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MUHAMMAD ALI, NEE CASSIUS CLAY
(THE NEW YORK TIMES' COVERAGE OF MUHAMMAD ALI
FROM SEPTEMBER 6, 1960 TO APRIL 30, 1967)

By

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B.A. University of Minnesota, 1970

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1981

Approved by:



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Newmann, Thomas S., M.A., 1981 Journalism

Muhammad Ali, Nee Cassius Clay (the New York Times' Coverage of Muhammad Ali from September 6, 1960 to April 30, 1967)

Director: Warren J. Brier **WJB**

A distinct bias against Muhammad Ali appeared in news stories and columns in the New York Times from 1964 through April, 1967. This thesis documents that bias and attempts to explain it.

At first, the Times sports writers regarded Ali as a refreshing figure in professional boxing. His antics and doggerel brightened many news accounts. But that editorial stance changed abruptly in 1964 when Ali, immediately after winning the heavyweight title, announced that he had become a Black Muslim. He subsequently revealed that he had changed his name from Cassius Clay to Cassius X (and later to Muhammad Ali). Insisting that as a Black Muslim he could not fight in the Vietnam war, he petitioned his draft board to declare him a conscientious objector.

The Times, refusing to acknowledge Ali's new name, continued to call him Cassius Clay. It displayed a marked prejudice against the Black Muslims, and it censured Ali for seeking conscientious-objector status.

The researcher examined every news story and column about Ali from September 6, 1960, to April 30, 1967, two days after Ali refused induction into the Army. Supplemental materials examined in this study suggest that sports writers for other newspapers also exhibited biases against Ali.

Preface

"Yes. That's true. I am a Muslim.

"I've learned to accept my own kind and be myself. I don't have to be what you want me to be. I'm free to be who I want.

"I want to be with my own kind. In the jungle, lions are with lions. Tigers are with tigers. Red birds are with red birds. That's what nature intends.

"I don't want to be where I'm not wanted.

"I don't have to be who you want me to be.

"I'm free. Free to be who I want."

—Muhammad Ali at a post-fight
conference¹

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, there was Cassius Clay, a brash 178-pound boxer from Louisville, Kentucky, who, on September 5, 1960, "soundly whipped Ziggy Pietrzykowski, an experienced Polish Olympian,"² to win a gold medal at the Rome Olympics.

The New York Times gave Clay's feat a two-paragraph mention September 6, 1960. But the brief coverage marked the beginning of a long bittersweet relationship between Clay (who changed his name to Muhammad Ali in 1964) and the Times. The Times' initial reaction to Clay was summed up in a 1963 editorial, which said, "Not in years has so refreshing and so corny a figure emerged from the miasma of a violent sport."³

Clay was a media dream, a young, brash, outspoken fighter in search of his own dream. He was, in short, good copy. But even Arthur Daley, a Times sports columnist, could not really take Clay too seriously. Before Clay's first heavyweight title bout with reigning champion Sonny Liston, on February 24, 1964, Daley wrote, "The only one who demanded [the title bout] was Cassius, a precocious master of ballyhoo, who lulls himself to sleep at night not by counting sheep but by counting money."⁴

The next day, Clay knocked out the fearsome Liston in the seventh round--and opened up a new relationship with the press. "Eat your words,"⁵ he shouted to reporters at ringside. Only three of the

46 scribes had predicted he would win.

In short order, Clay announced that he had become a Black Muslim⁶ and that he had changed his name to Cassius X,⁷ in honor of his new religion. He also flunked the Army mental test twice.⁸

In commenting on events after the first Liston fight, Daley wrote:

By way of adding to the unfragrant aspects of the wretched affair [the Clay-Liston bout], Clay revealed that he belonged to the Black Muslims. Later, he was rejected by the Army as unqualified.⁹

The "refreshing" figure had suddenly become "unfragrant" to the Times.

But one Times writer, Robert Lipsyte, tried to understand the many sides of the complicated boxer. In an article titled "Cassius Clay, Cassius X, Muhammad Ali," Lipsyte wrote, "Ali will probably remain, for a long time, the most controversial and complex figure in modern American sports history."¹⁰

Lipsyte, through the years, treated the boxer fairly (though the Times editors could not bring themselves to recognize Clay's new name of Muhammad Ali and consistently referred to him, through 1967, as Cassius Clay). Ali, in his book The Greatest, refers to Lipsyte as "one of the most fair-minded writers."¹¹

If Clay-Ali became a paradox by changing both his religion and his name after winning the heavyweight title, he became an object of derision for his supposed arrogance both in the ring and out. Even Lipsyte took Clay to task for his November 22, 1965, pummeling of Floyd Patterson, writing, "Like a little boy pulling the wings off a

butterfly piecemeal, Cassius Clay mocked and humiliated and punished Floyd Patterson for almost 12 rounds. . . ."12

And, addressing Clay's conduct after that fight, Joseph M. Sheehan of the Times wrote:

Clay shouted to the assembled men of letters, "What's the excuse? What's the excuse this time? What's the excuse?" The repeated question reflected Clay's annoyance at what he considered to have been unfairly stinted praise after each of his two victories over Sonny Liston.¹³

Undoubtedly, the members of the press were not at all pleased by the boxer's castigations.

A headline in the November 28, 1965, Times gave a clear indication of the paper's view of Clay. "Clay: A Ring Mystery," read the headline, followed by a deck reading, "His Mockery of Sport and Black Muslim Role Make Future of Boxing Uncertain."¹⁴

But, apart from his boxing skills, his personality, his religion and his name change, Clay's ultimate challenge with the Times came over his refusal to be inducted into the Army in 1967.

After being reclassified from 1-Y (under which he would not have had to serve, due to flunking the Army mental test) to 1-A (fit for service), Clay rebelled.

On February 18, 1966, Lipsyte wrote:

[Cassius Clay] charged that he was being "picked on" because he was a member of the so-called Black Muslim sect.

"Why me?," asked Clay. "I can't understand it. How did they do this to me--the heavyweight champion of the world?"

"How can they do this without another test to see if I'm any wiser or worsen than last time? Why are they so anxious, why are they gunning for me."¹⁵

Clay's subsequent comment--"I'm a member of the Black Muslims, and we don't go to no wars unless they're declared by Allah himself. I don't have no personal quarrel with those Vietcongs"16--touched off a furor. He refused to apologize for the remark and his upcoming title fight against Ernie Terrell was canceled in Chicago, banned in Pennsylvania, rejected in Louisville--and finally ended up in Toronto (where Clay fought George Chuvalo instead of Terrell).

The Times did little, if anything, to protest such action--or to reaffirm Clay's right to free speech. Instead, Daley wrote in a March 29, 1966, column:

With his personal charm, [Clay] could have been the most popular of all champions. But he attached himself to a hate organization, the Black Muslims, and antagonized everyone with his boasting and disdain for the decency of even a low-grade patriotism. Clay has soiled a multimillion-dollar property. He may destroy it.¹⁷

On April 28, 1967, after a series of unsuccessful appeals, Clay refused induction into the Army. He was immediately stripped of his title--though he had not received legal due process.

The Times was not bothered by the fact that Clay as yet had not been found guilty of any crime--or that his title had been stripped. Rather, an April 29, 1967, editorial said:

Citizens cannot pick and choose which wars they wish to fight any more than they can pick and choose which laws they wish to obey. However, if Cassius Clay and other draft-age objectors believe the war in Vietnam is unjust, they have the option of going to jail for their belief.¹⁸

The cycle had come full swing. The refreshing and corny figure, in seven years, had become now a national enigma. And the Times, so very concerned about the laws of the nation, was not about to show that

same concern for Ali's rights.

This thesis on the coverage of Muhammad Ali-Cassius Clay by the New York Times will attempt to show, in detail, the three stages of coverage. Chapter One is Clay as a breath of fresh air for boxing. It is a brief stage, portraying Clay as a likable young man with a big mouth and an impossible mission--the winning of the heavyweight title.

Chapter Two is Clay-Ali, the paradox. The young boxer wins the title, but confounds the Times in doing it. He not only pulls off the impossible victory, but also changes his religion and his name. He becomes a threat to the decency of boxing.

Chapter Three is Muhammad Ali, the national disgrace. Secure in his religious convictions, Ali refused induction into the Army. He is stripped of his title without due process and incurs the ire of a nation--and the Times.

The three stages encompass the period from 1960 to 1967 and culminate with Ali's refusal to be inducted on April 28, 1967.

Chapter One Footnotes

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Chapter 2

CASSIUS CLAY

Cassius Marcellus Clay was born January 17, 1942, at 6:35 p.m. in Louisville, Kentucky.¹ He weighed 6 pounds, 7 ounces² (not an imposing weight for a future heavyweight champion). His first words, according to his mother, Odessa, were, "GG" (which, she said, was young Cassius' way of saying Golden Gloves).³

Clay's boxing career started at age 12, when the bicycle his father, Cassius Clay Sr., had bought for him was stolen.⁴ Cassius angrily went off to a local recreation center to seek out a policeman--and encountered patrolman Joe Martin, who also happened to be a boxing coach. Martin urged Cassius to take up boxing, and the youngster did, appearing regularly on a Saturday television show in Louisville called Tomorrow's Champions."⁵

"He was always bragging that he was the best fighter in the gym and that someday he was going to be champion," Martin said.⁶ But Cassius also proved himself a prophet of sorts, winning the Louisville Golden Gloves light heavyweight title in 1958 and advancing to the quarter-finals of the Tournament of Champions in Chicago before being defeated.⁷ A year later, Cassius won the National A.A.U. light heavyweight title in Toledo, Ohio--then set his sights toward the 1960 Olympics in Rome.⁸

Of the early years before Rome, Clay said:

When I started fighting seriously, I found out that grown people, the fight fans, acted like the school kids

of my days. Almost from my first fights, I'd mouth off to anybody who would listen about what I was going to do to whoever I was going to fight. People would go out of their way to come and see, hoping I would get beat. When I was no more than a kid fighter, they would put me in bills because I was a drawing card, because I run my mouth so much. Other kids could battle and get all bloody and lose or win and didn't nobody care, it seemed like. . . .But the minute I would come in sight, people would start hollering, "Bash in his nose!" or, "Button his fat lip!" or something like that. I didn't care what they said long as they kept to see me fight. . . .You would have thought I was some well-known pro. . . . 9

Thus, the beginnings of the Louisville Lip.

In 1960, after 180 amateur fights, Clay won the National Golden Gloves and the National A.A.U. tournaments, the latter qualifying him for the Olympic Trials in San Francisco.¹⁰

Already in trouble with the San Francisco press (which criticized him for "boasting and bragging in a clean, pure, decent tournament",¹¹ Clay managed to stay out of trouble in the ring, winning the light heavyweight division and assuring himself a spot on the Olympic Boxing Team.

Clay won his first three bouts in Rome and faced Poland's Ziggy Pietrzykowski in the finals.¹² The final bout also marked the first coverage of Clay by the New York Times. "The 25-year-old Pole, the bronze medal winner in 1956, who has had 231 fights, met his master," the Times said. "It took the American a little while to counteract his opponent's southpaw style but by the third round he had it figured out. There were no knockdowns."¹³

On his return to the United States, Clay turned professional, signing with a 10-member (later 11-member) syndicate called the

Louisville Sponsoring Group.¹⁴ Clay received a \$10,000 advance for the pact, which ran from 1960 to 1966, and the syndicate was to get, initially, 50 percent of his earnings in and out of the ring.¹⁵ In addition, Clay would get a guarantee of \$200 a month for the first two years and \$6,000 as a draw against any earnings for the next four years.¹⁶

In his first bout as a pro (and without a manager, since Cassius Clay Sr. had argued against Martin continuing as the manager of his son),¹⁷ Clay decisioned Tunney Hunsaker in six rounds October 29, 1960, in Louisville.¹⁸

After a brief stint under the tutelage of Archie Moore,¹⁹ Clay started training in Miami under Angelo Dundee.²⁰

Clay ran off a series of wins--16 in all--predicting the correct round of the fight's end in six of the bouts.²¹ Of the predictions, Clay said:

I began predicting the outcome of my fights after watching Gorgeous George, the great wrestler. I hear this white fellow say, "I am the World's Greatest Wrestler. I cannot be defeated. I am the Greatest. If that sucker messes up my pretty waves in my hair, I'm gonna kill him. I am the King. If that sucker whups me, I gonna get the next jet to Russia. I cannot be defeated. I am the prettiest. I am the greatest!" When he was in the ring, everybody booooooed, booooooed. And I was mad. And I looked around and saw everybody was mad.

I saw 15,000 people coming in to see this man get beat. And his talking did it. And, I said, this is a g-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-d idea.²²

With his growing talent as a fighter, Clay also was becoming accomplished as his own promoter. In his 16th victory, he knocked out his old mentor, Archie Moore, in the fourth round in Los Angeles after predicting, "Moore, in four."²³ Then, in an interview with

the Times' Howard Tuckner, he said:

I'm just the heavyweight champion that the world needs. We need a man with personality, color, patience, charm, who'll talk to all reporters--give 'em just what they want. A man who's willing to cooperate in every way. A man who's not the greatest, but the double greatest. Man, it's great to be great.²⁴

The Times clearly thought the young fighter was great. After Clay registered his 19th straight win, this time in a fifth-round knockout of European champion Henry Cooper in London (after predicting that Cooper would fall in five),²⁵ the Times said in an editorial:

Not in years has so refreshing and so corny a figure emerged from the miasma of a violent sport--abolition of which we would gladly see. Mr. Clay once again has successfully predicted in his own reprehensible verse far removed from Shakespeare ("how vile doth this cynic rhyme") the exact round in which he would win. . . .

Shakespeare and Caesar sometimes played to the pit and the mob. They are not to be confused with Mr. Clay, who always plays for a more lucrative gate. . . . yon Cassius' lean and hungry look has been flattered by some impressive paydays.

In time, Cassius Marcellus Clay may meet a modern counterpart of Mark Anthony or Octavian, who will take his measure. But until then, this Nostradamus of the prize ring will twit the public imagination. ("For I am fresh of spirit and resolved to meet perils very constantly," as another Cassius said).²⁶

Clay provided good copy and the Times, while advocating the abolition of boxing, clearly enjoyed his fresh spirit, which was in direct contrast to the reigning heavyweight champion, Sonny Liston. Liston was a glowering, menacing man, "the most awesome thing in boxing at the time,"²⁷ according to Wilfrid Sheed.

On July 22, 1963, Liston had knocked out heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson in 2:17 minutes of the first round to gain the title,

then, in a rematch that same year, repeated the feat in 2:10 of the opening round.²⁸

Even boxing commentator Howard Cosell was taken in by what he called the "Liston mystique. The baleful stare, the huge head wrapped in the towel, all the rest."²⁹

The title fight between Clay and Liston was set for February 25, 1964, in Miami Beach, Florida, and the Times' Arthur Daley conceded the bout to Liston--in a rout:

An aura of artificiality surrounds Tuesday's heavy-weight championship fight between Sonny Liston and Cassius Clay. It isn't one of those "naturals," such as once had boxing buffs drooling in anticipation. It doesn't even rate being a match made by popular demand. In fact, the only one who demanded it was Cassius, a precocious master of ballyhoo, who lulls himself to sleep at night not by counting sheep but by counting money. He'll be seeing stars when Sonny Liston hits him on Tuesday but those stars will be coated by pure gold. . . . "He's got the edge in everything but talent," said Liston. . . . Perhaps he compressed the story of the fight into that one contemptuous sentence.³⁰

On the day of the fight, the Times headline read, "Liston 7-1 Choice to Beat Clay Tonight and Keep Heavyweight Title."

A Lipsyte story said, in part: "The air here is not exactly humming with the prospect of what is thought to be as oversung a struggle as Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother."³¹

And Daley chimed in, "Cassius just doesn't have the equipment to do the job. . . . So he goes into this fray as a raw novice who still fights like an amateur."³²

Lipsyte, in a revealing comment in his book SportsWorld, said that during Clay's pre-title bouts "most writers, perhaps

assuming Clay wouldn't be around long anyway, went for the easy copy, the outrageous doggerel, the boasting, the predictions."³³ But, just before the Liston bout, the same scribes, in Lipsyte's opinion, cast Clay adrift:

The boxing commissioners and the sporting press expected him to be beaten badly, but no one raised too strong an objection to the mismatch, which was flowering into another in a newly profitable string of closed-circuit televisions spectaculars. Po' ol' Cash, but everybody gonna have himself a payday.
Me, too.³⁴

Despite the role of underdog--and the role of being an apparently easy meal ticket for promoters and writers--Clay kept up his verse. "Liston is great," he said. "But he'll fall in eight."³⁵

Clay was wrong. Liston lasted seven.

The front-page headline in the Times February 26, 1964, said: "Clay Wins Title in Seventh-Round Upset as Liston is Halted by Shoulder Injury."³⁶

Lipsyte's story said:

Immediately after he had been announced as the new heavyweight champion of the world, Clay yelled to the newsmen covering the fight: "Eat your words." Only three of the 46 sports writers had picked him to win.³⁷

But Clay's brashness was apparently forgiven by Daley, who wrote the next day:

When Cassius wore his invisible crown into his first news conference this morning, he also wore a discernible cloak of humility. . . . It had to seem that Cassius had achieved a public relations coup of enormous magnitude, a total abandonment of his phony role as a distasteful braggart, now that he has gained his objective. If he sticks to this role, he can win a vast amount of popularity. I can still remember him

as a delightful young man of infinite charm at our first meeting four years ago in the Olympic Village in Rome.³⁸

But another headline on the same page showed that Clay was not sticking to anybody's preconceived role for him: "Clay Discusses His Future, Liston and Black Muslims."³⁹

Cassius Clay was soon to become Cassius X.

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Chapter 3

CASSIUS X

Clay has said that he first became interested in the Black Muslims in 1960, when he was training for his second professional bout against Herb Siler (which he won on a fourth-round knockout on December 27).¹

Clay said his introduction to the religion came about when a "Muslim minister came to meet me and he asked me, 'Would you like to come to my mosque and hear about the history of our forefathers?' I never had heard no black man talking about no forefathers except that they were slaves so I went to the meetings. I was [told that] black people by nature are Muslims and Muslims only means one who submits entirely to the will of Allah--to God."²

After listening to the minister's talk, Clay said he decided to join the Muslims.

But before I joined, I attended a lot of mosque meetings in different places I went. I never did come out of a meeting not understanding something I had not known before. Everywhere I looked, I started seeing things in a new light. Like, I remember right in our house back in Louisville all the pictures on the wall were white people. Nothing about us black people. A picture of a white Jesus Christ. Now, what painter ever saw Jesus? So who says Jesus is white?

The more I saw and thought, the more the truth made sense to me. Whatever I'm for, I always believe in talking it up, and the first thing you know, I was in Muslim meetings calling out just like the rest, "RIGHT, BROTHER! TELL IT BROTHER! KEEP IT COMING!" And today my religion is Islam and I'm proud of it.

It changed my life in every way.³

Clay's trainer, Dundee, did not mention the fighter's new religion before the Liston fight, but he first became aware of it in Miami before the bout:

When Clay was training. . .for the Liston fight, he had a new pal with him; a big, light-skinned Negro whom he introduced as Sam. . .There was another new face in the gym in those days, a face I recognized from the newspaper photos. It was Malcolm X. At the time he was one of the top Muslim leaders.

One day in the gym, I was standing near Sam when a Negro stranger passed by and called out, "Hello, Captain Sam." Captain Sam [Saxon] I soon discovered, was a leader in a Muslim mosque in Miami. I'm told that he helped to convert Clay to the Muslims. Malcolm X was there to complete the conversion.⁴

Clay gave a slightly different account of his affiliation with the Muslims in The Greatest, saying Dundee panicked when he discovered Malcolm X at a training Session:

"You know what will happen if the newspapers pick that up?" Dundee said, "They'll denounce you! They'll condemn you! They'll wreck the fight! Please! Please! We've got to get him out of there. If the newspapers know you're associated with Muslims like Malcolm X, your career is over. Do you hear me?"⁵

Clay added:

I've been as close to Angelo as I've ever been to a white up to now. The only thing he doesn't know is that Malcolm is not the only "X" in the gym. I am Cassius X. I too am a follower of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad [prophet of the Nation of Islam].⁶

When Bill McDonald, promoter of the Clay-Liston bout, heard of Clay's conversion to the Muslims, he threatened to cancel the bout if the fighter did not renounce his religion: "You'll tell the world you're not a 'Black Muslim.' You haven't joined anything. You've been misquoted. You're a true patriotic loyal American," McDonald

told Clay.⁷

But Clay called the promoter's bluff, and the fight went on. Lipsyte speculated that the episode was, for Clay, "the first inkling of what he would consider Muslim power."⁸

After the fight, armed with both a decisive victory in the face of disbelievers and with a reserve of spiritual strength from his religion, Clay entered his first press conference as the heavyweight champion--and confirmed rumors that he, indeed, was a Black Muslim.

Lipsyte covered that press conference:

"I don't have to be what you want me to be," said Cassius Clay, the new heavyweight champion. "I'm free to be who I want."

There was a trace of antagonism when he refused to play the mild and socially uninvolved sports-hero stereotype and began to use the news conference for socio-political theory.

"I go to Black Muslim meetings and what do I see? I see there's no smoking and no drinking and their women wear dresses down to the floor. And then I come out on the street and you tell me I shouldn't go in there. Well, there must be something in there if you don't want me to go in there."

Clay said he wanted to be nice to everyone, but he warned that no one would make him into something he was not.

"I know where I'm going and I know the truth and I don't have to be what you want me to be. I'm free to be what I want.

"In the jungle, lions are with lions and tigers with tigers, and redbirds stay with redbirds and bluebirds with bluebirds. That's human nature, too, to be with your own kind. I don't want to go where I'm not wanted."

Clay put down the civil rights movement ("I'm a citizen already"); defended Malcolm X ("If he's so bad, why don't they put him in jail?") and questioned those who attacked his learnings ("I catch so much hell, why? Why me when I don't try to bust into schools or march around and throw bricks?")⁹

Lipsyte later said at the beginning of the press conference:

Clay displayed such an even, mild temperament that hundreds [of reporters] left the hall to catch planes home or file stories on "a new Clay molded to the championship throne" before someone asked him if he was a "card-carrying member of the Black Muslims." In newspaper journalism there is a tendency for reporters to stay at the water hole only long enough to fill up for the next story or broadcast, and so only a small percentage of the fight's 500-man press corps heard Clay shout: "Card-carrying, what does that mean? I go to a Black Muslim meeting and what do I see?"

It quickly escalated, primarily because the reporters who had remained tended to be the younger, more vigorous, socially conscious liberals of the newspaper who felt comfortable talking non-sports and wanted to challenge Clay on the Muslims' separatist dogma. . . . And then, as arguments were trotted out, civil rights arguments and citizenship arguments and sports idol arguments, Clay suddenly said: "I don't have to be what you want me to be, I'm free to be who I want."

It was very simple, but at that time, coming from a brand-new heavyweight champion of the world, it was profound and revolutionary. A declaration of independence. . . .¹⁰

So Clay had declared his independence, his freedom to do as he chose, without being shackled by the heavyweight title. And the Times had a divided view of the new champion after the first press conference, with Daley (who presumably left early) writing about Clay's "discernible cloak of humility" and his role as a "delightful" young champion who abandoned "his phony role as a distasteful braggart, now that he had gained his objective," and Lipsyte (who stayed) writing about Clay's Muslim beliefs--most of which were not cloaked in humility and none of which were to gain Clay the "vast amount of popularity " that Daley had written of.

Daley's column would be virtually his last totally complimentary one on Clay, while Lipsyte, who would later be complimented

by Malcolm X on his fair coverage of Clay's fights, would be told by a Times editor, "That's just great, we'll put it up on the trucks, 'Malcolm X loves Lipsyte.'"¹¹

Rudolph Valentino Clay, Cassius' younger brother, disclosed that he, too, was a member of the Muslims.¹² Sheed speculated that Rudolph (who later changed his name to Rachaman) possibly converted to Islam before his brother.¹³

And Clay railed against the press calling Islam the Black Muslims:

They call it the Black Muslims. This is a press word. It is not a legitimate name. But Islam is a religion and there are 750 million people who believe in it, and I am one of them. . . .What is all the commotion about? Nobody asks other people about their religion.¹⁴

But the commotion, if not centered on religion, surrounded the fighter in more secular matters. Liston's company owned the rights to Clay's next fight and the Times, in a February 28, 1964, editorial said:

The post-fight revelation that Liston's company owns the promotional rights to Clay's next fight (whether with Liston or anyone else) is only additional evidence that professional boxing is mere big business and no longer a sport, if it ever was—and it ought to be abolished in a civilized society.

This much can be said for wrestling matches on TV: they make no pretense of being anything but entertainment. Compared to Clay, Gorgeous George was the greatest. If the public wants circuses, it can have them. Bring back the Beatles.¹⁵

Clay, who had won the fight, was losing the war. The next day he was criticized by black leaders for supporting the Muslims,¹⁶

then it was reported that he had flunked his Army mental exam (when asked to comment, "Clay replied with a chuckle, 'Do they think I'm crazy?'").¹⁷

Clay later said he tried "his hardest" to pass the test, and added that, if he passed, he would not seek an exemption from the military service as a conscientious objector ("I don't like that name. It sounds ugly--like I wouldn't want to be called," Clay said at the time).¹⁸ A Selective Service official said the agency had no blanket conscientious objector policy concerning the Black Muslims or any other religious group.¹⁹

The first skirmish with the Army behind him, Clay announced that he had changed his name. Under the headline "Clay Puts Black Muslim X in His Name," the story quoted Clay: "My name is Cassius X Clay. . . . X is what the slave masters used to be called. . . ." ²⁰ Elijah Muhammad, the national leader of the Black Muslims, added:

This Clay name. . . .has no divine meaning. I hope he will accept being called by a better name. Muhammad Ali is what I will give him as long as he believes in Allah and follows me.²¹

The story ended: ". . .the Muslims are reputed to be a racist group, favoring strict segregation of whites and Negroes."

Reaction to the name change was swift. Clay's father said that his son "was conned."²² Joe Martin, Clay's first trainer, said, "Clay can't get out of the Muslims--he's the one who put them on the front page--they'd kill him."²³ Bill Faversham, the head of the Louisville syndicate, concluded that Clay was "brainwashed."²⁴

And ex-heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson offered "to fight for no purse against new heavyweight champion Cassius Clay, to wrest the title from 'Cassius X' and the 'Black Muslims'. . . .I am willing and desire to take the title from the Black Muslim leadership and will do so for no purse, whatsoever, whenever and wherever they might desire."²⁵

Some writers were quick to put down the fighter they had earlier praised. Jimmy Cannon wrote that the Black Muslims were a "more pernicious hate symbol than Schmeling and Nazism."²⁶

Accusations of being "conned," "brainwashed" and otherwise duped (not to mention being targeted as a symbol of hate) made Clay look like a tool in the hands of some mad lunatics. But his second failure of the Army mental test made him look like a top-secret project:

At the Pentagon, a communique cleared through command channels with the care normally attached to the status of missile scientists, said: "The Department of the Army has completed a review of Cassius Clay's second pre-induction examination and has determined he is not qualified for induction into the Army under applicable standards."²⁷

But the decision to keep Clay out of the service raised some Congressional hackles, as the Times reported:

Congress proved wary of the Army decision to reject Clay--almost as wary as it had been in the past about defense decisions to dispense with missiles that do not meet the armed forces' technical standards.²⁸

After comparing Clay with a missile, the Times continued:

Representative Samuel S. Stratton, Democrat of New York. . . .said he believed the boxer's rejection was "unfortunate, since Mr. Clay seems to have exercised a good deal of mental agility in other quarters."

Representative William H. Ayers, Republican of Ohio. . .observed: "Had I flunked math, I still could have peeled potatoes for the first two months of my military service, which I did. Anybody that can throw a punch like Cassius ought to be able to throw a knife around a potato."

Representative Cornelius E. Gallagher, Democrat of New Jersey. . .said: "If I were Cassius Clay, I would feel insulted and ask for a waiver. Despite his lack of formal education, Clay is an outstanding physical example and possesses a quick mind. . . .He is a hero symbol to American youths and I am sure he would like to serve his country."²⁹

The Times also printed stories about Clay's high school academic record ("Young Cassius Had I.Q. of 78 Points Below School's Par")³⁰ and about how the Army found malingerers on tests.³¹

Through all the furor, one person remained unruffled. When told he did not meet Army induction standards, Clay simply said, "I just said I was the greatest. I never said I was the smartest."³²

But one matter did annoy Clay. "Don't call me Cassius Clay," the champion admonished interviewers. "I am Muhammad Ali. . . .That is a beautiful Arabic name. That's my name now."³³

Chapter 3 Footnotes

1. Torres, p. 132.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 134-135.
4. Ibid., p. 137.
5. Ali and Durham, p. 108.
6. Ibid., p. 109.
7. Ibid., p. 112.
8. Lipsyte, SportsWorld, p. 85.
9. Lipsyte, "Clay Discusses His Future, Liston and Black Muslims," New York Times, February 27, 1964, p. 34.
10. Lipsyte, loc. cit., pp. 87-88.
11. Ibid., p. 89.
12. "Rudolph Clay Discloses He's Muslim Member," New York Times, February 27, 1964, p. 34.
13. Sheed, p. 57.
14. "Clay Says He Has Adopted Islam Religion and Regards It as Way to Peace," New York Times, February 28, 1964, p. 22.
15. "Champion of What?," New York Times, February 28, 1964, p. 28.
16. "Negro Leaders Criticize Clay for Supporting Black Muslims," New York Times, February 29, 1964, p. 15.
17. Steve Cady, "Clay, on 2-Hour Tour of U.N., Tells of Plans to Visit Mecca," New York Times, March 5, 1964, p. 39.
18. "Clay Admits Army Test Baffled Him," New York Times, March 6, 1964, p. 21.
19. Ibid.
20. "Clay Puts Black Muslim X in His Name," New York Times, March 7, 1964, p. 15.

21. Ibid.
22. Torres, p. 137.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. "Patterson Seeks to Regain Title From Clay 'and Black Muslims,'" New York Times, March 8, 1964, Section 5, p. 1.
26. Torres, p. 138.
27. "Cassius Clay Rejected by Army," New York Times, March 21, 1964, p. 1.
28. "Clay Calmly Awaits Decision That Will Keep Him From Military Service," New York Times, March 21, p. 18.
29. Ibid.
30. New York Times, March 21, 1964, p. 18.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.

Chapter 4

Muhammad Ali

On March 24, 1964, the Times acceded to the heavyweight champion's request--it called him Muhammad Ali, for the first time, in a Lipsyte story:

"While political, social and religious controversy rocked his throne, Muhammad Ali. . . spoke quietly of his people, his God (Allah), and of Cassius the Fool. . . .
"It's funny," Ali said, "If I changed my name to Jimmy Jones or Calvin Washington nobody would say nothing. They wouldn't introduce me in Madison Square Garden the other night by my new name."¹

An adjacent story, concerning the World Boxing Association's threat to withdraw recognition of Ali's title because of his contract with Liston, called him Cassius Clay.

Lipsyte later explained the discrepancy of Clay-Ali (which would continue through 1967 in the Times) in SportsWorld:

Covering Ali for the Times offered the advantage of allowing, even demanding, the kind of steady, even-handed reporting that freed a writer from the knee-jerk recitation--right-wing or left--over the return-bout clause, Stepin Fetchit, Muslims, and the continued LY draft deferment as Vietnam war stoked up. This balanced, somewhat, the strait-jacketed way the Times defined news as a series of recent occurrences or official pronouncements or logical, "responsible" speculations, often to the exclusion of moods, common knowledge, or "outsider" intelligence that was sometimes years ahead of the facts. A minor, but telling example: The editors decreed he be referred to as Cassius Clay, although he demanded to be addressed as Muhammad Ali (a name that sticks in the throat of many of my older colleagues who either quarreled with him about it or compromised by calling him "champ").

Ali's contention was that the Establishment was frightened by the power of his new name and the implication that Negroes would cast off their slave names and rise to freedom. The Times' official line, as far as I could determine through

countless conferences and memos, was that until he changed his name legally he was still Cassius Clay; I suspected that the Times institutional adoration of words as ultimate definers of civilization was as much at stake in this case as in its refusal to allow certain slang and obscenities into the paper, even when they were essential to properly understand the character of an elected official or public event.

I discussed this once with Ali and was sorry I did. He patted my head and told me not to worry, "You just the white power structure's little brother." I brought that testimonial back to 43rd Street, too, and suggested it be put up on the trucks. Later, thinking about the smug arrogance with which the editors had insisted that Ali was Clay, I remembered that Liston had stared at Ali a few weeks before their scheduled rematch and sneered, "Ahmed Mali, Mamud Wally, what's that? I met you as Cassius Clay, I'll leave you as Cassius Clay."²

While the Times' editors and Sonny Liston both seemed to share the same view of Ali's new name, they were not alone. According to Cosell, many sportswriters were having difficulties with the new champion's name--and with his actions:

It was the same refrain: The Old World writers wanted him to live by their code, the same mythological sports legend that through all the years these non-contemporary men had been propounding; that every athlete must be a noble example, in accordance with their concept, of shining manhood; that he is pure--doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, doesn't try drugs. And there they were, in the 1960s, with the Vietnam tragedy already under way, with drug abuse raging across the country, with all the realities of life, and they wanted him to be another Joe Louis. A white man's black man. . . .There was nothing in his makeup that would allow it. He was completely a part of his time and he couldn't wait to tell them: "Look, I'm a Black Muslim. My name is Muhammad Ali."

Not only that. If the writers thought about it at all, he was the one who didn't drink, didn't smoke, didn't try drugs. Paradoxically he was the one who was pure. But he had taken the wrong religion, a different name.³

Among the writers upset by Ali's new lifestyle was Daley, who also was upset with the first Liston fight. In a March 29, 1964, column, he criticized the title bout, Ali (or Clay, as Daley continued

to call him), and boxing:

The odor of the Clay-Liston thing continue to assail the nostrils. . . .This was a fight--if you will excuse the expression--that started rancid and has been growing more offensive ever since [Daley was unhappy with the outcome--in which Liston failed to answer the bell in the eighth round, due to an arm injury later confirmed by a doctor--and with Liston's contract with Ali].

By way of adding to the unfragrant aspects of the wretched affair, Clay revealed that he belonged to the Black Muslims. Later he was rejected by the Army as unqualified.

This has to be a tawdry mess from its start to the finish, which has yet to come. The World Boxing Association already made one abortive effort to strip Clay of his title for conduct "detrimental" to the sport. But boxing is a sport that cannot be derogated and it now has sunk to a new low.

Boxing is beyond redemption. It should be abolished.⁴

As if to underscore the lack of understanding about Ali's name, religion and privacy, the Times ran a short--and seemingly non-newsworthy--wire story April 21, 1964, which said:

Cassius Clay, the world heavyweight boxing champion who now calls himself Muhammad Ali, attended a Black Muslim meeting [in Boston] last night. He refused to talk to newsmen.⁵

In May, 1964, Ali made a break with Malcolm X, his Muslim mentor who had himself broken with the Muslims after a difference in philosophy with leader Elijah Muhammad.⁶

He then went on a tour of Ghana, Nigeria and Egypt, during which time he "not only played up his role as a celebrity, but completely identified with 'my African brothers.' As Clay said on his arrival here [Ghana] Saturday, 'I am proud to be back home.' This theme crops up every time he makes a speech at a public function."⁷

A day later, under the headline "Clay Takes a Jab at Civil Rights Bill," a wire story from Ghana said, "Cassius Clay declared that the only way for American Negroes 'to get respect' was to set up a separate state." The article went on to say, "Mr. Clay [is] a member of the Black Muslims, a group that advocates a separate state for Negroes."⁸

In a June 4, 1964, story from Lagos, Nigeria, Ali is quoted as asking a large crowd, "Who's the greatest? Who's the King?" The story said, "'Muhammad Ali,' the crowd would roar back. Anyone saying 'Cassius Clay' would be corrected with a stern frown."⁹ But, throughout the story, Ali is referred to as Cassius Clay.

In Egypt, Ali said he would be "pleased" to fight for that country should aggression occur against it and accused the United States press of having tried to make the 1956 war "appear as an Arab aggression against Israel."¹⁰

Oddly, magazine articles attacking the Black Muslims and Elijah Muhammad had appeared in several widely read Cairo magazines a few weeks before Ali's arrival. And a June 15, 1964, wire story reported:

A pamphlet on the Black Muslims, prepared by the American Embassy [in Cairo] and distributed to certain high-placed people, is reported to have been responsible for these attacks.

Ali, who had no compunction about speaking his mind on any issue, and his Black Muslim alignment appeared not to be just a threat to the "Old World" sportswriters. The government seemed to be worried, too.

The Times made some headway with Ali's name, actually calling him Muhammad Ali through an entire Lipsyte story—though the outline on the accompanying photo referred to him as Cassius Clay.¹²

And a wire story on Ali's surprise marriage to Sonji Roi said that in applying for the license "Clay gave his name as Muhammad Ali, the name he uses as a member of the Black Muslims."¹³

On September 15, 1964, a Times headline read, "Clay Signs for Nov. 16 Title Bout With Liston." The story, in which Lipsyte referred to Muhammad Ali and the outline said, "Muhammad Ali, who was Cassius Clay," noted the details of the signing and added that Ali "was immediately stripped of the title by the World Boxing Association, which had forbidden the bout."¹⁴

Torres wrote of the WBA action:

There are no return bout clauses established in the WBA regulations. Obviously, as with the Liston-Patterson rematch, there had been such a private clause when Ali agreed to sign for the first match. (Although the WBA threatened, they took no action in the Liston-Patterson case.) But it was also obvious that people . . . thought that Liston had lost the first bout by accident, and a second fight would prove fatal for the Black Muslim. New York approved of the match as did California, Massachusetts and Europe.¹⁵

So, despite the WBA sanctions, Ali remained the champion in New York, California, Massachusetts and Europe.

On October 25, 1964, the most detailed Times portrait of Ali to that date appeared in the New York Times Magazine under the headline, "Cassius Clay, Cassius X, Muhammad Ali."¹⁶ Lipsyte correctly predicted at the beginning of his article that "Ali will probably remain, for a long time, the most controversial and complex figure in modern

American sports history."¹⁷

Several sections of Lipsyte's article are well worth noting, since they provided a comprehensive--and unusually fair--depiction of the "controversial and complex figure":

He has long since passed the brash Cassius Clay who burst upon boxing on the wings of bad poetry and brilliant publicity; he has even passed the convert Cassius X. . .he has been rejected by the Army for reasons not fully explained; he has traveled to Africa and returned to state: "I'm not an American. I'm a black man." And he has sweepingly denounced American Negroes in the civil rights movement. . . .

But somewhere around these Cassius Clays--the lovable clown; Cassius X, the troubled searching man; Muhammad Ali, the socio-political spokesman--is the 6-foot-3-inch, 220-pound, cherubically handsome 22-year-old paradox who, within minutes, can be a clown, thinker, spokesman or any combination of ~~these~~ three public roles.¹⁸

Lipsyte continued:

There was February 26, the day after he beat Liston, and he turned coldly on a public waiting to watch him bounce with the new joy of being the best of the biggest prizefighters in the world. . . .

Speaking almost by rote, he told an uncomfortable, frequently argumentative, and wholly unprepared press conference that "I want to be with my own kind."

There are all the days when he petulantly snaps, "I know what I'm doing," at someone who questions him, and later will say, "I'm just living from day to day, preparing for the hereafter--no, no, I don't know where I'm going next."¹⁹

Lipsyte quoted Ali's trainer, Dundee, who said, "The champ is an individualist, there's no cycle or pattern in what he does."²⁰ And Lipsyte concluded, "Had the Louisville Lip emerged at some other time, he might not have received the publicity, attention and encouragement. . . .But boxing was in bad shape, even worse than usual."²¹

But Lipsyte's view of Ali's conversion to the Black Muslims

is perhaps the most revealing portrait. The Times finally attempted to answer the question: Why had Ali become a Muslim? Though some of the facts vary from later accounts, they still represent the first in-depth look at Ali's relationship with the Muslims.

When he was 17, in Atlanta on vacation, Cassius and Rudy attended a meeting at a Muslim mosque. He was impressed by the cleanliness and sincerity of the people he saw, but he was not convinced. . . .

Even as the clown grew famous, there were incidents to hasten the growth of a potential convert to Islam. He marched in a civil-rights demonstration, and someone in the crowd threw hot water on him. . . . [and] his brother Rudy was becoming more and more involved with the Muslims.²²

Lipsyte mentioned what he believed to be America's view of the Lipsyte quoted Ali on the public revelation of his new

religion:

The pressure didn't really start until I flew up to be with Malcolm, a few weeks before the [Liston] fight, and then he came to Miami, and into the gym, and the trainer and everyone was shook up. Even the fight was threatened. They told me they would cancel the fight if I didn't renounce my religion. I got my X four weeks before the fight.²³

Lipsyte concluded:

Part of the reason [for the commotion surrounding Ali] must be the traditional role that the sporting world demands a hero play. Clay violated the code. As long as he was amusing, he immodesties could be tolerated. Once he started to jerk fang back to the problems of the real world he became a spoiler of the daydreams that sports is a never-never land where motivation is uncomplicated and a result is final and pure.²⁴

Lipsyte was a confidant of Ali's--and of the Muslims. His article on the three faces of the heavyweight champion had come after a three-hour interview with Ali in Harlem and "would be the first of many times I was the only white man in Clay's presence, and the first of many times I listened through his states-of-the-dogma address."²⁵

In SportsWorld, Lipsyte said:

I tended to prefer to be the only white with Muslims; first of all, it seemed to imply a guest status of protection; second, it meant there would be no wasted time and anger over pointlessly insulting questions of reporters who seemed challenged to defend the white race. As for the dogmatics, I learned to listen to them for subtle shifts in policy and emphasis; I'm not sure I ever really caught any of significance, but I was impressed at how Clay shaped and polished and refined his Muslim commentary over the years until the early rote had been so thoroughly filtered through his quick brain that it was his, much as the predictions and the doggerel and the mock bombast, which could not have been all his at the start, eventually became his through absorption and reconstitution.²⁶

Lipsyte mirrored what he believed to be America's view of the Muslims:

Ali's continued membership in the sect was costing him a great deal of money (in entertainment and advertising contracts). The editors and readers were beginning to realize he was "sincere." And they felt threatened.

The Muslims were hard, healthy, disciplined, devout, separatist, and violent. Those whites flabby with "guilt" could visualize Elijah galvanizing black America into a Super Mau-Mau. Those whites masquerading their racism as "backlash" instinctively understood that the Muslims were not unlike the fierce secret European sects of their own not-so-distant history. There were rumors that the Nation of Islam was financed by, variously, the Ku Klux Klan, Texas oil, the Arab Legion, the CIA. Between black civil rights activists, who presented themselves to "the white power structure" as the lesser of two evils in regard to the Muslims, and black writers and academics who were busy creating for themselves areas of expertise, Elijah's influence and membership were blown up beyond the little old man's wildest dreams. . . .

The Muslim presence around Ali, once no larger than the shadow of Malcolm X, was now a tangible, sometimes intimidating force.²⁷

Dr. Ferdie Pacheco, Ali's ring physician during most of the fighter's career, wrote that the Muslims, who were first envisioned by Elijah Muhammad when he was serving a prison sentence for draft

evasion during World War II, evolved from Elijah's idea that "the black man in America must have strong leadership, and that this leadership must preach superiority of the black race. . . .If racist slogans were needed, he provided them. If the white men must become White Devils in order to enlist the strong, then so be it. And if the religion needed some myths to believe in, then he created some. . . .Whatever the means to enable the black man to overcome his inferiority complex and to quit emulating the white man, Elijah Muhammad adopted it. If some of the means were harsh, the ends seemed to justify them. It was not a society of weak-kneed sob sisters. It was a society of street fighters, of toughs and. . . .at the beginning, of con men who thought they were in on the ground floor of yet another religion to milk the ghetto dollar reserve. But it is perhaps an interesting thought that here is a religion that started as a con game and ended up straight, whereas the converse is often the case in our white society."²⁸

Ali, in The Greatest, quoted Elijah's son, Herbert, as saying:

When my father refers to white people as "devils," he means those who've oppressed us, lynched us, kept us segregated in ghettos. What my father meant is that white people have made themselves devils by enslaving and oppressing the black man and by subjugating and exploiting colored people all over the world. But a man's skin color is not what makes the "devil." A man with white skin is no better or worse than any other person.²⁹

Herbert Muhammad went on to say that the devil led people from Allah, and added:

The history of the white man in Europe and America shows that their minds have been ruled by the devil. . . .in their actions and their deeds toward other people, even toward themselves. . . .

Muslims in America do not hate anybody. But the history of oppressed people shows they must learn to appreciate themselves, to have confidence in themselves, to love themselves. The White Establishment, whether in slavery days or modern

days, has taught us to hate ourselves. The image of everything positive in this country has been a white image, and blacks have been taught to feel ashamed and inferior. . . .

My father teaches that we must have pride and respect for ourselves. It's not color that we fight against. It's the inferior conditions, inferior opportunities. Whites who treat us with respect are not looked upon as devils, not by my father.³⁰

Even the sympathetic Torres, a boxer, a member of a minority group himself, had problems with the edict of the Black Muslims in 1964:

The fears that whites felt toward the Black Muslims were not altogether paranoid. There was some basis for any white man in America to be concerned, if you were to judge the Muslims by what they preached in their numerous mosques. Yet, I, for one, was not impressed by a trip to Harlem. I was the light heavyweight champion then. . . . I remember being recognized by many of the well-dressed Muslims who were going upstairs to the Mosque in Harlem. Nevertheless, I was frisked and asked to sign a paper which would have me endorse their religion.

The minister began attacking the Christians. He spoke with anger. "The white man is the devil," he shouted. Many times I found myself nodding my head unconsciously in approval of some of the things that the man in front of me was saying. I was only part black and a Puerto Rican, but it got to me. . . .

But I wasn't too comfortable when the minister said, "Whites have robbed us of everything in the name of law. They've killed us many times. Their law, the same one that protects them, does not protect us. They have their law—we are looking for our own." I could see where a white man could read that line pretty strong.³¹

Coupled with the hard-line Muslim approach was the fear of the sect by whites—and a general lack of understanding of the Muslims by the press, in part because the Muslims' dictates could be bent to fit the situation. Though Muslims were forbidden to pursue careers in entertainment (i.e., boxing), Elijah gave Ali special dispensation

to continue his career, prompting Sheed to write:

The only catch about Ali as a center of black capitalism was that Ali made his money in sports, which Elijah had officially denounced. Since sports is the opium of the underdog, this was not reasonable. But surely, he could make an exception for Ali, who was so much more than a sportsman.³³

The Times, until Lipsyte's story, was not inclined to portray the sect sympathetically. Its members were regarded as the bad guys. The general public, given the reticence of the press to try to understand the Muslims, saw the sect as a nasty, threatening group of racist blacks. There was probably little comfort for white America in Malcolm X's pronouncement after President Kennedy's assassination that it was an example of "the chickens coming home to roost"³³ in a violent white society.

Ironically, the same press that made Ali feel like a criminal for becoming a Black Muslim ("Many times I've found myself reflecting back on the big bold headlines in the papers when I announced that I had turned to Islam—ALI ADMITS HE'S A BLACK MUSLIM, as though I had committed a criminal offense—in a nation that boasted about its 'religious freedom.'")³⁴ and portrayed the racist, separatist ideals of the sect, seldom mentioned that Ali's retinue included blacks and whites.

Before the second Liston fight, originally scheduled in Boston, rumors circulated that the Muslims were going to kill Liston if he won or drop Ali if he did not.³⁵ Reporters covering Ali's training sessions were disturbed to see Lincoln Perry, the black movie comedian Stepin Fetchit (a character Lipsyte said encompassed "the lazy, dumb, cowardly

black stereotype"), spouting absurd rhetoric about Uncle Tom while Ali shouted to the scribes, "Whatsa matter, write it down, your pencils paralyzed?"³⁶His words hardly endeared him to many in the press corps.

But it turned out that Ali, and not the reporters, was ultimately "paralyzed." On November 13, 1964, just three days before the Liston bout, Ali was stricken with a hernia--and the bout was postponed (Lipsyte's story again referred to Cassius Clay).³⁷

Daley, writing about the postponement, seemed to think that Ali somehow conjured up the hernia for his own benefit:

So Monday's fight has been postponed indefinitely as a result of as bizarre development as this seamy sport has produced. . . .Clay became ill, was rushed to the hospital and was operated on for an incarcerated hernia.

Because the loudmouthed braggart from Louisville has an uninhibited compulsion to attract attention to himself, skeptics couldn't help but view it with suspicion. . . .But they learned to their surprise and dismay that it was for real.³⁸

On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was shot to death,³⁹ and, two days later, under the headline "Malcolm X Led Clay to Muslims," Lipsyte wrote:

Informed sources insist that Clay [after the Liston fight] would not have been awarded his X had Liston won.

A few weeks later, Malcolm broke with the movement. . . . with Malcolm gone, Cassius X's importance in the movement grew.

Clay, soon renamed Muhammad Ali, was able to recruit many young people for the movement, and was sent as a Black Muslim ambassador to African and Eastern heads of state.

When Clay went to Boston for the second fight with Liston and was asked about Malcolm, he burst into a tirade against "that chief hypocrite."⁴⁰

Lipsyte's reference to Ali's trip as a Muslim ambassador was a first--but his "informed source" was impeccable. Leon 4X Ameer, once

a rising light in the Muslims and a confidant of Ali, had broken with the sect and, after twice being severely beaten, had gone to Lipsyte to tell his story of the Muslims.⁴¹ Leon died soon after Malcolm X's death, of injuries from his beatings.

The rematch between Ali and Liston was scheduled for May 25, 1965, in Lewiston, Maine. (Torres wrote that "mounting pressure on promoter Sam Silverman by the Veterans committees and the super patriots caused the fight to be canceled in Boston.")⁴² A few days before the bout, Lipsyte wrote:

There have been indications that the security arrangements . . . were intensified because of the fear that followers of Malcolm, the slain Black Nationalist leader, might take revenge on Clay. The champion, under the name Muhammad Ali, is a leading symbol of the Black Muslim movement from which Malcolm defected after recruiting Clay.⁴³

The same day, Daley, in a somewhat friendly display toward Ali, wrote:

He was relaxed and enjoying himself to such an extent that he uttered every nonsensical boast and exaggeration as if he were speaking with tongue in cheek and secretly laughing at himself. He seemed much more like the appealing charmer this reporter first met at the Olympics in Rome five years ago than the arrogant loudmouth Cassius has forced himself to become.⁴⁴

And, taking his magnanimous stand to the limit, Daley had this prediction on fight day:

For all of Cassius' delusion of grandeur, it's impossible to believe that he would be so vainglorious as to mix in early. . . . So the belief of this ringsider is that Clay will tantalize the Bear once again and knock him out somewhere around the ninth round.⁴⁵

To balance Daley's sureness, the Times again was unsure about Ali's name. A Steve Cady article on the fight called the boxer Cassius Clay throughout, then interjected, "As usual, Muhammad Ali provided his quota of punch lines," and went on to refer to him as Cassius Clay.⁴⁶

Also unsure were the Times reporters after the second Liston bout, which Ali won in the first minute of the first round⁴⁷ with what became known as the "phantom punch."

It is still uncertain whether Liston actually took a punch of any type (Lipsyte, Torres and Pacheco say he did; Cosell says he's unsure; Sheed says "microscopes later turned up an actual punch"⁴⁸ and hundreds of fans yelled "fix").

The fight had another odd element, according to Rex Lardner, "because of Ali's embracing of Black Muslimism, Liston the ex-criminal was the sentimental favorite and hero of the production."⁴⁹ But the hero hit the deck and Daley wrote:

As always seems to happen in the strange wonderland inhabited by Cassius Marcellus Clay things keep getting curiouser and curiouser.

This wildly unpredictable young man put another strain on credibility tonight. . . .by placing Sonny Liston on the ice in the record of time of one minute of the first round. . . .Alice in Wonderland never had it so good.⁵⁰

Ali (Lipsyte wrote that he wore a robe bearing his Muslim name and was introduced by that name in the ring) "kept the press waiting more than half an hour. . . .outside his dressing room. When he finally emerged. . . .he reprimanded the newsmen for having doubted his prediction of an early surprise in the title bout.

'I told you, please, be here early. Please, from here on

out, listen to me!"⁵¹

Controversy followed the fight. On May 27, 1965, two stories appeared on page one under the headline, "Clay-Liston Fight Arouses Wide Demand for Inquiry."⁵²

"The bizarre ending of the fight. . . brought outcries of 'fake' and 'a disgrace' from fans, officials and leading boxing figures in this country and abroad," said one story, while the other said that the senate majority leader in New York, Joseph Zaretzki, introduced a bill to outlaw boxing in New York State, saying, "The public has to be protected."

In the same edition, Daley upbraided the fight:

Only one clear result emerged from the welter of confusion. Clay is still the heavyweight champion of the world, although even the legality of his stunning annihilation of the Big Bear is at least slightly open to question.

Despite all the wild reports of a bombing of Clay by dissident members of the Black Muslim sect, the only bomb was the fight itself. . . . Tongues will be wagging about the strange ending of this wretchedly mishandled bush-league production for many years to come.⁵³

In a Lipsyte story the same day, the Times went back to calling Clay Ali:

Ali chided the assembled reporters for "lies" in reporting that Black Muslim defectors would attempt to kill him in revenge for Malcolm X's murder. "All that publicity destroyed Liston, he didn't have the mind for all the degree of knowledge necessary," he said.⁵⁴

Ali's attack on the reporters may have had some merit.

Lipsyte later wrote:

It seems a little gratuitous now to snicker over a 1965 non-murder. Contemporary history has long since canceled all such jokes. But even then the inky stench

of the fresh press release hung over the story. At the beginning of buildup week, one of the promoters had said, "If I could assure the people an assassination in the ring I could sell a million tickets," and later took out a life insurance policy on Ali. Jose Torres. . . had said, jokingly, that he didn't want a front-row press seat in the line of fire. New York City plain-clothesmen, perhaps justifying their "special-duty assignments," in Maine, told Jimmy Cannon that some of Malcolm's hotbloods were "missing from their usual haunts," and he wrote it. Harold Conrad, the star publicist, took all the threads and began tying dry flies for the British. They bit. Once again, editors in New York began calling, and our stories could not ignore that Flying Dutchman of a killer car heading north to Lewiston with the only black men not accredited to the fight camps. Only the fighters seemed unconcerned. Ali said it was part of a plot to scare him, but would end up terrifying Sporn, who shrugged and said, "They're comin' to get him, not me, right?"

By fight time we had written ourselves into a high quiver.⁵⁵

A Times editorial two days after the fight, titled "A Hollow Ring," hardly wrote itself into a quiver:

On the theory that it is unsportsmanlike to attack an adversary when down, we postpone our usual morning-after demand for the abolition of professional prizefighting. Who, deploring beastly brutality, could find any fault with the brief and gentle Clay-Liston encounter at which only the customers suffered damage? A sport as sick as this one surely cannot survive much longer.⁵⁶

The next day, Ali chided his critics ("[they] just had to give me credit for being so good"), and, in the same story, Michael Strauss wrote, "films showed that Clay had connected with a short, sharp, downward smash that sent his foe crashing in the first round. Almost all movie viewers agreed that the shot to the head had connected with authority."⁵⁷

The fight controversy had almost died down when a Times headline

proclaimed, "Clay Sues to Annul Marriage, Says Wife Refuses to Convert."⁵⁸ The story that followed said that "the 23-year-old champion, who has been a Muslim since he won the Olympic title in 1960, filed suit as 'Muhammad Ali, also known as Cassius Clay.'" Apparently there was no end to the confusion over Ali's fights, names or the date he became a Muslim.

Ali signed for a November 22, 1965, bout with ex-champion Floyd Patterson, who had criticized Ali and the Muslims.

Torres wrote that the bout took on the fervor of a religious war between Ali the Black Muslim and Patterson the Roman Catholic:

"The only reason Patterson's decided to come out of his shell," Ali said in Playboy Magazine, "is to try and make himself a big hero to the white man by saving the heavyweight title from being held by a Muslim.

"I wish you would print for Patterson to read that if he ever convinces my managers to let him in the same ring with me, it's going to be the first time I ever trained to develop in myself a brutal killer instinct. I've never felt that way about nobody else. Fighting is just a sport for me, a game to me. But Patterson I would want to beat to the floor for the way he rushed out of hiding [after being beaten by Liston], announcing he wanted to fight me because no Muslim deserves to be the champ.

"I never had no concern about his having the Catholic religion. But he was going to jump up to fight me because he wants to be the white man's champion. And I don't know of a sadder example of nobody making a bigger fool of himself."⁵⁹

Daley reported the day before the fight that "Clay already has overwhelmed Patterson conversationally. All that remains is for him to do it pugilistically."⁶⁰ Daley, though picking Ali in four, called him "relatively inexperienced and still amateurish."⁶¹

Lipsyte, in a pre-fight story, even had a revealing glimpse

of Ali's supposed hatred, spawned by the Muslims:

Clay's Muslim affiliation and his trips downtown (to buy records for his portable stereo set) prompted one local newspaper to print that Clay met some Muslims downtown and they went behind closed doors to hate together.

Clay could hardly stop laughing. "Man, how do you hate behind closed doors.

"Man, I wish everybody would go and hate behind closed doors instead of taking their hate out on the street."⁶²

Ali would have been fortunate if the Times writers had kept their contempt for the Patterson bout—and for him—behind closed doors.

"Clay Knocks Out Patterson in the 17th and Wins Heavyweight Championship" said the page one headline November 23, 1963. The Lipsyte story compared Ali with the little boy pulling the wings of a butterfly piecemeal and added that "Clay mocked and humiliated and punished" Patterson. Lipsyte later deemed the fight "hideous," saying, "there was no question in my mind that Ali was in total control, and his in-fight commentary, 'No contest, get me a contender. . . Boop, boop, boop. . . watch it, Floyd. . . was the fulfillment of his promise to 'chastise' Patterson."⁶³

Ali's post-fight conduct made reporters cringe. "Clay Chides Reporters for Past Criticism"⁶⁴ read the headline on a story by Joseph M. Sheehan. Sheehan appeared to be thoroughly rankled by Ali's remarks, for he wrote:

While he did nothing to dispel his own image of petulant arrogance, Cassius Clay had the good grace after tonight's fight to heap obviously sincere and ungrudging praise on Floyd Patterson. . . .

Clay shouted to the assembled men of letters: "What's the excuse? What's the excuse this time? What's the excuse?" The repeated question reflected Clay's annoyance at what he considered to have been unfairly

stinted praise after each of his two victories over Sonny Liston.⁶⁵

On the same page, under the headline "Clay Mocks Foe in Word and Deed," and a deck reading "Contemptuously Toys With Outclassed Challenger," Daley wrote, "It was a more outrageous burlesque than the one that's on the stage at Minsky's on the other side of the Strip. It was a travesty all the way."⁶⁶

Also on the page was the headline "Hero of Black Muslims Gets Own Security Guard at Fight." The story, which had no byline, said that security precautions for the fight were handled by Las Vegas police, the FBI and a private patrol agency. The "apparent, though unspoken, reason for the precautions. . . . was the presence of scores of Clay's Black Muslim followers, including a group of about two-dozen of Muhammad Ali's self-styled security guards."⁶⁷

While in one sentence the Times was using two of Ali's three names, another story on the same page was titled "Champion Masks Real Personality," with the deck reading, "Sports World Puzzles Over Extremes in Behavior." The story, with no byline, said, in part:

There must be, say people who have seen Cassius Clay at both extremes, the "real" Clay somewhere between the angry, berating man and the laughing, quick-witted, often shy youth.

Even those around Clay—including his considerable circle of Black Muslim friends—often are unable to figure the depths of his feelings.

In the Muslim religion, Clay apparently is at ease. Yet there are reports that he tried to break away, and even today, when defending the religion, it seems to some people that he tends to protest too much. . . .

Since the [Liston] fight, he has become more sincere about his religion. He gets angrier now when people fail to call him Muhammad Ali, his Muslim name.⁶⁸

Between the conflicts of being portrayed as at ease with his religion and also trying to break away from it, and of wanting to be called Muhammad Ali while being referred to as Cassius Clay, Ali could take some solace in Daley's assessment of his talents during the Patterson bout:

As a fight this was dreadful because it was so one-sided. If nothing else, however, it did serve as a glittering showcase for the talents of the rapidly improving Cassius Marcellus Clay.⁶⁹

Lipsyte noted on the same page: "Clay has never lost a professional fight, and there are those who are beginning to think he never will."⁷⁰

The Times, in a brief editorial the same day titled "No Sport, No Manly Act," repeated its recurring plea: "Once again we say [boxing] should be outlawed."⁷¹

On November 28, 1965, Lipsyte wrote one of his most in-depth articles on Ali. Under the headline "Clay: A Ring Mystery," and a deck, "His Mockery of Sport, and Black Muslim Role Make Future of Boxing Uncertain," Lipsyte's story was both a judgmental and a sympathetic defense of Ali (whom he referred to as Cassius Clay in all but one instance) and an indictment of boxing:

. . . Many people—white, black, fans and non-fans—believe Clay's affiliation with the so-called Black Muslim movement has given a basically antisocial element a sporting pulpit from which to disseminate dogma and gather results.

His Muslim membership is unfortunate. Patterson has equated it with the Ku Klux Klan, and many people feel it is a disservice to the revolution in civil rights. And yet others, some of whom don't like it any better than Patterson does, feel it makes perfect sense in the context of this unusual champion.

From the beginning, he manipulated the press by charming them in private and boasting extravagantly in public. Sinister or saintly, Cassius Clay was good and easy copy.

The Muslims offered Clay a different kind of religion (non-white), a status within a community, a bastion from which to sortie into a world he felt was hostile toward him. Although the Muslims did not publicly claim him until he became champion, Clay was receiving instructions for years before he beat Liston.

With this emotional backing, and a realization that he had to use boxing harder than it used him, he opened the greatest publicity campaign in the history of sports. He says now that he wanted people to hate him, so they would come to his fights to see him knocked out. More likely, he was somewhat confused and hurt when his pitch for attention was not accepted in the same joyful spirit it was conceived. This, probably, drove him irrevocably into the Muslim fold.

The showmanship was taken badly because the public--through the press--was not ready to receive the antithesis of Louis and Patterson. Once before it had been presented with a nonconforming Negro champion, and society rejected, harassed and eventually persecuted Jack Johnson. . . .

Boxing men would like to have "mixed matches," but if they can't have white against black, they will gladly settle for Eastern versus Western religions. . . .

As long as he can keep his fists flying and his mouth running, Cassius Clay can defect to Mars and turn Trotzkyite and the boxing world, palms up, will play any game that pleases him.⁷²

Lipsyte's defense of Ali came at a time when Ali's popularity had dropped drastically. In defeating and humiliating Patterson (though Patterson had publicly humiliated Ali by taunting his religion) Ali had defeated and humiliated the "Great White Hope." The public--and the press--had not reacted kindly to Ali's affiliation with the Muslims. That he had twice beaten Liston (in what were thought of as suspect bouts) was only further proof to many that boxing needed salvation from both religious infidels and the criminal element. Patterson had failed to keep Liston (representing the criminal element) from taking his crown.

But popular sentiment backed Patterson in his quest to wrest the title from Ali (the religious infidel). The irony was compounded by the fact that Patterson, the white hope, was, like Ali, black.

And the irony was not lost on Lipsyte, who later wrote in SportsWorld:

The Floyd Patterson buildup and fight soured the liberals on Muhammad Ali just when he needed their understanding and support to counteract all the forces reacting to his unpatriotic posture. The liberals—I use the term loosely here for those who are not so much liberal as tolerant, bestowers of a kind of noblesse oblige made possible by their disengagement from day-to-day educational, housing and employment problems—would eventually make Ali their champion, but not until they were convinced that his constitutional rights had been flagrantly violated. Until then, his career would be at the mercy of television executives and boxing commissioners who saw in his unpopularity a way to squeeze out the last ounce of his promotional juice before responding to the will of the people and unloading him for a more cooperative champion.

The boxing industry wanted Patterson to win the title back, for the third time, in 1965. The Wall Street gang were financial rapists, but they were white and predictable in their greed. The peasants of boxing had long since learned that bandits always move on. But the Muslims were black and unpredictable; who knew what horrible, eternal surprises these mad-dog Allah freaks would wreak upon the land? Black ownership in boxing was rare, black promoters rarer, black control of a heavyweight title unheard of. Especially by what Eldridge Cleaver would call the "autonomous" black, in his own fanciful assessment of Ali.⁷³

But the writers—Lipsyte included—were still taken in by the pre-fight hype, the battle between the "Great White Hope" and the infidel, and Lipsyte explained why:

In Las Vegas for the fight, scheduled for the second anniversary of Kennedy's assassination, November 22, 1965, there was no way to avoid the Holy War hype—the crusading Christian vs. Saracen metaphor, planted by Ali, cultivated by Patterson, and left for the sportswriters to harvest or trample, but not ignore.

We tigers of the typewriter were stuck with just spreading the story, like a fly, selling tickets to the closed-circuit telecast, disseminating yet more racist propaganda, scattering seed for better stories to come.⁷⁴

And a better story was on the way.

The Vietnam war was escalating and, with it, pressure came to bear on Ali. The year he won the title, 1964, 147 Americans died in Vietnam. In 1965, the death toll was 1,400. In 1966 Times headlines announced "Army Is Likely to Recheck Clay."⁷⁵ During the first week of that year, the United States had nearly 400,000 men in Vietnam, and 5,000 had been killed.⁷⁶

The Times story carried this deck: "Draft Board Is Expected to Review Champion's Case," and the story said that "Clay likely would be called again [for his Army mental test] since the armed services have lowered their mental requirements." The story quoted Ali as saying that he "was thinking of only one kind of fighting—inside the ropes."

Two days later, in a brief article, the Times reported that "Cassius Clay won a divorce today [January 7, 1966] on grounds that his wife had thwarted his Black Muslim religion with makeup and form-fitting clothes."⁷⁷

The next day, a headline on the sports page cover said, "Clay to Put Title on the Line Against [Ernie] Terrell," accompanied by the deck "Champion Also Announces Formation of Company to Televisе His Matches."⁷⁸ The Lipsytc story said Ali would fight Terrell in New York and added that Ali (or Clay, as the story referred to him) would form Main Bout, Inc., to televise his fights. Ali, the Muslims and a third group would combine forces to form Main Bout, the article said, and profits from the company would be invested in black businesses.

Because of Ali's coming struggle with the draft, his deepening

religious convictions and the troubles looming with the Terrell fight, the Times' first three stories about the heavyweight champion in 1966 were appropriate and set the tone for events to come.

On January 28, 1966, the New York State Boxing Commission blocked the title bout in that state, claiming that an associate of Terrell, Bernie Glickman, was himself an associate of Frankie Carbo, the "so-called boxing czar" in prison for extortion and conspiracy.⁷⁹ The story on the commission's action added that Glickman had booked Terrell's rock 'n' roll band and had been in his corner when Terrell defended his WBA heavyweight title (won in elimination bouts after Ali was stripped of it) against George Chuvalo.

Several days later, Terrell received a license to box in Illinois,⁸⁰ and the fight was set for March 29 in Chicago.

But the draft issue was heating up. Under the headline, "Namath and Clay Cited as Draft Bill Is Backed," the Times story said:

The Defense Department has endorsed legislation that could lead to the drafting of military rejects, such as the heavyweight champion, Cassius Clay, and the New York Jet quarterback, Joe Namath, Representative Charles E. Bennett, Democrat of Florida said.

Bennett said . . . that he had received a letter from the Pentagon backing his bill, which would provide special physical and education programs to help draft rejects meet Selective Service standards.⁸¹

The next day Ali said that his Louisville, Kentucky draft board told him he might be acceptable for military service⁸² and, on February 12, 1966, the chairman of his draft board, J. Allen Sherman, said "Clay. . . could be inducted into the Army before his March 29 title fight with Ernie Terrell."

However, Sherman said that even if Clay were drafted he could appeal the reporting date to allow him time to make the match.

"I don't see any reason why Clay won't be acceptable for the draft," [Sherman said]. "When we meet next Thursday it's my guess that he will be placed in 1-A and there is certainly no reason why he shouldn't be."

The pending change in status for the 24-year-old Clay was confirmed earlier, ⁸³ by a Selective Service official in Washington. The official, who asked not to be identified, said the decision on drafting Clay would be left to his draft board.

So Ali, like thousands of other young men at that time, waited to see what his status would be. But how many others had their status confirmed by Selective Service officials in Washington?

On February 17, 1966, the machinations that would ultimately strip Ali of his title began in earnest. He was reclassified 1-A.

A headline in the February 18 Times said; "Clay Reclassified 1-A by Draft Board; Heavyweight Champion Plans Appeal," with decks reading, "Fighter Charges Board With Bias, and "Clay Says He Is Singled Out Because of His Affiliation With Black Muslim Sect." In the accompanying Lipsyte story, Ali's displeasure with his new classification was evident:

[Cassius Clay] charged that he was being "picked on" because he was a member of the so-called Black Muslim Sect.

"Why me?" asked Clay. "I can't understand it. How did they do this to me—the heavyweight champion of the world?

"How can they do this without another test to see if I'm any wiser or wiser than last time? Why are they so anxious, why are they gunning for me? All those thousands of young men in Louisville, and I don't think they need but 30, and they have to go into two-year-old files to seek me out.

"I can't understand out of all those baseball players, football players, basketball players, and they seek me out, and there's only one heavyweight champion."

He said that he had two or three lawyers, in different parts of the country, working on the next legal steps, although he was not sure what they would be.

Many Muslims, according to Clay, have avoided military service by declaring as conscientious objectors, but others were under arms.

"I've got a question," he said. "For two years the government caused me international embarrassment, letting people think I was a nut. Sure it bothered me, and my mother and father suffered, and now they jump up and make me 1-A without even an official notification or test. Why did they let me be considered a nut, an illiterate, for two years?"

Clay would make no comment on the war itself, or America's commitment in Vietnam. But he said that pressure had mounted as his own involvement in the Muslims became greater, and that he thought he was being reclassified because of his affiliation with the group. He also thought that drafting him would be a financial mistake for the country. . . .

"I'm fighting for the government every day. Why are they so anxious to pay me \$80 a month when the government is in trouble, financially? I think it costs them \$12 million a day to stay in Vietnam and I buy a lot of bullets, at least three jet bombers a year, and pay the salary of 50,000 fighting men with the money they take from me after my fights!"⁸⁴

Ali's remarks would not, at the best of times, have endeared him to patriots. On the day of his remarks, General Maxwell Taylor had criticized Senator Wayne Morse for his attack on the war in Vietnam. Morse had said that the American people would "repudiate our war in Southeast Asia," to which Taylor replied, "That, of course, is good news to Hanoi, Senator."⁸⁵ Taylor's inference could not have come at a worse time for Ali. Lipsyte wrote that Ali, then in Miami, got word of his reclassification by phone from a wire service reporter, and added that swarms of reporters soon descended on the agitated Ali.

Lipsyte wrote in SportsWorld:

After awhile there were no more rest periods between rounds with the press, television, radio, neighbors, friends, promoters, and the lawn became a worldwide dump for questions, answers, advice, gossip, rumors, stories of death and dismemberment, accusations,

anxieties, injustices, and always the interviews—What do you think about. . . ? How do you think. . . ? Why the. . . ?—and the Muslims, almost antic at this proof they were not paratroopers but chosen people, and somewhere along the way a newsman asked for the fiftieth time what Ali thought about the war in Vietnam, and he shrugged, and the newsman asked, "Do you know where Vietnam is?"

"Sure," said Ali.

"Where?"

Ali shrugged.

"Well, what do you think about the Vietcong?"

And Ali, tired, exasperated, angry, betrayed, certainly without thought, carved his quote on the facade of history:

"I ain't got nothing against them Vietcong."⁸⁶

The Times did not use the quote in Lipsyte's article on Ali's reclassification, but other media did.

Lipsyte, in an article headlined "Children Bring Joy to World-Wearry Champ," described Ali, who was in Miami training for the Terrell bout:

[When children come by after school] it is the only time of the day when his eyes seem to sparkle of the laughter of Cassius Clay.

In the morning, he rests, something he didn't have to do years ago, when he was Cassius Clay, and always laughing, and America thought it might like him very much. . . .

The phone begins to ring while he is resting, from people offering him \$400,000 to play Jack Johnson in a movie and incredulous that he should turn it down because he wouldn't appear on the screen as a white woman's lover and brainwash, he says, the Negro against the beauty of his own. . . .

Ali and his friends will sit and talk through the evening about the freedom of 22 million "so-called Negroes lost in this wilderness called North America" and of their leader, Elijah, who has predicted that by the end of this year (1968) all black men in America will be members of the Nation of Islam. . . .

They will talk of women, in the warm, soggy night, and play records, and this when Ali feels the pain of his divorce from Sonji Roi. It still disturbs him, he says, to lose a woman he loved because she couldn't conform to Muslim customs of dress and behavior. And, in the night somewhere, billed as Sonji Clay, the dark beauty

is sitting on a piano crooning blues and later, at the bar, telling customers that she still loved him, that "the Muslims took his mind and spirit away," and that he really was much too smart to fail an Army mental examination in the first place.⁸⁷

Ali's dream world was interrupted by the realities of his forthcoming bout with Terrill. And there would be no bout with Terrell (at least in Chicago) until he apologized for his unpatriotic remarks about the draft, the war, and the Vietcong. Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and numerous other political figures had urged Joe Triner, chairman of the Illinois Athletic Commission, to call off the bout.⁸⁸ So Ali—~~who was~~ ^{announced that Clay would appeal the decision,} ~~quoted as saying,~~ "I'm a member of the Black Muslims, and we don't go to no wars unless they're declared by Allah himself"⁸⁹—was thought to be on his way to apologize and "Gov. Kerner indicated he would be satisfied with a formal apology from Clay."⁹⁰

Two commissioners said they would withhold any decision on the fight until Clay arrived, but a third, Lou Radzienda, said he would not vote for revocation of the license for the bout because "this country is fighting for freedom all over the world, and part of this freedom is for a man to say what he wants."⁹¹

Lipsyte, in a column headlined "Instant Bile," said:

Five-and dime emotionism, like any cheap gimmick, has to be manufactured fast and thrown out on the market before anyone has a chance to examine its perishability and its shallowness. Usually—as in Cassius Clay's latest collision with the real world—it promises to leave nothing but the taste of instant bile. . . .

The apology will hopefully, according to one commissioner, and a long week in which everyone sank "to a kindergarten level."

[The reclassification] decision was relayed to Clay, third-hand, while he was sitting on the loan in front of his rented Miami house. Clay flipped. . . .

The 24-year-old heavyweight champion is "panic stricken" at the thought of military service, according to those close to him. First of all, he has been cosseted by managers, backers, public relations men, lawyers and advisers for the last six years. In that time, he never has done anything by himself as an equal in the company of men. Second, nested among Black Muslims, all of whom have rejected the mainstream of American life, he hears only sinister tales of the Army. . .

And third, after two years of being derided as a "nut" for failure to qualify for the draft, Clay felt that a reversal without a new test was another example of the white world "picking on" him for being a Muslim, a discrimination that would continue painfully in garrison and in the field.

As newsmen zeroed in on Clay for his reaction, closed-circuit television exhibitors throughout the country got leery of booking a fight that might be canceled. So one of Clay's lawyers quickly announced that Clay would appeal the decision, thus setting back his induction date. Then the world flipped.

Clay's defenders described the "great emotional strain" under which "the kid" has been living—a championship without honor, a messy divorce, an inner conflict between his Muslim allegiance and his desire to be loved unilaterally. His detractors pointed to the Muslims as a band of "thugs" unworthy of owning a championship, and Clay's remarks as a kick in the teeth to American youngsters dying in Vietnam.

The voices of the detractors were stronger and better placed than those of the defenders, many of whom were financially involved with Clay. "The Chicago Tribune" began a crusade to run the fight out of the city, and the Governor asked the commission to review its sanction of the fight.

Tickets for the fight are said to be going well, which proves that five-and-dime emotionalism can even produce a quick buck.⁹²

While both Lipsyte and Radzienda tried to appeal to the more rational sensibilities in a very emotional issue, two more rational—but unlikely—forces had been marshalled to keep the fight alive. Both Torres⁹³ and Lipsyte⁹⁴ referred to organized crime's fear of a black takeover in boxing—a fear sufficiently justified by the formation of Main Bout, Inc., which was promoting the bout. Lipsyte said the bout originally was barred in New York not because of Terrell's connections with mobster Glickman but because of a fear of Main Bout,

Inc., and the power it would gain ("Hardly anyone believed the 'exhaustive investigation' into Terrell's background was anything more than a delaying action against Main Bout, Inc.," Lipsyte wrote.⁹⁵ And Torres wrote, "What was left of the Mob in boxing felt threatened by someone moving in on their territory: the Black Muslims."⁹⁶

Lipsyte said the fight ended up in Chicago because "it was thought that the combination of organized crime and the Muslims would be strong enough to defeat even the Chicago Tribune's crusade to run it out of town."⁹⁷

But the fight was on its way out, anyway. "Clay Withholds Apology for 'Unpatriotic Remarks;' Title Fight in Jeopardy" read a Times headline February 26, 1966.

The story said:

Clay, who asked the commission to call him Muhammad Ali, the name he uses as a member of the Black Muslim racist sect, made his position clear from the outset, saying, "I'm not here to make a showdown plea or apologize, the way the press said I would.

"I came here because certain people advised me and certain people would be hurt financially over what I said and you people, the commissioners, were put on the spot before your Governor and other authorities. If I've got any apologizing to do, I'll do it to Government officials, draft boards and others". . . .When Clay and Commissioner Robichaux began yelling at each other, a recess was called until "a later date."⁹⁸

The Times said in the same story that the confrontation was "a wild meeting at which Clay appeared far from contrite," and that the Illinois attorney general had issued an opinion that the fight could not be legally held under Section 12 of the Illinois Exhibition Act, which stated that no boxing match could be conducted by a corporation with

less than 50 members. (The attorney general said the Ali-Terrell promotion had the names of only two members.) The rule had never been invoked before.⁹⁹ The commission later voted 2-1 to withhold sanction for the fight, prompting Radzienda to say, "I've been fighting over a week for the U.S. Constitution, and I've lost."¹⁰⁰

In the interim, the fight was banned in Pennsylvania, shifted to Louisville and banned in Louisville. Lipsyte wrote:

Louisville, apparently bowing to the pressure of veterans' groups, snatched back the welcome mat it had laid out two days ago.

The governors of other states, including Maine, have used the fight as a quick headline grabber—they rant against Clay's "unpatriotic" remarks almost before their athletic commissions make timid offers of welcome.

[Most observers] think that a snowballing fear of boycotts, ill-will and disorder is driving many states, which otherwise would welcome the financial and publicity windfall of a major sporting event, to avoid the controversial match.¹⁰¹

Promoters tried to schedule the bout in Canada, but Montreal and Verdun rejected it.

Toronto was the next "port of call for the traveling-circus title bout"¹⁰²—and finally offered a site. And Harold E. Ballard, executive vice president and part owner of Maple Leaf Gardens, where the fight was to be held, said:

I don't condone what he [Ali] said. I don't even know what he said and I certainly wouldn't want anyone making detrimental remarks about my country. But this man is the heavyweight champion, and we want him as long as he comes in here and acts properly.¹⁰³

For a brief instant, politics gave way to boxing.

The closed-circuit telecast of the bout to the United States was in jeopardy because a "significant number" of theaters had bowed

to pressure from veterans' groups and canceled their television contracts.¹⁰⁴ As Ali promoted the fight ("If fans want to see me beat, they ought to start making reservations for Toronto"¹⁰⁵), the California Athletic Commission urged its promoters not to telecast the bout, "citing Terrell's 'apparent' underworld connections' and Clay's 'extremely unpatriotic and selfish statements' and the fight's control by a 'self-contained Muslim organization.'"¹⁰⁶

In fact, 40 percent of Main Bout, Inc., stock was held by Michael Malitz and Robert Arum, both white; 10 percent was held by actor Jim Brown, a black; and 50 percent was held by John Ali, the national secretary of the Black Muslims, and Herbert Muhammad.¹⁰⁷

"The feeling among Malitz, Brown and Arum is that protests against the fight are based less upon Clay's anti-Administration statements than on racial prejudice," Lipsyte wrote.¹⁰⁸

Not to be outdone by California, the Massachusetts Boxing Commission also urged a ban on the showing of the bout.¹⁰⁹

Not to be outdone by California or Massachusetts, Terrell decided that he, too, would boycott the bout. Citing a contract dispute, he withdrew from the March 29 bout on March 10.¹¹⁰

Torres speculated that Terrell pulled out for one of three reasons: Ali would win; Ali would be drafted and go into the Army or to jail, giving Terrell the consolidated heavyweight title; Terrell would fight and win, but would not have a big payday.¹¹¹

Whatever the reason, with Terrell gone, a new opponent had to be found—and George Chuvalo, a white Toronto native and the 10th-ranked

heavyweight contender, was selected.¹¹²

The W.B.A. immediately withheld sanction of the bout--by a unanimous vote--saying Chuvalo was an unsuitable opponent for Ali.¹¹³ It dropped Ali as the top title contender, replacing him with Zora Folley.¹¹⁴

Moreover, a radio advertiser's boycott of Ali ultimately led to cancellation of the radio broadcast of the fight.¹¹⁵ Boston, Miami Beach and San Antonio joined the closed-circuit boycott. (The fight was banned in Boston because of "Clay's unpatriotic attitude" and in Miami Beach because, according to Mayor Elliott Roosevelt, the Black Muslims had "stated in their houses of worship, before God and the world, that they are dedicated to the destruction of white people and domination of the world."¹¹⁶ If such was the case, one had to wonder what George Chuvalo was thinking. The San Antonio telecast was being rejected for its apparent political overtones.)

The closed-circuit telecast, seen by only 7,500 paying customers, took in an estimated \$125,000, far below the projected \$3 million.¹¹⁷

Meanwhile, Ali's draft board rejected "the religious grounds of his Muslim beliefs as a basis for a change in [his] draft status",¹¹⁸ but Ali, after the furor caused by his remarks when he was reclassified to 1-A, wisely said, "I ain't talking about nothin' but fightin'."¹¹⁹ Ali's appeal was based solely on his religion, and not on conscientious-objector status or on dependency (he had stated that he was the sole support of his mother and faced alimony payments to Sonji Roi of \$177,000).¹²⁰

With the title bout looming, Billy Conn, the heavyweight who almost defeated Joe Louis, "urged the American public to boycott Cassius Clay's fights because of Clay's remarks about the war in Vietnam. 'I think that any American who pays to see him fight after what he has said recently should be ashamed. He is a disgrace to the boxing profession,' Conn said."¹²¹

In Conn's view, anyone who watched Ali fight was as tainted as Conn thought Ali was. And boxing, never a pristine profession, seemed to have reached an all-time low--at least in Conn's view--in the clutches of the "unpatriotic" Ali.

But if Conn had no compassion for Ali, the heavyweight champion's opponent, Chuvalo, did. In a Lipsyte story headlined "Title Fight Buildup Is Just a Charade," the Canadian challenger said, with uncanny foresight:

I can feel compassion for Clay. Sometimes I think he says things he doesn't quite mean, like some of those things about Vietnam and about the Black Muslims. But then again, who is to say he isn't right?¹²²

In the same article, Lipsyte wrote:

People feel a little sorry for Clay here. . . .they feel he is a "dead man" with no future. If he loses, he will be ridiculed; if he wins, what good is his title with a possible Army hitch or worse coming up? Many Canadians are frightened that American policy in Vietnam will drag them into a war, they think that those who speak against the war, as Clay did, are being persecuted.

"The Americans are envious," said a young Dutchman, visiting Clay, "because you speak the truth."

"Let other people defend me," said Clay, waving to the Dutchman, "because to defend myself would be cheapening."

The Canadians--who seemed to be quite correct in assuming that Americans, at least famous American boxers, who spoke out against

the war, would be persecuted--were sympathetic to Ali's predicament.

A Times story by Gerald Eskenazi the day of the fight gave this assessment by Ali:

For the first time as champion, Clay is in a friendly city. . . .

But Toronto is still not home and Clay said with bitterness:

"I was run out of Louisville, my home town, the town I brought an Olympic gold medal to. I was run out of my country. Why can't the American people judge me on the same scale they judge everyone else?"

There is a certain smugness and sophistication among the people who have any opinion at all. They say there was a certain naivete--and even poor sportsmanship--in the United States for not holding the fight there. 123

Daley was not sympathetic. His pre-fight story was an indictment of the fight, the Black Muslims--and Ali:

The fight isn't worth 30 cents. If promoters were smart--which they obviously aren't--they would keep the ice-making machines in operation at the erstwhile hockey arena (where the fight was being held). It would reduce the odor.

The real pressure came when Clay, a Black Muslim, succumbed to his congenital tendency toward foot-in-mouth disease.

"I don't have no quarrel with them Vietcongs," he responded when told his Louisville draft board was re-classifying him, thereby spurning patriotism and affronting a nation.

Not even the Illinois Boxing Commission, which can stomach almost anything, could then swallow and indigestible Clay-Terrill bout that had already been chased from New York.

The sulishly insistent closed-circuit TV entrepreneurs can't avoid going to the cleaners and neither can Clay. It's his fault entirely.

With his vast personal charm, he could have been the most popular of all champions. But he attached himself to a hate organization, the Black Muslims, and antagonized everyone with his boasting and disdain for the decency of even a low-grade patriotism. Clay has spoiled a multi-million-dollar property. He may yet destroy it.

Not a nickle should be contributed to the coffers of Clay, the Black Muslims or promoters who jammed this

down so many throats. A boycott is urged as the one effective way of showing resentment at a production that thumps its nose at the public.

Yanked from Florida sunshine (covering baseball spring training) and assembled here is the flower of American literature [the press] each asking the other, "Is this necessary?"¹²⁴

Daley's yearning for the return of the "old" Ali, the merry prankster who could have been "the most popular of all champions," was a recurring theme in his columns. So was his tendency to talk about the "odor" of most of Ali's fights. But the boycott was new, perhaps picked up during the month's earlier demands by almost every self-styled patriot and patriotic group. The only question appeared to be: Why did Daley himself venture to such an olfactory displeasure?

Lipsyte wrote, the same day, "In a match made possible by greed, hypocrisy and desperation, Cassius Clay will defend his . . . championship against George Chuvalo. Hardly anyone is holding his breath."¹²⁵

Both pundits missed the mark. The headline on the fight read, "Clay Outpoints Chuvalo in Bruising, No-Knockdown 15-Rounder in Toronto," while a second headline on the same page read, "Fans Who Attended Theater TV of Fight Get Money's Worth."¹²⁶ Chuvalo, who had never been stopped or floored in 48 bouts, made a fight of it. But few were aware of it at the time, since "there wasn't even an American radio broadcast of the fight. None of the principal networks in the United States would risk antagonizing the majority of American fight fans believed to be cool toward the bout."¹²⁷

Even Daley was impressed with Ali's ability to take another

low blow:

With the referee assuming the role of the innocent bystander, George Chuvalo pounded Cassius Clay from knee-cap to skullcap. . . .But he didn't hit him often enough or effectively enough to take away the world heavyweight championship, even though he lasted the Derby distance of 15 rounds.

Clay got what he deserved, a clear-cut victory over a most stubborn foe who neither knows nor cares where foul territory is located.¹²⁸

Also impressed with Ali, but for a different reason, was Jerry Izenberg, who covered the fight for the Newark Star Ledger. Izenberg encountered Ali in a Toronto gym, just before the fight, and recorded what Ali said about the controversy:

"I ain't afraid," he said. "I ain't afraid. I trust in Allah. They could pour boilin' oil on my feet. They could march me out to a firin' squad. If your want to be great, if you want to be wise, then you got to get readdy to suffer. Look what they done to sweet baby Jesus."

I do not care to examine. . . .the specific eschatology of the Muslims. . . .I do not even care about the inner workings of his mind on the day this is being written. . . . I do know this. I do know that when he said it, he meant it. I do know that meaning it was supposed to be his right if the Constitution we live under has any truth to it. I do know that there are a lot of people who believe in law by popularity. I didn't know this last, that day in Toronto.¹²⁹

Izenberg, impressed by what he considered to be Ali's sincerity, chided his fellow sportswriters:

[Many] had picked up on Ali's impending case. . . and were disseminating a mass of misinformation about him and the Muslims. Their biggest gripe seemed to be. . . the fact that they would continue to call him Cassius Clay, apparently in defense of some principle which only they knew. . . .

Much--but not all--of the flower and fauna of American sports journalism had decided to turn their erudition loose on a name many of them misspelled. I heard more than a few

remark: "I don't give a shit what he says, I still call him Cassius," as though they had just delivered the Gettysburg Address.

. . . Nowhere could I find middle ground. His enemies at the typewriter took to describing him as a coward, a devil incarnate, a racial thug, and a very bad boxer. His allies, in the main, began to insist that he was a philosopher of great import. They condoned--no, better say "palpitated over"--his every word and every act. Neither side--with a very few exceptions--appeared to be relevant.¹³⁰

If the writers covering Ali could not collectively make up their minds on what he really represented, they were no better at judging the quality of his opponents, for "after weeks of calling the fight a mismatch, the local press ecstatically proclaimed Chuvalo's courage and ability."¹³¹

The Chuvalo bout would be shown on television at the end of that week.¹³² Ali's next fights would be against Henry Cooper--and the draft.

The Cooper fight, set for May 21, 1966, in London, was the first of three European bouts arranged by Main Bout, Inc., for Ali was, in Torres' words, "too hot to handle in America."¹³³

Meanwhile, Ali's appeal of his 1-A draft classification on the grounds of financial hardship--stemming from his claim that most of his money was tied up in litigation and back alimony--and conscientious objection to military service was turned down by his Louisville draft board.¹³⁴ In the story on the board's decision, Sherman, the chairman of the Louisville board, "said the local board rejected Clay's conscientious objector appeal after he [Sherman] 'looked up a little Muslim law.'"¹³⁵

The article continued:

"The Muslim code says the Muslims should obey the law of the land in which they reside," [Sherman said]. "Now, this [the draft law] is the law of the land.

"Another thing, the Muslims have their own military force. I don't see how they could say they are not militaristic when they have a military force of their own."

Sherman said Clay "may have been more elaborate" in his appeal (which was pending with the Western Judicial Circuit Appeal Board.) "I'm sure he pulled out all of the stops there."

A Selective Service spokesman said some Muslims have been deferred as conscientious objectors, but others are serving in the Armed Forces.¹³⁶

In a May 13, 1966 story headlined "Rule Covers All," the Times took a further look at conscientious objectors--and the Muslims:

If Cassius Clay is classified as a conscientious objector by the Kentucky Selective Service appeals board, it won't be because he is a Black Muslim, according to draft officials [in Washington, D.C.].

"He will have to prove that he is opposed to military service because of his personal religious belief and not those of the sect," a spokesman for the Selective Service national headquarters said.

But this applies to anybody who wants a conscientious objector deferment, Black Muslim or not.

It is not clear on what grounds the Black Muslim sect itself opposes military service, or even if it does. One government source said that the Black Muslims objected to obeying any regulations set by the "white man's government" and thus refuse to serve in the armed services.

But Elijah Muhammad, the 69-year-old leader of the sect, was reported a few years ago to have said, "We carry no arms."

It was pointed out that Cassius would have to make a good case for himself if he wanted a deferment.

To get a 1-A-O, he would have to prove that "by reason of religious training and belief," he is "conscientiously opposed to combatant training and service in the Armed Forces."

To get a 1-O, he must be "conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form."¹³⁷

The article went on to say that religious groups that objected to military service usually sent a statement of their beliefs to the

National Service Board, and added that "a spokesman for Selective Service said that the Black Muslims had not submitted any such statement."¹³⁸

But Ali, when he filed initially as a conscientious objector, said that as a minister in the Nation of Islam, "to bear arms or kill is against my religion. And I conscientiously object to any combat military service that involves participation in any war in which the lives of human beings are being taken."¹³⁹

His troubles with the draft also posed some minor problems for Ali in London. Scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Wilson, the meeting was suddenly canceled when it was announced:

Clay was appealing to his draft board for reclassification as a conscientious objector, a move that a spokesman for the American Embassy termed "somewhat disparaging when we are trying to present the image of a nation unified."

The Embassy is taking no notice of Ali in London because his presence touches upon two of the image-makers' most sensitive areas--racial relations and Vietnam.

Mobbed wherever he goes, Ali made the public relations coup of the year by praising Cooper's fitness and left hook as soon as he arrived at London Airport.¹⁴⁰

Ali again beat his own drum for the fight but more philosophically:

Everyone on the street has an opinion. They gonna pay to see themselves right, gonna pay to see this fellow, Ali, beaten because I'm free, I say what I want, go where I want, don't have to kiss no one's feet to stay where I am, and people don't like that.

Onliest thing I don't like is when the press make the people around me say I'm dumb, that I have to be conned into flying in airplanes, that I can't have but \$2 at a time 'cause I'd give it all away. I know a pound is worth \$2.80.¹⁴¹

Lipsyte, in SportsWorld, wrote that Ali was "a superb guest. . . he was constantly thanking 'you Lords and you common market everyday people' for inviting him, and he praised British heavyweights so

earnestly that people forgot that the term 'British heavyweight' is generally derisive in boxing."¹⁴²

And the British, for their part, were receptive to Ali, as Lipsyte wrote on May 20, 1966, "Clay Thanks Britain and Praises U.S":

The feeling began to grow that yet another character in the complex development of Cassius Clay was emerging. . . .

The British have helped, receiving him with a fairness in the press and a genuine warmth in the street that he has rarely enjoyed in the United States.¹⁴³

If the British press had been kind to Ali (and the African and Eastern press had been "almost visceral"¹⁴⁴ in their adulation of the champion), the American press had been, in his own estimation, brutal:

"The American press keeps me in shape," [Ali] said, "because if they do this to me now, when I'm world champion, I know how devilish they're gonna be if I lose. . . ."

"The world wants to know how can this man continue against the propaganda machines of the most powerfulest Government in the world; how can this man continue when even governments fall under the press.

"Why doesn't the American press write that Russian fighters are copying my style? That my fight will be seen in Mecca? Add that up."¹⁴⁵

Daley, in a May 20, 1966, column, "A Pigeon for Clay,"¹⁴⁶ added up Ali's skills and concluded:

"Cassius has become bigger, stronger and better. . . he still thinks he's the greatest, however, he doesn't advertise it so blatantly. He also has traded in his name of Cassius to the Black Muslims for the moniker of Muhammad Ali."¹⁴⁷

Ali went into the Cooper fight as a 6-1 choice to retain his title,¹⁴⁷ and won in the sixth round after opening up scar tissue over Cooper's eye.¹⁴⁸

Lipsyte's story said, "Cassius Clay allowed Henry Cooper five

rounds for good behavior, then, feigning anger, broke open the vulnerable scar tissue over the Briton's left eye."¹⁴⁹

But the story added that Ali, who had been vilified for his involvement with the so-called violent and hate-filled Black Muslims, was disturbed by the sight of blood.

"I didn't want it to end like that," Cassius Clay said. . . ."I don't like doing this to anybody. It's against my religion. It's against my feelings.

"I don't mind admitting I was a bit disturbed by all that blood. I didn't really want the violence to continue, I don't really like hurting anyone. It's against my religion, as I said."¹⁵⁰

A Lipsyte story the next day, "A Happy Clay Says He Hated to See Title Fight End in Such a Brutal Way,"¹⁵¹ said Ali "admitted that the 'sight of blood really scares me,'" but added that the boxer, who obviously felt comfortable in London, "was bright-eyed and relaxed, with laughter tugging at the corners of his full mouth" as he held a genial hotel news conference about 16 hours after Britain's first heavyweight championship fight since 1908 had ended in ugliness. . . . [Cooper's] face looked as though it had smashed through a windshield."

Lipsyte ended the article in which he called Ali Clay, by saying, "The American, who prefers to be called Muhammad Ali, lauded British promoters."

Daley, in a column the same day, "An Easy Payday," gave Ali some grudging praise, while questioning his ability:

The chances are that more people watched Cassius Clay in action last Saturday than witnessed all the other fights he waged in his career (the fight was televised). It was not his most impressive performance. He toyed with Henry Cooper, much in the fashion of a matador making passes at a floundering bull.

When Cassius considered that the time had come for the kill, the sixth round, he made it in a stabbing thrust--like a sword plunging home. Blood spurted. The bout ended. He received no ear, the normal reward for spectacular achievement in any self-respecting bull ring. This was too commonplace and ordinary a job for such acclaim.

Yet, there was no clean knockout. The more often a guy watches Clay in action, the more suspicious he becomes of the one-punch dispatch of Sonny Liston, no model of rectitude, in their strange what-was-it fight in Lewiston, Maine.¹⁵²

Lipsyte later wrote in SportsWorld that by leaving the United States, "Ali also enhanced his celebrity among Americans," and added that his bouts, shown on ABC television, allowed both Ali and Howard Cosell to do both " 'controversial' and chatty interview(s) that showed off both men at their bantering best. . . .A lawyer, Cosell became Ali's public advocate for civil rights. . . ."153

Cosell tried to present Ali to the American public as a decent human being. Just before the Cooper bout, ABC carried a half-hour segment on Ali, wandering through London in a top hat, tails and a striped diplomat's trousers and being surrounded on the streets by admiring fans. The show was thoroughly complimentary to Ali--but, just as it was getting under way, Jimmie Ellis, who was fighting the final preliminary bout, knocked out his opponent in the first round. With Ali's fight against Cooper ready to start immediately. Cosell ran back to Ali's dressing room:

I [Cosell] said, "Muhammad, remember the great footage we shot of you walking around London--the way the people here feel about you--how much you want the people in the United States to see this now, with all your troubles?"

He nodded. I said, "It's on the air right now. Just started. We won't be able to show it if you go out there

now. They're going to be coming in for you any second. If you go with them there's just no way we'll get the whole show on. It's critical."

He was thinking it over when they knocked on the door. A British ring official stuck his head in the doorway: "Aw right. It's time to go."

Instantly Ali was on his feet, shadowboxing. "How much time you need?" he asked me in a whisper. I told him 18 minutes would do it.

He started dancing around the room, bobbing and weaving. "I won't be out for eighteen minutes," he announced. "Nobody tells the champ when to go."¹⁵⁴

Ali traveled to Egypt after the Cooper bout. In a story from Cairo, "Clay Tells Cairo Fans He Hopes to Beat Draft," with the deck "Champion Insists He'll Obey Laws," reporter Hendrick Smith quoted Ali: "My main concern is to go back to the States and try to beat the draft."¹⁵⁵ In the same article, Ali said he would "respect the laws of my country" and added, "We'll see what happens when I get there." The article, which referred to him as Cassius Clay throughout, said that when an Egyptian reporter addressed him as Mr. Clay, Ali "looked down at him and replied, 'Please don't call me Clay, say Muhammad Ali!'"

Ali, hailed by the Higher Council for Islamic Affairs as a "Moslem hero"¹⁵⁶ (and completing the cycle from Muslim to Moslem hero), returned to the United States and immediately denied saying he would try to beat the draft, adding, "I didn't say anything like that. That's just some mad angry reporter trying to get something started."¹⁵⁷

The story said that, when asked "about his patriotism [Clay] said it wasn't 'a tough question' and would not reply to it for fear of being misunderstood. . . .He said he was received by thousands of persons abroad, but he had no complaints about his treatment in the

United States. 'I'm treated good here--like a king,' he said."¹⁵⁸

But, no matter how judicious his remarks, Ali still had to go out of the country for bouts. With a fight already set for August 6, 1966, against England's Brian London in London, Ali also signed for a September 10, 1966, bout with Karl Mildenberger, in Frankfurt, West Germany.¹⁵⁹

A Lipsyte story, commenting on Ali's European travels, noted:

When Clay finishes his walk-over tour of Europe and wants to return to an American ring, he will need a challenger the public thinks has a chance to beat him. To many observers that means a [Cleveland] Williams-Clay fight.¹⁶⁰

Such was the state of heavyweight boxing in the United States that Williams was making a comeback of sorts after being shot by a Texas highway patrolman in 1964 (he still carried fragments of the .357 magnum slug in his body).¹⁶¹

Meanwhile, J. Allen Sherman, the head of Ali's draft board, said that he was very upset "over the length of time it was taking for a final ruling" on Ali's draft status.¹⁶² Sherman said the appeals board had rejected Ali's request to be deferred as a conscientious objector and added that the case had been sent to the U.S. Justice Department in May (the article appeared in July). "I don't understand this delay and I don't like it," Sherman was quoted as saying.¹⁶³

If the Justice Department was not willing to speak out, Elijah Muhammad was. After a rare interview with Elijah Muhammad, Lipsyte, in a July 24, 1966, article "Elijah Speaks of Clay, Boxing and Black Muslims," ¹⁶⁴ wrote:

The spiritual relationship between Cassius Clay and Elijah Muhammad is a strange and subtle force that has been shaping two mutually contemptuous minority interests: Black Muslims and boxing.

To boxing businessmen, the Muslims represent a financial threat in their growing control over the heavyweight championship. . . .To the Muslims, boxing is a "wicked and crooked" business whose only true value is the public exposure that Clay, known as Muhammad Ali, gives to the words of its 69-year-old leader, Elijah Muhammad.

"We are not trying to be permanent people in the fistical world," said Elijah Muhammad. "We know its a crooked business and Muhammad will not get justice out of it, even with my son and secretary in it. And we cannot prevent agreement with the white man when he holds the upper hand."

Elijah has become a kind of surrogate father to the often-troubled 24-year-old champion. Ali, who speaks of Elijah with great reverence, once called him a "little meek man with more wisdom in his pinky finger than we all got in our heads."

According to Elijah, Ali became at least a Muslim sympathizer some three years before he won the title from Sonny Liston early in 1963. But it was not until the day after the first Liston fight that Clay announced his membership in the Nation of Islam. Elijah would not say why Clay waited. Later that year, Elijah conferred the name Muhammad Ali upon Cassius X.

Now, both teacher (Elijah) and student (Ali) contend that Ali's recent inability to book a fight in this country was because the white man "hates the good and hates the truth, especially when it comes from a black man who has found Islam."

The trouble for Clay started with the announced formation of Main Bout, Inc., and rolled into high gear when the fighter said he had "no quarrel with the Vietcong" and didn't want to serve in the Army. Although Elijah said he did not directly counsel Ali to say this, he was in full agreement. The leader was jailed for draft evasion during World War II.

Elijah further contended that the opposition to Main Bout, Inc., was based on the white man's refusal to allow "the black man to do anything to better himself. . . ."

"It is not so much Muhammad whipping people that attracts people," [Elijah said], "but the clean life he leads and the clean language he uses. He is a spiritual speaker. He is full of it himself, and the Muslims love him throughout the world."

[But Elijah added] "America hates the boy and don't give him any chance for his championship to be respected and admired. They single him out and speak evil of him

without cause, and drive him out of the country. But in eyes of the world, when he wins it makes him the real thing he is, by nature the champion, with the ability by nature to win such titles in sports."

Elijah does not deny that the Muslim treasury is a major beneficiary of Ali's ring earnings, which will increase when the Louisville group loses its percentage (in October, 1966). But he denies that the Muslims are in any way dependent upon Ali financially.¹⁶⁵

Lipsyte had come away from the interview impressed with the shrewdness and conviction of the Muslims.¹⁶⁶ "Muslims," he later wrote, "did not go into the Army, Elijah himself had been jailed during World War II."¹⁶⁷

But one question remains. Ali had first announced that he was a Muslim on February 25, 1964, when he won the title from Sonny Liston. Since that time, there had been a great hue and cry (much of it either erroneous or misdirected) against the Muslims and Ali. Since the best place to derive information is usually at the source, the obvious question is: Why did the Times take a year and a half to finally talk with Elijah Muhammad?

Sheed echoed Lipsyte's sentiments about the Muslims' shrewdness:

Whatever their origins, the Muslims that Ali joined saw themselves as an elite and rather conservative corps, calculated to attract some fastidious element in his own temperament. . . . this was no swinging black power organization that Ali was joining, but something closer to a masonic lodge—at least at the summit; things got rougher lower down. Its motto, like Calvinism's, could be "Allah helps those who help themselves."¹⁶⁸

Discussing the draft and a possible deal for Ali to "waltz through his service, fighting exhibitions like Joe Louis and being a hawk by implication,"¹⁶⁹ Sheed wrote, "If a deal was offered, it was

not accepted. Elijah had sweated out World War II in jail for encouraging conscientious objection, and his disciple would do no less.¹⁷⁰

The sincerity of the Muslim's beliefs on conscientious objection to war had been held up to much scrutiny. But an in-depth look at the founding father of the sect would show that he conceived of the sect while himself in jail for draft evasion.

Not averse to fighting in the ring (if no copious quantities of blood were involved), Ali, a 10-1 favorite over Brian London,¹⁷¹ knocked out the challenger in the third round.¹⁷² Daley said, "It was as easy as breaking a stale crumpet. . . . At least Cassius did his part. Otherwise this would have been the all-Britain and intercontinental stinker."¹⁷³

Ali said to London after the bout, "I've been saying a prayer that you weren't hurt. You're a family man and you've got children and everything."¹⁷⁴

The next day, despite his distaste for London, Daley's column, "The Unanswered Question," had uncharacteristic praise for Ali:

London was a bad bum, ludicrously outclassed by a man who had everything while he himself had nothing more to offer than the scowl on his battered, unhandsome face. How good is [Clay], though? He may even be as great as he thinks he is. The bout with London proved little, unless it supplied a slight glimpse into the future.¹⁷⁵

In a more immediate action, Ali hired Hayden Covington, a New York draft lawyer, who, during World War II, "handled hundreds of cases for members of the Jehovah Witnesses."¹⁷⁶ Covington's first move was to have Ali seek a deferment as a Black Muslim minister, a position that, if granted, would free the boxer from any service

obligation.¹⁷⁷ Covington said the move for a 4-D (ministerial) deferment should have been made in the first place by Ali, instead of his becoming embroiled in "a controversy over an appeal based on a claim that he was a conscientious objector."¹⁷⁸

So Ali, in his role as a minister, appeared at a special hearing in Louisville on his request for a 4-D deferment. The story said that Ali, who appeared at the session presided over by a special judge appointed by the Justice Department, carrying "a copy of the Koran under one arm," said he had "been a Muslim minister for two years and has been traveling around the country 'preaching and converting people.'"¹⁷⁹ Ali [referred to as Clay] "contended that 90 percent of his time was taken up now with religious work. 'It's becoming my whole life. I only devote a little time each day to my fighting.'"¹⁸⁰

Meanwhile, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee was trying to thwart Ali's bid for a deferment. Under the headline "Rivers May Seek Change in Draft," with the deck "To Act if Clay Is Deferred, Carolinian Tells V.F.W.," the August 26, 1966 story said:

The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee threatened to seek a tighter draft law if Cassius Clay. . . got a deferment as a Moslem [sic] minister.

Representative L. Mendel Rivers, Democrat of South Carolina, told cheering delegates at the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention [in New York City] that his committee would undertake a "thorough overhaul" of the religious deferment section of the draft law if the Louisville draft board approved Mr. Clay's appeal. Mr. Clay is a Negro.

"Listen to this," Mr. Rivers cried, "if that great theologian of Black Muslim power, Cassius Clay, is deferred, you watch what happens in Washington.

"We are going to do something if that board takes your boy and leaves him [Mr. Clay] home to double talk."

"[Rivers] also received cheers when he "assailed" Stokely Carmichael, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

Committee, who was deferred as a conscientious objector and who said, "Negroes who fought in Vietnam were black mercenaries."¹⁸¹

Presumably, if Ali had been a white theologian applying for a religious deferment in a "respectable" religion, Rivers might have been more obliging.

Even the Times law section commented, in a more subdued fashion. An article headlined "Minister Cassius," August 28, 1966, said:

Cassius Marcellus Clay, or Muhammad Ali as the world heavyweight champion prefers to be called, has always been a man of many parts.

As a pugilist ~~and poet~~ and publicist, Mr. Clay always added a new role—preacher.

To qualify for a 4-D deferment under Selective Service law as a "minister of religion," Mr. Clay must prove that he "preaches and teaches the principles of religion," not merely "irregularly or incidentally," but "as his regular and customary vocation."

The Government has had difficulty in the past applying this to religious groups whose members are indistinguishable from the clergy.¹⁸²

The Times cited a 1950 case in which the Jehovah's Witnesses wanted all their members to qualify for a ministerial position—and a 4-D deferment. The government fought the Witnesses' contention and won. Thereafter, the Witnesses agreed that "only certain religious leaders would claim ministerial deferments." The article concluded: "Thus the odds are heavy against Mr. Clay becoming a U.S. certified preacher."¹⁸³

But Ali soon had to turn from the draft to the ring, although Daley believed his bout with Karl Mildenerger would require little effort:

It's inconceivable that the champion should fail to retain his title even though he has pointedly tried to

stimulate the gate by announcing to any gullible German who would listen that he twice was beaten by left-handers. The southpaw swinger, Mildenberger, wouldn't have the skill to do it if he were a switch hitter.¹⁸⁴

Ali's reason for the hype: money. "I've made five-million dollars in the ring, but 75 percent of it has gone to taxes," he said before the Mildenberger bout, for which he would earn \$150,000. "I'm the hardest working champion since Joe Louis."¹⁸⁵

He was correct. The Mildenberger bout would be his fourth title defense in 1966, and his sixth since winning the title in 1964.¹⁸⁶

Ali, a 10-1 favorite,¹⁸⁷ knocked out Mildenberger in the 12th round. But the fight was not one of his better ones, as the Times' Fred Tupper reported:

It was Clay's fight all the way, but he dogged it for long periods, apparently to sharpen his weapons. . . .

Periodically, with the beetle-browed German writhing under punches, Clay would dart off and survey his handiwork, apparently not interested in inflicting any more carnage.¹⁸⁸

Ali said that only Liston and Chivalo gave him harder fights than did Mildenberger, but when asked if he had trouble with the German's left-handed style, he replied, "Did it look as though I did."¹⁸⁹

Daley, in a column headlined "A Bull Exhibition," was, as usual, unimpressed:

It seemed that Cassius fooled around and wasted time. Of course, he eventually got the job done, but this definitely was not one of his better exhibitions.

[Daley then discussed some new heavyweights, including Joe Frazier, who would serve as more worthy opponents for Ali.]

But the future of Cassius is clouded by his draft status anyway. The troubled Clay won few friends or new admirers, though, by a second-rate performance against a second-rate foe.¹⁹⁰

The Mildenerger fight marked the end of Ali's European tour. He had eliminated the top European contenders. Lipsyte speculated that "the forces that had kept Ali from fighting in America allowed him back" because "perhaps they felt he was gaining too positive an image abroad; perhaps they didn't want to risk his running away from an imminent showdown with Selective Service."¹⁹¹

Ali signed for his fifth title defense of the year against Cleveland Williams in Houston's Astrodome. The fight would be his first defense in the United States since he had become embroiled in the controversy over his draft status earlier in the year.¹⁹²

But news of the fight, which would leave Ali just two short of Joe Louis' seven title defenses (in 1941 during his "Bum of the Month Club" tour),¹⁹³ was not enthusiastically received by members of the Miami Beach City Council. It voted to refuse a permit for the closed-circuit television broadcast of the bout after the broadcast request had been approved by the Miami Beach Convention Hall Advisory Board, the auditorium manager and the city manager. Councilman Mel Richard said he "had a right to resent Clay's refusal to serve in the Army with the claim he's a Black Muslim minister" and added "the Black Muslims are no credit to this country."¹⁹⁴ Richard argued that the council had a right to deny use of a public facility for an event that would "financially aid Clay and the Black Muslims."¹⁹⁵

Part of Richard's ire may have stemmed from the fact that Ali had left the Louisville syndicate and that the Muslims--specifically Herbert Muhammad, Elijah's son, and John Ali, the national secretary--

had taken over his business affairs.¹⁹⁶

A Steve Cady story about the Williams bout mentioned Ali's new affiliation with the Muslims--"Clay, fighting for the first time under the exclusive control of the Black Muslims, will get 50 percent of the live gate"¹⁹⁷--but the reference made the fighter seem like a zombie in the "control" of a malevolent force.

Daley, in Houston to cover the bout, began his column, "Deep in the Heart of Texas," with his usual rejoinder about what Ali could have been. But, instead of carrying on about the Muslims' terrible influence on the fighter, Daley actually listened to what Ali had to say:

When Cassius turns on his personality full blast, the overwhelming attractiveness of the man engulfs everyone within his scope. It makes a guy deeply regret that Clay has elected to toss away such a gift by the other side of his mixed up nature, his affiliation with the Black Muslims and his rebellion against the Army draft. He could have been the most popular ever. Instead he has incited considerable loathing.

He has even become a controversial switch-hitter, bright and gay one moment and then a deeply brooding prisoner of the Muslims the next. . . .

If he sounded vague, it's because there's no clarity in his thinking. Yet the more he talked the more a listener became convinced that there's a sincerity in his belief. . . .

A Negro broadcaster interrupted to ask the champion to drop by the studio for an interview. Cassius called into the next room for permission from the manager who has succeeded the original but discarded group of sponsoring Louisville millionaires. He is Herbert Muhammad, son of Elijah Muhammad, the head of the Black Muslims. Approval was granted.

"I do what Herbert tells me to do," said Cassius. "If Herbert says the fight's off, I go home. When he's talkin', his father is talkin' and everyone obeys their boss."

It was a little frightening. It sounded almost sacrilegious.

"The older I get, the tireder I get," said Cassius. "The only thing that saves me between trainin' for fights is my religion. I don't go to no bars, I don't smoke, I don't chase women. I only go to movies if they're decent and moral. With ministerin' how can a man get into trouble? My sacrifices and my life and my death are for thee, Allah, the Lord."

It would be impossible to argue against such a philosophy and yet an outsider, who is aware of the fact that the Muslim movement also has less lofty principles, squirms in discomfort.¹⁹⁸

While Daley could not be convinced about the sincerity of the Muslims' principles, he was convinced about Ali's intelligence. The day of the Williams fight, he wrote that "Cassius is smart--and never mind what those Army tests show"¹⁹⁹ and intimated that Williams was not so smart.

Ali knocked out Williams in the third round,²⁰⁰ prompting Daley to actually heap praise on him (and to forget his association with the Muslims):

For the first time in his controversial career, Cassius Clay looked like a tremendous fighter as he made a punching bag of Cleveland Williams.

The Clay who fought tonight was a revelation. He hit sharper and more accurately than ever before. He was a rounded fighting man and there was no way this performance could be faulted. For once he had everything.²⁰¹

Cady's story on the bout lavished equal praise on Ali's ability, saying, "Cleveland (Big Cat) Williams, the House Cat in tonight's heavyweight fight, couldn't move and couldn't fight. He never had a chance against the first-teasing, then pounding Ali Cat named Cassius (Muhammad Ali) Clay."²⁰²

But the best story may have been Lipsyte's. Headlined "Ali's New Gimmick" (the first time the Times referred to the boxer by his

new name in a headline), and with the deck "Champion's shuffle Confuses Foe, Amuses Fans, Sets Up Another Bout," Lipsyte wrote:

The primary purpose [of the shuffle] was to spice Clay's training. . . .

The second purpose was the humiliation of Williams, the kind of affable, accommodating Negro that Clay and the Muslims hold in contempt. Clay's Muslim "commercial" on closed-circuit television after the fight--an obviously prepared speech giving his religion credit for his victory--was piped, without charge, into half-a-dozen Negro colleges, where the message of Clay superiority would reach the presumably most open minds in the black community.

Purpose No. 3 was pure showmanship. . . .

Purpose No. 4, really a corollary of 3, was to set up the next fight.

So Clay won again, but left the public laughing for a change, laughing while he shuffled to the bank.²⁰³

Ali's return to the United States had been triumphant. He had entered the fight surrounded by a generally hostile public and press and, quite literally, had left them laughing with the Ali (not Clay) shuffle. Even his old critic Daley was obliged to accept him (though not his new name). In a column, "Acceptance at Last," Daley wrote, "No longer does Cassius ask to be acclaimed as the 'greatest.' He's now ready to settle just for being good. He's good, all right. He's awfully good."²⁰⁴

Ali, back in the good graces of press and public, announced that Ernie Terrell would be his next opponent.²⁰⁵ And then the public relations hubbub burst.

Headlined "Retention of 1-A Status for Clay Favored by Justice Department," an article January 1, 1967, said the Justice Department, after a six-month review, recommended that Ali not be reclassified as a conscientious objector.²⁰⁶ The Louisville board would meet later in

the week and, if one of the five-members cast a dissenting vote, the case would go to the Presidential Appeals Board in Washington. In a somewhat incongruous final paragraph , the story said: "[Clay's] vigorous protests of this action [reclassification] forced his bout with George Chuvalo from Chicago to Toronto and reduced Clay's prestige with many fans."²⁰⁷

The Louisville board unanimously rejected Ali's appeal as a conscientious objector²⁰⁸ and the story, under a sub-headline, "A Different Tune Sung," said, in part:

The 24-year-old fighter was twice classified 1-Y after failing the Army aptitude tests.

He commented at that time, "I may not be very smart but I got lots of common sense."

Clay was singing a different tune after he learned of his 1-A reclassification.

"I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong," he said when informed of his new status.²⁰⁹

The Louisville board also denied Ali's appeal for a deferment as a Muslim minister, prompting his lawyer, Hayden Covington, to ask Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, the National Selective Service Director (and Covington's brother-in-law),²¹⁰ and Everett Stephenson, the Kentucky Selective Service director, to order the case reopened.²¹¹ Covington, who said he would carry Ali's case to the Supreme Court, if necessary, also said he had "presented the Draft Board with 43 statements and 92 petitions, signed by 3,810 Black Muslims, testifying that Clay was a full-time minister. Clay maintains he preaches the Black Muslim gospel wherever he goes."²¹²

Hershey ordered the Louisville board to review its rejection of Ali's ministerial deferment and, after a 45-minute session, the

board again announced its rejection.²¹³ The article on the rejection said:

The board let it be known that it was a little upset by Hershey's action.

"But what can you do when the general tells you to do it?" said Mr. Dilley, a board member. "I was 40 years old when World War II started and went down and enlisted. I served 26 months in the Navy."²¹⁴

Perhaps, given Mr. Dilley's sentiments, the board's decision came as no surprise. Covington, who said Ali spent "90 percent of his time as a minister and 10 percent training and fighting and that sort of thing," added that he would appeal the case to the Kentucky Selective Service Appeals Board and would seek a Federal Court injunction if the appeal failed.²¹⁵

A small article January 26, 1967, said Ali had donated \$10,000 to the United Negro College Fund.²¹⁶ But his generosity was not matched by Ring Magazine. After Ali's five title defenses the previous year, Ring did not name him fighter of the year. Instead, it castigated him.

In his article "Clay Fails to Get Ring's Annual Award," Lipsyte wrote:

"Ring Magazine," for the first time since 1933, has refused to designate a fighter of the year. It pointed out that "most emphatically is Cassius Clay of Louisville, Ky., not to be held up as an example to the youngsters of the United States."

The sport's leading periodical said, in its March issue, that "strictly on the basis of achievement with his fists, Cassius Clay-Muhammad Ali, heavyweight champion, merits the outstanding citation for the past year."

But the magazine goes on to cite Clay's affiliation with the Black Muslims, his appeal for draft exemption and "utterances which have not redounded to the credit of boxing" as disqualifications for the award.

Clay expressed some surprise that the magazine made

such a point of refusing him the award instead of merely giving it to someone else. Then, counting his achievements as a boxer, drawing card, religious leader and controversial figure, he added:

"The whole world knows I'm not only the fighter of the year, but the fighter of the century."

Clay also expressed a feeling that Nat Fleischer, the 79-year-old publisher and founder of "Ring" was "overpowered by other pressures" into refusing to give him an award that would have been "forgotten in two days" after delivery.

But Fleischer had always tended to discount the champion's boxing abilities compared with those of Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis and others.²¹⁷

Lipsyte pointed out that Ali was Ring's 1963 fighter of the year and quoted Ernie Terrell, Ali's next opponent, on Ali's failure to win the 1966 award and on Ring's attitude toward the boxer:

This is out of the realm of "Ring" to do this, and it's acting just like Clay. He brought all this political and religious business into boxing, and instead of ignoring it, "Ring" is keeping it in.

They shouldn't judge Clay as a Muslim. Just because you disagree with someone, you shouldn't persecute him.²¹⁸

Ali expressed mild surprise --an irony-- at Ring's stance:

You can't be loved by everybody. But I'm surprised this could happen in this country, a country with freedom of religion and belief where we go and fight in other countries for other people's freedom.²¹⁹

Perhaps more telling on the outcome of their fight was Terrell's view of the Muslims. While he said that Ring's decision was "illegitimate reasoning," he went on to say:

This will be used as a stepping stone for the Muslims to say they achieved something. If Clay did something illegal, put him in jail. But he didn't. I dislike what Clay stands for, using boxing to further an extremist cause. But it's not against the law to be a clown.²²⁰

Ali would not forget those words.

In the article "Clay Considering a Patterson Bout," January 29, 1967, a week before the Terrell bout, Lipsyte wrote about Ali's plans and called the boxer Muhammad Ali throughout the story.²²¹ The article read, in part:

Plans for the 1967 campaign are contingent, of course, upon the success of Ali's latest appeal for draft exemption as an active preacher for the Nation of Islam, popularly known outside the sect as the Black Muslims. . . .

For Ali, the possibility of fighting in Japan is an exciting one.

"I am," he said, "the Tarzan of Africa, Asia, a hero to people and among my own kind. They know I'm playing a real role. I'm not just another Negro showing his teeth and bowing his head to get patted."²²²

Meanwhile, Ali petitioned his Louisville draft board to transfer his case to another state, after being denied a ministerial exemption for a second time.²²³

Ali's beliefs (religious and military) also did not endear him to many boxing "traditionalists." Lipsyte, in a February 5, 1967, article, "Boxing Sages Regard Terrell as Best of Clay's Title Foes," wrote:

Most of the sages desperately want Terrell to win. Terrell, a 27-year-old bachelor of considerable charm, kindness and show business talent [he had his own rock 'n' roll band], has often voiced his displeasure (mildly and thoughtfully) with extremist groups, prejudice and nasty words. If he wins the title he will entertain in Vietnam, visit hospitals and take the championship out of the political and theological arenas where Clay has paraded it.

It must be said, too, that Terrell's past associations, although now apparently purged, with a man who was friendly with ~~known and convicted~~ criminals make the sages of boxing a little easier. Some of them consider the Muslims a modern gang and the sages of boxing are traditionalists. . . .

They want Terrell as champion, but they realize that boxing, without the interest generated by an exciting

fighter and personality like Clay, is in great trouble.²²⁴

Lipsyte's assessment of the old order and the new, the Mob and the Muslims, was novel enough. But it was not as novel as his suggestion that Ali virtually was boxing's drawing card in early 1967, despite the boxer's beliefs and the beliefs of others toward him. Lipsyte was right: Ali was boxing.

If the sages desperately wanted Terrell to win, Ali desperately wanted to meet Terrell in the ring. Several days before the fight, in the column "Big Words from Texas" (the fight would be at the Astro-dome), Daley quoted Ali:

"I had a question for him [Terrell] when we met to sign," said Clay, dark eyes smoldering in real or pretended anger, "it was only three words. 'What's my name?' I said. 'Cassius Clay,' he said, using my slave name. That made it a personal thing, taking it beyond the barrier of sports and into a profane world."

If that sounded a little frenzy, maybe it was that Cassius is getting increasingly sensitive about his original and adopted names.

"So I'm gonna whip him," he continued, "not until he cries 'uncle' but until he addresses me by my proper name of Mohammad Ali. . ."

"He disrespected me and deserves punishment, same as Floyd Patterson disrespected me and asked for the punishment he got."²²⁵

Daley concluded: "No one who ever gets close to Cassius can stay mad at him."²²⁶

But Ali, whose "adopted" name was never taken seriously by the Times, was mad at Terrell. For nearly three years, Ali had been correcting people who called him Cassius Clay. His sensitivity about his name was not a recent issue. Lipsyte wrote in SportsWorld that, soon after Ali had won the title, officials at Madison Square Garden had

refused to let him be introduced from the ring with other guests if he insisted on being introduced as Muhammad Ali. Ali insisted--and did not enter the ring.²²⁷

A February 5, 1967, headline announced "Clay Will Make His Home in Houston, Seek 'Fabulous' \$100,000 'Spread.'" The accompanying story said that Muhammad Ali, "or Cassius Clay, as he is sometimes called," would "work with the large Negro population (in Houston), preaching and 'trying to uplift them mentally, morally and every other way.'"²²⁸ But Ali, in The Greatest, said he moved to Houston because Covington was convinced that the boxer could "get a better deal" from the Houston draft board.²²⁹

Ali also invited white newsmen and photographers to hear him preach for 15 minutes at a Muslim mosque in Houston the day before the Terrell bout. In "Muhammad Ali Shows Other Side," Lipsyte (referring to Muhammad Ali initially and Cassius Clay thereafter) said:

While the whites were present, Clay ridiculed Negroes "so wrapped up in sport and play you'll fly across the country to see me box a few rounds but you won't leave your bougaloo hangout to walk over and hear Elijah."

Once the whites were ushered out, according to sources, Clay bitterly castigated white men, Christian religions and integrationists. He had waited, he said, because he "didn't want to hurt the feelings" of the newsmen. . . .

The unusual presence of white men at a Muslim service was attributable, some observers thought, to Clay's desire to further publicize his more active involvement in the sect. The champion has announced his intention of moving to Houston to develop and encourage Muslim mosques. . . . It is also thought that the move may be connected to his campaign, thus far unsuccessful, to win a draft exemption as a Muslim minister. He has stated that the heavyweight championship is secondary to his principal vocation as a minister.²³⁰

In SportsWorld, Lipsyte said the reporters were thoroughly

searched when they entered the mosque, and added that "our ball-point pens were clicked in our faces as if they might be derringers. . . .The precautions must be taken, it is told, because Muslim teachings are so powerful that first-time listeners often go berserk and attack the teachers."²³¹

Lipsyte wrote:

The regular mosque minister introduced Ali as "another of Elijah's ministers and the heavyweight champion of the world in that world." Ali told the audience that while heredity and talent had made him strong and a good fighter, "the teaching of Elijah made me a heavyweight champion."

He then launched into his famous pork-eating lecture, which included snuffing pig sounds and blackboard cartoons of "the nastiest animal in the world, the swine, a mouthful of maggots and pus. They bred the cat and the rat and the dog and came up with the hog."²³²

After the reporters had left, Lipsyte said he was told that Ali stepped up his attack "on the white man, that devil created by a mad scientist and doomed to destruction by floating space platforms manned by 'men who never smile.'"²³³

Ali, himself, was unsmiling as the fight approached. Daley's column "Cassius and the Octopus," (a name given to the rangy Terrell by Ali) said that "in his bombastic fashion, Cassius talks about 'whupping' and 'spankin' and 'humiliating' Terrell for some fancied insults."²³⁴

Daley added that, though Ali had humiliated Patterson, "tall Ernie is unlikely to be such a pigeon for him," but predicted Ali would knock out the W.B.A. champion in nine.²³⁵

A front-page story proved Daley wrong on both points. Headlined "Clay Beats Terrell and Retains Title," the story said, "Cassius Clay cruelly battered and cut the eyes of Ernie Terrell, the awkward

and thoughtful challenger, for 15 rounds to gain a unanimous decision and retain his world heavyweight boxing championship."²³⁶

Lipsyte's story, "Clay Batters Terrell Severely and Retains Crown on Unanimous Decision," with the deck "Chicagoan's Eyes Cut and Swollen," said:

In his own cruel time, Cassius Clay battered and dimmed the eyes of Ernie Terrell tonight and added the awkward giant's heavyweight title to his own.

"Clay. . . kept warning Terrell to call him Muhammad Ali, his name in the black racist sect.

Clay's gradual domination of the pace and pattern of the fight became absolute in the eighth round, when he began yelling, "What's my name?" After each unanswered question, he rattled a combination off Terrell's head.

Afterward, Clay said he had administered a worse "humiliation" to Terrell than to Patterson.²³⁷

Daley was uncharacteristically enthusiastic about Ali's performance. His story, "Clay Keeps Promise," with the deck "Champion Makes Good on His Boast to 'Whup, Spank and Humiliate' Foe," said:

No matador ever stabbed a helpless bull more cold-bloodedly or efficiently.

This was unquestionably the finest exhibition of Clay's tempestuous career from the stand-point of boxing craftsmanship. He was superb.²³⁸

The next day, in the column "At the Bottom of the Barrel," Daley first praised Ali's boxing ability, saying no heavyweight challenger had a chance of beating him, and added that Ali should have been able to knock out Terrell in the eighth round. Then he added:

But he turned propagandist in the eighth and blew his chance. That's when he taunted his gallant opponent, expounding racist hate instead of attending to the business at hand.

All that Clay achieved was to keep destroying the image he once had of being the likable charm boy.

He showed himself to be a mean and malicious man. His

facade continues to crumble as he gets deeper into the Black Muslim movement. Even before the fight he delivered the supreme insult from one Negro to another. Cassius called Ernie an "Uncle Tom," merely because Terrell addressed him as Cassius Clay instead of his Muslim name of Muhammad Ali.

In a post-fight interview, he even snarled at Howie Cosell, a former friend, and arrogantly referred to Terrell as a dog. This had to lower esteem for Clay with millions who were listening. Sportsmanship? Clay doesn't know the word.

Even sharper divisions appear in Clay's split personality. The more he improves as a fighter the more apparent becomes his retrogression as a man. It's a pity.

The worst of it is that there is no foe left worthy of his talents--unless you want to include the Vietcong. And Cassius wants no part of them.²³⁹

Daley's attack could best be described as emotional nonsense. He excused Terrell for calling Ali Cassius Clay (though he had written that Ali was increasingly sensitive about his name), but chided Ali for calling Terrell an "Uncle Tom." Ali had said, and Daley had written, that Ali had no love for Terrell. But what Daley had apparently taken for good copy was, in fact, a sincere belief of Ali's.

He also continued to think Ali was destroying his image as a "likable charm boy," an image that Ali never tried to develop. Perhaps Daley created the facade for Ali that he, himself, wanted to see (the young charm boy from the 1960 Olympics) and then became frustrated with Ali's refusal to be that charm boy--and with Ali's involvement with the Muslims (whom) Daley never seemed to fully understand, either).

Daley also took a post-fight quote of Ali's (Terrell was a "dog") and made much of what Daley called Ali's lack of sportsmanship. But, in a Lipsyte story the same day, Ali said he was "hot and angry" after the bout and didn't mean to call Terrell a dog, adding, "They usually

kill people in wars for attacking a man's faith. I just gave Terrell a little spanking. Some day I'll convert him." 240 Ali also referred to Terrell as "a gentleman."241

Referring to the post-fight interview with Ali, Cosell wrote:

The moment the fight ended I was in the ring to interview him. He turned on me with a meanness I hadn't seen before.

"I'm sick and tired," he bellowed, "of talking to you and taking your stuff. . . ."He kept up a tirade until we went off the air. I walked away without comment.

The next morning I again saw the contradictory nature of Muhammad Ali. I was with him at the Hotel America in Houston, and he said, almost sheepishly, "I was really bad last night, wasn't I? With you--with everything."

I said, "You sure as hell were. You made an ass out of yourself."

He said, "Well, when I go into the press conference I'll make up for it."

A few minutes later he faced a roomful of reporters and could not have been more charming. This is the most vacillating man, in terms of mood, I've ever known. He complimented Terrell and appeared rather contrite.242

Ali's many moods could hardly be interpreted, even by Cosell, as evidence of his retrogression as a man (as Daley had stated).

Daley, a seasoned boxing writer, seemed to have missed the fact that boxing, for all its hype, was still a violent and brutal sport--and that the nature of most boxers in the ring was mean and malicious. That Ali was "mean and malicious" after the fight, especially given his dislike of Terrell, should not have been a surprise. The surprise is that Daley, for rather irrelevant reasons, ended his column by saying that the only foe left for Ali were the Vietcong. That was a low blow.

The W.B.A. also landed a low blow when it finally recognized Ali as world champion, "but declined to name him--or anyone else--for

the annual boxer of the year award. "There was no boxer who could be considered outstanding, both in and out of the ring, during the last year," the W.B.A.'s ratings chairman said.²⁴³

Ali's problems with the draft continued when the Houston draft board voted 4-0 not to defer him as a Muslim minister.²⁴⁴ Ali had tried to claim he was under the jurisdiction of the Houston board because Houston was his principal place of employment. But, under Selective Service rules, the Louisville board still had jurisdiction, though he reported to the Houston board.²⁴⁵

Lipsyte wrote in SportsWorld that by mid-1967 black leaders were honing in on Ali's struggle with the draft:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, who would soon be denied his seat in Congress, and Julian Bond, barred from his seat in the Georgia legislature for his antiwar stand until the Supreme Court ruled the action unconstitutional, were citing Ali as symbolic of black manhood courageously refusing to knuckle under to an illegal and immoral system.²⁴⁶

In a March 5, 1967, column, "Observer: Powell and Ali Break the Faith," the Times' Russell Baker considered the plight of Ali and Rep. Powell, who represented Harlem and had earned the wrath of his fellow representatives for what they considered misuse of funds:

Perhaps Adam Clayton Powell's most damaging weakness is his inability to assume the humble manner. The distinguished heavyweight, Mohammad Ali [sic], suffers from the same defect. Ability to wear the trappings of humility is an occupational requirement in certain lines of work--particularly in politics and championship boxing--and he who scorns them invites the vengeance of an outraged public.

There may be some truth in the argument that both Powell and Ali are in trouble because of their Negritude, but the more persuasive argument is that both are being punished

for their refusal to serve a peculiar American sentimentalism.

Messrs. Powell and Ali refuse to play the game.

. . . Ali might have avoided public demands for his drafting by ceasing to dilitate upon his physical superiority. We like our champions humble. After they have flattened some poor gaffer for our amusement, we want them to come to the microphone, like Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano, and say, "He put up a great fight." Ali outrages us by coming to the microphone and calling a bum a bum.

The refusal of Powell and Ali to satisfy our craving for gods with hearts of putty may result from their Negritude. Perhaps it reflects the Negro's determination to resist the Uncle Tom role. If so, they have misunderstood the obligations of power, for the necessity to give the public a little Uncle Tom rests just as heavily on our white heroes. (Presidential modesty, athletic modesty, etc.)

Powell and Ali have betrayed the faith, possibly out of the misapprehension that it would be demeaning for a Negro to keep it. One may admire their flamboyance in refusing to participate in a tradition that is obviously tinged with hypocrisy, but it is hard to sustain the argument that the resulting punishments express white racism. They are, more likely, the vengeance to be expected by any man, whatever his race, who violates cherished national mythology.²⁴⁷

Baker's assumption of vengeance for violating national mythology--for refusing to play the game--followed Daley's vengeful column that castigated Ali for refusing to be "the likable charm boy."

Ali received yet another setback in his attempt to obtain a military deferment when on March 15, 1967, his appeal for reclassification was turned down by the Presidential Appeals Board.²⁴⁸ With his induction date set for April 11, Ali filed suit in United States District Court to obtain an injunction barring his induction on the grounds that his draft boards were acting illegally because "they discriminate against the Negro race."²⁴⁹

Always the showman, Ali said, "If I have to go into the Army this [a March 22 bout against Zora Folley] will be my last fight. And

you can tell all those people who want to see the greatest champion that they better see him now."²⁵⁰

But a story by the Times' Dave Anderson, "Clay Prefers Jail to Army," with the decks "Champion Risking Prison and Fine," and "Clay Implies He Will Defy Order to Report to Army for Induction April 11"--²⁵¹ suggested that, after the Folley fight, Ali might have plans other than an Army hitch.

Anderson wrote:

Cassius Clay, the world heavyweight boxing champion, who prefers to be known by his Black Muslim name of Muhammad Ali, implied he would go to jail "for what I believe" rather than comply with his United States Army induction date of April 11.

Clay said it was "against my teachings" to serve in the Army. When he was reminded that other Muslims had been ordered to report for induction, he said, "The jails are full of 'em."

"My decision is made," the 25-year-old champion told newsmen, "but I have to answer to the government, not no reporters. . . ."

"If necessary, I'll have to die for what I believe. I'm fighting for the freedom of my people."

Clay was asked whether Elijah Muhammad would decide what the champion should do.

He replied: "Elijah don't decide nothing, he ain't gonna tell me what to do. He just teaches us the religion and the laws. And I've been following 'em. It's cost me \$8 million in endorsements and recordings, stuff like that."

Several firms canceled offers to Clay when the champion publicly embraced the sect two years ago.

Although Clay has appealed his draft status on the grounds that he is a Muslim minister, he never mentioned his ministerial status during several interviews yesterday.

Regarding the Vietnam situation now, he said that "we're over there so that the people of Vietnam can be free. But I'm here in America and I'm being punished for upholding my beliefs."

Although the champion often mentioned that "the only thing on my mind is the Folley fight," he appeared to be thinking beyond next week's bout to 6:30 A.M., April 11, the time of his ordered induction in Louisville.²⁵²

Anderson's story was the first time that Ali implied that he would risk jail rather than be inducted. It was also the first time that he stated that Elijah Muhammad did not tell him what to do. After publicly stating three years before that he was a Muslim (Anderson was wrong by a year), Ali's comment that "Elijah ain't gonna tell me what to do" was revealing--maybe he actually was not, as many thought, a pawn of the Muslims.

Ali appeared unfazed by the draft controversy as he prepared for the Folley bout. "I strive on challenge," he told Anderson. "What I have to go through outside the ring is child's play compared to inside it."²⁵³

Ali went into the ring a 5-1 choice over Folley, but the headline decks and the fight pre-story centered more on his draft status than the bout. The decks read, "Champion Files New Court Action," and "Seeks Restraining Order on Draft Induction April 11--16,000 Expected at Bout," while Lipsyte's story read, in part:

Clay's lawyers asked a United States Circuit Court of Appeals to issue a restraining order to prevent the fighter from being inducted into the Army on April 11.

In another motion filed on Clay's behalf before the court, leave to appeal was asked from a United States District Court decision denying Clay an injunction.

Clay, who has been classified 1-A, is seeking draft deferment as a minister of the Nation of Islam, the so-called Black Muslim sect.²⁵⁴

And, in a related situation, the Louisville draft board added a black, prompting Ali's lawyer, Covington, to remark:

They did this when they knew I was coming at them [Covington had charged that the board was racially imbalanced]. But it is too little too late. They knew it was a serious situation and admitted it by appointing him.²⁵⁵

Daley, in "A Pigeon for Clay," returned to his usual theme of what could have been:

Clay has alienated the public by his rebellion against the draft and for other reasons, not the least of which is his espousal of the cause of the Black Muslims, a hate organization. With his natural charm and glowing personality, he could have been an even more popular champion than Joe Louis, but he has destroyed this glorious opportunity.

Now he is waging a delaying action against induction into the Army on April 11.

This, therefore, could be his last fight, although he has indicated that legal moves may enable him to have three or four more bouts before he is confronted with the distasteful alternatives of Army or prison.

Clay in 5.²⁵⁶

Ali stopped Folley in the seventh round in Madison Square Garden and added some stature to his Muslim name, as Lipsyte reported:

Clay, who was 20 minutes late, merely slashed across the street from Loew's Midtown Motor Inn. . . .He walked under a Garden marquee advertising Muhammad Ali, a bit of irony that helps one understand the stewpot of boxing.

After Clay won the title, the boxing officials of the Garden refused to allow the heavyweight champion to be introduced in the ring under his Muslim name before a major fight. So Clay merely remained in the audience that night.

Since this fight, the Garden's first heavyweight title match in 16 years, the words Muhammad Ali have flowed like honey from the mouths of Garden officials.²⁵⁷

A second irony: while Muhammad Ali's name flowed from the mouths of fight officials, it did not flow from the Times typewriters.

Daley caustically pondered the champion's future in a column, "The Unclear Focus."²⁵⁸ He derided Ali's punching power, saying the knockout punch to Folley was "casually delivered," and added:

[Clay is] tough enough to accept when he is one of a kind. More than one would be unbearable.

What's next for the champion?

That's the ugly, unpleasant query that's just in the offing. The draft board is closing down on him and no one

knows if he can stall long enough to meet Oscar Bonavena in Tokyo or Thad Spencer in Heaven-knows-where.²⁵⁹

Bonavena agreed to fight Ali in Tokyo and, in the last vestiges of the Folley bout, Ali told Lipsyte that he was kind to the challenger because he always called the champion Muhammad Ali.²⁶⁰

The government, meanwhile, contended that Ali's appeals to avoid the draft should come after his induction.²⁶¹ The government's motion said:

The Supreme Court has uniformly and repeatedly held that Selective Service registrants may not challenge draft boards action in courts except by submitting to induction and seeking relief by way of habeas corpus, or by refusing to submit to induction and raising their contentions in defense of a criminal prosecution.²⁶²

In what Louisville Draft Board Director, J. Allen Sherman called a "delaying tactic," Ali had his draft records transferred from Louisville to Houston, his legal residence, and delayed his scheduled April 11 induction.²⁶³ But the delay was short-lived, for a Federal judge denied Ali's request for a "three-judge Federal panel. . .to hear Clay's suit attacking the constitutionality of his draft board on the ground that it had no Negro members; that an injunction be granted to block enforcement of the Selective Service law until the question of constitutionality had been settled through appeals, and that a temporary restraining order be used while [the judge's] decision was carried to the Supreme Court.²⁶⁴

With his induction set for April 28, Ali, when asked if he would report, said:

I'll answer to the Government when the time comes, not the press.

If I thought my joining the war and possibly dying would bring peace, freedom, justice and equality to

21-million so-called Negroes, they would not have to draft me. I would join tomorrow.²⁶⁵

Ali's attorneys said they would take his case to the Supreme Court.²⁶⁶

In a bizarre development, Las Vegas and Detroit got into a squabble over who would host an Ali-Patterson bout. The Nevada Athletic Commission voted 4-1 to license the bout, over the objections of the Detroit group, which claimed that Ali's group had offered to fight in that city and the offer had been accepted.²⁶⁷

Then, just as quickly as it came into being, the proposed fight with Patterson dissolved when Nevada Governor Paul Laxalt asked the commission not to sanction the fight because "it would give Nevada a black eye."²⁶⁸

Laxalt added: "If Clay carries Patterson and knocks him out, it will only be a repeat of their previous fight. If Patterson should win, eyebrows would be raised all over the world."²⁶⁹

Despite such dubious logic (since every fight usually has a loser and a winner), Laxalt may have come closer to the reason for canceling the bout when he said he had received "violent reactions" to the proposed fight from around the nation.²⁷⁰ Once again, public pressure had kept Ali from fighting.

The proposed bout then took on the theme of "musical fights," with Pittsburgh accepting the bout, only to drop it when Pennsylvania Governor Raymond P. Shafer, after a conversation with Laxalt, asked his state athletic commission (which had apparently approved the bout) not to approve it.²⁷¹ Edwin P. Dooley, the chairman of the New York Athletic Commission, did not

bother to talk to either governor about the fight. He merely cited a reciprocity agreement with both Nevada and Pennsylvania and said New York would not stage the bout.²⁷²

So the fight was canceled, but that did not dull Ali's humor. While boarding a plane to leave Las Vegas, he was asked if he would go into the Army if inducted: "Yes. It would break my mother's heart if I didn't."²⁷³

Meanwhile, Covington filed an injunction with the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals to halt induction pending the outcome of a ruling on Ali's exemption as a Muslim minister.²⁷⁴ Then he filed briefs in the Supreme Court to stop the induction.²⁷⁵

The article on Ali's motion to the Supreme Court said, in part:

Clay filed his papers under his Black Muslim name, Muhammad Ali, and described himself as a "25-year-old black man or a so-called Negro male who serves as a duly appointed regular minister. . . ."

The champion's lawyers reiterated the claim they had made in lower courts--that the Selective Service Act gives the President and governors unconstitutional, unlimited discretion "to make appointments of members of draft boards throughout the country in a manner that discriminates against Negroes contrary to the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution."

One of their moves was to ask Justice Potter Stewart to issue an injunction barring Clay's induction until the court acts on Clay's appeal.

And among their claims is that Clay's chance to raise constitutional attacks on his induction was destroyed. . .when [a District Court judge] refused to set up a three-judge Federal panel to hear these attacks. . . .

In claiming that injury would stem from induction April 28, Clay's lawyers said the champion had contracts for three fights that have had to be abandoned.²⁷⁶

At the time the appeals were being filed with the High Court, Ali, in Chicago, denied that he had ever said he would enter the Army

because it would break his mother's heart if he didn't.²⁷⁷

Meanwhile, Daley, in the column "Keystone Comedy,"²⁷⁸ discussed the fight cancellations:

After the Nevada cancellation. . .the quick-buck guys who now control Clay immediately announced that they were switching the site, but holding fast to the original date of April 25, three days before Clay is due to report for induction into the Army--or for imprisonment if he refuses military service.

Cassius towers over the field so overwhelmingly that he not only has trouble in excavating foes worthy of his talent, but also has difficulty in finding places to stage his exhibitions of superior skills.

Except for the fact that this rematch would have been a lovely going away present for Cassius, the bout had no excuse for being scheduled. Its total cancellation is eminently proper.²⁷⁹

Daley evidently believed Laxalt's public appraisal that the bout was a no-win situation for the state that staged it. Ironically, almost five years later, on September 20, 1972, Ali would knock out Patterson in Madison Square Garden in the seventh round.²⁸⁰ One thread that ran through Daley's assessment of Ali during his fights in 1966 and 1967 is that, while the writer castigated the boxer's conduct and religion, he constantly praised Ali, almost in spite of himself, as a fighter.

In keeping with the Keystone Kops aura that hung over any potential fight, both Albuquerque and Atlanta on April 15 offered to fill the void left when Las Vegas and Pittsburgh dropped the bout. Herbert Muhammad accepted an invitation from New Mexico Governor David Cargo to stage the bout in Albuquerque, but it was canceled about two hours later because of inadequate time for promotion (the bout would have been held on April 27, one day before Ali's induction).²⁸¹

Atlanta's bid was turned down before it was accepted.²⁸² Herbert Muhammad, in a parting shot, blamed both the Nevada and Pennsylvania bans on "racial prejudice," and said he turned down the Atlanta offer because he feared a similar rejection of the bout in Georgia.²⁸³

The rejection of Ali's fights was incidental to the rejection of Ali's appeal by the Supreme Court. The Fred Graham story, "Supreme Court Rejects Clay's Appeal; He Says He'll Appear for Induction," with the decks "Champion Insists He Is an Objector" and "Says He Can't Kill or Take Part in War—New Legal Maneuver Is Planned,"²⁸⁴ said:

The Supreme Court refused to grant Clay's request for an injunction to block his induction. In Cincinnati, the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit refused to stay a lower court decision ordering the champion to report for induction.

. . .Clay announced that he would appear for induction [and] said he would continue to insist he is a conscientious objector. . . .

In its decision, the Circuit Court said it did not believe Congress "ever intended draftees should have the right to litigate the validity of their induction before acceptance for national service.

"If the injunction suits were permitted. . .intemperate delays would undoubtedly result while the case was being pursued in the courts. Such a procedure would interfere with the orderly proceedings of the draft boards and prevent them from filling their quotas."²⁸⁵

Covington said the Supreme Court did not give any reason for its decision, adding: "I feel they may have decided not to hear the case because we had the Cincinnati case pending."²⁸⁶ He said he would seek a writ of habeas corpus to keep Ali out on the grounds that the boxer was a Muslim minister and that no blacks were on the Houston draft board.

Ali refused to comment directly on whether he would refuse

induction: "I've made my decision and I will give it at that time [of induction]. You can make your own conclusion when I say I will stand on my religious beliefs and will be ready to face any punishment in following them."²⁸⁸

But two days later, on April 20, 1967, Ali, in an interview with Charlie Mastin on a Louisville television station, said he would refuse induction:

Clay was asked by . . . Mastin if he would take the oath. Clay replied, "No." When Mastin asked if Clay knew what the consequences would be, Clay said, "Yeh, just five years and \$10,000--that's all."²⁸⁹

An April 21, 1967 Times story on Ali's decision, "Clay Says He Will Not Step Forward to Be Inducted on April 28," said:

Clay, in an almost somber mood as he said his Muslim religion and beliefs on human rights would not permit him to serve, added that he would not go into the Army "simply to help continue the domination of white slave masters over darker people the world over."

The generally ebullient Clay. . . slumped morosely on a chair in his hotel room as he read parts of his statement. He declined to clown or make up verse, saying sadly, "This is not the time for poems."

Clay replied to a suggestion that a long prison term [he faced a five-year term] would ruin his career by saying, "I'm 25 now and I'd only be 28 when I got out. I guess I'd be all right, depending on what kind of food I got. . . ."

The boxer said he realized that his prestige was at stake and that he was prepared to go to jail to uphold his convictions.

"Why, should they ask me, another so-called Negro, to put on a uniform and go 10,000 miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights?

"I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for justice, equality and freedom."²⁹⁰

The somber Ali created, in turn, a somber tone for the writers.

With no doggerel, no boasts, no bombast, Ali became less a caricature and more an individual beset by problems.

The Supreme Court barred two of Ali's appeals (to review the Cincinnati ruling and on a re-hearing from the High Court) on April 24.²⁹¹ The next day, Covington petitioned a Federal judge in Houston to restrain the draft board from declaring Ali delinquent if he failed to submit to induction because "Clay has publicly declared and here alleges that he will not do as commanded on the 28th day of April, 1967, or anytime thereafter."²⁹² Covington also asked for a change in Ali's draft status (to a minister of religion with a total exemption) and for an injunction against the governor of Texas (John Connally) and others to assure that blacks would be named to draft boards in Texas.²⁹³

Two days before his scheduled induction in Houston, Ali, in Chicago, talked with Lipsyte for 3-1/2 hours. The interview, "Clay Puts His Affairs in Order as Day of Decision Approaches," was a straight-forward, yet poignant view of the boxer and his uncertain future:

Arrangements were made today to store the gray Cadillac in Dibbles Garage and close out the long-term room at the 50th On The Lake Motel here (in Chicago). Muhammad Ali, who is also known as Cassius Clay, was going down to meet the Man, and he didn't know when he'd be back.

. . .It is expected that Ali will appear for induction, but refuse to be sworn into the Army. This will probably not result in his immediate arrest. Government lawyers have indicated that further legal moves, involving the Justice Department, would occur before action could be taken against Ali.

It has been said, by the Rev. Martin Luther King and others, that Ali's refusal to be inducted would encourage thousands of young men to choose prison sentences rather than Army service.

"There will be great repercussions," said Ali. "My case is just revealing so much, shaking the black man's confidence in the white liberals. But I'm taking no credit

as a leader, they're not going to make no Malcolm X out of me. If they make you a leader, they can catch you up."

Both the champion and his manager, Herbert Muhammad, said that there would be real danger for the fighter in the Army, particularly from a "prejudiced soldier who thinks he's doing the country a favor." Today, the champion said, "If the Vietcong didn't get me, some Georgia cracker would."

While forswearing any formal leadership, the champion has been making appearances at colleges and prisons, and recently spoke to an open-housing rally in Louisville. He denied that these appearances were contradictory to the Muslims' usual disengagement from civil rights demonstrations of any kind.

. . .Fearing only that jail food would debilitate his body, he said that a prison term would enable him to continue his proselytizing [Muslim] work.

For a man being "tried and tested by Allah as a true believer," the champion seemed remarkably relaxed, and in good humor, humming snatches of popular tunes, several times shadow-boxing at his image in the mirror.

Although his own very clearly defined professional pride is never far from the surface, he sees himself now as something far more than a controversial boxer.

"This is all beautiful, it's better than boxing for me," he said. "All a man has to show for his time here is what kind of name he had. Jesus, Columbus, Daniel Boone. Now Wyatt Earp, who would have told him when he was fighting crooks and standing up for his principles that there'd be a television show about him, that little kids on the street would say, 'I'm Wyatt Earp, reach.'"294

Ali, who, ironically, would later have a cartoon television show named after him, made some headway with the Times in Lipsyte's story--for he was referred to as Muhammad Ali throughout the article.

Writing about the interview in SportsWorld, Lipsyte said Ali refused to leave the country because of his commitment to the Muslims and added that the champion would not make a deal with the Army (to give exhibitions and teach physical fitness) because "what can you give me, America, for turning down my religion. You want me to do what the white man says and go fight a war against some people I don't know nothing about, get some freedom for some other people when my own kind can't get theirs

here?"²⁹⁵

But Ali did make a prediction:

Ahlee will return. My ghost will haunt all arenas.
The people will watch fights and they will whisper, Hey,
Ali could whip that guy. . . You think so? . . . Sure. . . .²⁹⁶
No, he couldn't. . . Wish he'd come out of retirement. . . .

On April 27, a Federal judge dismissed Ali's plea to restrain the Houston board from reporting the fighter delinquent if he refused to be sworn into the Army the next day.²⁹⁷

The Lipsyte story said:

In effect [the judge] ruled out the possibility of further civil action until after Clay, who prefers to be called Muhammad Ali, has committed a felony that can be punished by a five-year prison sentence and a \$10,000 fine.

. . . Morton Susman, a local [Houston] United States attorney, said Clay was trying to turn the court into a "super draft board" to review the findings of previous decisions.

The potentially explosive nature of the case was underscored by Fred Drogula, an attorney with the Department of Justice, who said later: "If he wins, all the Muslims will refuse to take the oath, and where will we get soldiers?"²⁹⁸

Daley, in an April 28 column, "Day of Decision," returned to his two basic themes: what a nice young man Ali once was, and what a shame that he had become a mixed-up Muslim. But his theme had a new twist as he wrote:

The heavyweight champion of the world has indicated that he will take jail rather than be drafted into the Army. Military service, he claims, is contrary to his religious beliefs.

It would appear that he doesn't think the United States is worth fighting for. Yet, a couple of flashbacks to the Olympic Games at Rome in 1960. . . of all the champions to be crowned, none stood at attention with more obvious pride than Cassius Marcellus Clay, the light-heavyweight winner.

He had won for himself but he had also won for his country.

People change in seven years and few have changed more than Clay. The delightful boy of 1960 has become a mixed-up man. If there was skepticism about the sincerity of his motives when he first fell under the sway of the Black Muslims, it exists no longer. He has been so thoroughly brain-washed that he now believes what he says even if the words are put into his mouth by the Muslims.

This reporter was captivated by Cassius the first time he met him at the Villaggio Olimpico in Rome. Not even the intermediate developments have completely broken that hold, even though such an admission might be a rebuke to intelligence. But it just can't be helped.

That's why there's a tragic feeling here at what is about to happen to Cassius. Actually, it's merely a minuscule offshoot of the greater tragedy of Vietnam. But because he's the heavyweight champion and therefore the world's best fighter, his refusal to fight for his country gets disproportionate emphasis and may produce ensuing ground swells of unpredictable potency.

The Muslims, who direct his every move, have lost their meal ticket and gained a martyr. The shrewd men at the head of the movement must think that sacrificing him is worth the price.

So perhaps Cassius has fought his last ring fight. He is now 25 years old. The normal sentence for those refusing induction is five years. If he were to try to resume his career after he has passed his 30th birthday, time will have eroded his skills, even if he could stay in sharp physical condition in the jug, an unlikely possibility.

As a fist-fighter Cassius might very well have become the greatest. But we'll never know. Instead he seems fated to bring about his own destruction.²⁹⁹

Dailey, who obviously wanted to like Ali, showed an uncharacteristic concern for the boxer's plight, especially when discussing the Vietnam war and its consequences for Ali. But at the same time, he complained that Ali "doesn't think the United States is worth fighting for." He could not believe that Ali was capable of making a decision without what Daley considered the malevolent guidance of the Muslims (though Ali had said, "Eli-jah don't decide nothing, he ain't gonna tell me what to do."). Daley had his

own vision of what he wanted Ali to be--and that was Cassius Clay.

On April 29, 1967, in Houston, Ali refused induction. The Times' front-page story was headlined "Clay Refuses Army Oath; Stripped of Boxing Crown", Lipsyte wrote:

Cassius Clay refused today, as expected, to take the one step forward that would have constituted induction into the armed forces. There was no immediate government action.

Although government authorities. . . foresaw several months of preliminary moves before Clay would be arrested and charged with a felony, boxing organizations instantly stripped the 25-year-old fighter of his world heavyweight championship.³⁰⁰

Lipsyte wrote that the United States attorney had said Ali would probably not be indicted for 30 days and could remain free for a year and a half because of appeals.³⁰¹

Then he added:

As a plaintiff in civil action, the Negro fighter has touched on such politically and socially explosive issues as alleged racial imbalance on local Texas draft boards, alleged discriminatory action by the Government in response to public pressure, and the rights of a minority religion to appoint clergymen.

As a prospective defendant in criminal proceedings, Clay is expected to attempt to establish that "preaching and teaching" the tenets of the Muslims is a full-time occupation and that boxing is the "avocation" that financially supports his unpaid ministerial duties.

Two information officers supplied a stream of printed and oral releases throughout the procedure. . . . Such information, however, did not forestall the instigation, by television crews, of a small demonstration outside the Custom House. . . . continuous and sometimes insulting interviewers eventually provoked both groups [students and blacks], separately with [anti-war] signs.³⁰²

In SportsWorld, Lipsyte wrote that the television crews promised "a dozen rubbernecking black secretaries and students time on the tube if they would whip up some black power posters and march in front of the Custom House steps. By shooting close, the cameramen were able

to create the illusion of a sizable demonstration while TV reporters provoked loud and angry answers and shouts of 'Burn, Baby, Burn' by asking deliberately insulting questions. It looked very exciting that night on the news."³⁰³

Ali's statement, like the demonstration, was prepared. It also scolded the press for its shortsighted view of his predicament saying:

I strongly object to the fact that so many newspapers have given the American public and the world the impression that I have only two alternatives in taking this stand: either I go to jail or go to the Army. There is another alternative and that alternative is justice. If justice prevails, if my constitutional rights are upheld, I will be forced neither to go to the Army nor jail. In the end I am confident that justice will come my way for the truth must eventually prevail. . . .

As to the threat voiced by certain elements to "strip" me of my title, this is merely a continuation of the same artificially induced prejudice and discrimination.³⁰⁴

The "elements" Ali referred to moved quickly to strip him of his title. A Thomas Rogers story that same day, "New York Lifts Crown in Swift Move," said:

Only a few hours after he had refused to be inducted into the armed forces of the United States, Cassius Clay was stripped of his world heavyweight boxing championship by the major governing authorities of the sport in this country and Europe.

The New York State Athletic Commission, in a statement issued by Edwin Dooley, the chairman, announced it had "unanimously decided to suspend his boxing license indefinitely and to withdraw recognition of him as world heavyweight champion."

Mr. Dooley said, "His refusal to enter the service is regarded by the commission to be detrimental to the best interests of boxing."³⁰⁵

Ali also was stripped of his W.B.A. title (the W.B.A. comprised "a loose confederation of 30 or so state athletic commissions") and his Texas and California titles (those two states were "independent" of a

formal governing body at the time).

Rogers wrote:

The actions taken by the governing authorities of boxing make it virtually impossible for Clay to box in the United States until he has cleared himself of his legal entanglements with the Government.

In England, J. Onslow Fane, the president of the British Board of Boxing Control and vice president of the European Boxing Union, said that Clay's title would be declared vacant.

Both the New York Commission and the W.B.A. cited Clay's refusal to enter the armed forces as the reason for their actions stripping him of the title.

In Louisville, Ky., M. Robert Evans, president of the W.B.A., said, "I feel that Muhammad Ali has defied the laws of the United States regarding Selective Service. His action today leaves me no alternative."

"A spokesman for the New York Commission pointed out that Clay's license is now under "indefinite suspension" and, "if or when he enters jail, it would be revoked under statutes of the commission."³⁰⁶

A series of elimination bouts to determine a new champion were proposed, but Ali, when asked who would fill his vacant title, replied, "Oh, they'll pick some dodo or junior champion."³⁰⁷

Without due process, Ali was stripped of his title and his livelihood. Cosell wrote:

There had been no arraignment, no grand-jury hearing, no indictment, no trial, no conviction, no appeal to a higher court. And, in a matter such as this, with the Supreme Court likely to hear the case, there had been no appeal to the court of last resort. In other words, due process of law had not even been initiated, let alone exhausted. Under the Fifth Amendment, no person may be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law. Yet every state in the Union adopted the action of the New York Commission. Now here was Ali: unable to fight anywhere in America; stripped of his right to leave the country, hence unable to fight overseas either.³⁰⁸

The Times editorial April 29, 1967, the day after Ali's refusal to be inducted, did not deal with the abrogation of his rights.

Instead, the Times editorial, "Clay vs. the Army," considered the effect of Ali's refusal on the public as a whole:

In somewhat blurred but discernible form the case of Cassius Clay. . . poses to the nation the issue of selective conscientious objection to military service--an issue that is being raised increasingly by young men opposed to the war in Vietnam. . . .

The draft board denied Mr. Clay's original application for conscientious objector status, apparently because he is not opposed to all wars but only those that his Muslim religion has not declared to be the will of Allah. His subsequent application for exemption as a minister of religion was likewise denied presumably because the board was not convinced by his argument that religious work is his principal occupation and prizefighting only a sideline.

The Federal Courts have sustained the Selective Service System on both of these issues. They have likewise ruled against a suit by Mr. Clay challenging the entire system on the ground that Negroes are inadequately represented on draft boards. He has complicated his case by also raising a political objection to the war in Vietnam. He argues that, as a Negro, he does not intend to fight against the darkskinned people of Asia.

No case arising among student critics of the Vietnam war or others who object to the United States' involvement there offers a precise parallel to that of the heavyweight champion. But there is a common thread which, if accepted by the nation, would chip away the foundation of universally shared obligation on which the Selective Service System rests.

Citizens cannot pick and choose which wars they wish to fight any more than they can pick and choose which laws they wish to obey. However, if Cassius Clay and other draft-age objectors believe the war in Vietnam is unjust, they have the option of going to jail for their beliefs.

This is the same hard choice that civil rights demonstrators faced in protesting unjust laws upholding racial segregation. Civil disobedience entails a penalty, but the risk is less than for those young men who willingly serve their country in Vietnam and other places of hardship and danger. ³⁰⁹

The Times editorial seemed to be misleading. In stating that "citizens cannot pick and choose which wars they wish to fight," the Times failed to mention that the Vietnam war was uniquely different from most--it was never declared. Without official Congressional

sanction, the war could hardly have been considered totally "legal." So if Ali and others raised political objections to the war, those objections might have been worthy of more than "the option of going to jail for their beliefs." The "common thread" that would erode the foundation of the Selective Service System, the refusal to fight in a war that Congress did not officially recognize, may have finally acted as the catalyst to end the United States' involvement in Vietnam.

But more telling was the Times' sanctimonious view that the proponents of civil disobedience risked less than did the "young men who willingly serve their country in Vietnam and other places of hardship and danger." Ali had risked his career and his future. He had also been publicly castigated and stripped of his livelihood. In a conversation with Lipsyte, he had intimated the ultimate risk his stand might entail.

Lipsyte had said to the boxer, "Well, you've talked about someone so poisoned with hate he'd kill you and think he was doing the country a favor. It wouldn't serve any point, your getting killed." To which Ali replied, "Every day they die in Vietnam for nothing. I might as well die right here for something."³¹⁰

The next day, April 30, in the "Week in Review" section, "Cassius vs. Army," the Times repeated its assertion that Ali might become a rallying point for opposition to the draft and the war:

. . .But beyond [the] legalistic steps may lie greater consequences, not only for Clay himself, but for the nation's Negroes and indeed for the nation itself. It is the possibility that Clay may become a new symbol and rallying point for opposition to the draft and the Vietnam war.

There is, in fact, little evidence that the champ's membership in the [Black Muslim] movement has influenced other Negroes to join. But Clay, as a symbol of defiance against the draft during a war in which 22 percent of the battlefield deaths are Negro while the Negro population is only 10 percent, may have far greater influence.³¹¹

If "citizens cannot pick and choose which wars they wish to fight any more than they can pick and choose which laws they wish to obey," the blacks were more than good citizens. Ali, to the Times, seemed to be a threat to black representation in the war. The previous day's editorial had mentioned that "the same hard choice that civil rights demonstrators faced in protesting unjust laws upholding racial segregation" revolved around a term in jail. Earlier civil disobedience over civil rights had ostensibly led to greater strides toward racial equality. But if equality meant that blacks would have the chance to die in higher numbers than whites (220 percent) in Vietnam's jungles, then the Times conjecture that Ali might become a symbol for black opposition to the draft and war was quite valid. Ali's stand of civil disobedience might very well have ended in imprisonment. But his incarceration, like that of the civil rights activists before him, might have swayed public opinion—at least black public opinion.

With Ali on the sidelines, an eight-man tourney to determine a new heavyweight champion was announced. Lipsyte wrote:

With Clay out, these men represent a mediocre, but fairly evenly matched, heavyweight class.

Some boxing people hold that. . . Clay's removal will stimulate interest in boxing. [This] is shortsighted. He brought non-boxing fans into the sport because of his personal appeal, and the new customers may leave with him.

Where does this leave Clay?

Even if he should be licensed ("doubtful") no boxing

promoter would take the chance of going against the new combine or incurring the wrath of his local patriotic organizations or losing money in the match. And who would fight Clay and give up a title opportunity in this new set-up?³¹²

Lipsyte's final statement perhaps summed up Ali's entire predicament:

The political, social and legal ramifications of Clay's fight for draft exemption are complex and touch on many areas rubbed raw by current events. Clay feels that he has been discriminated against because of "color and creed." But in boxing, the discrimination was purely economic, and in boxing Clay will have little opportunity for redress or recourse or appeal.³¹³

After winning all 29 of his bouts as a pro, Muhammad Ali, heavyweight champion of the world, was retired at age 25. He would not box competitively for 42 months. Such were the "economics" of the times.

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Chapter 5

EPILOGUE

On June 20, 1967, two months after he refused induction into the Army, Ali was convicted of draft evasion. He received the maximum punishment: five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.¹

Ali appealed the sentence and, while his case proceeded through the courts, he made his living primarily by giving lectures at colleges and rallies.² As sentiment toward the Vietnam war became more unpopular, Ali found more and more speaking engagements. At one point, he was the most sought-after speaker in the nation, behind Senators Edmund Muskie and Edward Kennedy.³ He also appeared in a Broadway musical, "Buck White," which had seven performances before closing.⁴ His performance was praised by critics.⁵

The fighter was not allowed to pursue his livelihood—boxing. A bout was arranged in Tokyo, with Ali's promise that he would report to officials at the American Embassy and fly back to the United States the day after the fight, but his passport was canceled.⁶ The Supreme Court turned down a petition to let him cross the Canadian border for 18 hours to fight Joe Frazier in Toronto.⁷ Promoters tried, and failed, to arrange bouts in cities such as Tampa, Florida; Macon, Georgia; Hot Springs, Arkansas; Columbus, Ohio; and Jackson, Mississippi.⁸ Even a proposed bout at the Gila River Indian Reservation, in Sacaton, Arizona, was turned down because of the tribe's "military and historical heritage."⁹

The only way Ali was able to fight was in a computerized tourney,

based on the records of current and former champions, in which he lost to James L. Jefferies.¹⁰ Ali sued the promoters of the computerized matchup, saing, "They won't let me earn a living anymore, and my name is all I've got. Now somebody is trying to ruin that, too."¹¹

Elijah Muhammad suspended Ali from the Muslims for one year--and took away his name of Muhammad Ali--after Ali told Howard Cosell during an interview that he would like to fight again because he needed the Money.¹² Said Elijah Muhammad:

I want the world to know that Muhammad Ali has stepped down off the spiritual platform of Islam... we, the Muslims, are not with Muhammad Ali in his desire to work in sports for the sake of a "lettle" money. . . .We shall call him Cassius Clay. We take away the name of Allah from him until he proves worthy of that name.¹³

On August 11, 1970, Ali was issued a license to fight in Atlanta on October 26, against the top-rated contender, Jerry Quarry.¹⁴ His long exile from the ring over, Ali's boxing license in New York also was restored when a Federal Judge ruled that Ali had been denied his rights under the Fourteenth Amendment.¹⁵ The judge ruled that under the Admendment, which provides equal protection under the law, Ali's license must be restored because the New York State Athletic Commission has been granting boxing licenses to deserters from the military and, therefore, could not discriminate against Ali.¹⁶

Ali stopped Quarry in the third round, then knocked out Oscar Bonavena in the fifteenth round in New York December 7 to set up a title bout with Joe Frazier, the heavyweight champion.¹⁷

On March 8, 1971, in New York, Frazier knocked Ali down for the

first time in Ali's professional career and won a fifteen-round decision.¹⁸ The defeat was Ali's first in 32 professional fights.

But the defeat was balanced by his legal victory. On June 28, 1971, the United States Supreme Court cleared Ali of his conviction for refusing induction into the Army.¹⁹ But the High Court's decision had a bizarre twist, as Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong wrote in The Brethren:²⁰

The case had already come up to the Court two terms before, and the conference had voted not to hear it, thus letting Ali's conviction stand. A last-minute revelation by the government that Ali had been overheard by a national-security wiretap had prevented the decision from being announced [the wiretaps had occurred when the FBI bugged Ali's conversations with Martin Luther King].²¹

The case went back to the lower courts and again reached the High Court in April, 1970. Solicitor General Griswold argued that Muslims would participate in a war against the Vietcong if the Vietcong were attacking Muslims and added that, since Ali said he would participate in a holy war, he was not really a conscientious objector.²²

The Court agreed with Griswold, 5 to 3, that Ali was not a conscientious objector. But Justice Harlan, assigned to write the majority opinion, was persuaded to read some Muslim literature by one of his clerks and become convinced that Ali opposed all wars. He also "was persuaded that the government had mistakenly painted Ali as a racist, misinterpreting the doctrine of the Black Muslims despite the Justice Department's own hearing examiner's finding that Ali was sincerely opposed to all wars."²³

Harlan's draft, which said "Black Muslim doctrine teaches 'that Islam is the religion of peace. . .and that war-making is the habit of the race of devils [whites]. . .and [that Islam] forbids its members to carry arms or weapons of any kind,'" created a 4 to 4 split in the Court.²⁴ The deadlock meant that Ali still would go to jail--and that, since decisions equally divided had no written opinion, he would not know why he lost his legal battle.²⁵

But Justice Stewart proposed that the Court cite a technical error by the Justice Department, thus setting Ali free without setting a precedent for rulings on conscientious objectors.²⁶ The Court agreed. Ali did not go to jail.

Ali had 12 more fights before meeting Frazier again. But he was almost sidetracked from his goal of regaining the heavyweight title when he was defeated by Ken Norton March 31, 1973, in San Diego.²⁷ Norton won a 12-round decision (Ali's second loss in 43 bouts) and broke Ali's jaw, putting the fighter out of the ring for six months.

On January 28, 1974, Ali defeated Frazier (who had lost the title to George Foreman) in a 12-round decision in New York, then joined Floyd Patterson as the only boxer to regain the heavyweight title when he knocked out Foreman in the eighth round in Kinshasa, Zaire.²⁸

Ali met Frazier again in the Philippines, winning "the Thrilla in Manila" in a fourteenth-round knockout October 1, 1975.²⁹

On February 15, 1978, Ali in his 58th professional bout, lost his title to Leon Spinks on a split decision at Las Vegas. But in his 59th bout, September 15, 1978, he made boxing history, scoring a

unanimous victory over Spinks in New Orleans to become the first boxer to win the heavyweight title three times.³⁰

Ali retired after the second Spinks fight, but could not stay retired. On October 2, 1980, in a quest for his fourth heavyweight title, the 38-year-old Ali, in his 60th professional bout, failed to answer the bell for the 11th round against champion Larry Holmes.³¹ Ali earned his largest purse, \$8 million, for the title bout.³²

Patterson, Frazier and Foreman all retired from the ring. Ali's first professional opponent, Tunney Hunsaker, became a police chief in Fayetteville, West Virginia, while Henry Cooper became a company director in London.³³ Tony Esperti, his third opponent, ended up in prison, and his ninth, Alex Miteff, started a limousine service.³⁴

Sonny Liston is dead, the victim of a heroin overdose.³⁵ So is Zora Folley, who struck his head on the side of a swimming pool.³⁶ So are Sonny Banks, Ali's 11th professional opponent, and Oscar Bonevena, his 31st. Banks died of head injuries suffered in a later bout; Bonevena was shot to death after an altercation.³⁷

Ali survived. After 20 years as a professional boxer, after prolonged legal battles, after three and one-half years in "exile" and after incurring the wrath of many of his country's citizens, Ali had proved at least one point: He was a survivor.

Chapter Five Footnotes

1. Ali and Durham, p. 205.
2. Ibid., p. 209.
3. Torres, p. 160.
4. Ibid., p. 159.
5. Sheed, p. 76.
6. Schulberg, p. 53.
7. Ali and Durham, p. 316.
8. Torres, p. 161.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Sheed, p. 79.
13. Ibid.
14. Torres, p. 162.
15. Cosell, p. 222.
16. Ibid.
17. Sheed, p. 253.
18. Ibid.
19. Scott Armstrong and Bob Woodward, The Brethren: Inside the Supreme Court (New York: Avon Books, 1981), p. 160.
20. Ibid., p. 158.
21. Schulberg, p. 53.
22. Armstrong and Woodward, loc. cit.
23. Ibid., p. 159.

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 160.
26. Ibid.
27. Sheed, p. 255.
28. Ibid.
29. Lardner, p. 91.
30. Associated Press, September 16, 1978.
31. Pat Putnam, "Doom in the Desert," Sports Illustrated, October 13, 1980, pp. 34-49.
32. Ibid.
33. Michael Brennan, "Ali and His Educators," Sports Illustrated, September 22, 1980, pp. 40-57.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
37. Ibid.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

"How good is Clay?" snorts Joe Louis. "I don't think anybody will ever know how good he is. There's nobody around to test him."

--Joe Louis¹

Louis was partially right. In the ring, between 1960 and 1967, few men actually tested Ali's ability. But out of the ring, Ali was repeatedly tested, especially by the press.

Cosell was correct when he said earlier that the "Old World writers wanted [Ali] to live by their code, the same mythological sports legend that through all these years these non-contemporary men had been propounding. . .and they wanted another Joe Louis. . .a white man's black man."

But Ali, saying, "I'm free to be who I want," did not give the writers, Old or New World, what they wanted. His allegiance to the Muslims—"a racist hate organization"—and his name change—"editors insisted that Ali was Clay"—threatened the existing order. Lipsyte had written that "Ali's contention was that the Establishment was frightened by the power of his new name and the implications that Negroes would cast off their slave names and rise to freedom."

Ironically, the Muslims were miscast in their role as a racist hate organization. Malcolm X, on the subject of hate, said, "When we Muslims had talked about 'the devil white man' he had been relatively

abstract, someone we Muslims rarely come into contact with. . . .The white man so guilty of white supremacy can't hide his guilt by trying to accuse The Honorable Elijah Muhammad of teaching black supremacy and hate. All Mr. Muhammad is doing is trying to uplift the black man's mentality and the black man's social and economic condition in this country. "2

On the doctrine of racism, Malcolm X claimed that the Muslims were similarly misunderstood:

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches that for the black man in America the only solution is complete separation from the white man. . . .

[Elijah Muhammad] teaches us that since Western society is deteriorating, it has become overrun with immorality, and God is going to judge it, and destroy it. And the only way the black people caught up in this society can be saved is not to integrate into this corrupt society, but to separate from it, to a land of our own, where we can reform ourselves, lift up our moral standards, and try to be godly. The Western world's most learned diplomats have failed to solve this grave race problem. Her learned legal experts have failed. Her sociologists have failed. Her civil leaders have failed. Her fraternal leaders have failed. Since all of these have failed to solve this race problem, it is time for us to sit down and reason! I am certain that it takes God Himself to solve this grave racial dilemma.

Every time I mentioned "separation," some of them would cry that we Muslims were standing for the same thing that white racists and demagogues stood for. I would explain the difference. "No! We reject segregation even more militantly than you say you do! We want separation, which is not the same." The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that segregation is when your life and liberty are controlled, relegated by someone else. To segregate means to control. Segregation is that which is forced upon inferiors by superiors. But separation is that which is done voluntarily, by two equals--for the good of both! The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that as long as our people here in America are dependent upon the white man, we will always be begging him for jobs, food, clothing and housing. And he will always control our lives, regulate our lives, and have the power to segregate us. The Negro here in America has been treated like a child. A child stays within the mother until the time of birth! When the time of birth arrives, the child must be

separated, or it will destroy the mother and itself. The mother can't carry the child after its time. The child cries for and needs its own world.³

Lipsyte tried to understand the Muslim doctrine, spending time with Ali and, before Ali's falling out with Elijah Muhammad, with Malcolm X. But Lipsyte, though admittedly "even-handed" in his reporting on Ali, also was shackled by the "balanced. . .strait-jacketed way the Times defined news as a series of recent occurrences or official pronouncements or logical, 'responsible' speculations, often to the exclusion of moods, common knowledge, or 'outsider' intelligence that was sometimes years ahead of the facts." Lipsyte's stories on Ali were straight-forward and dispassionate. Lipsyte wrote as an observer, gradually shedding light on Ali and his Muslim beliefs, but never passing judgment. In that respect, especially because of stories that referred to the Muslims as racist hate sect, Lipsyte's reporting might be considered sympathetic.

Daley, in contrast, wrote a subjective column. Lipsyte said that Daley's approach was "traditional, conservative, sentimentally nostalgic," and added, "We were perfect foils for each other, we appealed to different readers, we often took opposite views on an issue. . . ."4

Daley's view of Ali followed a traditional, conservative, sentimentally nostalgic line. Ali had been, literally, Cassius Clay, a good American. He then became Muhammad Ali, bad Muslim. Daley was almost always impressed with Ali's ability as a boxer, but he became totally disenchanted with what he considered Ali's stance as a Muslim. The irony of Daley's contentions was that he seemed uninformed about Muslim doctrine. Malcolm X's book, which described Muslim philosophy, had been

published in 1964. But Daley, from his simplistic statements on the Muslims, did not seem to have read it or any other literature on the Muslims. He maintained that Ali was "brainwashed" by the Muslims, though he never seemed to understand the doctrine Ali supposedly was brainwashed by.

A 1959 television show, "The Hate That Hate Produced," portrayed the Muslims as "preaching hate of white people."⁵ Malcolm X said that the newspapers, after the show was aired, called the program "Alarming," and said the Muslims were "hate-messengers. . . [a] threat to the good relations between the races. . . black segregationists. . . black supremacists and the like."⁶

Daley, given the nature of his attacks on the Muslims, fell right into step with the alarmists. An Old World writer, he could not understand the Muslims and why the heavyweight champion was affiliated with them.

Between 1960 and 1967, Daley and Lipsyte seemed not so much foils for one another as subjective columnist and objective reporter. Lipsyte did not inject opinions in his stories; Daley did in his columns. Daley's columns had no rebuttals.

The Times also regarded Ali as a threat. Its editorial logic, that those guilty of civil disobedience should go to jail for their beliefs, could easily have haunted the paper when it later published the classified "Pentagon Papers." The idea that, if Ali resisted the draft, others might also try to resist, carried little or no clout. The Muslims, as the Court later came to understand, were opposed to war. The Times

might just as well have noted that Jehovah's Witnesses presented the same threat to national security (by being opposed to war and to military service) as did the Muslims. And the Times might have done some research on Muslim doctrines before commenting on Ali's case.

The Times also seemed to be confused by Ali's name, referring to him as Cassius Clay in headlines and Cassius Clay and Muhammad Ali in copy. Sometimes he was referred to as Clay and Ali in the same story. The Times never appeared to have a policy, though Lipsyte wrote about the "smug arrogance with which the Times editors had insisted that Ali was Clay "until he changed his name legally.

The confusion over what to call Ali seemed symptomatic of the Times coverage of him between 1960 and 1967. Confusion over his religion, his ability, his moods, his sincerity, his military status, and even his patriotism made Ali good copy. So did the boxer's quips, statements and doggerel. Between his first mention in the Times, when he was 18 years old, and his refusal to be inducted, at 25, Ali had provided seven years of copy.

The Times, as a paragon of journalism in America, had fed on that copy. But, despite the seven-year "relationship" with the boxer, it never really understood his contention that he did not have to be what others wanted him to be.

"Leisurely rereading one's old, hastily written newspaper stories is always a squinty business; the best turned phrases, if they were really that good, are now cliches, and the precious fact that was exclusive the day it was reported is now an archeologist's shard beneath a ruined tower of misinformation. The eye tries to skip over all the clumsy phrases, incorrect details, pompous predictions, and off-the-wall insights. Reading old clips, you can only hope that the concept, the attitude really, of the piece holds up, that it is all still basically true.

"When it is, when later events seem to confirm the 'truth' of what you have written, you then begin to wonder if your piece contributed to those later events, if, in effect, the story helped give life to later events.

"And if it did—God or Allah help us—could it be that there was more manipulation involved in your writing the story than there was the 'right of a free press'? Could it be that journalism is so structured that the reporter and his reader are inevitable victims of that cynical setup called 'news'?"

— Lipsyte, SportsWorld⁷

Chapter Six Footnotes

1. Korn, p. 64.
2. Alex Haley and Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Grove Press, 1964), pp. 240-241.
3. Ibid., p. 246.
4. Lipsyte, SportsWorld, pp. 129-130.
5. Haley and X, p. 238.
6. Ibid.
7. Lipsyte, SportsWorld, p. 110.

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