness of women. "The beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness, or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity."²² Arguing that perfection is not necessary to beauty (contra the classicists) Burke points out that beauty, "where it is highest in the female sex, almost always carries with it an idea of weakness and imperfection.

²¹. Burke Enquiry, 141.

²². Burke Enquiry, 116.

Women are very sensible of this; for which reason, they learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness. In all this, they are guided by nature. Beauty in distress is much more the most affecting beauty." Distinguishing between the sublime, which we admire, and beauty, which we love, Burke argued that "we submit to what we admire, but we love what submits to us."²³

Burke's aesthetic philosophy, like John Locke's political philosophy, was a reflection and a justification for new social realities. Both were founded on the positive values of masculine ambition and aggressiveness, and both became part of the framework for a new concept of the state. Locke's philosophy, however, still imagined a social contract dependent on rational judgement, but reason alone was a feeble reed upon which to found a state. Only by locating the origins of the social order within the complex dynamics of the human mind could a popular government be a reality. By inventing an aesthetics which embraced the irrational, Burke was able to do just this.²⁴

This critique of reason, which glorified nature above society and found truth neither in reason nor in divine revelation but instead in man's innate character, was

²³. Burke Enquiry, 113.

²⁴. This interpretation of Burke and aesthetics in general owes much to Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford, 1990).

spreading throughout the last part of the eighteenth century and would blossom in the next century when it took the name of romanticism.²⁵ It could, however, take many forms. In the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau it could lead to a justification for the French Revolution. For Edmund Burke in his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), however, the French Revolution represented a triumph of metaphysical abstraction over empirical reality. Ancient English liberties, unlike those of the French theorists, were rooted in specific social circumstances, and not dependent on philosophical speculations²⁶. In this way Locke's empiricism, born in a justification of one revolution (that of 1688), was turned into a critique of another.

At the heart of both Rousseau's and Burke's

²⁵. For good introductions to Romanticism, see M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1953); Buell, Lawrence, New England Literary Culture from Revolution to Renaissance (Cambridge, 1986), 84-104; and the articles by Franklin L. Baumer, "Romanticism (ca1780-ca1830)," 198-204; Rene Wellek, "Romanticism in Literature," 187-198; and Jacques Dros, "Romanticism in Political Thought," 205-208; all in Philip P. Wiener, editor Dictionary of the History of Ideas, Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas, (New York, 1973).

²⁶. The essential harmony of Burke's aesthetic philosophy and his political philosophy can be seen even earlier in his speech On American Taxation (1774) which urged the repeal of the tea act. "The question with me," Burke said, "is not whether you have the right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy." (Oxford Companion to American History, New York, 1966, 121). Like his arguments on the beautiful and the sublime, Burke criticizes abstract reason, and places his emphasis on emotions, practicality, and interests.

philosophies, nevertheless, was a concept of the natural man who embodied the virtues of his country. Their philosophies equally pointed to a union of person and state, and their doctrines established the psychology of the individual as the foundation for a new conception of national identity -- a theme which also lay at the heart of Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia.

The abstract debates on aesthetics, political philosophy, and the uses of reason, were also taking place on a more practical level in the popular press where the battle ground was the very language used to discuss these issues.²⁷ Inevitably, the outcome of the battles over the language would determine the possible conclusions that the language was able to reach, because such conflicts would ultimately define the very boundaries of what was rational and natural. To those who were engaged in these discussions -- men such as Samuel Johnson and Horne Tooke in England, and Noah Webster and Jefferson in America -- it was obvious that victors do not merely write the history; they invent the language that makes that history appear inevitable.

By the late eighteenth century in England the debate over language had entered a new stage. The defenders of a formal language were rapidly losing ground before a wave of reformers who advocated that language should be based on

²⁷. This discussion is based primarily on Olivia Smith's The Politics of Language, 1791-1819 (Oxford, 1984).

usage rather than rules. Writers such as Bishop Lowth, Hugh Blair, and Thomas Percy extolled the virtues of "primitive" languages which used concrete terms, emotional expressions, syntactical simplicity, an abundance of metaphors, and a restricted vocabulary, and opposed the "latinizing" of the language in both vocabulary and grammar which they had observed occurring in their lifetimes.

This cause was taken up by political radicals such as William Cobbet, Joseph Priestley, and John Horne Tooke, for whom the issue of free speech was intricately bound up with the status accorded "vulgar speech." Tooke, who described the action of English soldiers at Lexington in 1775 as "murder," also criticized (in his The Diversions of Purley, 1786) the elevated language which he described as a metaphysics detached from sense impressions. Tooke welcomed the progress of the language and the use of new words, and criticized what he saw as a link between bad language and bad government.²⁸ His outspoken opinions led to his several trials for sedition and treason, which often revolved around questions of language usage.

The final years of the eighteenth century in England were marked by what has been described as "semantic

²⁸. A tradition continued by George Orwell ("Politics and the English Language," in Collected Essays of George Orwell (London, 1961), 337-351; and by Noam Chomsky, Problems of Freedom and Knowledge (New York, 1971). See John Lyons, Noam Chomsky (Penguin, Middlesex, Eng., 1970), for an introduction to Chomsky.

hysteria,"²⁹ as writers increasingly sought an accommodation between the high style and the vernacular. The most successful, and influential, writers in this endeavor were Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke, whose writings exhibited a plain logic based upon emotions and concrete experience. They were able to create an "intellectual vernacular," widely copied by writers of all political persuasions which combined a formal syntax and vernacular diction.³⁰ The new language they created, a synthesis of logic and passion, was disseminated to an ever-wider reading public through new printing technologies, novels, and newspapers and became an instrument of the new social and political realities of nineteenth-century Britain.

The progress in language theory and use was not confined to England. In America, Benjamin Franklin and Noah Webster worked on phonetic alphabets, and Webster's dictionary was an attempt to reform the American language of many of its superfluous European excesses. John Adams, speaking for most of the New England Federalists, who were horrified by the cultural changes they saw in the arts and language, in his Answer to Paine's Rights of Man (1793), pointed out the relationship of language change to political

²⁹. Olivia Smith, Politics of Language, 114.

³⁰. Olivia Smith, Politics of Language, 48, et passim. The idea that modern language is a synthesis of classical and vernacular forms is further explicated in Kenneth Cmiel's Democratic Eloquence (New York, 1990), which appeared too late to be used in this analysis.

change, "Mr Pain . . . in the warmth of his zeal for Revolutions, endeavors to bring about a revolution in language also."³¹

Thomas Jefferson was keenly aware of the eighteenth-century debates over literary style, artistic taste, and their political implications. He consistently took the side of the reformers, and he particularly criticized that fountainhead of all error -- Plato. "No writer," Jefferson wrote, "ancient or modern has bewildered the world with more ignis fatui, than this renowned philosopher," and he consistently criticized the "whimsies of Plato's . . . foggy brain,"³² prophesying that an improvement in philosophical thinking will only result "by clearing the mind of Platonic mysticism and unintelligible jargon."³³ Jefferson argued that Plato's "mysticisms" were the buttress of despotic systems, "The Christian priesthood . . . saw in the mysticisms of Plato, materials with which they might build up an artificial system which might from its indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give

³¹. Olivia Smith, Politics of Language, 48. For the Federalists opposition to language change and the cultural system which they tried to preserve see, Linda Kerber, Federalists in Dissent, Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America (Ithaca, 1970); Lawrence Buell, New England Literary Culture, From Revolution through Renaissance (Cambridge, 1986); David Simpson, The Politics of American English, 1776-1850 (New York, 1986).

³². Both quotes from, T.J. to William Short, August 4, 1820.

³³. T.J. to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, March 3, 1818.

employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power and pre-eminence." Explaining Plato's continuing influence, Jefferson argued that "With the Moderns, I think, it is rather a matter of fashion and authority. Education is chiefly in the hands of persons who, from their profession, have an interest in the reputation and the dreams of Plato. They give the tone while at school, and few, in their after-years, have occasion to revise their college opinions." "It is fortunate for us," he concluded, "that Platonic republicanism has not obtained the same favor as Platonic Christianity."³⁴ Jefferson consistently admonished that, "When once we quit the basis of sensation, all is in the wind. To talk of immaterial existences, is to talk of nothings (Jefferson's emphasis)."³⁵

This anti-Platonism formed the philosophical background for Jefferson's, as well as the English reformers', attitudes toward language and the arts.³⁶ Their

³⁴. T.J. to J. Adams, July 5, 1814. This is Jefferson's most extensive discussion of Plato, from which the quotations here are only a sampling. See also, T.J. to William Short, October 31, 1819.

³⁵. T.J. to John Adams, August 15, 1820.

³⁶. Thomas Jefferson's ideas on language and art are discussed in; Eleanor Davidson Berman, Thomas Jefferson Among the Arts, An Essay in Early American Aesthetics (New York, 1947); Horace M. Kallen "The Arts and Thomas Jefferson," in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., Thomas Jefferson, A Profile (New York, 1967), 218-242; Lee Quimby, "Thomas Jefferson: The Virtue of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Virtue," AHR, 87, #2 (April, 1982), 337-389; Stephen D. Cox, "The Literary Aesthetic of Thomas Jefferson," in J.A. Leo Lemay, ed., Essays in Early Virginia Literature, 235-256. See also Kerber,

materialistic philosophy held that beauty, truth and virtue were not imitations of abstract laws but were grounded in the real world and based on usage and utility. Thus Jefferson's ideas on the subject of language were identical to those of the reformers. To a friend who had written a work on English grammar, Jefferson wrote,

I have been pleased to see that in all cases you appeal to usage, as the arbiter of language; and justly consider that as giving law to grammar, and not grammar to usage. I concur entirely with you in opposition to Purists, who would destroy all strength and beauty of style, by subjecting it to a rigorous compliance with their rules. . . . I am no friend. . . to what is called Purism, but a zealous one to the Neology which has introduced these two words without the authority of any dictionary. (Jefferson's emphasis).³⁷

Jefferson frequently criticized the tendency toward the latinization of the language which he saw in Samuel Johnson's etymologies and rules on prosody.³⁸ For examples

Politics of Dissent, and Buell, New England Literary Culture. A good discussion of Jefferson's ambivalent feelings toward the classics is found in Carl J. Richards, "A Dialogue with the Ancients: Thomas Jefferson and Classical Philosophy and History," Journal of the Early Republic, 9 (Winter, 1989), 431-455; see Meyer Reinhold, "The Classical World," in Merrill Peterson, ed., Thomas Jefferson: a Reference Biography (Scribner's, New York, 1986), 135-156.

³⁷. T.J. to John Waldo, August 16, 1813. See also, T.J. to John Adams, August 15, 1820.

³⁸. On etymologies, T.J. to H. Croft, Oct 30 1798, (Lipscomb and Berg, XVIII, 361). On prosody, see T.J. to deChastellux, 1789, in "Thoughts on English Prosody" (L&B, XVIII, 413ff); "Thoughts on Prosody" (Padover, 832).

of great eloquence Jefferson looked not to Livy, Tacitus, Sallust and Cicero,³⁹ but to the speeches of the Mingo Indian, Logan,⁴⁰ and that of an accused murderer before the bar, Eugene Aram.⁴¹

For a reformation of the language Jefferson constantly encouraged the study of Anglo-Saxon. While serving as Vice President he wrote an essay on Anglo-Saxon grammar, and he included Anglo-Saxon among the "modern languages" to be studied at the University of Virginia. (Much earlier, Jefferson had been instrumental in having the requirement of the study of classical languages dropped at William and Mary.⁴²) These were not the dreams of a mere antiquarian. Jefferson believed it necessary to trace the language back to its Anglo-Saxon origins, just as he had traced the law and government back to an ancient, Anglo-Saxon constitution.⁴³ Those who studied the language of the

³⁹. T.J. to J.W. Eppes Jan 17 1810.

⁴⁰. Peden, Notes, 62-3.

⁴¹. T.J. to Abraham Small, May 20, 1814.

⁴². Kerber, Politics of Dissent, 112.

⁴³. See, Stanley R.Hauer, "Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language," PMLA, 95, #5 (Oct. 1983), 879-898. On Jefferson's use of the "Saxon myth" see, Gilbert Chinard, The Commonplace book of Thomas Jefferson (1926). See also on the Anglo-Saxon constitution, T.J. to John Cartwright, June 5, 1824; and on the Anglo-Saxon language, T.J. to J. E. Denison, November, 9, 1825. Jefferson's "Essay Towards Facilitating Instruction in the Anglo-Saxon...Language, for the use of the University of Virginia," is in T.J. to Herbert Croft, October 30, 1798, in Lipscomb and Bergh, XVIII, 359-411.

Anglo-Saxons, Jefferson proclaimed, would "imbibe with the language their free principles of government."⁴⁴

Jefferson's enthusiasm for the Anglo-Saxon language can be seen as part of a late eighteenth century primitivist movement which extolled the virtues of natural man, before they had been corrupted by society. Associated with it was the "Celtic revival" which brought the writings of James MacPherson, through the fictitious authorship of the ancient celtic bard, Ossian, to an international audience.⁴⁵

Jefferson was one of Ossian's most ardent admirers: Chastellux described an excited evening at Monticello when Ossian's poems and a bowl of punch carried the conversation far into the night.⁴⁶

Within this literary environment there sprang up a small genre of writings about mountains. Mountains in this literature were a powerful symbol of all that was natural and sublime. They were the physical manifestation of man's scheme in the cosmos, halfway between the stars and the earth, and the feelings they aroused of terror and delight, of pleasure and pain, were part of the complex emotional baggage of the modern age. In Europe visits to, and descriptions of, the Alps became a popular element of

⁴⁴. T.J. to John Cartwright, June 5, 1824.

⁴⁵. See Edward D. Snyder, The Celtic Revival in English Literature, 1760-1800 (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1965).

⁴⁶. in 1782. See Merrill D. Peterson, Visitors to Monticello, 13.

emerging middle class culture. Even America had its descriptions such as that of Timothy Dwight in Travels in New-England and New-York:

It is impossible for a person traveling through this cleft of the Green Mountains not to experience the most interesting emotions. The unceasing gaiety of the river and the brilliancy of its fine borders create uncommon elasticity of mind, animated thoughts, and sprightly excursions of fancy; while the rude and desolate aspect of the mountains, the huge misshapen rocks, the precipices, beyond description barren and dreary, awaken emotions verging toward melancholy, and mild and elevated conceptions. Curiosity grows naturally out of astonishment, and inquiry of course succeeds wonder. Why, the mind instinctively asks, were these huge piles of ruin thus heaped together? What end could creative wisdom propose in forming such masses of solid rock?"

It should not be surprising that mountains became a virtual metaphor for Jefferson's life and thought. Not only did Jefferson build his house and name it "Monticello," little mountain, after its location, but the mountain imagery was constantly utilized by himself and by his admirers.

Jefferson's description of the Natural Bridge in the Notes on the State of Virginia has all of the typical characteristics of the genre. The Natural Bridge, located as Jefferson wrote, "on the ascent of a hill" is the "most sublime of Nature's works;" it evoked in him all of the

⁴⁷. 2:300; cited in Lawrence Buell, New England Literary Culture from Revolution to Renaissance, 92-p3.

feelings of beauty and the sublime. As he explained it, "If the view from the top be painful and intolerable, that from below is delightful in an equal extreme. It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime to be felt beyond what they are here." Few men, according to Jefferson, have the resolution to walk to the height of the bridge and look over into the abyss. The experience was so violent for Jefferson that it caused one of the intense headaches which often struck him during periods of emotional stress.⁴⁸

Chastellux's description of the Natural Bridge repeats the familiar elements. He relates approaching the precipice, "the great masses of rocks," "the ravine," "an immense abyss," he places himself, "not without precaution, upon the brink of the precipice. . . . After enjoying this magnificent but tremendous spectacle, which many persons could not bear to look at," he views, "all this apparatus of rude and shapeless nature, which art attempts in vain [which] attacks at once the senses and the thoughts, and excites a gloomy and melancholy admiration."⁴⁹

Similar rhetoric was frequently used to describe the passage of visitors to the summit of Monticello. In 1809 Margaret Bayard Smith described crossing the Ravanna, "a

⁴⁸. Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation, 84. For a good discussion of Jefferson's description of the Natural Bridge, see G. Wills, Inventing America, 259-272.

⁴⁹. Cited in G. Wills, Inventing America, 261.

wild and romantic little river, which flows at the foot of the mountain," and her ascent up the mountain. All the while, she wrote:

my heart beat, -- I thought I had entered, as it were the threshold of his dwelling, and I looked around everywhere expecting to meet with some trace of his superintending care. In this I was disappointed, for no vestige of the labour of man appeared; nature seemed to hold an undisturbed dominion. We began to ascend this mountain, still as we rose I cast my eyes around, but could discern nothing but untamed woodland, after a mile's winding upwards, we saw a field of corn, but the road was still wild and uncultivated. I every moment expected to reach the summit, and I shall never forget the emotion the first view of this sublime scenery excited. Below me extended for above 60 miles round, a country covered with woods, plantations and houses; beyond, arose the blue mountains, in all their grandeur. Monticello rising 500 feet above the river, of a conical form and standing by itself, commands on all sides an unobstructed and I suppose one of the most extensive views any spot [on] the globe affords.⁵⁰

Although Monticello seemed to Smith to be part of a sublime landscape in which "no vestige of the labour of man appeared [and] nature seemed to hold an undisturbed dominion," this effect had been laboriously constructed. Penshurst was described as having been constructed "with no man's labor, no man's groan," but Jefferson tried to turn this idealistic vision into a physically apparent reality.

Jefferson was certainly influenced by Burke's Enquiry

⁵⁰ (1809) Visitors, 45-46.

into the Origins of . . . the Sublime and Beautiful and had recommended it on a list of select books to his friend Robert Skipwith in 1771.⁵¹ The same year, he composed the earliest plans for Monticello which have come down to us. Around the mountaintop he planned a network of walks which would lead visitors past statuettes, urns and pedestals with bucolic inscriptions. A series of terraced springs would dot the landscape, and near the base of the mountain would be Jefferson's deer park. Special attention was saved for a burying place where Jefferson planned to construct a Gothic temple and imagined dreamily that "on the grave of a favorite and faithful servant might be a pyramid erected of the rough rock-stone; the pedestal made plain to receive an inscription."⁵²

Jefferson's mountain retreat was not simply an aesthetic affectation. The significance of its location and landscape resounded through much of his social and political thinking. In a letter to Maria Cosway, the married woman with whom he may have had an affair in France, Jefferson wrote his famous dialogue between his head and his heart. In the contest between head and heart, the image of the sublime landscape plays a critical role. In the letter the head speaks for the enticements of science and solitude,

⁵¹. G. Wills, Inventing America, 270.

⁵² Garden Book, 1771, 25.

Everything in life is a calculation. . . .
the art of life is avoiding pain. . . . The
most effectual means of being secure against
pain, is to retire within ourselves, and to
suffice for our own happiness. . . . Hence
the inestimable value of intellectual
pleasures. Ever in our power, always leading
us to something new, never cloying, we ride
serene and sublime above the concerns of this
mortal world, contemplating truth and nature,
matter and motion, the laws which bind up
their existence, and that Eternal Being who
made and bound them up by those laws. Let
this be our employ. Leave the bustle and
tumult of society to those who have not the
talents to occupy themselves without them. [My
emphasis]⁵³

The heart, on the other hand, represents the emotions of the affections -- friendship, sympathy, compassion and benevolence. Despite the contrast, Jefferson uses very similar imagery to support the heart's case: "With what majesty do we there ride above the storms!" Jefferson urged the Cosways to visit Monticello, "How sublime to look down into the workhouse of nature, to see her clouds, hail, snow, rain, thunder, all fabricated at our feet! and the glorious sun, when rising as if out of a distant water, just gliding the tops of the mountains, and giving life to all of nature!"

The contest between head and heart, for Jefferson, is the same as the contest between the professor and the ploughman, between science and sentiment, and the most natural place to work out a solution is on the mountaintop.

⁵³ T.J. to Maria Cosway, Oct 12, 1786.

Ultimately (just like Locke's equivocal state of nature), it was a contest which could have no final victor. "When nature assigned us the same habitation, she gave us over it a divided empire." Although Jefferson always ends such discussions in favor of morality and the affections, the drama was continuously in progress.⁵⁴

The political significance of the imagery of the sublime was not lost on Jefferson's critics. The New York Federalist, Clement Clark Moore, later to become famous for his seasonal poetry, warned that "Whenever modern philosophers talk about mountains something impious is likely to be at hand."⁵⁵ Josiah Quincy spoofed a fictitious Jeffersonian's visit to Monticello who boasted of his discussions on liberty with Jefferson, "from the top of Monticello, by the side of the great Jefferson, I have watched its wild uproar, while we philosophized together on

⁵⁴. The argument that the head wins the argument, suggested by Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation, 349, and Julian Boyd, Jefferson's Papers, X, 453, cannot be supported by a close reading of the text. Dumas Malone is half right in stating that "the Heart had the last word in the dialogue as in life." (D.Malone, Jefferson and His Time, Vol II, 78.) See also; G. Wills, Inventing America, 298. Lee Quimby in "Thomas Jefferson, the Virtue of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Virtue," AHR, 87, #2 (April, 1982), 337-356, argues that Jefferson in effect established a truce between them, forming a harmony or "fusion of art and morals." Quimby fails to discuss Jefferson's letter to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814, in which Jefferson clearly states that art and morality are distinct categories.

⁵⁵. Cited in Linda Kerber, Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America (Ithaca, New York, 1970), 91.

its sublime horrors. There, safe from the surge. . . I have quaffed the high crowned cup to this exhilarating toast -- TO YON TEMPESTUOUS SEA OF LIBERTY. . . MAY IT NEVER BE CALM."⁵⁶

The idea that the individual could occupy a spot midway between safety and danger, in the midst of a conflict without resolution and without ascribable victors, was implicit in the philosophy of the sublime and in Jefferson's political and social philosophy.

The role of art in society for Thomas Jefferson was strictly utilitarian. The arts were not imitations of the perfect forms of an ideal, static realm which inspired emotional restraint, but were meant to incite passions and to serve practical purposes. Although Jefferson occasionally praised the "chaste" forms of classical architecture,⁵⁷ the arts in the new nation must be fitted to social uses. Jefferson called the Maison Carrée, a Roman temple he visited in Nimes, "one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful and precious morsel of architecture left us by antiquity," and he exclaimed to James Madison, "you see I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts. But it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed, as its object

⁵⁶. Josiah Quincy "Climenole, No 7," March 17, 1804; cited in Linda Kerber, Federalist in Dissent, 177.

⁵⁷. e.g., T.J. to James Oldham, Jan 19, 1805, cited in McLaughlin, Jefferson and Monticello, 290-91; also, Peden, Notes on the State of Virginia, 153.

is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world, and procure them its praise."⁵⁸

Although art had a moral function, Jefferson specifically denied any mystical relationship between art and the elevation of morals. The concept of the beautiful, Jefferson wrote (probably alluding to Shaftesbury's argument), "is founded in a different faculty, that of taste, which is not even a branch of morality. We have indeed an innate sense of what we call beautiful, but that is exercised chiefly on subjects addressed to the fancy . . . a faculty entirely distinct from the moral one. Self-interest, or rather self-love, or egoism, has been more plausibly substituted as the basis of morality."⁵⁹

Jefferson mocked the idea that objects could have some noumenal quality when he gave the writing desk on which he wrote the Declaration of Independence to his granddaughter Ellen Randolph Coolidge and her husband:

If then things acquire a superstitious value because of their connection with a particular person, surely a connection with the great Charter of our Independence may give a value to what has been associated with that. . . . Now I happen still to possess the writing box on which it was written. . . . Mr Coolidge must do me the favor of accepting this. Its imaginary value will increase with the years,

⁵⁸ T.J. to James Madison, September 20, 1785.

⁵⁹ T.J. to Thomas Law, June 13, 1814, emphasis in the original.

and if he lives to my age, or another half century, he may see it carried in the procession of our nation's birthday, as the relics of the saints are in those of the church.⁶⁰

Central to understanding Jefferson's conception of art is the idea that art was not a final thing to Jefferson but was continuously in a state of becoming. Every student of Jefferson's architecture knows that Monticello took almost forty years to build. This was not an accident. The whole point of his architecture is that it never was finished. It was the process and not the finished product that intrigued Jefferson. As he expressed himself, "Architecture is my delight, and putting up and pulling down, one of my favorite amusements." It was a process which only after Jefferson's death, when Monticello came into the hands of "preservationists," ever attained the status of a finished product.

Jefferson's self-deprecating description of Monticello to the architect Benjamin Latrobe embodies his whole philosophy of art: "My essay in architecture has been so much subordinated to the law of convenience & affected also by the circumstance of change in the original design, that it is liable to some unfavorable & just criticisms. But what nature has done for us is sublime & beautiful and

⁶⁰ T.J. to Ellen Randolph Coolidge, Nov 14, 1825, Family Letters, 461-2.

unique."⁶¹

Visitors to Monticello consistently made the observation that the building was still unfinished. Anna Thornton, whose description of her visit to Monticello is similar in some ways to that of Ms Smith's, was decidedly less sympathetic. A modern reader of her narrative is more apt to be reminded of the gothic tales of Edgar Allen Poe than the perfection of the Augustans. Her way up the mountain in the night was illuminated by bolts of lightning, and she and her companions were so uneasy that they left their carriage and walked the remainder of the way to the house, arriving in a bad humor, "exhausted and quite unwell." As she described what she saw:

Tho' I had been prepared to see an unfinished house, still I could not help being much struck with the uncommon appearance & which the general gloom that prevailed contributed much to increase. We went thro' a large unfinished hall, loose plank forming the floor, lighted by one dull lantern, into a large room with a small bow and separated by an arch, where the company were seated at tea. No light being in the large part of the room & part of the family being seated there, the appearance was irregular & unpleasant. . . . Everything has a whimsical and droll appearance. . . . he has altered his plan so frequently, pulled down & rebuilt, that in many parts without side it looks like a house going to decay from the length of time that it has been erected. . . . There is something grand and awful in the situation but far from convenient or in my opinion agreeable. It is a place you wou'd rather look at now & then than live at. Mr J. has

⁶¹ Oct 10, 1809, Garden Book, 416

been 27 years engaged in improving the place, but he has pulled down & built up again so often, that nothing⁶² is completed, nor do I think ever will be.

Although Jefferson's first version of Monticello, begun around 1770 (and never completed), was a close copy of plate three from Robert Morris's Select Architecture, and was as classical a structure as could be imagined, when Jefferson began rebuilding Monticello in 1796 it was on entirely new principles.⁶³ The result owed at least as much to the vernacular houses of Jefferson's poorer neighbors as to classical principles. Jefferson, in effect, created a new architectural language, with its vocabulary taken from classical formalism and its grammar derived from vernacular building practices. Monticello was a synthesis of Westover

⁶² (1802) Visitors, 33-34.

⁶³. For Jefferson's architecture the following works are recommended; Frederick Doveton Nichols, Thomas Jefferson's Architectural Drawings, Compiled and with Commentary and a Check List (Boston, 1961); Jack McLaughlin, Jefferson and Monticello, the Biography of a Builder (New York, 1988); William Howard Adams, Jefferson's Monticello, (New York, 1983); Fiske Kimball, Thomas Jefferson, Architect: Original Designs in the Collection of Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, Junior, with an Essay and Notes by Fiske Kimball, (Boston, 1916); Kimball, Fiske Architectural Drawings; Fiske Kimball, "Jefferson and the Arts," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 87, #3 (July 1943), 238-245; Buford Pickens, "Mr. Jefferson as Revolutionary Architect," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XXXIV, #4 (Dec 1975), 257-279; Kimberly Prothro, "Monticello as Roman Villa; the Ancients, Architecture and Thomas Jefferson," Virginia Cavalcade, 39 (Summer, 1989); Gene Wadell, "The First Monticello," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XLVI, #1 (March 1987), 257-285.

and a log cabin.⁶⁴

Jefferson was certainly familiar with the common housing of the majority of the population in Europe and America. He advised Lafayette, as well as his own countrymen to "ferret the people out of their hovels, as I have done, look into their kettles, eat their bread, loll on their beds under pretense of resting yourself, but in fact to find if they are soft. You will feel a sublime pleasure in the course of this investigation, and a sublimer one hereafter, when you shall be able to apply your knowledge to the softening of their beds, or the throwing a morsel of meat into their kettle of vegetables."⁶⁵

In Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, he strongly criticized the architecture of Virginia. "The genius of architecture seems to have shed its maledictions over this land." About the only positive comments he makes are reserved for the houses at the lowest end of the architectural spectrum. "The poorest people build huts of logs, laid horizontally in pens, stopping the interstices with mud. These are warmer in winter, and cooler in summer, than the more expensive constructions of scantling and plank." About such houses, however, Jefferson noted, "It is

⁶⁴ see, e.g., Buford Pickens, "Mr. Jefferson as Revolutionary Architect," JSAH, XXXIV, #4 (Dec, 1975), 257-279.

⁶⁵ T.J. to Marquis de LaFayette, April 11, 1787, see also T.J. to Rutledge and Shippen, June 3, 1788 "Travelling Notes."

impossible to devise things more ugly, uncomfortable, and happily more perishable. . . . A country whose buildings are of wood, can never increase in its improvements to any considerable degree. Their duration is highly estimated at 50 years. Every half century then our country becomes a tabula rasa, whereon we have to set out anew."⁶⁶

Jefferson's "Little Mountain," was his own tabula rasa. In one of the first letters written from the mountaintop he described his situation, "I have lately removed to the mountain from whence this is dated. . . I have here but one room, which like the cobbler's, serves me for parlor, for kitchen and hall. I may add, for bedchamber and study too. . . . I have hopes, however, of getting more elbow room this summer."⁶⁷ Monticello, unlike a classical building, did not pretend to be the expression of an eternal idea, fashioned fully-formed by the hands of a Platonic demiurge. It grew according the same additive, organic principles which dictated the growth of a vernacular structure.

Jefferson's stay in France had a large influence on his

⁶⁶ Peden Notes, 152-54; elsewhere Jefferson estimates the average life of a building in Virginia at 20 years. See, Cary Carson, Norman F. Barka, William M. Kelso, Garry Wheeler Stone, and Dell Upton, "Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies," Winterthur Portfolio, 16, #2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1981), 135-196, for the seminal statement on the importance of impermanent architecture and its social importance in the colonial South.

⁶⁷ T.J. to James Ogilvie February 20, 1771,, in Pierson, American Buildings and Their Architects, 292-93.

new architectural ideas.⁶⁸ His visit to the Maison Carrée, the Roman Republican temple which had been restored by Louis XV, inspired him to design a replica to be used for the Virginia State capitol. About the temple he wrote to the Comtesse de Tesse, "Here I am, Madame, gazing whole hours at the Maison Carree, like a lover at his mistress." He was no less affected by the Hotel de Salm, which architectural historians have identified as a model for the second Monticello. In another letter to the comtesse he wrote, "while in Paris I was violently smitten with the Hotel de Salm and used to go to the Tuilleries almost daily to look at it."

It was not just the forms of these buildings which Jefferson admired. In their Roman facades Jefferson saw an alternative to the English architectural traditions which had hitherto dominated the design of great houses of America. In addition, he absorbed some of the philosophy of the French neo-classical architects, particularly Claude-Nicholas Ledoux and Charles-Louis Clerisseau, who imagined architecture and the arts as political statements in opposition to feudalism and aristocracy.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Most writers on Jefferson's architecture identify this as the major influence on Jefferson's evolving views on architecture. See e.g. McLaughlin, 343, passim; and Pierson 286-334.

⁶⁹ On the political implications of French neo-classicism see Hugh Honor, Neo-Classicism (Penguin Books, 1968) or nearly any survey of Western art history.

Although the facade of Monticello was constructed out of a classical architectural vocabulary, with a tripartite, symmetrical arrangement of pediment, columns, cornices, friezes, architraves, watertables and stringcourses, the various parts are put together using a unique grammar. If the rhythm of the bays were scanned horizontally like the rhymes of a poem, half a dozen unique units would be counted off before they would begin to be repeated (a-b-c-d-e-f-g-f-e-d-c-b-a; Westover, in contrast, would read, a-a-a-b-a-a-a). Inside as well as outside, Jefferson applied Burke's dictum that beauty and sublimity require that the directions of lines should be frequently changing.

Internally, the same precept led Jefferson to create a building with a startling spatial complexity. Abandoning an overall symmetry, Jefferson made each room in Monticello unique. Playfully altering ceiling heights, and using units of polygons with rectangles, Jefferson was able to make, using abstract rules, spaces which almost approximated those found in nature -- or in the houses of his neighbors and slaves. In this process Jefferson can appropriately be said to be the first American architect to purposely "break out of the box," a common theme to twentieth-century architects.⁷⁰

Jefferson's exploration of the relation of process and

⁷⁰. See, for example, A.O. Boulton, "Pride of the Prairie (the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright)," American Heritage, Vol. 42, #4, July, August, 1991, 62-69.

product, of natural growth and rational order was manifest in ways that were designed to startle the viewer -- such as his conceit of supporting the west portico for years with the trunks of tulip trees. According to one visitor, the result was "as beautiful as the fluted shafts of Corinthian pillars."⁷¹

Inside the house, the collection of curiosities that Jefferson had installed in the hall of Monticello had a similar effect. His museum, according to a description by a visiting Frenchman in 1816, included "the upper jaw of a mammoth; a mammoth's tusk, several teeth of the same animal, the thigh-bone of the same; an Indian picture representing a battle, it is on buffalo hide, about five feet square; a map, also on buffalo hide, six feet square; an elephant's tusk and tooth; a head of a gigantic ram; a bear's claw; a European coat of mail which those who fought with the Indians used in the early wars; antlers of the American elk, and of other animals of the same type; two stone busts, sculptured by the Indians, one representing a man and the other a woman -- the faces are hideous and very crudely executed; a little Indian hatchet; a figure of an animal; various petrifications; bows, arrows, spears and a host of objects made by the Indians."⁷² The rough, the primitive

⁷¹ McLaughlin, Jefferson and Monticello, 332.

⁷² Baron de Montlezun in 1816, cited in Peterson, Visitors to Monticello, 68-69. I have taken some liberties with the punctuation.

and the emotional, which classical principles would have excluded, were enshrined in the most public space in Monticello.

Even the way Jefferson dressed emphasized a strange rapprochement between order and irregularity. Many writers commented on his quixotic dress. One senator described Jefferson's appearance during his term as president, "though his coat was old and thread bare, his scarlet vest, his corduroy small cloths, and his white cotton hose, were new and clean -- but his linen was much soiled, and his slippers old." And another described him thus: "He wore a blue coat, a thick grey-coloured hairy waistcoat, with a red under-waistcoat lapped over it, green velveteen breeches with pearl buttons, yarn stockings and slippers down at the heel, his appearance being very much like that of a tall large-boned farmer."⁷³ As one writer described it, "There is the breathing of notional philosophy in Mr. Jefferson, -- in his dress, his house, his conversation. His setness, for instance, in wearing very sharp toed shoes, corduroy small-clothes, and red plush waistcoat, which have been laughed at till he might perhaps wisely have dismissed them."⁷⁴

⁷³ Both quotes from Dumas Malone, Jefferson the President, 371; Malone discusses the charges of Jefferson's using his "apparent unconcern for dress and appearance to political purpose," 373-4.

⁷⁴ George Ticknor in 1815, quoted in Peterson, Visitors to Monticello, 65. For other descriptions of Jefferson's manners see Visitors, 63, 95.

The connections between Jefferson's "notional philosophy" and his politics were sometimes quite close. As President, during the embargo on American trade which Jefferson hoped would prevent the country from being pulled into a European war, Jefferson encouraged domestic manufacture by wearing homespun garments during social occasions at the White house⁷⁵ More generally, Jefferson's sartorial and architectural aesthetic seemed to many to reinforce his idealization of the common man and his commitment to progress.

Jefferson faith in progress of course played a central role in his political philosophy. He consistently argued that, "the earth belongs . . . to the living,"⁷⁶ and "that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical."⁷⁷ Jefferson himself drew the parallel between the political world and the world of goods when he wrote to

⁷⁵ T.J. to T.J.R. Dec 19, 1808, Family Letters, 372; Jefferson's rationale seems to have been at least partly his nostalgia for the glories of the Revolutionary era, "We never lived so comfortably as while we were reduced to this system formerly: because we soon learnt to supply all our real wants at home, and we could not run in debt, as not an hour's credit was given for any thing..." T.J. to Ellen Feb 23, 1808, Family Letters, 329; On homespun at Monticello see Anne to T.J. Mar 18, 1808 Family Letters, 334; Ellen to T.J., March 18, 1808, Family Letters, 335-36.

⁷⁶ T.J. to Madison, Sept 6, 1789.

⁷⁷ T.J. to Madison, Jan 30, 1787. See A.J. Beitzinger, "Political Theorist," in Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson: a Reference Biography, 81-100.

Samuel Kercheval, "Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant, too sacred to be touched. . . . We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy, as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."⁷⁸

Monticello, however, was always much more than just the physical expression of Jefferson's abstract philosophical ideas. Its physical construction was always guided by very real social concerns, and it is possible to trace in Jefferson's designation of spaces for leisure and for work, for formal entertaining, and for family retirement his ongoing attempts to rationalize his relationships with his family and his slaves.

To a large extent Monticello can be seen as the culmination of a general trend in the houses of Virginia's colonial and early national elite to separate the spaces reserved for slaves and family and visitors. A capsule history of the changing relationship between work and domestic spaces in elite Virginian's housing can be traced in four structures which preceded Monticello: Bacon's Castle (c1655), the Governor's Palace at Williamsburg (1706), Westover (c1760s?), and Mount Airy (1758). (Although Mount Airy may have been built earlier than Westover, for the

⁷⁸ T.J. to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816.

purpose of this discussion it will be treated as an example of Palladianism which is a later development of the Georgian style.)

In Bacon's Castle in Surry County, Virginia, the merchant Arthur Allen built one of Virginia's earliest brick structures, and the oldest house, firmly dated to the seventeenth century, still extant in Virginia. Although the house no doubt had auxiliary structures surrounding it, the house's attic with its unfinished timbers and its fireplaces was likely the sleeping space for many of the workers on the estate. These workers descended the single stairway, along with other members of the household, and some of them likely worked in the ground level kitchen with its large fireplace. The structure of the house as it has been preserved make it clear that workers and family members of the household had constant and continual contact with each other.⁷⁹

The Governor's Palace in Williamsburg was built in 1706 and reflected the increasing dominance of Georgian and Classical architectural forms. In many respects, however, it still had much in common with the local farmhouses of

⁷⁹ On Bacon's Castle see William Pierson American Buildings, 29-33; Bacon's Castle, guide book published by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities; and Cary Carson, "What Lumpkin's Eyes Told Lumpkin's Brain: Visual Thinking in Early America," unpublished manuscript, 1979. A fuller discussion of the issue of the separation of work and leisure space in Virginia building should begin with Frazer D. Neiman, The "Manner House" before Stratford (Discovering the Clifts Plantation) (Stratford, Virginia, 1980); and with Cary Carson, "Segregation in Vernacular Buildings," Vernacular Architecture, #7, 24-29.

England as shown in plans for farmhouses published by William Halfpenny in the early part of the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ The Governor's Palace, like English farmhouses of the time, had advance buildings used as living and work places for the staff of the household. The two buildings on either side and in front of the Palace were probably originally used as a stable and kitchen.⁸¹ Although the majority of work was now apparently being performed outside the main house, the enclosed forecourt, in the front of the Palace formed by the three buildings, must have been a very active place full of the noises, smells, and debris generated by men and animals.

The next stage is to be seen at such typically Georgian estates as Westover, where the dependencies are spread out to either side of the main structure, creating a more linear, horizontal massing. These new buildings were designed to be viewed at a distance, and the demise of the forecourt, with all of its activities, which was a necessary

⁸⁰ See for example, William Halfpenny, 12 Beautiful Designs for Farmhouses, 1759, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Research Library.

⁸¹ Thomas Tileston Waterman, The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776, 45. For an excellent discussion of such buildings and their use see William Kelso, Kingsmill Plantations, 1619-1800, Archaeology of Country Life in Colonial Virginia, 110-115, and passim. That slaves commonly occupied this area is suggested by Governor Fauquier's instructions to his slaves not to let Reverend Camm to be admitted beyond the gates of the Governor's Palace, see Tate, William and Mary Quarterly XIX, 1962, 330; and Richard Morton, Colonial Virginia, II, 802.

corollary was a major step in the establishment of a new social order with an increasing emphasis on formal social and political relationships and a de-emphasis on domestic production.

The Palladian movement, which included Mount Airy, the later version of Mount Vernon and, some people would say, Monticello represented a further step in the arrangements of dependencies. Such auxiliary structures were often integrated into the total massing of the estate through the construction of hyphens and the dependencies were often again advanced to the front of the house. It is perhaps pleasant to imagine that this coincided with a new egalitarian and revolutionary philosophy, as if the main houses were literally reaching out their arms to embrace its dependents. But by this time the flanking structures no longer typically housed workers and animals. Generally the attached dependencies included family rooms, a study, or an office for conducting business. If one of the dependencies was used as a kitchen it was generally occupied by highly-acculturated domestic servants who were proud of the fact that they were not field hands. Very often they were educated, literate, and related by birth to their white masters. The actual workers who supported the estate at the end of the colonial period, were often miles in distance, and even further psychologically, from the household of

those who controlled the means of production.⁸²

If Monticello seems to be a logical next step when viewed in terms of Virginia's architectural history, it nevertheless represented an extraordinary shift in thinking when viewed in a larger context. If at Penshurst we can detect an underlying world view which emphasized the interdependence and congruence of social, architectural and even cosmological levels, and at Westover we can see an almost frenzied involvement between William Byrd and the social and economic worlds in which he was actively related, the world of Monticello was strikingly different. Monticello was a retreat from the physical realities of this world, physically, economically, socially, and mentally. Just as Jefferson's Declaration of Independence had erased property from the list of natural inalienable rights and replaced it with the pursuit of happiness, Jefferson's Monticello was also ultimately a shrine to Jefferson's philosophy of individualism abstracted from its material relationships.⁸³

⁸² For Mount Airy see Richard S. Dunn, "A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave life in Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia, 1799 to 1828," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., #34 (1977), 32-65. This pattern of social segregation, of course, was typical North and South. Mill villages in New England which were established in the early nineteenth century and which can still be seen today (such as Wauregan Mills, Wauregan, Connecticut), had identical physical layouts to many Southern plantations.

⁸³ Merrill Peterson has detected in Jefferson's actions as President what he calls a "Jeffersonian animus against systems of energy, force, and command, whether fiscal or

It is possible to trace parts of Jefferson's personal journey from an older world view to a new, modern world in the course of his construction at Monticello. Jefferson's earliest experiences are firmly rooted in that earlier world. Tuckahoe, the house of the Randolphs where Jefferson spent much of his youth, was designed according to an eighteenth-century visitor "solely to answer the purposes of hospitality." It consisted actually of two large houses, one especially for visitors, joined in their centers by a large central salon to form a H.⁸⁴ Here Jefferson probably witnessed many scenes such as the one described by a visitor to Tuckahoe in 1789 when, "three country peasants, who came upon business, entered the room where the colonel and his company were sitting, took themselves chairs, drew near the fire, began spitting, pulling off their country boots all over mud, and then opened their business."⁸⁵

Virginia houses throughout the colonial period whether

military, which were simply different faces of a statecraft at war with the liberties and happiness of the people." I would include with fiscal and military, domestic and aesthetic. Merrill Peterson, Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation, 689.

⁸⁴ Thomas Anburey Travels through the Interior Parts of America, II, 208; (about this work see Bell, Whitfield, Jr., "Thomas Anburey's 'Travels through America': A note on Eighteenth-century Plagiarism" Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, XXXVII, 1943, 23-36); The name "Tuckahoe," was eventually extended to indicate all of the Virginia aristocracy by the early part of the nineteenth century -- see Merrill Peterson, The Jefferson Image in the American Mind, 248-250.

⁸⁵ Anburry, Travels, 215.

explicitly open to hospitality or not were constantly opened to visitors who seemingly had no conception that certain areas or even goods were private and inaccessible. Monticello itself seems to have been occupied by a number of Jefferson's slaves while Jefferson was in Philadelphia in 1791, and Martha was able to protect the china and silverware only by keeping them under lock and key. Nevertheless, Martha reported, "our beautiful cups which being obliged to leave out are all broke but one."⁸⁶

Jefferson objected to Virginia hospitality from a very early date (as discussed in the previous chapter). As long as Jefferson lived, however, Monticello was open to all visitors. Especially during the summer months, travellers, often on the way to the springs in western Virginia, stopped off to see the estate of the ex-President. Summer visitation was an annual event which required preparations by the household for months in advance. New china had to be ordered, hay put in the stables for the horses, cows slaughtered, cider put up.⁸⁷

Jefferson's constant attempt to retreat from the world, nevertheless, affected nearly every aspect of his landscape and house. During his later years he even bought up all of

⁸⁶ Martha Jefferson Randolph to T.J. Jan 16, 1791, Family Letters, 68.

⁸⁷ E.g., Martha to T.J. June 23, 1808, Family Letters, 345-6; Edmund Bacon Private Life, in Bear, Jefferson at Monticello, 113-114.

the nearby town of Milton so that nothing of it remains today.⁸⁸

Jefferson's earliest plan for Monticello seems to have been to make it completely self-sufficient. When he came into full ownership of his and his wife's estates in 1770, he had all of the skilled craftsmen moved to the mountain and apparently planned to house them all in offices which were planned for the entire perimeter of the summit.⁸⁹ Only the southern range was ever constructed. This formed a plantation street to which Jefferson gave the whimsical name "Mulberry row."

The earliest and best description of Mulberry row is from an insurance valuation dated 1796. According to this, Mulberry row was the site of a stone house (which is probably still standing), a stable, a smith and nailer's shop, a joiner's shop, a carpenter's shop, five servant's houses (probably built with logs with wooden chimneys and earthen floors, the three smallest had dimensions of only 12'x14'), a wash house, a smoke house and dairy, a store house for nailrod and iron, 3 sheds for wood and joiner's work (Jefferson notes that he was planning to build four more), and a saw pit.⁹⁰ This was certainly a very active

⁸⁸. Boynton Merrill, Jr., Jefferson's Nephews: A Frontier Tragedy (New York, 1976), 58-70.

⁸⁹. Gene Wadell, "The First Monticello," JSAH, XLVI, #1, March, 1987, 7.

⁹⁰ A good plan is in the Farm Book, 6.

area.

Of the houses on Mulberry row Margaret Bayard Smith noted, "We passed the outhouses for slaves and workmen. They are all much better than I have seen on any other plantation, but to an eye unaccustomed to such sights, they appear poor and their cabins form a most unpleasant contrast with the place that rises so near them."⁹¹

Jefferson apparently agreed with Mrs. Smith and while in his second term in the White House made plans to improve Monticello's gardens and grounds with the construction of ornamental temples, walks, terraced springs a fish pond. His notes included, "All the houses on the Mulberry walk to be taken away except the stone house."⁹² It was not until Jefferson returned to Monticello in 1809 that some of these plans were apparently carried out. By this time many of the log houses on Mulberry row were already vacant.⁹³ In addition, Jefferson during this period of improvements had the terraces built which covered the paths between Monticello and its underground offices, imported thousands of shrubs from a Washington nursery to be used as hedges around the perimeter of his gardens, and had a ten foot high

⁹¹ Visitors to Monticello, 47. In William Howard Adams Jefferson's Monticello, the quote reads "...unpleasant contrast with the palace that rises so near them." 165-7.

⁹² See "General ideas for improvement of Monticello" in F. Kimball Thomas Jefferson, Architect, and Garden Book.

⁹³ T.J. to Edmund Bacon, Feb 27, 1809, Farm Book, 27-28.

paling constructed around the garden on the south side of his lawn. In his efforts to reduce noise and disorder he even instructed his overseer to remove all animals from the mountaintop. His instructions to the overseer included the directions that, "the negroes dogs must all be killed. Do not spare a single one. If you keep a couple yourself it will be enough for the whole land. Let this be carried into execution immediately."⁹⁴

Not satisfied with these measures, Jefferson in 1814 planned re-routing the entrance road to the main house. Instead of passing the shops and servants quarters on Mulberry row, the new road would be built to the North of the house.⁹⁵ Years later Jefferson's overseer during this period Edmund Bacon would note that at Monticello, "there were no Negro and other outhouses around the mansion, as you generally see on plantations."⁹⁶ While perhaps not entirely accurate, this was definitely the impression which Jefferson strove to create.

Jefferson's attempts to remove any sight of human labor from the landscape of Monticello reached its culmination in the construction of the house. The final determinant of Monticello's final plan was neither Jefferson's aesthetics

⁹⁴ T.J. to Edmond Bacon, Dec 26, 1808, Garden Book, 383,

⁹⁵ T.J. to Martha Jefferson Randolph, June 6, 1814, Family Letters, 405. See Farm Book, 70.

⁹⁶ in Bear Jefferson at Monticello, 46.

nor philosophy, but his intention to make invisible anything which might be considered disagreeable. This list of objectionable elements included any evidences of work, workers, slaves, and even his own family.

The most notable example of this were the tunnels, or "cryptoporticullis" (even the name hides their function), which led to the servant's quarters on the south and the stables on the north and which contained storage spaces, an ice-cellar, and vents for the privies. Above these tunnels were the terraces on which visitors promenaded after dinner. Slaves were further excluded from the family and formal spaces by Jefferson's ingenious use of dumb-waiters and revolving doors. Jefferson's innovations, the double-doors which open together when one is moved, the seven-day clock, the weather vane under the portico, even the ladder that folded to look like a pole, all gave the impression that the house was managed, not by people who performed work, but by abstract and invisible natural laws.

Not only slaves and workers were banished from sight at Jefferson's Monticello. Private family space was rigidly distinguished and separated from formal entertaining areas. Unlike Westover and where monumental staircases encouraged visitors to move into the "private" quarters on the floor above, access to the bed chambers at Monticello was by way of exceedingly narrow stairs which led to the equally cramped spaces on the second floor. They were, in addition,

hid from the outside observer behind a facade that gave the impression that Monticello had not four levels of activity but only one.

Downstairs on the main floor, a visitor's progress generally conformed to a set path from hall (museum) to parlor to dining room. If a visitor gained Jefferson's favor, he or she was sometimes granted permission to visit his library and bedchamber. More than one visitor remarked that, "The president's bedchamber is only separated from the library by an arch; he keeps it constantly locked, and I have been disappointed much by not being able to get in today."⁹⁷ A British diplomat wrote, "If the library had been thrown open to guests, the President's country house would have been as agreeable a place to stay as any I know, but it was there he sat and wrote and he did not like of course to be disturbed by visitors who in this part of the world are rather disposed to be indiscreet." Margaret Bayard Smith noted, "Mr J. went to his apartments, the door of which is never opened but by himself and his retirement seems so sacred that I told him it was his sanctum sanctorum."⁹⁸ For years after Jefferson's death, arguments raged among his intimates over who had been allowed and not allowed into this space. Here was indeed the innermost

⁹⁷ Anna Thornton in Visitors to Monticello, 34.

⁹⁸ Visitors to Monticello, 48.

circle, access to which was reserved to a small elect.⁹⁹

The principles of spatial segregation which were so important to the ultimate form of Monticello found their most significant manifestation in Jefferson's plan for the University of Virginia which in many ways was the ultimate expression of his political and social philosophy. The plan for his "academical village" is a virtual schematic diagram of Jefferson's ideal hierarchy based upon a division of labor and dominated by reason. At the head of his great lawn is the Rotunda which contained the library. On each side are the pavilions which housed professors and their classrooms. Connecting them are the ubiquitous rows of columns which Jefferson did much to popularize.¹⁰⁰ Behind these are the professors' gardens, and on rear streets the "hotels" for students. As Jefferson described his plans,

I consider the common plan followed in this country. . . of making one large and expensive building, as unfortunately erroneous. It is infinitely better to erect a small and separate lodge for each separate professorship, with only a hall below for his class, and two chambers above for himself; joining these lodges by barracks for a certain portion of the students, opening into a covered way to give a dry communication between all the schools. The whole of these

⁹⁹ See Edmund Bacon in Jefferson at Monticello, 84, 109, and 135, fn#3.

¹⁰⁰ Jefferson's seminal role in the Greek revival movement, whose hallmark is its monumental porticoes, is described by Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America (New York, 1944), 17-27 & passim.

arranged around an open square of grass and trees, would make it, what it should be in fact, an academical village, instead of a large and common den of noise, of filth and of fetid air. It would afford that quiet retirement so friendly to study and lessen the dangers of fire, infection and tumult.¹⁰¹

Jefferson's constant search for privacy took many forms. Frequently he wrote to Martha while he was president that he wished to leave public office, rejoin his family and return to a "private style of living." Here, finally Jefferson hoped, he would find peace: "I look with infinite joy to the moment when I shall be ultimately moored in the midst of my affections, and free to follow the pursuits of choice. In retiring to the condition of a private citizen and reducing our establishment to the style of living of a mere private family."¹⁰² Here by "enforcing the observance of the necessary economies in the internal administration of the house," Jefferson imagined he would find freedom to follow "the pursuits of choice" in the midst of the affections of his family.

But even at Monticello this goal was elusive, and even while construction at Monticello was continuing during his second term in office, Jefferson began the building of a second retreat at Poplar Forest near Lynchburg, Virginia.

¹⁰¹. T.J. to Hugh L. White, et al., May 6, 1810; Lipscomb and Bergh, XII, 387.

¹⁰² T.J. to Martha, Feb 27, 1809, Family Letters, 385-6; see also T.J. to Martha, Feb 6, 1808, Family Letters, 327.

In the decade after his retirement, he made two or three visits to this "second home," ninety miles from Monticello.¹⁰³ Jefferson wrote of his modest, octagonal retreat in 1812, "when finished, it will be the best dwelling house in the state, except that of Monticello; perhaps preferable to that, as more proportioned to the faculties of a private citizen."¹⁰⁴ Here perhaps Jefferson finally found the solitude, the freedom, and the privacy he sought.

But even in the fulfillment of all his wishes Jefferson was still not happy. On one of his visits to Poplar Forest he bemoaned, "I have seen the face of no human being for days except the servants. I am like a state prisoner. My keepers set before me at fixed hours something to eat and withdraw."¹⁰⁵ It was the ultimate irony, perhaps, in a life filled with ironies, that Jefferson's ideal of freedom had led him only to make a new prison for himself, one which he could ultimately never escape because its walls were constructed within his head. It was a situation that Samuel Johnson recognized in his adage, "Chains need not be put

¹⁰³ Dumas Malone The Sage of Monticello, 15, 290.

¹⁰⁴ T.J. to J.W. Eppes Sept. 18, 1812, Garden Book, 488-9.

¹⁰⁵ T.J. to Martha, Feb 24, 1811, Family Letters, 399-400.

upon those who will be restrained without them."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶. Cited in Stuart Gerry Brown, "Dr. Johnson and the Old Order," in Marxist Quarterly, #1 (Oct\Dec 1937); also in Donald J. Greene, ed., Samuel Johnson, a Collection of Critical Essays (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1965), 158-171. A similar image is the subject of Fredric Jameson, The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism (Princeton, 1972).

DECONSTRUCTING SLAVERY

I shall here relate a trifling, or rather diverting circumstance that may be interesting to some, by evincing the great simplicity of the blacks.

Having taken with me a negroe named Richmond, from a plantation here, which I had just purchased and settled, to carry me over the Roanoak in a canoe, that I might contemplate on and enjoy an elegant, wild perspective, from the summit of a considerable eminence that arose abruptly on a peninsula, almost surrounded by the river, I ordered him to meet me with the canoe at the opposite side of the peninsula.

When I arrived there, at the time appointed, there was no canoe, and no negroe: I called out for Richmond, as loud as I could vociferate, but had no answer.

It was about the middle of the day, which happened to be uncommonly hot and sultry; I was much indisposed and reduced very weak with an intermittent fever;

After waiting until the heat of the weather and the fever had almost overcome me, I resolved to walk down, along the side of the river, until I should meet or find him; as I apprehended he might be asleep, which all negroes are extremely addicted to; but in this attempt I found the utmost difficulty, from the almost insuperable impediments of trees fallen, and impending over the water, deep miry soil and leaves that sunk to my knees every step, impenetrable briars and underwood, black muddy gutts from the river, which compelled me to make circuits of half a mile to get round each of them, and innumerable swarms of musketoes, ticks, poisonous insects, and snakes.

Every quarter of a mile I loudly called him, but received no answer. Frequently quite overpowered with weakness and fatigue,

I sunk down to rest, and as often, for mere self-preservation and defence, was compelled to arise again to insupportable toil. At length night overtook me, with my cloaths torn, my flesh lacerated and bleeding with briars and thorns, stung all over by poisonous insects, suffocated with thirst and heat, and fainting under fatigue, imbecility, and disease.

In this wretched miserable condition, I at length arrived at the place where I had landed in the morning, having travelled about five miles in seven hours, through a perpetual thicket of almost impenetrable woods.

Here I found Richmond, fast asleep in the canoe, exactly in the same spot where I had left him in the morning.

Being incensed in the highest degree, I threatened him with severe punishment, when he begged me to listen to his excuse. "Kay massa (says he), you just leave me, me sit here, great fish jump up into de canoe; here he be, massa, fine fish, massa, me den very glad; den me sit very still, until another great fish jump into de canoe; but me fall asleep, massa, and no wake till you come: now massa, me know deserve flogging, cause if great fish jump into de canoe, he see me asleep, den he jump out again, and I no catch him; so massa, me willing now take good flogging."

My pain and vexation were for a moment forgotten, and I laughed heartily at the poor fellow's ignorance, and extreme simplicity, in waiting there for more fishes to jump into his canoe, because one had happened to do so; and therefore forgave his crime.

The English traveller in Virginia, J.F.D. Smyth, and the slave, Richmond, constructed two different narratives around the events of this day. In Smyth's narrative, the relevant events were his ascent up a hill to contemplate the

¹ J.F.D. Smyth, A Tour in the United States of America... (London, 1784), p118-121.

view and his troubles returning: the conclusion he drew was proof of the "great simplicity of the blacks." In Richmond's narrative, Smyth's activities play only a secondary role, and the most important event was his own attempt to catch a fish by simply watching and waiting. Richmond may well have had another narrative which he recounted later to a more sympathetic audience, about his taking a day off from labor, and the conclusion of his story may have been about the gullibility of an English traveller.

Whether or not a fish actually jumped into Richmond's canoe is irrelevant. The fish was merely a convenient fiction which both individuals agreed to accept because it detracted attention from their own personally constructed narratives of the day's events. It represented a negotiation between the two individuals. It allowed them both to ignore the actual balance of power between the two men which was based on the realities that Richmond probably had very little concern whether or not Smyth safely completed his sight-seeing trip, and also that Smyth could not flog Richmond without jeopardizing his eventual return to settled society. Smyth's narrative of the day's events - which included certain assumptions about the value of admiring the landscape, his rights to direct the actions of an individual whose labor he had purchased, and the idea that his interests ranked above those of a slave -- if maintained without change, would have led him to the

necessity of physical violence. Richmond's narrative, which might remind the reader of the fishes at Penshurst which jumped into the fisher's hand, was similarly based on a set of assumptions, and it served the immediate purpose of helping him to avoid the perhaps equally repugnant alternatives of accepting a flogging or of retaliating against Smyth's violence. He, in effect, deconstructed Smyth's narrative, and the conflicts which were implicit in it, by creating his own narrative, which was then mutually accepted by both parties. This process of deconstructing narratives, and re-interpreting them for their own purposes, was a process in which slaves were masters.²

In this story, Richmond invented a fish, which played a central role in defusing the potential violence implicit in Smyth's narrative. People in the nineteenth century were busy creating narratives and inventing the creatures which populated them. Unfortunately, not all of these creatures disappeared as simply as Richmond's fish by merely jumping out of a boat. To a large extent slavery was created in the same way as the fish in this story. It served to explain and ameliorate tensions. It was a rhetorical strategy, which, once life had been breathed into it, had a life of

² See Henry Louis Gates, The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism (New York, 1990). In the story of Richmond and Smyth the levels of narrative are especially dense. See Whitfield Bell, Jr., "Thomas Anburey's 'Travels through America': A note on Eighteenth-century Plagiarism" Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, XXXVII, 1943, 23-36.

its own. Although to a captive African in America, slavery was something very real which could have mortal consequences, it was, nevertheless, the product of certain semantic structures. These rhetorical strategies would eventually affect Africans and non-Africans with equally negative results.³

Richmond faced the same problem as John Locke: how could one justify an existing authority without a recourse to violence? For both Locke and Richmond, the solution existed in a kind of legerdemain. A "fish" was constructed which was the symbol of the gulf between ideals and realities, and as soon as it was created it had to be eliminated, but its influence could never be entirely erased. This was an event that was reenacted again and again in the nineteenth century. Not just slavery but other words that were dependent on the concept of slavery -- freedom, democracy, family, race, property -- were continually invented and re-invented. Like fishes out of water, they had all been separated from the physical

³. This interpretation, and much that follows owes a great deal to current work in literary criticism. Good introductions to this work are in: Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1983); Terence Hawks, Structuralism and Semiotics (Berkeley, California, 1977); and Jonathan Culler, Framing the Sign, Criticism and Its Institutions (Norman, Oklahoma, 1988). See also: K.M. Newton (ed.), Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader (New York, 1988); and Robert Con Davis (ed.), Contemporary Literary Criticism: Modernism Through Post-Structuralism (New York, 1986). See, as well, the works cited in the preceding chapters.

realities which gave them life.

The new words were defined, not by their relations to the physical world, but by their relations with each other. In this new grammar, no single word carried such a weight of responsibilities as did slavery. The relationship between slavery and race was one of the first inventions of the modern world. It was this relationship which made modern slavery unique by creating in slavery an absolute status from which there could be no hope of escape for oneself or one's children. But slavery and race have as often been oppositional terms as they have been compatible. In the development of the modern world, anti-slavery and racism have typically progressed hand-in-hand,⁴ thus it was not accidental that the author of the Declaration of Independence was also one of the major innovators of the theory of scientific racism.

A modern, industrial, capitalist democracy could not tolerate slavery.⁵ Arbitrary authority, which had its

⁴. Tocqueville was perhaps the first to make this observation in his statement that, "The prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists; and nowhere is it so intolerant as in those states where servitude has never been known." cited in C.Vann Woodward, American Counterpoint, Slavery and Racism in the North/South Dialogue (New York, 1964), 238. Leon Litwack suggested the relationship for the antebellum period in his, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago, 1961).

⁵. The relationship between capitalism and slavery was central to the interpretations of a number of historians in the 1960s and 70s, which reached their most powerful statements in the works of David Brion Davis and Eugene

economic base in community or household production, and its justification in a unified and mutualistic conception of the world, and which was emphatically resistant to change, could not compete against the higher laws necessary to regulate an international commerce in goods created by specialized labor in competitive and ever-changing markets. Nuclear families, set adrift in this new world, no longer identified themselves with either the rich or the poor, but fastened their status on their hopes for the future. The poverty, disease, and filth from which they hoped to escape could only be combatted by new codes of individual restraint and industry -- in effect rejecting the world of luxury and concupiscence which material success would likely bring. In this modernizing spirit, all of the forces which were aligned against them seemed to take on physical forms in the persons of blacks and the institution of slavery.

At the same time, the positive values of freedom and democracy were defined by their opposition to slavery. Throughout the last two centuries, slavery and freedom have most often been defined circularly in a dualistic scheme of opposition. Slavery is the absence of freedom; freedom is the absence of slavery. The interdependence of slavery and freedom, however, has not been solely due to grammatical

Genovese. Since most of this work appeared, however, many studies of slavery have reverted to a neo-abolitionist view of slavery as the embodiment of absolute evil -- a trend indicative to me of an increasing intolerance in the larger society.

constructions. Economically, the freedom gained by white Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended on the labor of black workers. Tobacco, cotton and sugar, all of which were produced almost entirely by slave labor, were the great engines which drove the economies not only of the southern colonies and states, but also the trade, commerce, and industry of the North.

For those who were not the obvious beneficiaries of black labor, a "deal" was struck (much like that between Richmond and Smyth) that gave to the poor and exploited classes, North and South, a rhetorical status higher than that of blacks and/or slaves.⁶

Crucial in these developments was the invention of the idea of race which made modern slavery possible by placing slaves in a category entirely separate from the normative social order - a condition that bound all successive generations, and that was dependent on a new rigidity in establishing lines of inheritance and a new conceptualization of the nuclear family.

The idea of race also, paradoxically, made possible the development of a philosophy of anti-slavery. Conceptions of

⁶. The idea of a "Deal" was suggested by Wilbur Cash, The Mind of the South (New York, 1941). See also Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery/American Freedom, The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1975). The idea of a "Herrenvolk democracy," described by Pieter L. van den Burghe, is the subject of George M. Fredrickson's The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1971).

both race and anti-slavery depended on a concept of natural law and an urge to categorize tied to emerging economic realities and dependent on the competition of individuals for limited goods. In this process a despised category of "radical otherness" was formulated which comprised people outside of the economic/social realm, i.e., Africans, African-Americans, and slaves. Like Locke's ambiguous "state of nature," the black slave served two disparate, but linked, purposes. The union of anti-slavery and racism supported a modern economic, social, and political system based on aggressive, individualistic competition, while at the same time a philosophy of anti-slavery cloaked a laissez-faire philosophy with an aura of benevolence.

The linked concepts of race and anti-slavery, thus supported social policies which promised everyone a piece of the pie so long as they worked for it within the market system. At the same time, the concepts justified the status of the white middle class who had been successful in acquiring their portion, even while ignoring the reality that there was not enough pie, as it was divided, to go around. People of color, excluded by apparently natural law as well as economic reality, served as proof and support to the whole cycle.

During the whole course of American history the Jeffersonian romantic-liberal tradition, with its rejection of an organic conception of society and its implicit

assumptions of distinctions of race, class, and gender has had a central role. Accommodations with slavery and racism were critical in the formulation and ratification of the U.S. Constitution. The constitutional convention's "Great Compromise," between large and small states contained a series of smaller compromises over the representation of slaves and the continuance of the slave trade. Policies based upon the Jeffersonian formula were enacted and continued throughout the Presidencies of the "Virginia Dynasty," who dominated the office for the first of a quarter century after the nation's founding. The Jeffersonian liberal tradition, suffering more from schism than from outright opposition, has continued as the foundation of American political parties and their philosophies ever since.⁷ During the crisis of the sectional conflict, Lincoln and the abolitionists avoided the practical issues of economic and political structure by turned to Jefferson and formulated the Northern cause as a crusade against slavery which incidentally was allied with their promotion of industry and the railroads. Issues of slavery and race, did not catapult the nation to the brink of dissolution, as usually assumed, but acted then, as it has since, as the glue which held it together.

⁷. See, particularly, Daniel Walker Howe, The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago, 1979), and Merrill D. Peterson, The Jefferson Image in the American Mind (Oxford, 1960).

In nearly every age of our history, central issues have been avoided or obscured by the ambiguous role of race and the mythology of slavery.⁸ Recently (1991) American politics seem to be again dominated by issues of equality and natural rights which have an ironic character. Politicians have become adept at manipulating the inherent contradictions of Locke's and Jefferson's philosophies. It is easy to imagine that their intrigues are entirely new, a part of the unravelled fabric of the post-modern world. But such is not the case. A clear thread runs from Jefferson to Lincoln to Reagan and Bush. The issues of slavery and racism, are not, as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. once wrote, "a betrayal of the basic values of our Christian and democratic tradition."⁹ They lie at their very foundation.

⁸. For especially illuminating statements about the interrelationships between slavery and race in American history see Barbara J. Field, "Ideology and race in American History," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Van Woodward, (New York, 1982); and Nathan I. Huggins, "The Deforming Mirror of Truth: Slavery and the Master Narrative of American History," Radical History Review, 49, 1991; Nathan I. Huggins "Introduction," to Black Odyssey: The Afro-American Ordeal in Slavery, (Second edition, New York, forthcoming).

⁹ "The Causes of the Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Parisian Review, Vol XVI, #10, 968-81; cited in Michael P. Johnson "Upward in Slavery," New York Review of Books, December, 21, 1989.

APPENDIX A:

To Penshurst,

Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show
 of touch or marble, nor canst boast a row
Of polished pillars, or a roof of gold;
 Thou hast no lanthornn, whereof tales are told,
Or stairs, or courts; but standest an ancient pile,
 And these grudged at, art revered the while.
Thou joyest in better marks, of soil of air,
 Of wood, of water: therein thou art fair.
Thou hast thy walks for health, as well as sport;
10 Thy Mount, to which the Dryads do resort,
Where Pan and Bacchus their high feasts have made
 Beneath the broad beech and the chestnut shade,
The taller tree, which of a nut was set,
 At his great birth, where all the Muses met.
There, in the writhed bark, are cut the names
 Of many a Sylvan, taken with his flames.
And thence, the ruddy Satyrs oft provoke
 The lighter Fauns, to reach thy lady's Oak.
Thy copse, too, named of Gamage, thou hast there,
20 That never fails to serve thee seasoned deer
When thou wouldst feast, or exercise thy friends.
 The lower land that to the river bends,
Thy sheep, thy bullocks, kine, and calves do feed:
 The middle grounds thy mares and horses breed.
Each bank doth yield thee coneys, and the tops
 Fertile of wood, Ashore and Sidney's copse,
To crown thy open table doth provide
 The purpled pheasant with the speckled side.
The painted partridge lies in every field,
30 And, for thy mess, is willing to be killed;
And if the high swollen Medway fail thy dish,
 Thou hast thy ponds that pay thee tribute fish,
Fat, aged carps, that run into thy net.
 And pikes, now weary their own kind to eat,
As loath, the second draught or cast to stay,
 Officiously, at first, themselves betray.
Bright eels that emulate them and leap on land,
 Before the fisher or into his hand.
Then hath thy orchard fruit, thy garden flowers,

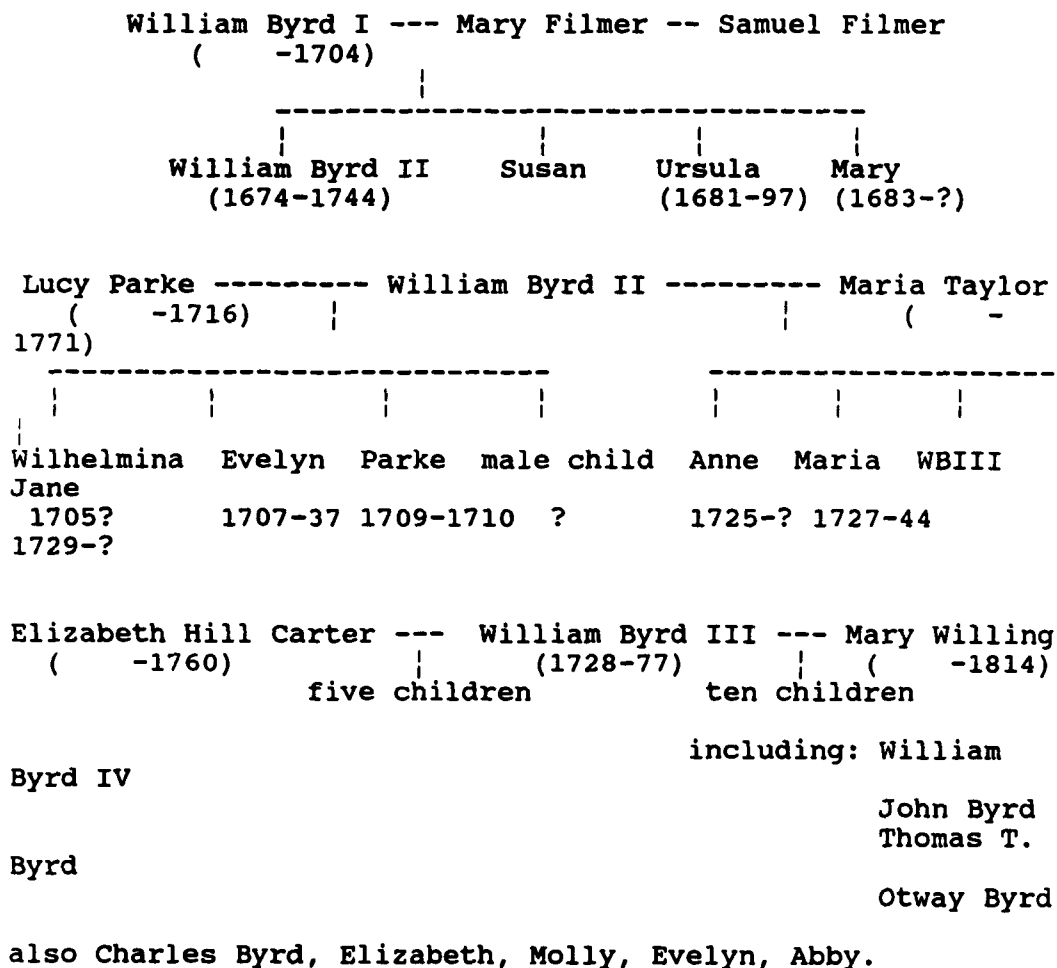
40 Fresh as the air and new as are the hours.
 The early cherry, with the later plum,
 Fig, grape, and quince, each in his time doth
 come;
 The flushing apricot and wooly peach
 Hang on thy walls that every child may reach.
 And though thy walls be of the country stone,
 They are reared with no man's ruin, no man's
 groan.

There's none that dwell about them wish them down;
 But all come in, the farmer, and the clown;
 And no one empty-handed to salute
 50 Thy lord and lady, though they have no suit.
 Some bring a capon, some a rural cake,
 Some nuts, some apples; some that think they make
 The better cheeses bring them; or else send
 By their ripe daughters whom they would commend
 This way to husbands, and whose baskets bear
 An emblem of themselves, in plum or pear.
 But what can this (more than express their love)
 Add to thy free provisions, far above
 The need of such? whose liberal board doth flow
 60 With all that hospitality doth know!
 Where comes no guest, but is allowed to eat
 Without his fear, and of thy Lord's own meat,
 Where the same beer and bread and self-same wine
 That is his Lordship's shall be also mine.
 And I not fain to sit (as some, this day,
 At great men's tables) and yet dine away.
 Here no man tells my cups; nor standing by,
 A waiter doth my gluttony envy,
 But gives me what I call and lets me eat,
 70 He knows, below, he shall find plenty of meat.
 Thy tables hoard not up for the next day,
 Nor when I take my lodgings need I pray
 For fire, or lights, or livery: all is there;
 As if thou, then wert mine, or I reigned here,
 There's nothing I can wish, for which I stay.
 That found King James, when hunting late this way,
 With his brave sone, the Prince, they saw thy fires
 Shine bright on every hearth as the desires
 Of thy Penates had been set on flame
 80 To entertain them; or the country came,
 With all their zeal, to warm their welcome here.
 What (great, I will not say, but) sudden cheer
 Didst thou, then, make them! and what praise was heaped
 On thy good lady, then! who, therein, reaped
 The just reward of her high huswifery;
 To have her linen, plate, and all things nigh,
 When she was far: and not a room, but dressed,
 As if it had expected such a guest!
 These, Penshurst, are thy praise, and yet no all.

90 Thy lady's noble, fruitful, chaste withall.
His children thy great lord may call his own:
A fortune in this age but rarely known.
They are and have been taught religion; thence
Their gentler spirits have sucked innocence.
Each morn and even they are taught to pray
With the whole household, and may every day,
Read, in their virtuous parents noble parts,
The mysteries of manners, arms, and arts.
100 Now Penshurst, they that will proportion thee
With other edifices, when they see
Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,
May say, their lords have built, but thy lord
dwells.

APPENDIX B:

GENELOGICAL CHART;



APPENDIX C:

William Byrd to John Percival, Earl of Egmont, a discussion of Peter Kolb's Present State of the Cape of Good Hope. On the Hottentots. . .

I am pleased to find by his book that those savages have some sense of a superior being (contrary to the vulgar notion) tho they as ignorant of him as many who call themselves Christians. They believe there is a God who made all things and call him Gounja, i.e. God of all Gods; that he curst their first parents and all their posterity with hardness of heart, so that they know little of him, and have less inclination to serve him, but that he now hurts no body, dwells far above the moon, and no body need fear hem. They worship the moon as his representative, they adore a small insect peculiar to their country, pay religious veneration to good Hottentots departed, and worship the Devil to avert his malice. They are naturally honest, make good servants, are remarkably human to each other and have a policy of government well suited to their tempers together with just laws in civil and criminal causes which they are as just and speedy in executing. Robbery murder and adultery they punish with death, they suffer not first nor second cousins to marry and are exceeding modest both in words and actions before strangers. They think it unlawful to eat the flesh of swine, hares or rabbits or fish that has no scales or to touch or to eat with their wives when they have the menses. They are faithful to their allyances, and never make war before the injured nation sends a deputy to represent the injury and demand redress. The prisoners taken in battle they kill on the spot, but touch not the enemies they slay neither to insult or plunder them. Those things set them off to me in a very advantageous light. But on the other hand I am extreemly disgusted when I read that they eat their own lice by handfulls, and that the highest honour can be done them is to piss upon 'em, a ceremony which always attends their inauguration of their princes and magistrates, and is the reward of valour, and that they expose their daughters to death if

too chargeable to maintain, that the youth when grown up are taught to dispise their mothers and beat them, and that when the old are past labor they shut them up in caves to expire of cold and hunger. . . . It appears by what another says of the chas[t]ity of these people that it has not that incitive quality to venery, tho it warms a cold constitution and is a great restorative.

December 28, 1730, Correspondences, p440-41. See also his paper to the Royal Society on a "dappled negro."

APPENDIX D:

Lockes Two Treatise on Government, "Of Slavery," The Second Treatise, Chapter IV (II, IV, 22,1 - 24,17):

The Natural Liberty of Man is be be free from any Superior Power on Earth, and not to be under the Will or Legislative Authority of Man, but to have only the Law of Nature for his Rule. The Liberty of Man, in Society, is to be under no other Legislative Power, but that established, by consent, in the Commonwealth, nor under the Dominion of any Will, or Restraint of any Law, but what the Legislative shall enact, according to the Trust put in it. Freedom then is not what Sir R.F. tells us, O.A.55[224]. A Liberty for every one to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tyed by any Laws: But Freedom of Men under Government, is to have a stnading Rule to live by, common to every one of that Society, and made by the Legislative Power erected in it; A Liberty to follow my own Will in all things, where the Rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will of another Man. As Freedom of Nature is to be under no other restraint but the Law of Nature.

23. This Freedom from Absolute, Arbitrary Power, is so necessary to, and closely joynd with a Man's Preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his Preservation and Life together. For a Man, not having the Power of his own Life, cannot, by Compact, or his own Consent, enslave himself to any one, nor put himself under the Absolute, Arbitrary Power of another, to take away his Life, when he pleases. No body can give more Power than he has himself; and he that cannot take away his own Life, cannot give another power over it. Indeed having, by his fault, forfeited his own Life, by some Act that deserves Death; he, to whom he has forfeited it, may (when he has him in his Power) delay to take it, and make use of him to his own Service, and he does him no injury by it. For, whenever he finds the hardship of his Slavery out-weigh the value of his Life, 'tis in his Power, by resisting the Will of his Master, to draw on

himself the Death he desires.

24. This is the perfect condition of Slavery, which is nothing else, but the State of War continued, between a lawful Conqueror, and a Captive. For if once Compact enter between them, and make an agreement for a limited Power on the one side, and Obedience on the other, the State of War and Slavery ceases, as long as the Compact endures. For, as has been said, no Man can, by agreement, pass over to another that which he hate not in himself, a Power over his own Life.

I confess, we find among the Jews, as well as othr Nations, that Men did sell themselves; but, 'tis plain, this was only to Drudgery, not to Slavery. For, it is evident, the Person sold was not under an Absolute, Arbitray, Despotical Power. For the Master could not have power to kill him, at any time, whom, at a certain time, he was obliged to let go free out of his Service: and the Master of such a Servant was wo far from having and Arbitray Power over his Life, that he could not, at pleasure, so much as maim him, but the loss of an Eye, or Tooth, set him free, Exod. XXI. END QUOTE, P283-285.

APPENDIX E:

Jefferson's plans for Monticello, 1771, from his account book, (reprinted in Betts, Jefferson's Garden Book, p25-7).

choose out for a Burying place some unfrequented vale in the park, where is, 'no sound to break the stillness but a brook, that bubbling winds among the weeds; no mark of any human shape that had been there, unless the skelton of some poor wretch, Who sought that place out to despair and die in.' let it be among antient and venerable oaks; interperse some gloomy evergreens/ tje area circular, abt. 60 f. diameter, encircled with an untrimmed hedge of cedar, or of stone wall with a holly hedge on it in the form below [He makes a drawing of a spiral on the margin to illustrate this.] in the center of it erect a small Gothic temple of antique appearance. appropriate one half to the use of my own family, the other of stangers, servants, etc. erect pedestals with urns, etc. and proper inscriptions. the passage between the walls, 4 f. wide. on the grave of a favorite and faithful servant might be a pyramid erected of the rough rock-stone; the pedestal made plain to receive an inscription. let the exit of the spiral at (a) [this a refers to spiral diagram] look on a small and distant part of the blue mountains. in the middle of the temple an altar, the sides of turf, the top of plain stone. very little light, perhaps none at all, save only the feeble ray of an half extinguished lamp. . . . a few feet below the spring level the ground 40 or 50 f. sq. let the water fall from the spring in the upper level over a terrace in the Western side of the level, where it may fall into a cistern under a temple, from which it may go off by the western border till it falls over another terrace at the Northern or lower side. let the temple be raised 2.f. for the first floor of stone. under this the cistern, which may be a bath or anything else. the 1st story arches on three sides; the back or western side being close because the hill there comes down, and also to carry up stairs on the outside. the 2d story to

have a door on one side, a spacious window in each of the other sides, the rooms each 8.f. cube; with a small table and a couple of chairs. the roof may be Chinese, Grecian, or in the taste of the lantern of Demosthenes at Athens.

the ground just about the spring smoothed and turfed; close to the spring a sleeping figure reclined on a plain marble slab, surrounded with turf; on the slab this inscription: Hujus nympha loci. . . .

near the spring also inscribe on stone, or a metal plate fastened to a tree, these lines: 'Beatus ille qui. . . ." plant trees of Beech and Aspen about it. open a vista to the millpond, river, road, etc. qu, if a view to the neighboring town would have a good effect? intersperse in this and every other part of the ground (except the environs of the Burying ground) abundance of jesamine, Honeysuckel, sweet briar, etc. under the temple, an Aeolian harp, where it may be concealed as well as covered from the weather. . . .

APPENDIX F:

Thomas Jefferson's advice to Martha, Nov 28, 1783;

With respect to the distribution of your time, the following is what I should approve: From 8 to 10 o'clock, practice music; from 10 to 1, Dance one day draw another; from 1 to 2, draw on the day you dance, and write a letter the next day; from 3 to 4 read French; from 4 to 5 exercise yourself in music; from 5 till bedtime read English write &c. . . . I expect you will write to me by every post. Inform me what books you read, what tunes you learn, and enclose me your best copy of every lesson in drawing. Write also one letter every week. . . . take care that you never spell a word wrong. Always consider how it is spelt, and if you do not remember it, turn to a dictionary. It produces great praise to a lady to spell well. I have place my happiness on seeing you good and accomplished, and no distress which this world can now bring on me could equal that of your disappointing my hopes. If you love me then, strive to be good under every situation and to all living creatures, and to acquire those accomplishments which I have put in your power, and which will go far towards ensuring you the warmest love of your affectionate father, Th: Jefferson.

(T.J. to Martha Nov 28, 1783, Family Letters, p19-20. I have made slight changes in punctuation.)

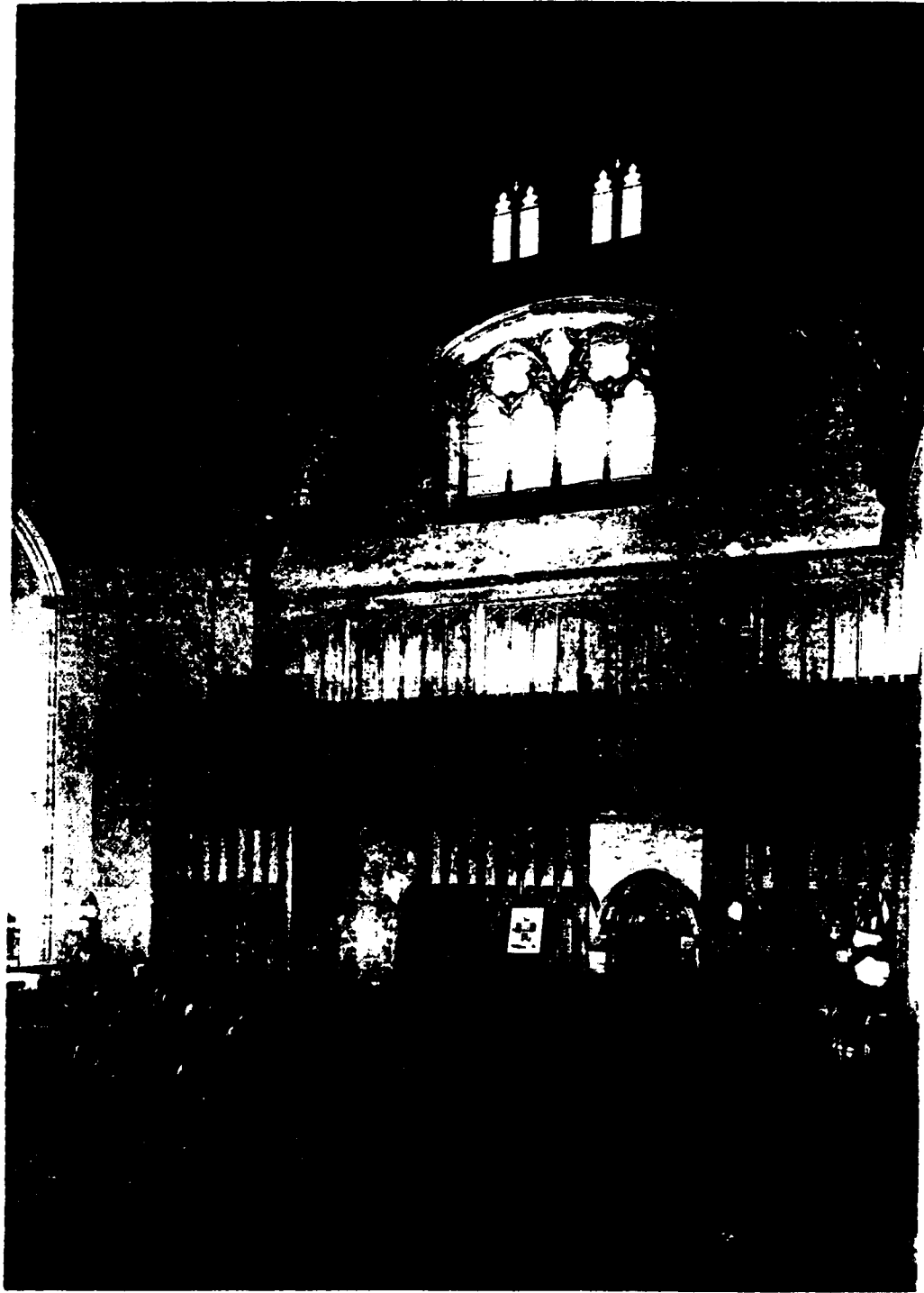
APPENDIX G
ILLUSTRATIONS



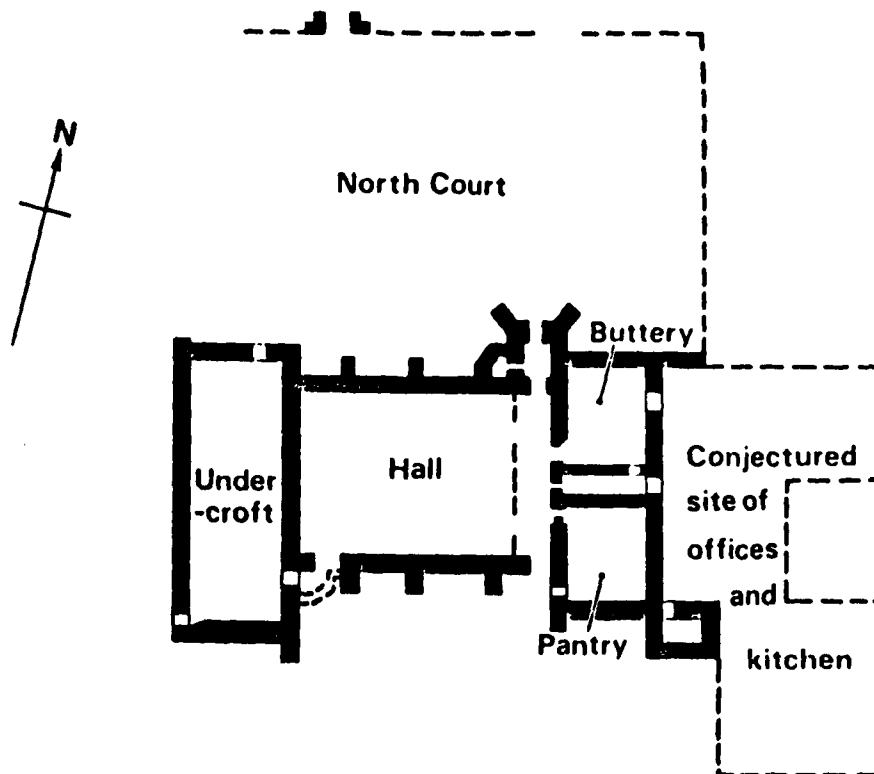
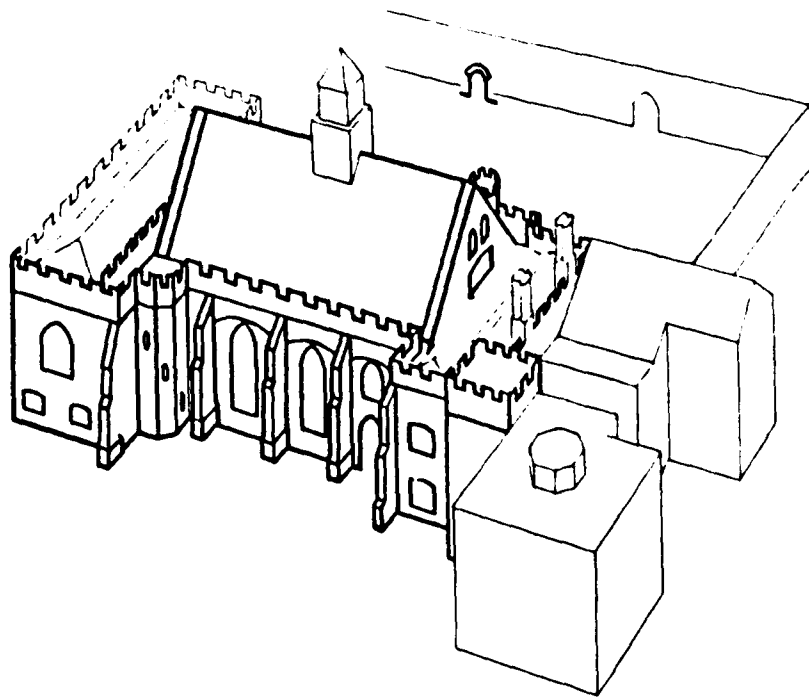
R. Cooke del.

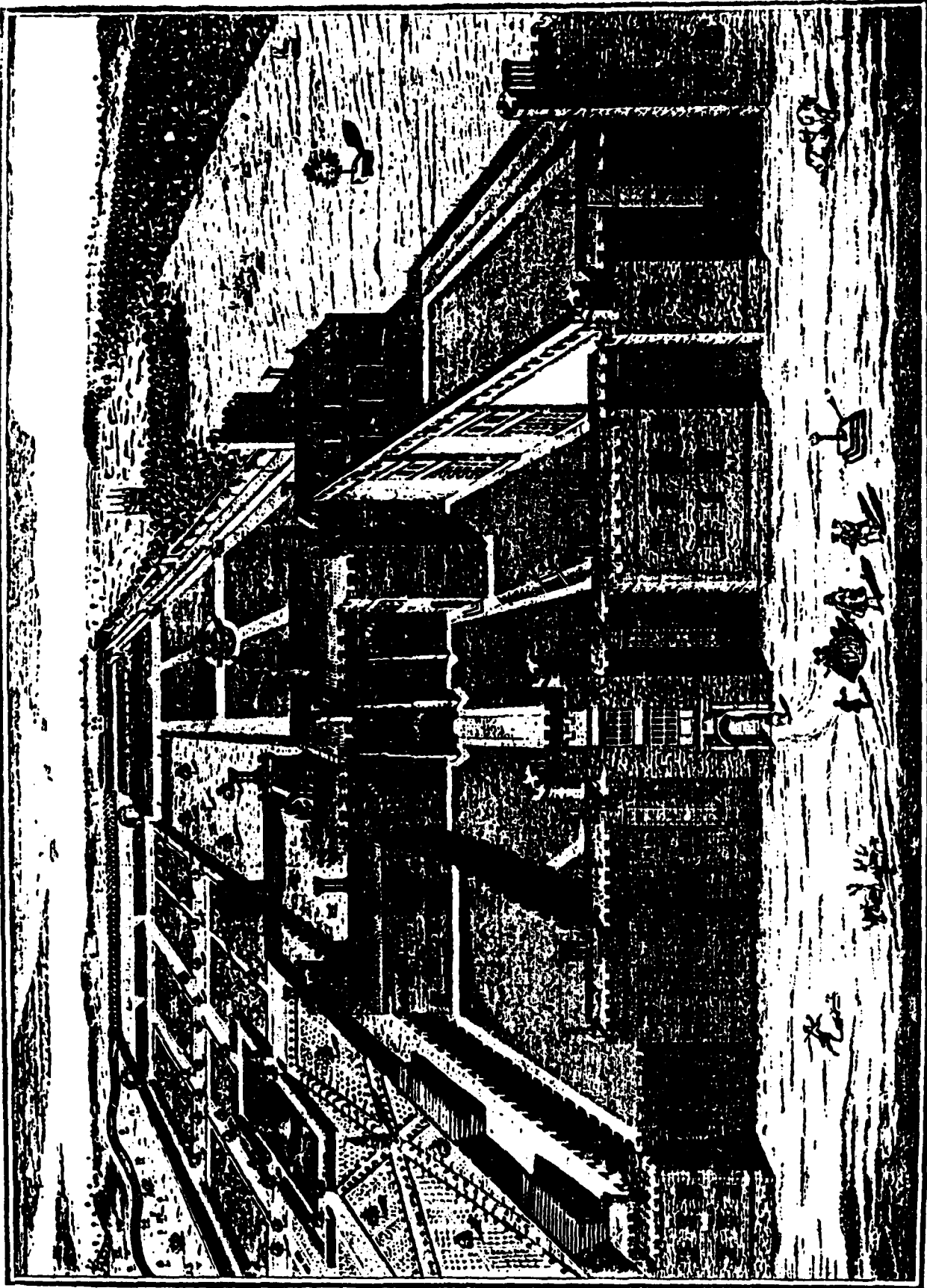
P. Marench sc.

*The Genius of Patriotism driving
Corruption from the Constitution. —*



THE GREAT HALL AT PENS HurST

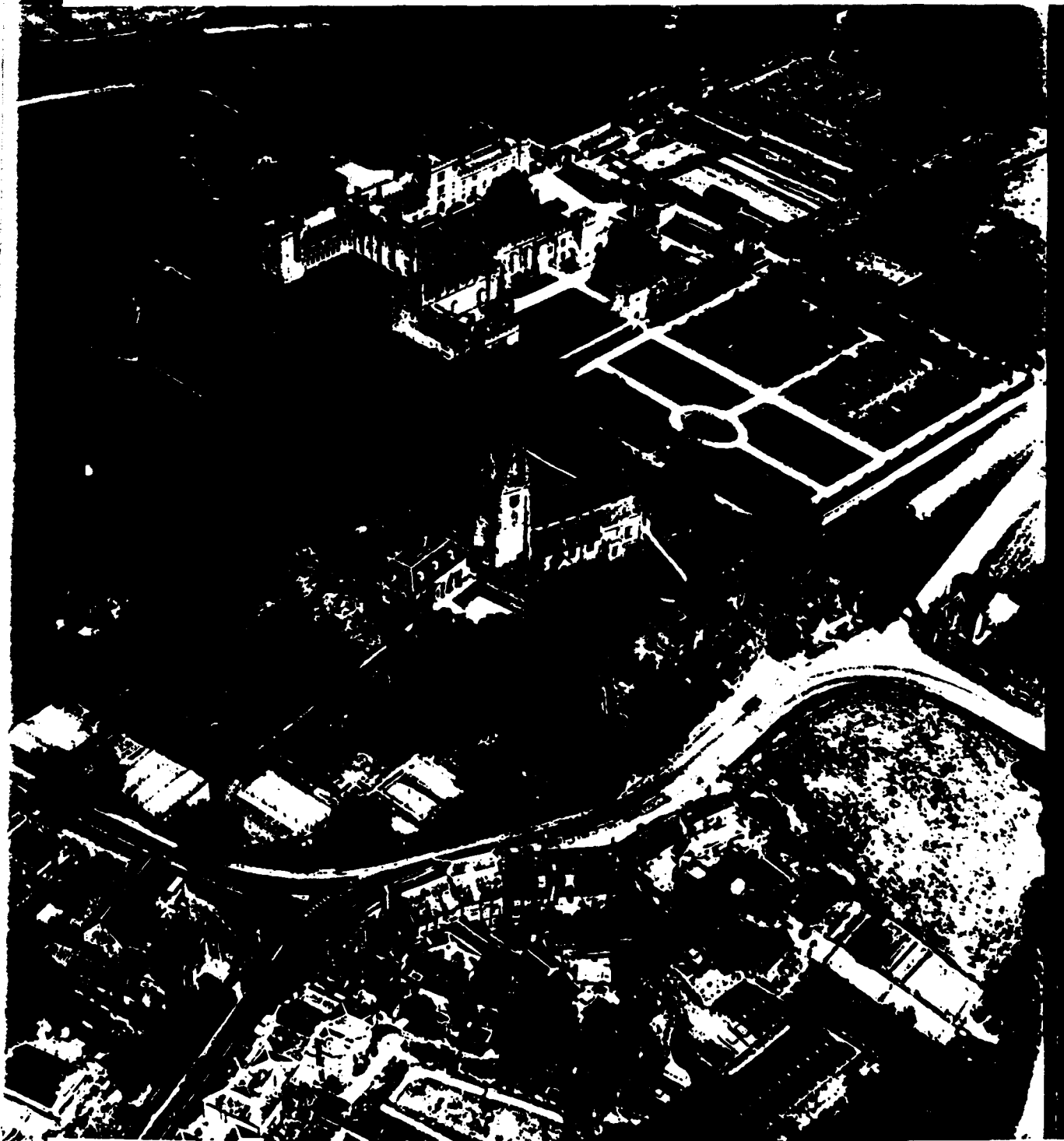




A VIEW OF PENS Hurst PLACE IN THE COUNTY OF KENT.



"LADY GAMAGE" AND SIX OF HER CHILDREN, by Marcus Gheeraets the Elder, from the collection of nonshurst place.



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF PENSURST, CHURCH AND VILLAGE, from National Monuments Record Air Photogaphy unit, 23 Saville row, TQ 5243/4, NMR 1248/115 (neg.n.) 9-Jun-78.

The HUNDRED of Codsall



PLAT OF PENSURST, FROM EDWARD HASTED, HISTORY AND TOPOGRAPHICAL

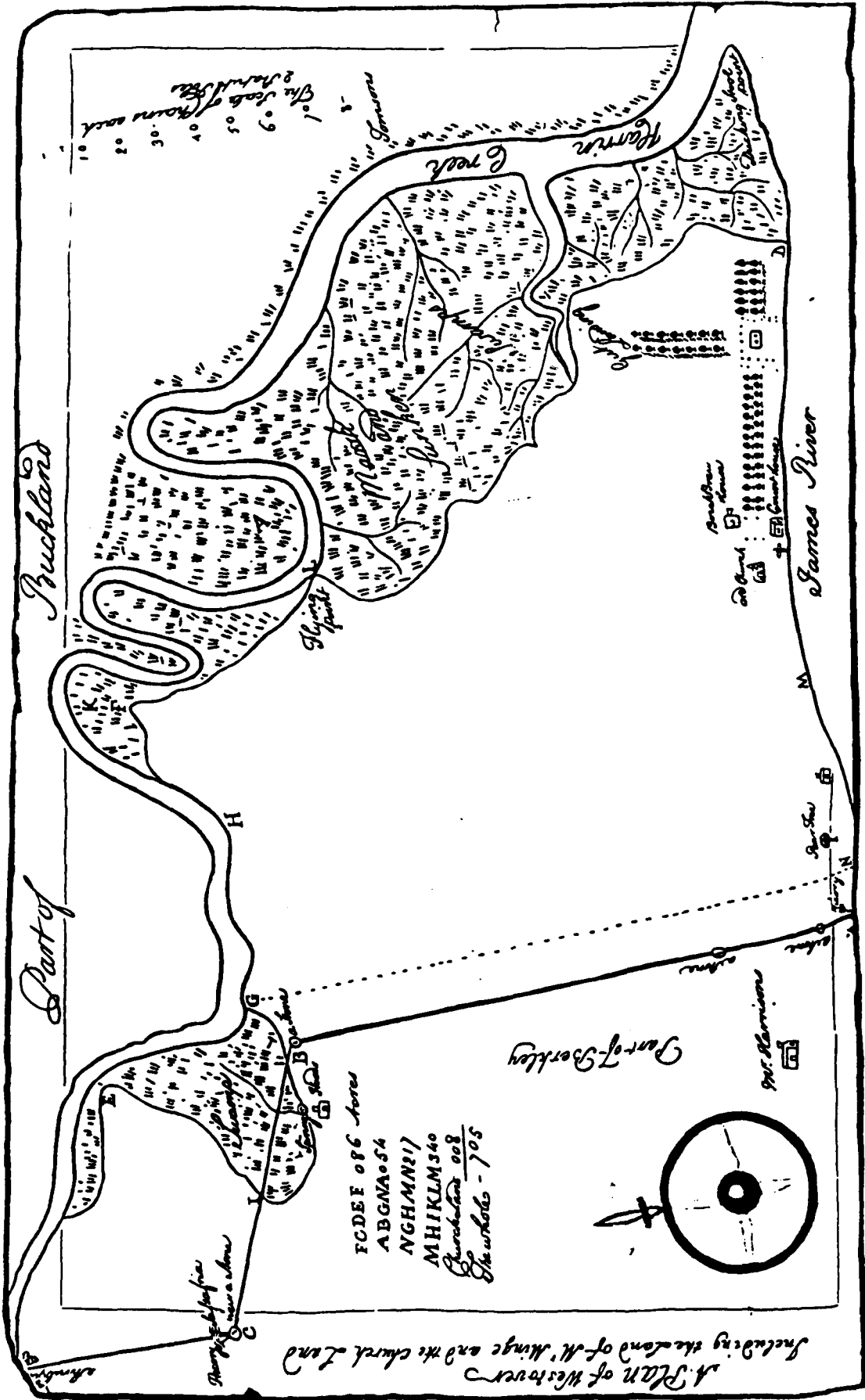
HUNDRED of WASHINGTON

T of SUSSEX



Fig. 1. The Child

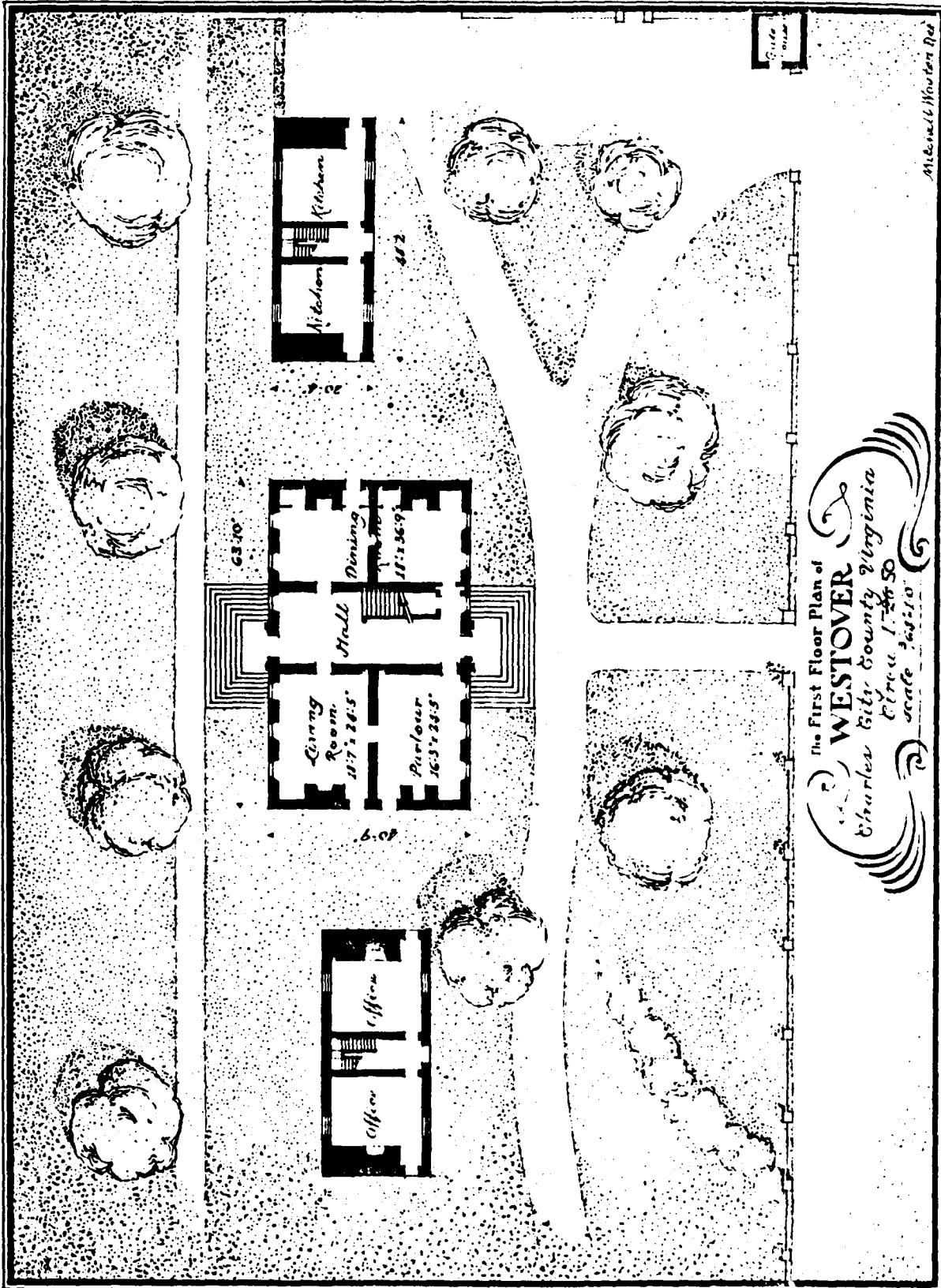
THE DANCE OF DEATH BY HANS HOLBEIN, 1490, from Bernard Rosenthal and Paul E. Szarmach (ed.s) Medievalism in American Culture, 1987. Structures such as this with its open heart was probably typical of



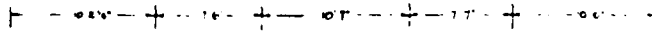
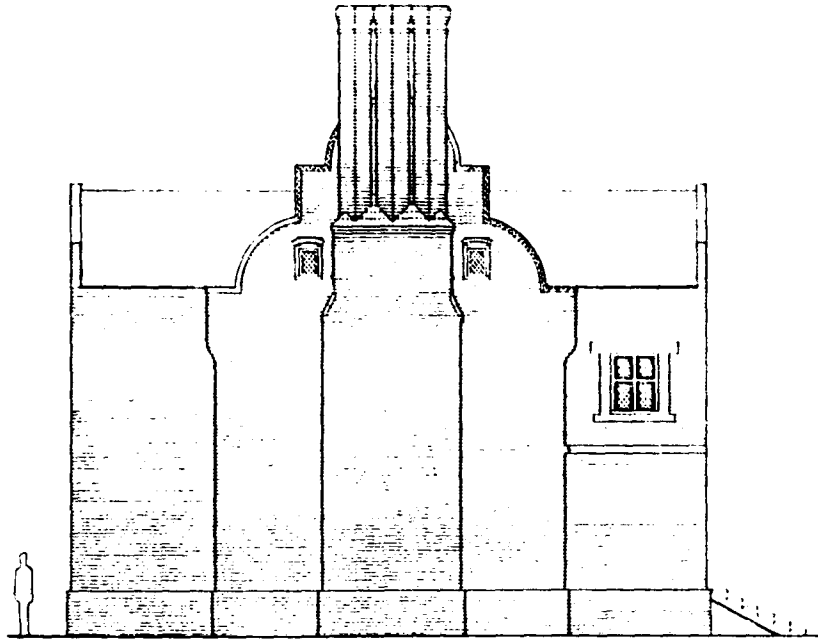
PLAT OF WESTOVER, c. 1706?, from The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography XI.VII 1939, opposite p 285



WESTOVER, BY LUCY HARRISON, BETWEEN 1825-30, from Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts, May 1988, MESDA Research file 14276.



BACON'S CASTLE

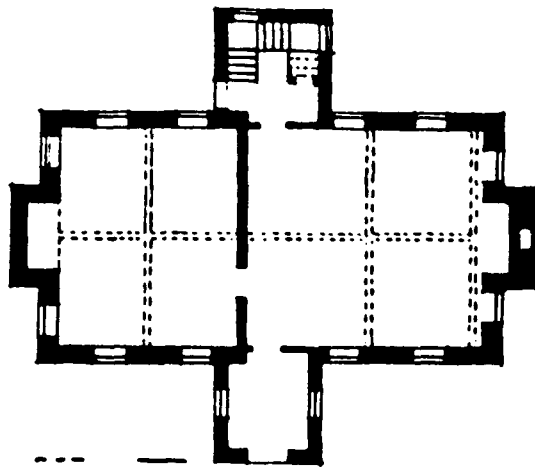


RESTORED WEST ELEVATION

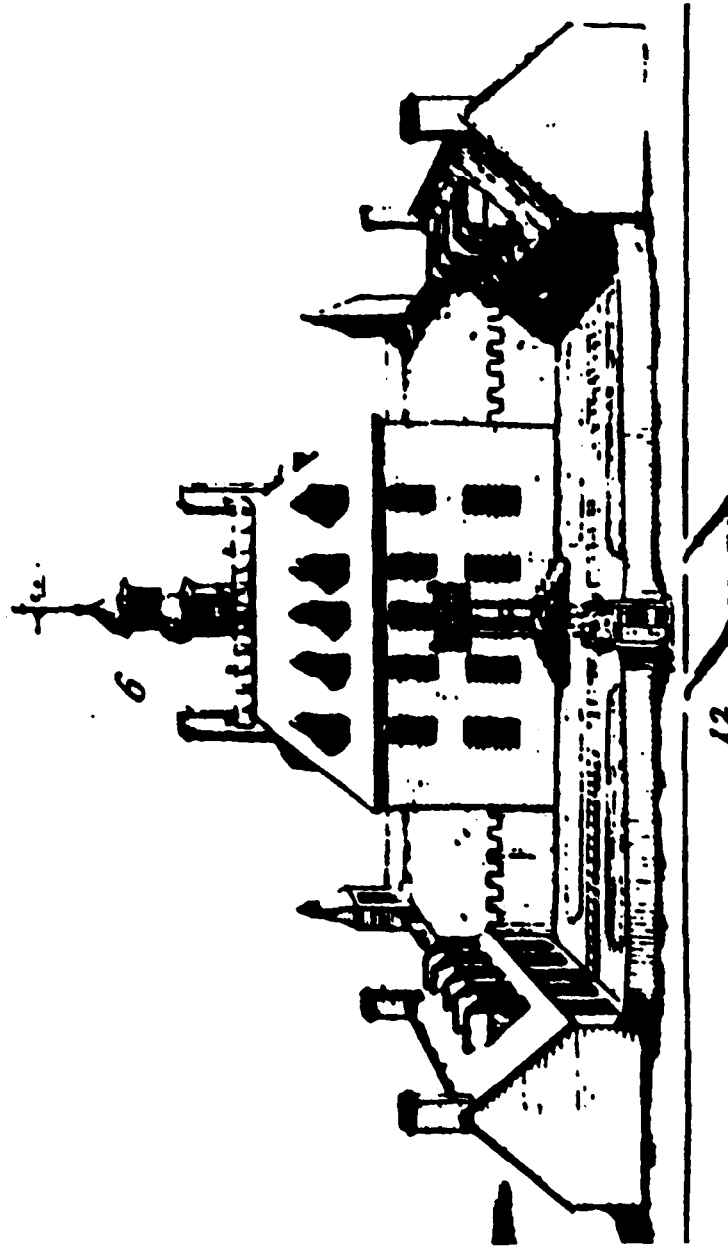


RESTORED SOUTH ELEVATION

Scale, $\frac{1}{8}$ in. to the foot

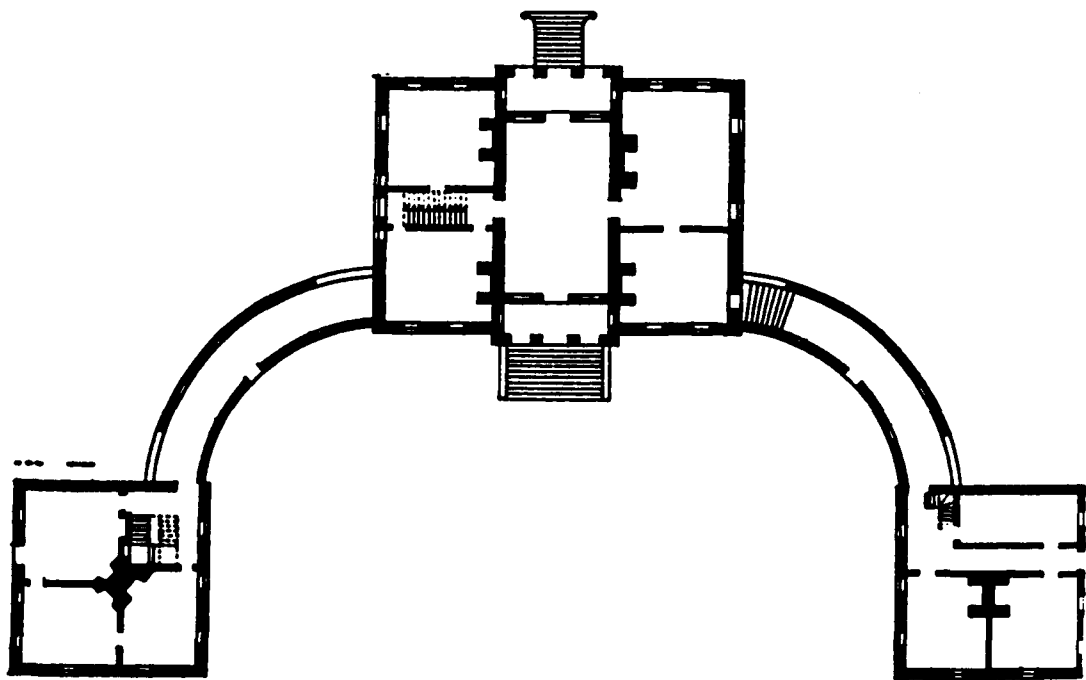


BACON'S CASTLE, Surry County.

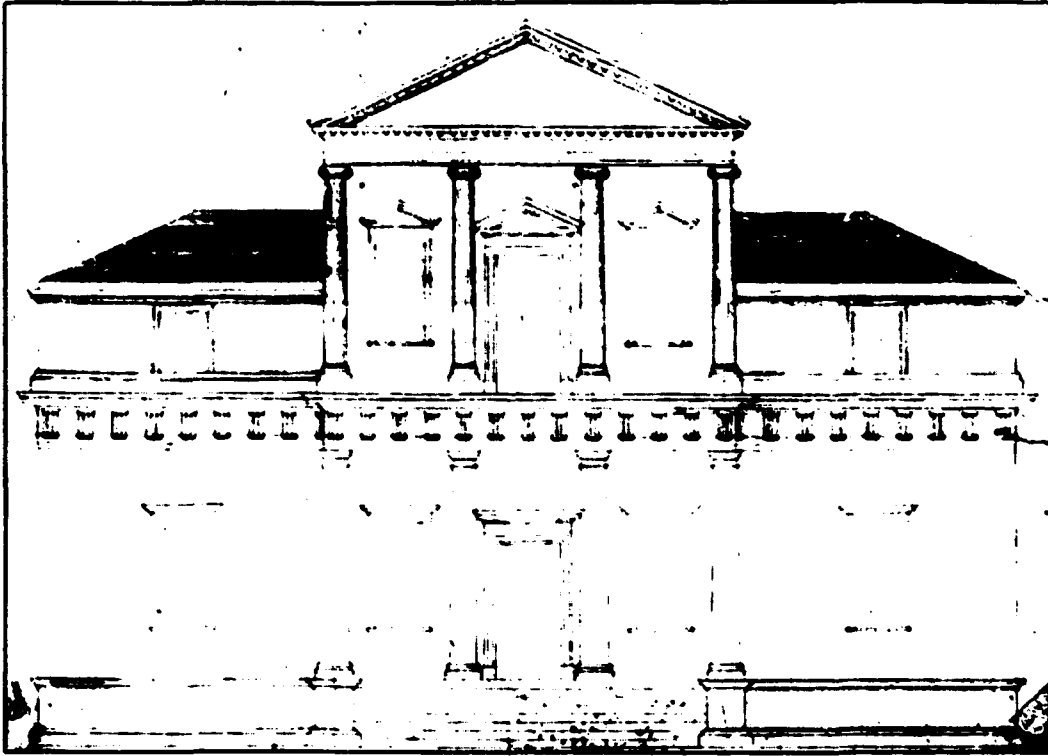




MOUNT AIRY, Richmond County. A lithograph by Pendleton of Boston, view before 1844 fire.



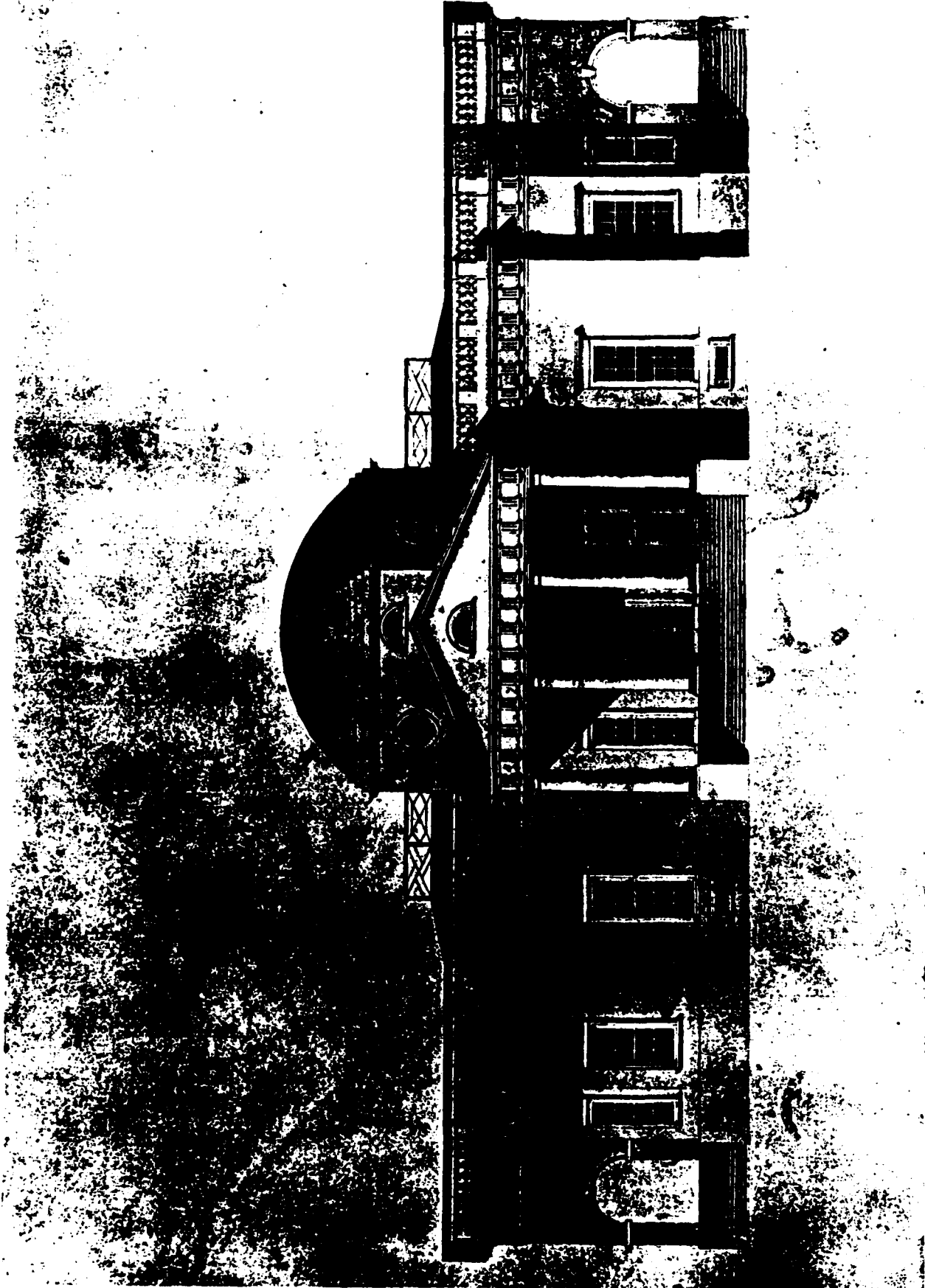
MOUNT AIRY, Richmond County.



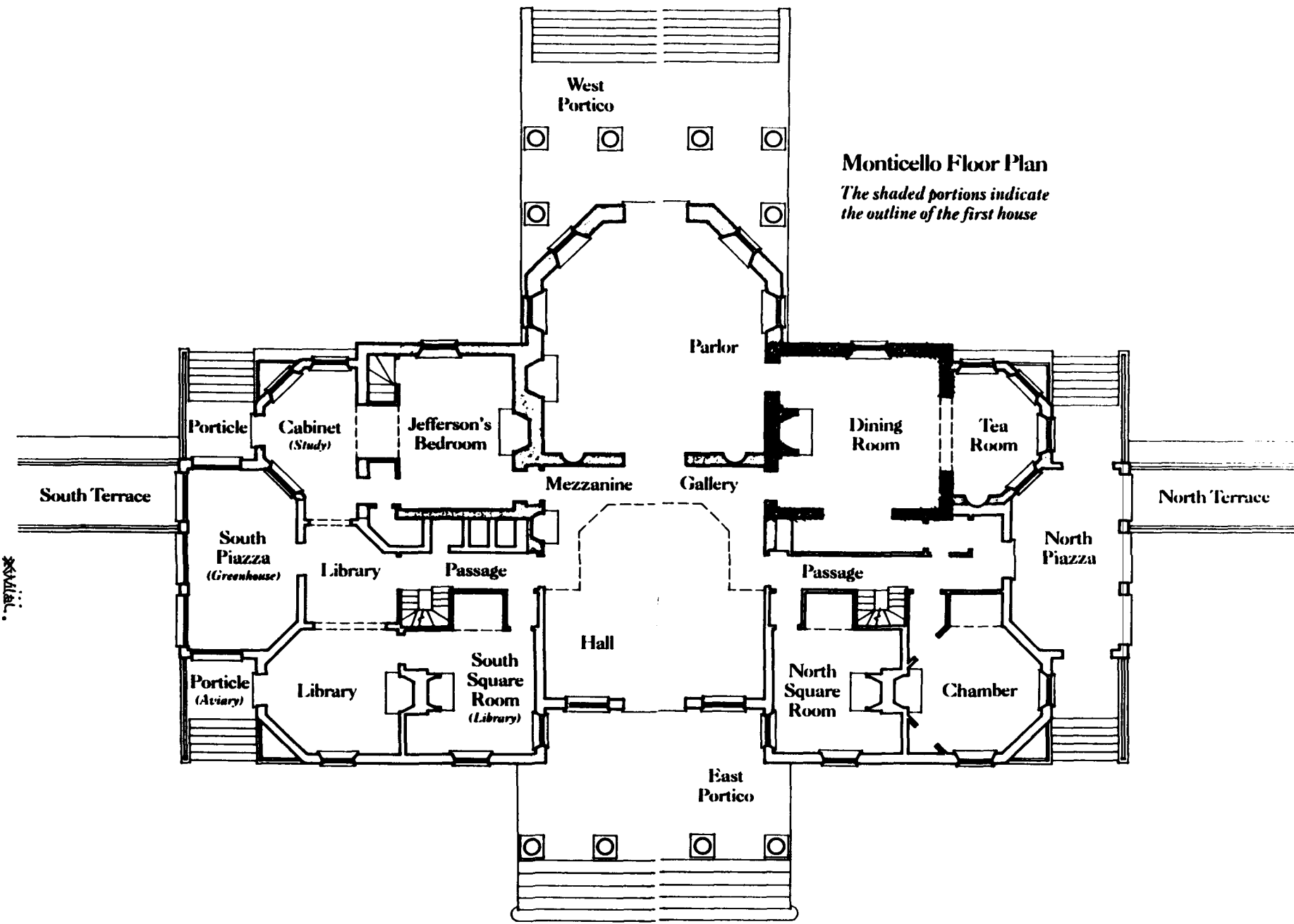
Jefferson's elevation of the first Monticello house. EAST PORT



An artist's rendering of what the first Monticello looked like. The upper columns and many of the decorative moldings were never installed, however. XVI.



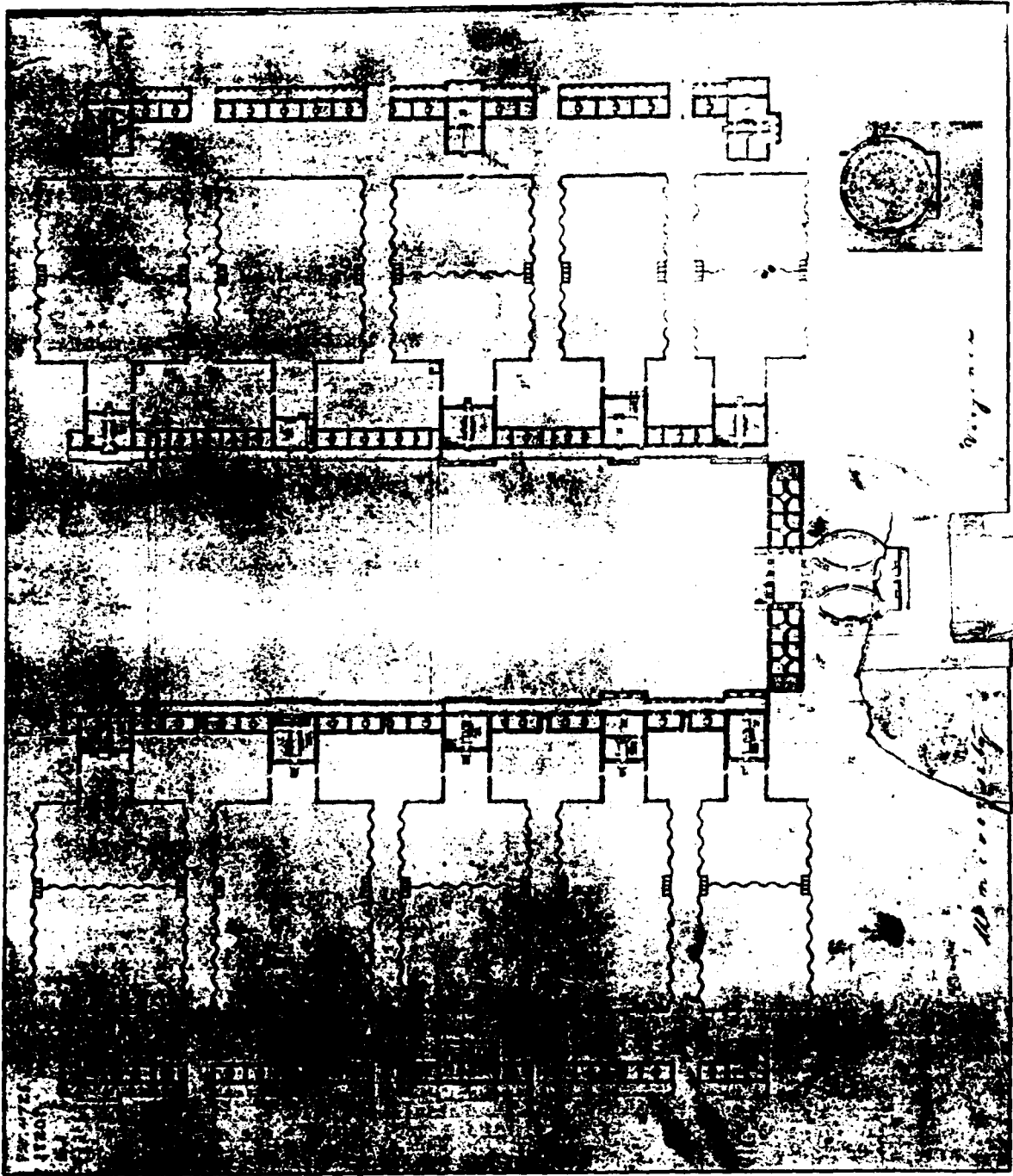
MONTICELLO, WEST ELEVATION. from Frederick Doveton Nichols Thomas



Monticello Floor Plan

The shaded portions indicate the outline of the first house

Vertical text on the left margin, possibly a page number or reference mark.



PLAN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, from Frederick Doveton Nichols,



Figure 19 Negro house near Richmond, Virginia, with the single-room loft and wooden chimney typical of slave cabins of an earlier time. (Cook Collection, Valentine Museum, Richmond.)

VITA

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