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The unimagined city: Public humanities and change in Fayetteville, North Carolina

Anthony, Bolton, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1987

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THE UNIMAGINED CITY: PUBLIC HUMANITIES AND CHANGE IN FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

by

Bolton Anthony

A dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
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ANTHONY, BOLTON, Ed.D. The Unimagined City: Public Humanities and Change in Fayetteville, North Carolina. (1987) Directed by Dr. R. Fritz Mengert. 96 pp.

The case study at the center of this dissertation describes an innovative public humanities program which was conducted in Fayetteville, North Carolina, during the fall of 1977. Sponsored by the Cumberland County Public Library with funds provided by the North Carolina Humanities Committee, "The Unimagined City: A Program for Fayetteville" examined issues of urban growth, downtown decay and community values and featured a thirteen week residency by Henry L. Kamphoefner, dean emeritus of the School of Design at North Carolina State University. Subsequent events in Fayetteville suggest that the broad public discussion initiated by this project served as the catalyst for significant community change.

The chapters which precede and follow the case study provide a theoretical context for the examination of a number of broad public questions raised by the project, chief among which are how the modern experience of privatization has diminished American civic life and how it might be reinvigorated through a revival of public discourse. The political theory developed by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* is used in the discussion of these matters, and a model which clarifies the role of a public institution as the initiator of public debate is proposed.

To my wife who during my absence has raised our children and to the few mad dreamers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

> Finally there are two Fayettevilles. One is the visible city, the other, the possible. . . As long as that possible city remains largely *unimagined* by most of us, by default the sole property of a few mad dreamers, our shared lives will remain impoverished.
>
> *The Unimagined City* brochure

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Draw a triangle. Where the first pair of lines intersect, set the city. Where the second, the public library; and the third, public humanities programs. What I want to examine in this inquiry is the *space* (understood quite literally) which those joined lines enclose and create. I will pursue this purpose with a kind of indirection. I will look at a *second* triangle: that described by a specific city, Fayetteville, North Carolina; a specific institution located there, the Cumberland County Public Library; and a specific program sponsored by the library during the fall of 1977, *The Unimagined City.*

What can we expect to learn from this inquiry? I believe we will arrive at a better, more comprehensive understanding of the role of public humanities programs and their potential to inform public discourse. The model I suggest will clarify the educational character of such programs and the "standing" of the community institutions which sponsor them. Finally, the general context of the inquiry--the life of the city--will develop a useful analogue.

Why examine this particular program and not some other? I suggest for two reasons: the first is the innovative character of the program and its potential as a model for similar programs in other communities. At the time, *The Unimagined City* represented a novel experiment in the design of public humanities programs. The Humanist-in-Residence project in Fayetteville subsequently served as a model for other programs in the cities of Wilson and Statesville, North Carolina. The second reason to examine this program is the impact it had on the life of the community. Since 1977, a number of dramatic changes have occurred in Fayetteville. Significant efforts at downtown revitalization, undertaken in the years since the project, are now coming to fruition; and a renewed sense of civic pride is evident. These changes were sparked, at least in part, by *The Unimagined City.*

I wish in this brief introductory chapter to provide necessary background information about each element of our triangle.

The river brought early prosperity to Fayetteville. Located at the head of navigation on the Cape Fear River one hundred miles inland, colonial Fayetteville was the trading center for a vast and developing back country. Overland traffic converged on the river port from six early roads. "[P]lanters from as far away as Tennessee brought produce for shipment on rafts down the river to Wilmington. They loaded their wagons with salt, iron and manufactured items which had been poled back

up the Cape Fear."[1] By 1825, when the French hero of the American Revolution, the Marquis de Lafayette, visited the town that had been the first to honor him by taking his name,[2] Fayetteville had grown to the second largest city in the state.[3]

But the town's fortunes soon waned. When the early railroads by-passed Fayetteville, wagon trade from the west dried up and river traffic slowed.[4] Canal and plank road construction schemes proved unsuccessful.[5] Other disasters--both natural and man-made followed. In 1831, "the worst fire our country had ever seen" swept through the downtown, leveling most of its houses and buildings.[6] Thirty-four years later, General Sherman marched through the town and, in five days, "wreaked havoc, burning six [of the seven] textile mills, 11 warehouses, the arsenal and other buildings."[7]

The economy of Fayetteville revived only after the beginning of the first world war, when Fort Bragg was established. The continuing

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[1]Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina*, 5 vols. (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Co., 1961) 3:1252.

[2]John A. Oates, *The Story of Fayetteville* (Charlotte: The Dowd Press, 1950) p. 89, 91.

[3]Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963) p. 299.

[4]Oates, p. 437.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 178, 373.

[6]PBS, "Fayetteville," Smithsonian World, (March 19, 1986).

[7]Sharpe, 3:1272.

economic boom peaked during World War II and then crested again during the Vietnam War. In 1970, Cumberland County, the fourth largest in the state with a population of 212,042, had in the previous ten years experienced a 42.9% rate of growth.[8]

The explosive growth the county experienced concealed a cancerous decay eating away at the city's heart. When a new suburban shopping mall opened in 1975, the abandonment of the downtown, by chain stores and local merchants alike, came as a shock to most residents. The prosperity fueled by the military payroll took its toll in a visible seaminess downtown. The "red light district, the 500 block of Hay Street, was known all over the country. Drugs were openly traded in the beer joints and topless bars. Prostitutes from New York to Miami knew when it was payday at Fort Bragg."[9]

How to revitalize the central city and how to eradicate the vice and seaminess of its 500 block--Fayetteville faced these two challenges in the mid-1970's. A decade of progress has brought many changes: many of them, visible brick and mortar improvements. When the new downtown mall was dedicated in June of 1985, the television crew from the *Smithsonian World* which filmed the ceremonies documented many of these: the razing of the 500 block and the new medical complex which replaced it and the downtown mall itself. But most of the documentary is about something

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[8]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *County and City Data Book: 1977.* p.342.

[9]PBS, "Fayetteville," Smithsonian World, (March 19, 1986).

less tangible, the renewal of civic pride and the recovery of civic confidence, no small virtues. In this renewal and recovery *The Unimagined City* played some part.

Among libraries in the state, the Cumberland County Public Library was in many ways a progressive system. Under David Warren, who became library director on January 1, 1972, the system had grown: the budget had tripled, the staff doubled, two new branch libraries had been opened, and existing branches enlarged or relocated. A number of innovative library services were initiated during Warren's seven-and-a-half-year tenure. A foreign language collection was developed which provided statewide service and a local community information service, ACCESS, was put in place. The adult public programming developed during the same period offered the most extraordinary range of programs in the state.

Yet during this period of, in many ways, remarkable expansion, what the library system was doing in terms of *basic services* was *catching up.* The size of the library's collection, a ready index of the quality of community library service, was illustrative: "In 1978 there were 161,188 books in the county system, or .7 books per capita; Forsyth and Durham counties had 1.4 books per capita, and Mecklenburg had 1.8. The national average for libraries was about 2 books per capita."[10]

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[10]"Celebrating 50 Years of Service," *Fayetteville Observer*, January 15, 1982, p. A12.

The situation with facilities was, if anything, worse. Main library services were provided from three downtown facilities: the non-fiction collection and reference services were housed at the Anderson Street Library; fiction and audiovisual materials circulated from the Frances Brooks Stein Memorial Library on Hay Street, two blocks away; the foreign language collection was housed at the Gillespie Street Library a half mile away.

The Anderson Street Library, opened in 1952, had, within a decade, become obsolete--its 8,000 square feet woefully inadequate and its design inhospitable to expansion. The Cumberland County Friends of the Library, organized in 1961, signalled the push for a new downtown facility. That effort stalled in 1968, when the necessary bond issue was defeated at the polls. Two years earlier, part of the collection had been moved to the Hay Street building--the old post office which, as surplus federal property, had been deeded to the city. The defeat of the bond issue, coupled with a major fire the following year which closed the Anderson Street branch for six months, made the makeshift changes permanent.[11]

Three points--important in the later unfolding of events--should be emphasized. First, the bond issue was soundly defeated, and the 6-to-1 margin left scars. Library trustees, burned by that experience, perhaps delayed too long in reviving the issue and perhaps were too cautious and deliberate in pressing their agenda. That point made, its counter is called for. *Passage* of the bond issue would have been out of the

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. A11, A12.

ordinary, not its defeat. If voters viewed library service the way they consistently viewed public parks[12], that is, as an amenity which, when it came to paying for it, they could forego; then the "deliberate speed" of the trustees was only prudent. Both points seem valid.

The third point is that the library itself became another symbol of Fayetteville's problems. Though less dramatic than the 500 block of Hay Street, the library was another bad situation which the community seemed powerless to remedy. Roy Parker, editor of the Fayetteville *Times*, took note of this numbing sense of impotence: "When I came here [in 1973] I couldn't believe it. How people would say, 'Oh, you know Fayetteville. We really can't do much around here. We never have, and we never will.'"[13]

Public humanities as an organized and federally-funded educational activity has a recent history. Legislation organizing the National Endowment for the Humanities was passed in 1965, when this independent grant-making agency of the federal government was established to support scholarship, research, education, and public programs in the humanities. The legislation understood the humanities both as academic disciplines and as a mode of inquiry:

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[12]"Fayetteville's Bid To Put Crippling Urban Problems Behind It," Fayetteville *Observer*, September ?, 1986, p. A4.

[13]PBS, "Fayetteville," Smithsonian World, (March 19, 1986).

> The humanities are ways of thinking about what is human--about our diverse histories, imaginations, values, words, and dreams. The humanities analyze, interpret, and refine our experience, its comedies and tragedies, struggles and achievements. They embrace history and art history, literature and film, philosophy and morality, comparative religion, jurisprudence, political theory, languages and linguistics, anthropology, and some of the inquires of the social sciences. When we ask who we are, and what our lives ought to mean, we are using the humanities.[14]

In 1970 the NEH began organizing the state humanities councils. Beginning in the fall of 1975, the Cumberland County Public Library applied for and received a number of grants from the North Carolina Humanities Committee. These antecedents to *The Unimagined City* can be briefly mentioned because they share important assumptions with the later project whose focus they anticipate. Their discussion will also provide a working definition for public humanities programming.

Considered most broadly, the agenda for each of these projects was the same: *to begin a conversation in the community.* The conversation, of course, was not without focus; thus, specific solutions to specific problems might emerge from it. But the conversation, not the solutions, was paramount. The perspective that the humanities provided was removed

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[14]National Federation of State Humanities Councils, "State Humanities Councils" (St. Paul, MN: National Federation of State Humanities Councils, 1985) p. 1.

from action,[15] and it was precisely that distance which permitted the "problem" to be radically reenvisioned.

An example may make this clearer:

Cumberland County, like most counties of comparable size in North Carolina, had separate city and county school systems. Merger of the two systems had been discussed publicly for a number of years, and the discussion, which had racial overtones, had become highly politicized. In the first public humanities series the library sponsored, *The Individual and Society*, school merger was not a topic. But education and racial justice--the over-arching concerns which must inform and animate the specific public debate--were.[16]

Another project, *At Home in the World: The Roots of Community*, anticipated the themes of *The Unimagined City*, and pointed to the larger value questions:

> In the past, community was grounded in a sense of place and in the stability of family life and of religious convictions held in common. The mobility of contemporary American society has "uprooted" our lives, subverted our sense of place. A pervasive feeling of impermanence assails us: all

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[15]Humanistic discourse, like poetry, "makes nothing happens" but is itself "A way of happening." W.H. Auden, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," in *The Collected Poetry of W.H. Auden* (New York: Random House, 1945) p. 210.

[16]The first forum in the series, "Alternative to Schooling," asked whether schooling had "served to institutionalize conformity" and "what alternatives . . . might allow for a richer development of individual potential." "Images of the Black Experience," the fourth forum, asked how a community might be enriched by an appreciation of the uniqueness of the Black experience. The five forums were held between August 21 and December 11, 1975. Quotations are taken from the grant application.

> things are disposable; all human relationships, provisional. Many of the most prized assumptions that united us in a shared expectation of a yet more bountiful future have been called into question: our technology threatens to annihilate us, and our prosperity has impoverished our lives. We are aware of nothing, apart from physical proximity--no common values and traditions--that animates our living together.
>
> Fayetteville . . . [has] experienced these changes. The public policies and priorities upon which . . . [Fayetteville is] called to act demand precisely that which change has made highly elusive--a coherent perception of what "community" means . . . Decisions arrived at with attention only to expedience are likely to be ill-advised. Rather, decisions must be made in the context of what it might mean, in the largest possible sense, *to live together in a city.*"[17]

The earlier projects provided the paradigm used in the design of *The Unimagined City.* They were also instrumental to the success of the later project for a number of practical reasons. All the programs in these earlier projects were held downtown (four of the five projects used the Frances Brooks Stein Memorial Library). The downtown was thought to be unsafe at night; yet despite this reputation, the series attracted large audiences,[18] and their success helped dispell the ungrounded public fears. As a result of the earlier projects, effective working relationships with other community institutions and agencies were developed. *Seasonal Man*, a film/lecture series sponsored by the library

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[17]Sponsored collaboratively by the Cumberland County Public Library and the Wake County Public Libraries, the six programs in this film/lecture series were presented in Fayetteville between September 23-December 2, 1976. Quotations are taken from the grant application.

[18]The attendance for most programs averaged 75-100 people and exceeded 150 for several.

and eight local churches (three of them downtown), was a particularly fruitful collaboration.[19]

Finally, over time, the projects created their own audience. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized. The establishment of a continuing audience involves the development of a kind of public trust. By sponsoring a public program, an institution has set an agenda for the public discourse, established a priority: this issue, this problem, will be addressed; and (since communities, like individuals, can attend to only so many "problems" at once) other issues, other problems will not be addressed. The ability to pull this off depends on two things: the institution's standing in the community (which has most to do with a perception of its *neutrality*) and its track record. Track record is most critical when the discussion being invited is less tangibly directed toward action. It was the success of the earlier projects which permitted the library, in *The Unimagined City*, to set the public agenda.

"There is a city where you arrive for the first time; and there is another city which you leave never to return. Each deserves a different name."[20] And there is a man who arrives and a man who leaves, changed by

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[19]Using films and lectures, this project explored the impact of "dark times" (Hannah Arendt) on the traditional inherited structures which had in the past provided the ethical ground necessary for everyday living. The eight meetings were held on successive Sunday afternoon and evenings, between January 23and February 13, 1977. Quotations are taken from the grant application.

[20]Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1974) p. 125.

six years of work and friendships formed and children born. And since those two men are different, perhaps they too "deserve a different name."

I had finished the course work for a master's in library science at the University of Texas in the summer of 1974 and came to Fayetteville that fall. The position I assumed, Head of Adult Services with the Cumberland County Public Library, was newly created; and, as is often the case in such circumstances, I was given wide latitude to define my own job and considerable opportunity to shape the expanding services of the growing library system. Many of my duties required the building of coalitions with other public agencies and with community groups. This experience proved invaluable, and these contacts formed the base of support for the library's initiatives in the area of public programs.

My work with the library represented a career change for me; my previous work experience had been limited to four years of teaching English at the university level. When I came to Fayetteville, I had with certain notions about the nature of power, the power of words, and the potential of an institution like the public library to assist in the transformation of the city. That is, I came with theoretical understandings; the public programs developed by the library became a way for me of *applying ideas.*

In their application, the ideas changed only slightly. The opinions I had formed as an undergraduate at the University of Notre Dame through a reading of the political philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and Hannah

Arendt were largely validated by my experience. In some sense I *learned* little from the experience, though I came to *own* much. Looking back now on that experience, reflecting on it through the discipline of this study, I find not that those original understandings have altered, but that I have become aware of their limits, aware of other, larger questions, chief among them, empowerment *for what ends.* In Chapter 5, I have tried to explore some of these questions with no hope of bringing them to closure. A conclusion which opens rather than closes matters is perhaps appropriate to so irregular a dissertation.

I left Fayetteville in the summer of 1980. When I returned in December to fulfill a last official obligation, I was honored by the mayor and made an honorary citizen. It is as a citizen of Fayetteville that I have tried to write this account, conceiving of it as a "conversation with fellow citizens about matters of common interest."[21] In this conversation, I have been helped immensely by the imagined responses of five people in particular. Three--Mason Hicks, Roy Parker, and Walter Vick--are other citizens of Fayetteville. The other two--John Sullivan and Oakley Winters--are itinerant preachers whose circuit ride has from time to time included Fayetteville. I thank them, and absolve them of all liability for that which I imagined them to say.

Finally, I thank my wife who during my absence has raised our children.

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[21]Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) p. 304.

Certain things can be adequately discussed only if at the same time we speak of the whole of the world and of life.

Josef Pieper

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

The question now changes. In Chapter 1 we asked *why* study *The Unimagined City*. We turn now to *how*, to the question of *method*. One motive in looking closely at the project was its potential to serve as a model for similar public humanities programs in other communities. Would the program that worked in Fayetteville work in Raleigh? Would it work in Statesville, a small city with 50,000 residents? Or Waynesville, a small town in western North Carolina?

These questions begin to suggest the complexity of the "answers" we are seeking. In what sense did the program "work," that is, what did it *succeed* in doing? Was its "success" dependent more on *format* or on *content*? Or, is that distinction in this case artificial? Did the program succeed because format and content merged, the content informing format, the issues themselves giving structure to the public conversation? What part in the success of the program did dynamics unique to community life in Fayetteville play, and does this fact

decrease the likelihood that similar experiments would enjoy equal success in dissimilar laboratories, dissimilar urban "containers"?[1]

Such questions suggest the need for a many-faceted and highly nuanced portrait and recommend the use of the case study as a research method. The case study is, as Robert Stake argues, particularly useful "for adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding" and the descriptions it renders are "complex, holistic, and [accommodate] a myriad of not highly isolated variables."[2] The case study which comprises Chapter 4 of this dissertation was developed from newspaper accounts, other unpublished material and interviews. This "objective" data was also supplemented by personal recollection.

In the selection of one research method over other possible strategies there are, inevitably, trade-offs to be made. Though the case study yields a complex portrait of the project, it cannot assess its *success*. How to measure success in public humanities programs, for which quantitative indices seem less appropriate, has been a vexing problem, and some contribution to its resolution would, doubtless, have been welcomed. To accomplish this I would have had to compare the project in Fayetteville to other projects--something I make no attempt to do. Nor do I attempt to establish a causal connection between *The Unimagined City*

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[1]Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961) p. 98.

[2]Robert Stake, "The Case Study Method in Social Inquiry." *Educational Researcher*. 7 (February 1978):7.

and the revitalization of downtown Fayetteville in the nine years since that project.

These limitations are significant. They betoken, however, no shortcoming in the study, but its particular focus. I have looked *at* the Humanist-in-Residence project in Fayetteville in order to look *through* it at a larger question, the nature of public humanities programs and their potential contribution to the revival of civic life in twentieth century America. Thus, the case study of Chapter 4 is flanked on either side by chapters which examine the larger context.

The authors of *Habits of the Heart* have called this method of inquiry "social science as public philosophy," suggesting that it represents a revival of "an older conception . . . in which the boundary between social science and philosophy [is] still open."[3] The authors argue that human actions can only be properly understood "in the context of society as a whole, with its possibilities, its limitations, and its aspirations."[4]

A *concern for the whole* is not limited to "the acquisition of useful insights from neightboring disciplines." It requires "transcending disciplinary boundaries altogether." For an inquiry which seeks to understand how humanistic discourse might leaven the public conversation, appropriately the first disciplinary boundary that must be bridged is

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[3] *Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) p. 297-8.

[4] *Ibid.*

"the recent and quite arbitrary boundary between the social sciences and the humanities."[5]

I have attempted to do this in two ways. First, I have followed the lead of the authors of *Habits of the Heart*, who find in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* "a synoptic view, at once philosophical, historical, and sociological" that points out "the moral and political meaning of the American experiment."[6] In this inquiry, two works serve a similar purpose: *The Human Condition* by Hannah Arendt informs my understanding of political philosophy; *Habits of the Heart*, my understanding of sociological questions. These two strong, clear voices form the reflective center for this study.

Secondly, I have listened to other voices--a range of voices from poetry and fiction, from philosophy and religion, from history and social commentary. Where the resonances between authors were particularly strong, I have--by alternating quotations--on occasion woven the two together. Thus, out of many different voices, I have attempted to weave one conversation.

One final point indirectly related to methodology: at its heart this inquiry is concerned with how men by speaking to one another reveal who

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 300-1.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 298.

they are and insert themselves in the human world. It is concerned with how men *act* and not with how they statistically *behave*.[7]

> . . . The justification of statistics is that deeds and events are rare occurrences in everyday life and in history. Yet the meaningfulness of everyday relationships is disclosed not in everyday life but in rare deeds, just as the significance of a historical period shows itself only in the few events that illuminate it.[8]

Action--the infinite improbability that occurs regularly--"always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws"[9] Yet it is the one thing that saves our lives and renders them meaningful.

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[7]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) p. 41.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 42.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 178.

We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it, we learn to be human.

Hannah Arendt

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

How Love Is Unlike Burying the Dead

"What to make of a diminished thing"[1]--that question, though not unasked by earlier ages, has in our age a new poignancy. What do we make of a diminished thing? How do we live in a diminished world? The world is diminished for moderns in a way previously unexperienced. And it is, in part, the loss of the *common world*--the disappearance of the public realm--which gives our experience of diminishment its peculiarly modern nuance.

Two examples from literature may make this point clearer:

All Shakespearean tragedy concludes with the experience of diminishment. The titans--mortals "past the size of dreaming"[2]--have departed; and putting ruin to right is left to those who have survived. Like Albany in *King Lear*, they are smaller men; and they move within a shrunken world. "We that are young," says Albany, "Shall never see so

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[1]Robert Frost, "The Oven Bird" in *Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1949) p. 150.

[2]*Antony and Cleopatra* 5. 2. 97.

much, nor live so long."[3] The space for human action contracts, but the common world, the *public* world, *survives*; and at the conclusion of the tragedy, the human players set about the shared task of burying of the dead.[4]

The modern response to a radically diminished world often involves a flight into the private--into the sphere of intimacy--which betokens not a contraction of the public world, but its obliteration. "We have tried to make the fact of being in private, alone with ourselves and with family and intimate friends, an end in itself." As Richard Sennett says, "to know oneself has become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world."[5] In *Doctor Zhivago*, Lara, in response to his question, explains to Zhivago "what is happening to human life in general and to life in Russia":

> . . . All customs and traditions, all our way of life, everything to do with home and order, has crumbled into dust in the general upheaval and reorganization of society. The whole human way of life has been destroyed and ruined. All that's left is the naked human soul stripped to the last shred, for which nothing has changed because it was always cold and shivering and reaching out to its nearest neighbor, as cold and lonely as itself. You and I are like Adam and Eve, the first two people on earth who at the beginning of the world had nothing to cover themselves with--and now at the end of it we

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[3] *King Lear* 5. 3. 324.

[4] *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien provides a modern counterpart. Despite the ultimate triumph of good, human action has its tragic cost signalled by the departure of the elves from Middle Earth. A glory passes, and the world is left diminished.

[5] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) p. 4.

> are just as naked and homeless. And you and I are the last remembrance of all that immeasurable greatness which has been created in the world in all the thousands of years between them and us, and it is in memory of all those vanished marvels that we live and love and weep and cling to one another.[6]

In such a shattered world, intimacy is the last and final shelter for the "naked human soul."[7]

Life has become radically *privatized*, when, among the diverse modes of interaction available to humankind, only the intimate remains authentic. Privatization, and the loss of the common world which it implies, gives, as I said above, the peculiarly modern nuance to our experience of diminishment. The disappearance of the public realm--of the space where, by "acting and speaking, men show who they are . . . and

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[6]Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, (New York: Pantheon, 1958), p. 402-403.

[7]In a tragic world, diminishment is the consequence of human choice. ("The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to scourge us." *King Lear* 5,3,168-69.) In *Doctor Zhivago*, the revolution which shatters the world is a result of impersonal historical necessity. But in most modern literature, the world is neither tragic nor mechanistic, but absurd. That is, the world is diminished not as a *consequence*, but as a precondition. "The world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new" is only seeming. It "Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain." And Matthew Arnold, like Pasternak, turns to the sphere of intimacy for solace: "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!" Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach" in *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950) p. 210.

thus make their appearance in the human world"[8]--is the major political problem of the twentieth century. I want in this modest inquiry to examine what I perceive to be some of the educational implications of that political problem.

It is necessary at the outset to define the terms I am using and the assumptions I make: what is meant by the private realm? what, by the public? To what human activities is each properly home? How has our understanding of these distinctions changed over time? The assumptions which I make in these matter derive from the critique of modern politics advanced by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition.*[9] What follows is a summary of the relevant points in her argument.

"The distinction between a private and a public sphere of life corresponds," Arendt maintains, "to the *household* and the *political* realms, which have existed as distinct, separate entities at least since the rise of the ancient city-state."[10] The household and family

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[8]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) p. 179.*

[9]*Arendt, a German-born political philosopher, studied under Heideiger and Jaspars. She fled Nazi Germany in 1933 and in the 1940's came to the United States where she taught at Princeton, the University of Chicago and the New School of Social Research. Her intellectual interests and her writings--some of which (for example, the series of articles on the Eichmann trial published by the New Yorker* and later expanded into the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) stirred considerable controversy--ranged widely. In *The Human Condition*, her major work of political theory, Arendt reinterprets modern political thought in light of the ancient Greek understandings of politics.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 28. Italics mine.

represented "natural community [which] was born of *necessity*."[11] Here "men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs . . . [by] life itself . . . which, for its individual maintenance and its survival as the life of the species, needs the company of others."[12] Thus, what we today would understand as a social need, namely, the fact that "man cannot live outside the company of men,"[13] the Greeks would have considered a purely biological need that "human life had in common with animal life"[14] and not among those activities which make us distinctly human.

> According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home and the family. . . Of all the activities necessary and present in human communities, only two were deemed to be political . . . namely action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*).[15]

The public realm "arises out of [our] acting and speaking together.

> . . . It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word . . . the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.
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> This space does not always exist, and although all men are capable of deed and word, most of them . . . do not live in it. No man, moveover, can live in it all the time. To be deprived

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 30. Italics mine.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*, p 23.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

> of it means to be deprived of reality, which humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all . . . Whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality.[16]

With the emergence of the modern age, Hannah Arendt argues, the public realm has become inhospitable to speech and action. The *political* has been displaced by the *social*; the public, by the private. The dividing line between the two realms, "between the sphere of the polis and the sphere of household and family" is, for moderns, distorted. "We see the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping."[17] That "collective of families economically organized into the facsimile of one super-human family"[18]--*society*--is "the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance and where the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public."[19]

One final proposition in Hannah Arendt's argument needs to be summarized: the role of intimacy. "The decisive historical fact is that modern privacy in its most relevant function, to shelter the intimate,

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[16] *Ibid.* p. 198-9.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

was discovered as the opposite not of the political sphere but of the social."[20] Where the social has displaced the public, "the only thing people have in common is their private interests," and the commonwealth becomes the common *wealth.*[21] "Immersion in private economic pursuits" is, as Tocqueville observed, isolating and "undermines the person as citizen."[22] Common wealth, that is, "common" private interests, "can never become common in the sense we speak of a common world." Modern intimacy--the "flight from the whole outer world into the inner subjectivity of the individual"[23]--represents a last, desperate attempt to recover the common world using the only thing we any longer have left in common, the inmost feelings of the "naked human soul."

In this attempt, we have succeeded, it seems, in merely exchanging one "tyranny" for another--the tyranny of the private where men are merely consumers and producers, for what Richard Sennett calls "the tyranny of intimacy":

> . . . Men came to believe that they were the authors of their own characters, that every event in their lives must have a meaning in terms of defining themselves, but what this meaning was, the instabilities and contradictions of their lives made it difficult to say. Yet the sheer attention and involvement in matters of personality grew ever greater. Gradually this

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 68-9.

[22] Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) p. 38.

[23] *The Human Condition*, p. 69.

> mysterious, dangerous force which was the self came to define social relations. It became a social principle. At that point, the public realm of impersonal meaning and impersonal action began to wither.
>
> The society we inhabit today is burdened with the consequences of that history, the effacement of the *res publica* by the belief that social meanings are generated by the feelings of individual human beings.[24]

At issue is something more than the debasement of the language of political discourse, which "the measurement of society in psychological terms" represents.[25]

> . . . We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others in work, love, and learning. All of our activity goes on in relationships, groups, associations, and communities ordered by institutional structure and interpreted by cultural patterns of meaning. . . we are not simply ends in ourselves, either as individuals or as a society. We are parts of a larger whole that we can neither forget nor imagine in our own image without paying a high price.[26]

Lacking a public life and the space where men, through speech and action, appear to one another, can the "naked human soul" even sustain its private life?

Private Lives and Public Lives

"Privacy" has for moderns lost much of the connotation of *deprivation* which its etymology suggests. This "is partly due to the

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[24] Sennett, p. 338-9.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 338.

[26] *Habits of the Heart*, p. 84.

enormous enrichment of the private sphere through modern individualism."[27] Technological change in the twentieth century has played a role in this "enrichment" which requires specific examination. People "are learning to live private lives of unprecedented completeness," Martin Pawley argues, through "a technology which is evolving more and more into a pattern of socially atomizing appliances."[28] Our inventiveness--our most extraordinary gift--has been our own undoing; like Daedalus, who discovered the gift of flight, we are destined, it seems, to use it against ourselves.[29]

Our automobile spirits us away--encapsuled in "a social diving suit"[30]--to the loneliness of the suburb. The central heating in our houses means the family--what's left of it--need no longer congregate together in one room.[31] Our televisions, or, more properly, our "home entertainment centers," transform our home into "a place to live as opposed to a place to stay";[32]; with the impending linkage to the work place which personal computers now allow, it may become a place we need

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[27] *The Human Condition*, p. 38

[28] Martin Pawley, *The Private Future* (New York: Random House, 1974) p. 8.

[29] A paraphrase of an epigram by Kakfa, quoted by Hannah Arendt: "He found the Archimedean point, but he used it against himself; it seems that he was permitted to find it only under this condition." *The Human Condition*, p. 248.

[30] Pawley, p. 53

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 14

never leave. Even our most apparently benign inventions seem party to the conspiracy: the freezer, while freeing us from the drudgery of daily shopping, has freed us also from the social intercourse it provided;[33] and "the telephone . . . is at least as useful for not having to *see* people as it is for making contact with them."[34]

With privatization comes a concomitant "surrender of sovereignty by the layman so that he may take up the role not of the person but of the consumer."[35] "Nonmaterial needs are transformed into demands for commodities . . . [and] health, education, personal mobility, welfare or psychological healing are defined as the result of [the] services or 'treatments'"[36] of "a class of privileged knowers."[37] In consumer societies, the number of people living together in an average household decreases, while the space they require--the average dwelling size--increases.[38] The new space houses the ever expanding array of consumer durables (we had to put that stuff somewhere!) which converts

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[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[35] Walker Percy, "The Loss of the Creature," in *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975) p. 54.

[36] Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harrow Books, 1971) p. 1-2.

[37] "The Loss of the Creature," p. 54.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 13-16.

our homes into a *total environment.* As we withdraw more and more into our private space, the vitality is sapped from our cities.

The cost of "dead public space"[39]-- the price we pay for the "enrichment" of the private sphere--can only be understood when we examine the dynamics of city life at "street level." "The trust of a city street," Jane Jacobs writes in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,*

> is formed over time from many, many little public sidewalk contacts. It grows out of people stopping by at the bar for a beer, getting advice from the grocer and giving advice to the newsstand man, comparing opinions with other customers at the bakery and nodding hello to the two boys drinking pop on the stoop, eying the girls while waiting to be called for dinner, admonishing the children, hearing about a job from the hardware man and borrowing a dollar from the druggist, admiring the new babies and sympathizing over the way a coat faded. Customs vary: in some neighborhoods people compare notes on their dogs; in other they compare notes on their landlords.
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> Most of it is ostensibly utterly trivial but the sum is not trivial at all. The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level--most of it fortuitous, most of it associated with errands, all of it metered by the person concerned and not thrust upon him by anyone--is *a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust.*[40]

But that web upon which rests our visceral sense of safety and well-being "*implies no private commitments.*"[41] Where a vital sidewalk life is absent, residents "must enlarge their private lives if they are

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[39]Sennett, p. 12.

[40]Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961) p. 56. Italics mine.

[41] *Ibid.*

to have anything approaching equivalent contact with their neighbors."[42] That is, they must share more with one another than the life of the sidewalk would demand. "Where people do share much," where the private life expands to compensate for the absence of a public life, "they become exceedingly choosy as to who their neighbors are, or with whom they associate at all."[43] The particular pathology at work here, extended, finds its mature expression in what the authors of *Habits of the Heart* call *lifestyle enclaves*, socially segmenting pseudo-communities which bring together those who are similar in their standards, interests and backgrounds. Such enclaves, which "celebrate the narcissism of similarities," fail to involve more than "a segment of each individual, for they concern only private life, especially leisure and consumption."[44]

Where the public space is sterile or moribund, a range of human potentiality, for which no embellishment of the private sphere can compensate, atrophies. To use a metaphor from the performing arts, we are musicians whose symphonic performance requires a concert hall. It is not simply that in our playing alone, the range of musical expression is drastically attenuated. In the live performance, in the collaboration between musicians and the subtle synergy between orchestra and audience,

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[42] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[44] *Habits of the Heart*, p. 72.

something unique comes into being which is always greater than the sum of its parts.

On the slow accumulation of casual daily neighborhood encounters is built not only our sense of public safety, but our sense of reality itself. It is "the presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear [that] assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves."[45] "To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of" that reality. And this is the root of "the mass phenomenon of loneliness."[46] Lacking the presence of others, we become radically adrift, "uncertified," the anonymous Anyone living Anywhere that Binx Bolling describes in Walker Percy's novel *The Moviegoer*:

> . . . Nowadays when a person lives somewhere, in a neighborhood, the place is not certified for him. More than likely he will live there sadly and the emptiness which is inside him will expand until it evacuates the entire neighborhood. But if he sees a movie which shows his very neighborhood, it becomes possible for him to live, for a time at least, as a person who is Somewhere and not Anywhere."[47]

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[45] *The Human Condition*, p. 50.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 58-9. Hannah Arendt suggests that our "loneliness" has its metaphysical ground in "our having looked upon and treated earth-bound nature from a truly universal viewpoint, that is, from an Archimedean standpoint taken, wilfully and explicitly, outside the earth." *The Human Condition*, p. 11. Modern man has "stood outside the universe and sought to understand it." After having successfully "disposed" of it, he finds to his dismay that he himself is "left over," alone, "lost in the cosmos" (to use the title of another book by Percy). Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961) p. 69-70.

[47] *The Moviegoer*, p. 63. A footnote in Cornford's translation of *The Republic* is interesting in this regard: "A modern Plato would compare his Cave to an underground cinema, where the audience watch the play of shadows thrown by the film passing before a light at their backs. The

Indeed, as the quotation from Percy suggests, we catch glimpses of ourselves in the mirror of the media. But the hold on reality these glimpses yield is tenuous and fleeting, a quick fix whose dosage must increase with every repetition. The mass media fails to connect us with ourselves and with the larger public world for a variety of reasons. Among the obvious: the real business of the media, television especially, is *the selling of the private world*, and its purpose is to manipulate and optimize "what economists call 'the intention to purchase.'"[48] But there is a deeper, more fundamental reason. The mass media lacks the *multiplicity of perspectives* which allows us to *weight* the sensory data we receive. In a *live* experience, when we listen to someone speak, for example, we watch not only the speaker but those who listen with us. We hear both what *we* hear and, in some measure, what *they* hear. Media lack this multiplicity of perspectives . . . and is unidirectional, that is, it does not allow for our response. Without others, we cannot properly assess what we experience, *and*--because we cannot watch others watching us--we cannot know our own opinion.

Lacking the presence of others, "nobody can be certain of his value--one cannot even explore the validity of one's smallest belief."

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film itself is only an image of 'real' things and events in the world outside the cinema." Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated by Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945) p. 228n.

[48]Pawley, p. 22.

This last quote is from an article written by Norman Mailer in 1970 during his campaign for mayor of New York City. The article is remarkable (as was the campaign itself, with its slogan, "Power to the Neighborhoods") in its insight into the consequences of privatization and their relation to the life of the city:

> In New York, which is to say, in the twentieth century, one can never know whether the world is vastly more or less violent than it seems. Nor can we discover which actions in our lives are authentic or which belong to the art of the put-on. . . The answers are unknown because the questions . . . collide in the vast empty arena of the mass media where no price has ever to be paid for your opinion.[49]

"We cannot work at our destiny without a *contest*," Mailer says at another point. And the arena for that contest is "that *most specific neighborhood* which welcomes or rejects our efforts, and so gives a mirror to the value of our striving, and the distortion of our prejudice."[50]

Of Stones and Arches and Other Paradoxes

We *must* pay for our opinions. Opinions--private and public opinions--must have consequences. One must be able to assay their value in the specific crucible of civic life. Otherwise, one can never know their worth; and one can never own them. When we express our opinions,

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[49]Norman Mailer, "An Instrument for the City, in *Existential Errands* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972) p. 335.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 336. Italics mine.

they change; they become knowledge. And that transformation is what we mean by "education."

The problem of education in twentieth century America and the problem of the city in the twentieth century are inseparable. Radical privatization, which has decimated the public realm, has simultaneously eroded our *ability* to learn--"to explore the validity of one's smallest belief." The condition for learning--*dialogue* which is for Paulo Freire "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world"[51]--is identical to the condition for political community.

Dialogue allows for an objectification of thought which, though a pale analogue to the reification represented by books and works of art, is still sufficient in its *otherness* to allow us to regard it. When we express our opinion in the company of others, two things happens. The first is pointed to by a common experience: during animated discussions, who has not expressed a thought and, *simultaneously*, realized its absolute rightness or validity, or *seen* an order, a relationship, a fitting-together of what had hitherto been disparate ideas?[52] In the

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[51]Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970) p. 76. Freire is a contemporary Brazilian educational theorist who argues that education and political liberation cannot be separated.

[52]In dialogues with teachers, Sara Lightfoot found a similar startling clarity often suddenly emerged: "For the first time, many of them were being asked to reflect upon and think critically about their work, their values, and their goals; and as they talked out loud, they discovered how they felt. Frequently people would say, 'I never knew I felt that way,' or 'That idea just seemed to sneak up on me.'" Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) p. 371.

articulation of one's opinions one somehow measures--purchases--them. The second thing that happens is that, through the process I discussed above, one gains a multiplicity of perspectives. One somehow manages to see one's thought through the reactions of others.

Education as *the transformation of opinion into knowledge through dialogue* is a definition which is hardly novel. One can discern it informing the Dialogues of Plato, and it accounts in large measure for his elaboration of the dialogue itself as such a remarkable pedagogic instrument. Dialogue is the most effective method at our disposal for understanding what we think.

There is an important second element in Freire's definition, that is, that "dialogue is the encounter between men, *mediated by the world.*" I take "world" to mean what Hannah Arendt calls the "human artifice"--"the sheer unending variety of things"[53] which are the products of man's work and represent the reification of thought and action. Books are among the *made* things which come between men and which, therefore, can be the subject of men's dialogue. Among the things of the world, they are, however, a special case and need particular attention.

Perhaps because they are so close to thought and action--to that which is "fresh and fast flying of us"[54]--they retain the ephemeral

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[53] *The Human Condition*, p. 136.

[54] Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" in *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Penquin Books, 1953) p. 53.

character of their source *to the extent that* their liveliness must with each encounter be recovered anew from the dead letter, from the warehouse of "specimens."[55] Dialogue accomplishes this recovery best. Books require discussion. Obviously not all books (not manuals on volkswagen repair, for instance), but a large class of books require discussion--to be understood. For most individuals discussion is the most effective bridge to understanding--to the "assimilation" of one's "reaction" to a book.

I have discussed books at some length because, understood as a particular kind of "container," they provide a good analogue for another "container," the city itself. The city, according to Lewis Mumford, "'lives by remembering' . . . [and] through its durable buildings and institutional structures and even more durable symbolic forms of literature and art . . . unites times past, times present, and times to come."[56] What both share is that *dialogue is the condition of their liveliness.* "The city in its higher aspects . . . is a place designed to offer the widest facilities for significant conversation . . . [and] dialogue is one of the ultimate expressions of life in the city: the delicate flower of its long vegetative growth."[57]

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[55]"The Loss of the Creature," p. 58-59.

[56]Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961) p. 98.

[57]*Ibid.*, p. 116.

The point of this extended discussion is to argue that the purpose of public humanities programs is to provide a public space for dialogue and to suggest the importance of that space and its "educational" ground. What is involved is more radical than appears; what is involved is the creation of a center, at once both spatial and spiritual, for human speech. What is involved is the restoration of the public realm, or, more properly, the restoration of its preconditions.

We have, to this point, discussed speech as dialogue, speech as a way of appropriating our own opinions.[58] I want to consider now the *revelatory* character of speech, its ability to disclose "'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is"[59]--a power which has to do with human *becoming*. "In acting and speaking," according to Hannah Arendt,

> men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world. . . . [But] the disclosure of [the] "who" . . . can almost never be achieved as a wilful purpose. . . On the contrary, it is more than likely that the "who," which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters. This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them--that is, in sheer human togetherness. . . Because of its inherent tendency to disclose the agent together with the act, action

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[58] I have focused on the appropriation of *one's own* opinion not out of a solipsistic position which would argue all you can know is what you think. The same "objectification" which dialogue gives to our own thoughts allows us to understand the expressed thoughts and opinions of others.

[59] *The Human Condition*, p. 179.

> needs for its full appearance the shining brightness we once called glory, and which is possible only in the public realm.[60]

We become fully human only when we become a "who." With our words and actions, we "start a new process which eventually emerges as . . . [our] unique life story." [61] "*Who* somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero--his biography, in other words; everything else we know of him, including the work he may have produced and left behind, tells us only *what* he is or was."[62] The precondition for this dynamic is the presence of a public realm, of a "space for appearance," the space the city, when it has not yet become the "Necropolis,"[63] has always provided.

This conception of the human becoming is, Hannah Arendt argues,

> . . . [at] the root of the ancient estimation of politics . . . [namely] that man *qua* man, each individual in his unique distinctness, appears and confirms himself in speech and action, and that these activities, despite their material futility, possess an enduring quality of their own because they create their own remembrance. . . The human sense of reality demands that men actualize the sheer passive givenness of their being, not in order to change it but in order to make articulate and call into full existence what otherwise they would have to suffer passively anyhow. This actualization

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 179-80.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

[63] Mumford, p. 242.

resides and comes to pass in those activities that exist only in sheer actuality.[64]

> Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.
> "But which is the stone that supports the bridge?" Kublai Khan asks.
> "The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form."
> Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: "Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me."
> Polo answers: "Without stones there is no arch."[65]

The public realm exists where speech is still *empowered* (in Freire's words) "to name the world"--"where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclosed reality, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities."[66] Thus, the public realm, like the paradox of stone and arch, is both a condition for--and the result of--human actualization.

What sense does it make to speak of *restoring the public realm* and to suggest that public humanities programs might contribute to that restoration? We may think of public humanities programs as a kind of legislation and regard legislation from the perspective which "the

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[64] *The Human Condition*, p. 207-8.

[65] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974) p. 82.

[66] *The Human Condition.*, p. 200.

Greeks, in distinction from all later developments," regarded it. Laws, to them, "like the wall around the city, were not results of action but products of making. Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the *polis* and its structure the law; legislator and architect belonged in the same category."[67]

Public humanities programs can provide a structure for the conversation of the community. This is distinct from an agenda for action, which will often emerge out of that conversation, but which cannot be determined in advance. Public humanities programs provide the space, the boundaries, for public discourse and the human actualization which it allows. This re-envisioning has the potential to rescue the educational *enterprise* from what it has become, "a business venture," and restore to it the full significance embodied in the original understanding of the word as "a bold, difficult, dangerous and important undertaking."

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 194-5.

Where there is no dream, the people perish.

Proverbs

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY

The Resident Gadfly

The road from Raleigh to Fayetteville crosses the Cape Fear at Lillington, below the fall line, and then, following the river's southward progress, descends to the coastal plain. On the outskirts of Fayetteville, you pass the Kelly Springfield Tire Company. The huge brown and white plant--with its gleaming overhead circuitry of pipes and conical tanks--sits back from the highway across a wide green expanse, as charged with purpose and power as an idling locomotive. The plant had opened in 1970--a boom for the local economy and a tangible symbol of the lure of the sunbelt.

Approaching the city, you penetrate concentric rings of growth. At the periphery, the new campus of Methodist College attests to a boom in higher education which fizzled in the 70's a decade after the school's founding. But the school has held on, gained a foothold in the community, and--like the shade trees of middling height which grace the lawns between the buildings--perhaps even prospered.

Closer to the city the barely perceptible remnant of a line of breastworks crosses the road. The breastworks had been thrown up in

early 1865 to halt Sherman when it was thought he might invade the city from the North.[1] The Veterans Hospital, built here in 1940, sits far back from the road, half-concealed by the tall pines. The design of the building is a play upon the architecture of the Market House, and a replica ornaments the front facade...indigenous architecture among the indigenous pines.[2]

The hospital bears witness to the presence of Fort Bragg. So also the soldier in fatiques thumbing a ride from the sandy shoulder of the road. But the base lies to the west, out of a direct line to the city; and the cancerous commercial strip development--the redundancy of pawn shops, adult bookstores and used car lots--which straddles the northwest corridor between the base and city is absent here.

Three blocks north of the Market House the center city begins. The first courthouse in the upper town of Cross Creek[3] had stood here, where Ramsey, Grove, Green and Rowan Streets converge, on a square of land that James Hogg gave to the county. "Not wanting to call it Hogg's Square, it was called James Square, and afterward St. James."[4] The courthouse is gone, of course. To the delight of the municipal traffic engineers, so

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[1] John A. Oates, *The Story of Fayetteville and the Upper Cape Fear* (1972) p. 780.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 802.

[3] The two settlements that had grown up sometime after 1754--Campbellton on the river and Cross Creek a mile to the west--were renamed Fayetteville in 1783 to honor Lafayette. *Ibid.*, p. 86-89.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.43-44.

is the square: it was leveled when the streets were widened. The St. James Inn, built after that, is all that's left--the obliteration to which all human deeds are subject arrested for an ironic moment in a name left on the land.

The Market House is visible ahead, at the center of a traffic rotary. Approaching it, you pass the older buildings of the city: St. John's Episcopal Church and, beside it, the Kyle House, an elegant Georgian home which, through adaptive use, now houses the mayor's office. Just beyond, across a pleasant park through which Cross Creek meanders, the steeple of First Presbyterian Church is visible. The Kyle House was built, and the two churches *rebuilt*, following the fire of 1831. The Market House itself, which looms before you now, dates from that same disaster. The building's style is, like the city's history it has come to symbolize, unique to Fayetteville. Its arches, a combination of Gothic and Romanesque, enclose an airy open space which command views down each of the four main streets. From each facade of its second floor, three arched windows open out. The hipped roof above is crowned by a cupola that holds the town clock and bell tower. Entering the rotary from the north on Green Street, the first exit off the circle takes you onto Hay Street.

When Henry L. Kamphoefner arrived in Fayetteville on Tuesday morning, September 13, 1977, the Hay Street he passed down gave clear indications of the urban problem the city faced. The downtown remained a financial center, but retailing had been decimated. The latest fall

fashions were on display in the windows of the Capital, a locally owned department store. But across the street, another department store, Belk's, had abandoned its downtown facility and moved to the new suburban shopping mall.[5] Sears and Penney's--the other two major department stores which, located in the 400 block of Hay Street, had anchored the other end of the downtown shopping district--had moved with Belk's.

The small shops and specialty stores had taken a beating, dependent as they were on the flow of customers the large department stores had once attracted. In the first and second blocks of Hay Street, sixteen of the thirty-eight retail establishments which were operating in 1974, had closed by 1978. Once empty, half the premises stayed that way. Where new tenants replaced the departing ones, the enterprise was rarely retail.[6] In another sure sign of downtown decay, the two theaters (a third was boarded up) featured only second run movies.

Kamphoefner's destination that September morning, the Frances Brooks Stein Memorial Library, was in the third block of Hay Street. Had Kamphoefner continued two blocks farther, he would have come to the 500 block, an infamous zone of beer joints and topless bars which catered to off-duty servicemen. The 500 block was known all over the country ever since an article in the Charlotte *Observer* had been picked up by a wire

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[5]Cross Creek Mall, built with outside capital (none of its twelve principal investors was from Fayetteville), had opened in February of 1975. "Local Mall Leads Carolinas In Retail Sales," *Fayetteville Times*, November 5, 1976, p. B1.

[6]The information is derived from the 1974 and 1978 Fayetteville *City Directory*.

service and given national circulation. The cancer was clearly spreading: the last bastion of stability in the block, the Fayetteville Publishing Company which published the two daily newspapers, was preparing to abandon its Hay Street facility.

Fayetteville residents who read the newspaper knew something about Kamphoefner and his mission. The planning for the project had received coverage in both the Fayetteville *Observer* and the Fayetteville *Times*, and an article that appeared on Sunday had anticipated Kamphoefner's arrival:

> If there is a new mood of optimism, a sense of excitement in the city's pulse in the next three months, it will be the vibrations from an innovative humanist-in-residence program beginning this week with the arrival of Dean Emeritus Henry L. Kamphoefner.
>
> Fayetteville and Cumberland County are breaking ground for North Carolina and the entire nation by being the first community to invite a prominent planner and thinker to live in the community for several months.
>
> His presence will hopefully spark discussion, ideas and action among local residents and civic organizations to revitalize Fayetteville.
>
> Kamphoefner brings extensive knowledge in urban problems and development with him from his years as dean of the North [Carolina] State University School of Design and his experience as a nationally-renowned architect.
>
> He will arrive in Fayetteville Tuesday to begin a three-month residence.
>
> In the four days he will spend here each week, Tuesday-Friday, Kamphoefner will speak at civic meetings, planning workshops and special forums designed to promote discussion of Fayetteville's problems and potential.[7]

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[7]"'Humanist' Begins Work," *Fayetteville Observer-Times*, September 11, 1977, p. B1.

The morning of Kamphoefner's arrival, an editorial in the *Times* had underscored community expectations: "Together, the Humanist-in-Residence and the people-in-residence can hopefully find new sources of pride, new commitment, new ideas, and new will to undertake new things, to change old things that need changing, to perceive the values and the things that are good as a heritage."[8]

What were "Fayetteville's problems" and what did Henry L. Kamphoefner (whoever he was) think he could do about them? It is tempting to say that the problems were obvious, that any outsider whose study of cities was anything more than casual could have provided the list about which consensus would have readily been reached. Like many of its counterparts across the nation, in recent years Fayetteville had grown from a town to a city without much planning. Suburban sprawl and downtown decay proportionately marked its growth. The city's "growing pains" were further complicated by the presence of Fort Bragg, one of the country's largest military bases. Finally, as a result of these problems--or perhaps another problem altogether--Fayetteville had what might be called low civic self-esteem.

But at his news conference Tuesday morning, Fayetteville's arriving urban expert offered little diagnosis and less prescription. Kamphoefner "doesn't know how to make the 500 block disappear," a reporter for the *Observer* wrote. "And he doesn't pretend to have a formula for bringing

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[8]"'Humanist-In-Residence' Arrives," *Fayetteville Times*, September 13, 1977, p. A4.

life back into a desolate downtown area. He can't even answer how to control a sprawling, uncontrolled urban growth. He doesn't have solutions to any of these problems."[9]

This confession of ignorance was, in part, simple prudence. No arbitrator wants to "find himself 'persona non grata' before the ball actually gets rolling."[10] "I wouldn't get very far if I went around pointing out problems. I'm sure the people here know what the problems are." [11]

But Kamphoefner's reticence was rooted more firmly in a proper respect for the challenge inherent in *stating the problem.* "It is critical that a distinction be made as early as possible between problems that are real and problems that are imagined. . . It will be useless and counterproductive to try to solve problems before the problem itself has been clearly stated and understood."[12] "Stating the problem" has a specific meaning for urban planners.

> . . . The consciousness of a problem is always an integrated perception, however vague, that is simultaneously an image of the situation and its constraints, of the goals to be achieved, of who the clients are, and what kinds of resources and solutions are available. Problems do not exist without some

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[9]"Humanist No Wizard, But He May Work Magic," *Fayetteville Observer*, September 16, 1977, p. 13A.

[10]*Ibid.*

[11]"Problems: 'Humanist' Hopes to be Sparkplug To Fayetteville," *Fayetteville Times*, September 14, 1977, p. B1.

[12]"Conversation Aids In Problem-Solving," *Fayetteville Times*, September 26, 1977, p. 6A.

> inkling of all of these features, and the decision process is no more than a progressive clarification of this set, until a firm basis for action is found--one in which solution, aims, clients, resources to be used, and perceived situation all seem to match one another. To achieve this mutual fit may require modifying any or all of these separate features. But the initial concept of the problem is crucial. Often enough, it is wrong to begin with--the situation so poorly understood, the clients so restricted, the aims or the solution envisaged so inappropriate, that nothing can be done except to make things worse." [13]

With this understanding of the task, "conversations and discussions" became, quite appropriately, the means to "discovery and definition."[14] The peculiarly American penchant to form associations has been recognized at least since Tocqueville.[15] Associations are *mediating structures* which stand "between the individual in his private life and the large institutions of public life."[16] Into this existing web of associational life the community discussion was carried. During the thirteen weeks of the project, Kamphoefner spoke to over thirty civic clubs and organizations, including local chapters of the Lions clubs and the Junior Service League, the Arts Council and the Ministerial Association, the Senior Citizens Roundtable and the Democratic Women's Club, the Board of

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[13]Kevin Lynch, *A Theory of Good City Form* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981) p.42.

[14]"Conversation Aids In Problem-Solving," p. 6A.

[15]Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) p. 167.

[16]Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, *To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977) p. 6,2.

Realtors and the Sierra Club. On one particularly hectic day early in the project, the Dean managed to pledge allegiance four times and sing "God Bless America" twice.

In all of these presentations (many of them after-dinner speeches), the time available to Kamphoefner was often less than 15 minutes and rarely more than half an hour. His remarks--variations on what came to be called The Speech--emphasized the same issues his four guest editorials published in the newspapers would focus on. Among city, county and military leaders, Kamphoefner said, he had found "a consensus of anxiety." Importantly, the shared concern was, he believed, invigorated by a new confidence that cooperation could generate new solutions.[17] He noted that the disparaging talk about a lack of civic leadership which he had heard often, early in his stay, had ended, "almost abruptly, as leadership became observed and was recognized."[18]

The importance of planning and good design--the need for "quality, people-oriented changes in our physical environment"--was, of course, a recurrent theme in his remarks.[19] On occasion he became a vocal advocate of the local architects: "The missing ingredient in quality rebirth of Fayetteville lies in the simple step of setting quality local designers to work on specific blueprints for the future. What is most needed here

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[17]"Conversation Aids In Problem-Solving," p. 6A.

[18]"Humanist Sums Up Work With Fayetteville People," *Fayetteville Observer*, December 29, 1977, p. 5A.

[19]"Local Talent Can Save City," *Fayetteville Observer*, November 17, 1977, p. A4.

in Fayetteville is an association of the most talented and professionally compatible architects to update and complete the city's 'revitalization' plans."[20] In his final report to the community, Kamphoefner would stress the need for quality design and praise local architects as an "'unusually talented group of designers' competent to handle local design problems."[21]

Kamphoefner also appeared before the City Council, the county Board of Commissioners and the joint city/county Planning Board and addressed audiences at Fayetteville State University, Methodist College, and Fayetteville Technical Institute--the three post-secondary institutions. The dean also met personally with over three-hundred individuals and served as advisor to a select committee of local citizens charged with carrying on the momentum for change which the project generated in the community.

The Dean was asked repeatedly during the thirteen weeks of his stay in Fayetteville what the residents could expect him to leave when he returned to Raleigh. Would he outline specific solutions for the city's problems? Would he leave behind a plan for downtown revitalization, replete with drawings and models? "I think," the Dean said later, "that's what they expect out of an architect . . . somebody who comes in from outside." "I kept telling them they weren't going to get that all along. . . The best I could do was try to identify problems and call

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[20]"A City for 'The People,'" *Fayetteville Times*, October 18, 1977, p. A4.

[21]"School Merger Backed," *Fayetteville Observer*, December 2, 1977, p. B15.

your attention to them. I think that's all I did." And then, with uncharacteristic humility, he added, "If I did that."[22]

Kamphoefner's residency was the most visible of the three components of the Humanist In Residence project. His presence generated the critical mass of popular interest and concern which the other parts of the program then built upon. He accomplished with great aplomb what had been his mission: "to stimulate discussion in the Fayetteville community of its urban problems . . . *to get people talking.*"[23]

Perhaps the most accurate assessment of his success is conveyed through an anecdote. When Kamphoefner arrived in September, his name, like Spiro Agnew's ten years earlier, was not a household word. Over the thirteen weeks he became a familiar presence in the community--a tall man whose mustache and shock of white hair made him look a bit like a wizard.

On the last evening of his stay, he went with a group of friends to a Thai restaurant that was located in the 500 block of Hay Street. It was his first nighttime excursion to the infamous strip. It was a relatively quiet evening, a Thursday. The prostitutes who were shipped in each month for payday had already returned to New York and Miami. Only a few locals worked the small groups of soldiers who moved up and down both sides of the street. The glow of the neon lights and the grind of the music from the bars lent the street a carnival atmosphere and made

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[22]Henry L. Kamphoefner, interview held in Raleigh, North Carolina, September 5, 1986.

[23]*Spectra*, Aug-Sept, 1977, p. 3.

it seem like nothing more than another red-light district--one of those ambiguous blessings which make cities lively. As a group of soldiers passed Kamphoefner's group, one looked up and, recognizing the Dean, called to him: "Good evening, Dean; it's nice to see you down here." Kamphoefner was a household word.

The Public Conversation

What have cities meant in the past, and what does it mean now for residents to live together in Fayetteville? What are the shared values of the community? How should these values be reflected in the design and revitalization of downtown? *The Unimagined City* (as the Humanist In Residence project came to be called) posed these questions. "We are migrants," literature for the program argued,

> living as if we were on temporary assignment, expecting of our city what we've come to expect of a competently managed Holiday Inn: that [it be] like all the rest, sanitary and nondescript, convenient to an interstate and to a McDonalds . . . and isolated from the city's seaminess and squalor, from its "500 Block."
>
> We prefer to live as if we were Anywhere . . . and therefore Nowhere. We are wary of investing too much of ourselves in any place, lest when we move on, the experience of relocating, of reinvesting ourselves, [be] too wrenching.
>
> . . .
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> Though we share the same geographic space, do we in fact form a *community*?[24]

As an analogy for residence in Fayetteville, a *tour of duty* had a certain aptness. The average stay of soldiers stationed at Bragg was two

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[24]"Seeking 'Unimagined City,'" *Fayetteville Times.*

years, and over 45% of the county's labor force was supported by the military.[25] But mobility was hardly a problem unique to Fayetteville. A transformation in the character of work had created a nation of migrant professionals. In the older understanding of a *calling*, "to enter a profession meant to take up a definite function in a community and to operate within [its] civic and civil order." But the "profession as *career* was no longer oriented to any face-to-face community but to impersonal standards of excellence, operating in the context of a national occupational system." Thus, "following a profession came to mean, quite literally, 'to move *up* and away.'"[26]

Though perhaps different in degree, Fayetteville's problem with transience was not different in kind from a problem the rest of the country grappled with. The same was true of most of the city's other problems. There were "Bragg Boulevards in most cities--ugly sprawling strip developments which [were] the result of unregulated growth." The same cycle of decay ate away at Main Streets across the country as the large downtown department stores deserted the center city, "crippling the small independent merchants who depend upon them to attract their

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[25]This figure includes 7,698 federal civilian employees (6%) and is adjusted for unemployment (9.2% in 1980); the comparable figure for the percentage of the national work force supported by the government is 10.71%. In 1980, 31.6% of the residents of Fayetteville had five years earlier been living in other states. This compares to the national average of 11.6%. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *County and City Data Book: 1983*. p. 24, 28, 396-97 and 406.

[26]*Habits of the Heart*, p. 119-120. Italics mine.

shoppers, . . . [destroying] the tax base of the city itself, [and] leaving the inner city to the poor and to vice and violence.[27]

The project assumed, however, that these specific problems were but symptoms of two, more fundamental problems endemic to our time. The first was the "sense of powerlessness" which had insinuated itself into the fabric of civic life.

> . . . No "outside expert" can solve that problem... Citizens recover a confidence in their ability to act *by acting.* And action will lead them to a crucial rediscovery: namely, that there are resources at hand, here in Fayetteville (not the least of which are imagination and sweat), sufficient to remedy the problems the community faces. The solutions must come from us, from the talent and imagination that is here; the dean's role has been to help mobilize that talent and that imagination.[28]

The radical privatization of life in the twentieth century was the second problem. To "restore conversation and the variety of random, daily contact between citizens" was seen as a step toward its remedy:

> If this project succeeds in drawing a large number of people downtown to discuss and debate "the state of the city," the fact of that discussion and that debate will go a long way in reversing our increasing isolation. And if we can solve *that* problem . . . then we can certainly find the means--both moral and financial--to restore our decaying downtown, to eradicate the seediness and vice of the 500 block, and to

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[27]"Seeking 'Unimagined City.'"

[28]"Midpoint In Fayetteville's 'Humanist' Program," *Fayetteville Times*, October 30, 1977, p. D5.

manage the explosive growth with the county has experienced in recent years.[29]

The idea for a Humanist-In-Residence project emerged from a meeting in Fayetteville. R. Oakley Winters, director of the North Carolina Humanities Committee, was looking for an alternative to the "single-event programing" which had to date claimed the lion's share of the committee's funds.[30] Bolton Anthony, who had designed and directed the earlier projects the library had sponsored, like Winters, wanted more effective ways to extend and deepen the interaction "between citizenry and scholar."[31] Roy Parker, Jr., editor of the Fayetteville *Times* and the third participant, was looking for a way to prod the community into action on downtown revitalization. The three met on December 13, 1976, at Parker's office in the 500 block of Hay Street, and the idea for the project emerged.[32]

As the project evolved, the resident humanist became one of three distinct elements. His three-month stay in Fayetteville would serve as the catalyst for broad public discussion. Four weeks after his arrival, a series of public forums would begin; these would give conceptual

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[29] *Ibid.*

[30] R. Oakley Winters, "A Resident Humanist Program," No date (Mimeographed) p. 2.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] The grant which was approved by North Carolina Humanities Committee in April, provided support in the amount of $14,108. It was matched by local in-kind contributions.

organization to the community discussion. A daylong workshop for city and county officials and planners--the third element in the project--was planned for late October.[33]

Identifying the resident humanist was the first order of business. The three-month term of the project narrowed considerably the range of available candidates; and the broad, interdisciplinary concerns of the project meant the planners were looking for that rarest of scholars...a generalist. Someone, like Lewis Mumford or Kevin Lynch, who understood the web of city life and the impact of the built environment on human values.

The search lead to Henry L. Kamphoefner, dean emeritus of the School of Design at North Carolina State University. As a young man, Kamphoefner had studied under Frank Lloyd Wright who, in calling him "an architectural missionary," had pointed Kamphoefner toward a life-long calling. He had come to State in 1948 as founding dean of the School of Design; and his tenure there had a profound impact on North Carolina, "not only in the design of houses and buildings but in ideas for living." He was interested, as Sam Ragan said, "in not only the way people live but how they live, and the quality of their lives."[34] In early March,

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[33]Of the three elements of the project, the October 21 workshop was least successful. In organizing the workshop, the library apparently exceeded its mandate. Most elected officials were conspicuously absent. The three presenters--urban planners from the Charlotte, Raleigh and South Bend, Indiana--were put in the awkward and almost untenable position of outside experts offering unsolicited advice.

[34]"Southern Accent" (editorial) *Sandhills Pilot*, September 28, 1977.

after several meetings in Raleigh and in Fayetteville, Kamphoefner agreed to tackle the assignment.

Planning meetings, which continued through the spring, involved a broad spectrum of community leaders. Mayor Beth Finch and County Commissioner Larry Thompson were active participants in these meetings as was A.A. (Bill) Markley, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, the downtown church which would host the forum series. Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Revitalization Commission, Fort Bragg and a number of community organizations were also involved.

The meetings built broad local support for the project. More importantly, they gave form and definition to the conversation it proposed. The final planning meeting, held in May, brought together community leaders and the seven speakers from across the state who had agreed to serve as speakers in the forum series. The *conversation* began at that meeting when residents shared with speakers their concerns for their city and their hopes for its future.

The public forums, which began Thursday, October 6, were a cross between a town meeting and a chautauqua.[35] At each forum presentations (a half-hour in length) by two visiting speakers were followed by a panel discussion. The visiting speakers came from a variety of academic

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[35]Attendance, which began at 75, grew to perhaps 150. Four forums had been planned originally: "The Idea of the City" (October 6), "Planning the City" (October 20), "Recognizing Attitudes" (November 3), and "Coping with Growth: Values and Politics" (November 17). After the series had begun a fifth public meeting, scheduled for December 1, was added.

disciplines: history, philosophy, political science, city planning, and architecture. In each program a generalist was teamed with a more technically-oriented specialist: an historian with an architect, a philosopher with a political scientist. The role of the panelists was to *mediate* the discussion, that is, to react to the speakers' remarks, situate them within the local context *and then* to transfer the locus of discussion to the audience.

The Dean's presence in the community had sparked broad public discussion. The forums now attempted to "organize" that discussion, that is, to provide it with a *conceptual framework.* But a second meaning to the word "organize"--to channel public discussion toward specific political action--is also relevant here. The project *in its design* had no specific political agenda and operated at some remove from political action. Yet all public discussion, being action, occurs within a political context which shapes it and which is in turn modified by it. Thus, as public interest and participation increased with each forum and momentum built, the project *in its execution* took on a decidedly political character.

Some accounting of its political impact must be made, and that impact is best understood in terms of the public debate over two specific issues.

The first of these issues is planning. Fayetteville had two plans for downtown revitalization. The official plan had been prepared by

LBC&W Consultants.[36] The unofficial plan was urged by the Citizens Advocacy Planning Group, a group of local architects who found the official plan seriously deficient.[37]

The two alternatives visions of downtown revitalization shared much; the important differences were a matter of emphasis. Both plans recognized the need for "mixed uses" of downtown; the central business district could no longer depend exclusively on retail trade for its economic vitality. The architects believed the provision of downtown housing was an essential ingredient in that mix--an ingredient which LBC&W had stressed insufficiently. They applauded the attention Cross Creek had received, but thought it should receive more. Similarly they applauded the vision of downtown as a "people-oriented core where pedestrians can move about freely without conflict with the automobile."

The real disagreements were over process. To succeed, downtown revitalization needed to enlist broad community support; private and public funding was essential. The support for the LBC&W plan,

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[36]LBC&W Consultants, Hammer, Siler, George Associates, and Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. *Downtown Fayetteville 1975/2000.* Alexandria, VA: LBC&W, 1975. The report was commissioned by the Fayetteville Area Chamber of Commerce.

[37]The "minority" review and critique of the LBC&W plan was presented to City Council and the County Board of Commissioners on March 24, 1975. Humanist-in-Residence project prompted its reconsideration, and it was revised and presented to the Fayetteville Revitalization Commission on December 15, 1977. Hicks, Mason, Walter Vick, William Laslett and Wayne McGary. "A Review, Critique, and Proposals to the Fayetteville City Council and the Cumberland County Commissioners through the Cumberland County Joint Planning Board for the Downtown Revitalization Plan by LBC&W and Consultants, March 24, 1975."

representing vested business interests, was, to the architects, not broad-based enough. The community needed to share a vision of downtown and be drawn into the planning process itself. The product of that public involvement would, the architects were confident, produce a plan for downtown revitalization that, while forward looking, respected the unique historic character of the city.

Planning has certain limitations as a broadly accessible issue of public debate. Like city management, of which it is a part, it has become a complex and highly specialized profession.[38] The decisions which city managers and planners are called upon to make depend on a technical expertise which few have and most would not want. The challenge this presents in a democracy was noted by John Roos, one of the forum speakers:

> To consult with citizens seriously is a great risk for professional planners. To attempt to influence the plans of experts is a great risk for citizens. Some sort of faith in one another is the prerequisite, if the process is not to become simply another individualistic fight over private ends. An openness to public and shareable objects is the rare but

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[38]An alternative--the Athenian city state--has a certain romantic appeal. "Almost every male Athenian, at one time or another, had to take part in public business, as a member of the ecclesia or assembly, and in seeing that its decisions were properly carried out. . . work now done by executives, permanent secretaries, inspectors, and magistrates, was done by ordinary Athenians, rotating in sections of fifty." But the romance aside, few twentieth century city-dwellers would welcome a stint as building inspector or trust the management of the city sewer system to the luck of the draw. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961) p. 167.

indispensable quality that pervades successful attempts in this area.[39]

Planning *per se* rarely becomes a public issue, though specific planning decisions--for example, the routing of an expressway through an historical district or the preservation of a community landmark--often do. Only where the dire consequences of the failure to plan are highly visible does planning itself become an issue. And in these instances, the overarching issue is not planning, but the failure of leadership.

Fayetteville's "Leadership Void" (the title of an editorial in the Fayetteville *Observer*) is the second public issue to which I need make reference. During May and June of 1977, the Fayetteville City Council and the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners became embroiled in a "shouting match" over downtown revitalization. What to do with the Prince Charles Hotel was the specific issue. This once-elegant showcase had fallen upon hard times. In the past it had provided lodging to Fayetteville's most distinguished visitors; now its rooms were rented by the hour to "visitors" to the 500 block of Hay Street, a block away. The Downtown Revitalization Commission recommended purchase of the building; high-density center city housing was an essential ingredient in most successful revitalization schemes. The City Council entertained the idea and considered converting it to senior citizen housing. But unable to agree among themselves, council passed the issue on to County Commissioners. Tempers flared on both sides, and accusations flew. The

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[39]L. John Roos, lecture presented in Fayetteville, October 20, 1977.

unseemly public squabbling laid bare a glaring lack of leadership and a need for new ideas.[40]

The public debate over planning and the failure of elected leadership to act on downtown revitalization formed the concrete political context for the Humanist-in-Residence project. The public conversation which the project sparked was defined by that context and, over the term of the project, modified it, as can be chronicled through newspaper accounts and editorials about the program.

"By the time the [second] session ended, there was the beginning of a clamor to keep the forums . . . going after the professionals who organized the series have left Fayetteville."[41] Both reporters who covered that forum detected the change in public mood. "The people in the audience," the reporter for the Fayetteville *Observer* wrote, "seemed ready to get at the 'real plans'" architect Mason Hicks, a panelist, had said were needed.[42] The Fayetteville *Times* article reported some of the spontaneous suggestions the audience began making:

> One woman suggested that planting trees downtown "certainly could not cost that much," and another complained that the downtown revitalization plan was out to destroy

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[40]"City to Purchase Hotel 'With Strings Attached,'" *Fayetteville Observer*, June 28, 1977, p. B1. See also, May 16 (p. A1, B1), 24 (p. A1, B1), 25 (p. B1); June 2 (p. B1), 21 (p. B1), and 23 (p. B1), 1977.

[41]"Forum On City Planning Stirs Interest In Downtown Renewal" *Fayetteville Times*, October 21, 1977, p. B1.

[42]"Humanistic City Is Forum's Goal," *Fayetteville Observer*, October 21, 1977, p. 8B.

> "everything I like about Fayetteville, like these small streets."
>
> Others called for the construction of a community arts center downtown and the building of a central library.
>
> One woman wanted to know why only one elected official[43] from Cumberland County . . . attended the session. Nobody could answer that question."[44]

An editorial in the Fayetteville *Observer* on the following Tuesday took note of the conspicuous absence of elected officials who, according to the editorial, were "in the best and maybe only position to translate the talking and the 'dreaming' into action." "Until . . . local political officeholders do pay some attention to the real and fundamental needs of Fayetteville and are willing to listen to those concerned enough to meet and talk about those needs in a constructive way, Fayetteville's self-defeating shortcomings will remain."[45]

Mayor Beth Finch, who moderated the third forum, opened the program by saying: "Everywhere I go, people are talking about the Humanist-in-Residence. There is a changing attitude. People are interested, aware. They are looking for solutions to problems."[46] Four city council members--"the ruling bloc . . . [who] have led the city government on a backward march almost since the day they took office two

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[43]City Councilman J.L. Dawkins.

[44]"Forum on City Planning Stirs Interest," p. B2.

[45]"Leadership Void," *Fayetteville Observer*, October 25, 1977, p. A4.

[46]"Humanist Project Sows Seeds of Permanence," *Fayetteville Times*, November 4, 1977, p. B2.

years ago"[47]--were again absent. But two political newcomers who would in the municipal election the following Tuesday out-poll incumbents were present.[48]

At the conclusion of third forum Henry Kamphoefner proposed the establishment of "a permanent 'open-ended' organization" to press for civic improvement.[49] By the fourth forum, the "movement to keep alive the spirit and excitement that [had] been generated" had found a structure. Plans to form a "Committee of 100" were announced, Rev. A.A. Markley was selected as temporary chairman of the group, and a December 1 meeting was scheduled. "We see now that we can say the process has begun," Markley said, "You're talking, the community's talking. The despondency has become excitement."[50]

In an editorial, published the following Monday, the Fayetteville

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[47]"Critical City Vote" (editorial), *Fayetteville Observer*, November 7, 1977, p. A4.

[48]Four newcomers were elected to City Council in the November 8th election: Bill Hurley and Mildred Evans, who had both been active participants in the project, and Wayne T. Williams and George Markham. Defeated in their re-election bids were council members Marie Beard and Steve Satisky. Vincent Shields, who had opposed Mayor Beth Finch, lost by a three-to-one margin. Marion George, the only member of the "ruling bloc" returned to office, finished sixth; while J.L. Dawkins, who had been "on the short end of all those 4-2 votes which bogged the city government down during the past two years," led all candidates. "Newcomers Cop Council Seats," *Fayetteville Observer*, November 9, 1977, p. A1.

[49]"Humanist Project Sows Seeds of Permanence," p. B2.

[50]"Forum 'Spirit' Praised," *Fayetteville Observer*, November 18, 1977, p. B1.

Times called the Committee of 100 "a logical and sound . . . follow-on to Kamphoefner's stay."

> The yearning for such an effort has been evident at the forums and in the dozens of gatherings which Kamphoefner has attended or hosted.
>
> The yearnings themselves speak to the need for individual volunteer effort. A more beautiful city in the physical sense, more civility in human relations, public decisions based on human values as well as political or economic values, enhancement of education and cultural resources, these are the yearnings which have been expressed. They are the sorts of issues and goals which require widespread involvement to prompt the ideas and eventually develop the clout to make them a reality through both private and public initiatives.
>
> The impulses triggered in many breasts by the Humanist-in-Residence project seem soundly altruistic and hopefully robust. The scheme to follow-up the project with the practical approach of a citizens' involvement effort is the most effective way to channel the altruism and harness the robustness to accomplish real goals for the community.[51]

At the December 1st meeting, the Humanist-in-Residence gave his final report to the community. In his remarks, Kamphoefner called for the development of Fayetteville State University into "a first-rate university to serve the entire community . . . [and for] improved city-county coordination and merger of the dual school systems." He told the gathering, "The downtown must be made attractive and safe again;" and he advised city leaders "to undertake one visible project" whose success could spur other efforts. He concluded by saying, "The leadership exists here to make this community a better place to live and work." The list of priorities emerging from the small group discussions that followed

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[51]"Sound Followup To Humanist," *Fayetteville Times*, November 21, 1977, p. B4.

Kamphoefner's talk resembled closely the goals the Dean had articulated. Elizabeth Geimer, reporting for the *Observer*, captured what was most critical, the exuberant optimism of the meeting: "Over 100 people who share a dream for Fayetteville took the ideas and excitement generated by the Humanist-in-Residence program and melded them into common priorities and goals for this community."[52]

The Dean left Fayetteville at the end of the following week; and the Humanist-in-Residence project, which had stretched over a thirteen week period, came to its official conclusion. An assessment, published three days after the Dean's departure, found mixed reactions to the project. Those who had "believed Kamphoefner would leave Fayetteville with a simple, concrete plan for bettering itself" were disappointed. Others, like Denny Shaffer, a member of the Downtown Revitalization Commission, and Larry Thompson, a county commissioner, recognized "the exciting potential . . . [in the] beginning of a dialogue." Kamphoefner helped to "give us pride in our city," said Shaffer, "To get us over our inferiority."

Those who were critical were afraid that the "energy and enthusiasm" created was too unfocused, or that "business representation [at the meetings] was as weak as the political representation" or that "not all segments of the community were included." The most negative appraisal of Kamphoefner's stay came from a businessman: "All he's done is stirred up controversy. . . It wasn't worth a tinker's damn." The businessman who

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[52]"School Merger Backed," p. B1,B15.

was quoted asked not to be identified, because "criticizing the humanist is like criticizing mother."[53]

The Committee of 100 met irregularly over the next five years. The community issues discussed at its public forums included downtown revitalization, beautification and environmental design, historic preservation and consolidation of city/county government.[54] But it was never more than "a loosely organized group of interested citizens";[55] and it never acted as a lobby for specific actions, though concrete progress, such as the establishment of a community trust, can be traced to the efforts of some of the task forces into which it organized itself. Apart from whatever it may have accomplished directly, the Committee was important because it signalled a changed political reality--a political reality which a project, begun with no political agenda, had helped forge.

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[53]"Humanist Program Called 'Force' For Future," *Fayetteville Times*, December 12, 1977, p. B1,B16.

[54]Joan Allen, "Committee of 100 Five Year Progress Report on Priorities Selected January 1978 (1978-1982)" (November 16, 1982) (Mimeographed).

[55]"No New Library Sites Proposed," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 22, 1978, p. B1.

Cities and Dreams

In this account, no mention has been made of what the eight speakers in the forums actually said. Since the intent of the forums was to provide the community conversation with a "conceptual framework," some attention to the matter is obviously called for.

We are faced immediately with a major practical difficulty: only scant record of what was said exists. Brief summaries occur in some of the newspaper accounts. These are, of necessity, highly selective and often focus on points which the speaker would have, in all likelihood, considered marginal. A manuscript exists in the one instance where the speaker spoke from written remarks. A second talk which accompanied a slide presentation was taped, and the transcript and slides for that talk also exist. But for six of the eight talks, where there is no written record, alternative ways to *characterize* a speaker's remarks must be found.

In these instances, one might mention the *topic* a speaker was invited to address. One might, for example, note that Richard Bardolph, an historian from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro whose presentation opened the series, was asked to examine "the possibilities for enrichment of the human spirit which the city has in history held out." Or one might say what a particular speaker--according to his own account--was *likely* to have said. The advice Dan Morrill, an historian at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, gave in 1977 was, in all probability, not significantly different from his advice recorded

eight years later: "Don't revitalize your town by a formula. Don't order it out of a catalog. Recognize that every community is different. Recognize that Fayetteville has some very distinctive assets. Recognize that one thing that a center city has that the suburbs don't have is history. Recognize that a community must grow, you can't freeze it in the past; but at the same time, you don't throw that past away."[56] As a third alternative, one might provide a hearsay account.

Yet the scantness of the written record seems to me appropriate, and I am disinclined to search for alternative ways to characterize the remarks of the speakers or (in the two instances where a record exists) to summarize. I want to speak personally now of the words which were spoken and the words which were heard during that long autumn of talk in Fayetteville. Because I was "both in and out of the game," my "watching and wondering at it"[57] lack a distance no piling up of years can ever supply. Yet the testimony of an involved observer has its own uses. And, in a sense, no observer is really ever uninvolved; and all observation is always an "it-seems-to-me" which is the mode in which the world appears.[58]

My reluctance to construct an approximation of what was said has its roots in my understanding of public programs. Like drama, to which they

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[56]PBS, "Fayetteville," Smithsonian World, (March 19, 1986).

[57]Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1959) p. 27.

[58]Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977) p. 38.

seem to me akin, the live experience of a public program involves a mysterious collaboration between speaker and audience. Its meaning--contained as it is in not only what was said, but who said it and to whom--is but imperfectly captured by the written record. It seems to me appropriate that words spoken in such a forum have something of ephemeral about them. One has to have been there. All the public programs I have planned and directed share this prejudice, and in most I have successfully resisted suggestions that presentations be transcribed and published.

In thinking back over the four forums, the successful presentations--and by that I mean those talks which sparked intense audience discussion--shared two important characteristics: perspective and vision. Perspective is the easier of the two to deal with.

At the first forum, James Vaseff, an architectural historian from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, illustrated his remarks with slides of Fayetteville. In a number of these, taken from atop the Wachovia building, the course of Cross Creek is visible as a ribbon of trees winding through the downtown on its way to the Cape Fear River. The creek is largely neglected: overgrown in places and fronted by the backs of buildings. At a number of points as the creek meanders across the grid pattern of the downtown, the belt of green is cinched by asphalt parking lots or covered over by broad streets. But from the height at which the slides were shot, the creek has a dramatic presence. From that

perspective it becomes possible to see it in a new way, not as an inconvenience to orderly city planning, but as a potential enhancement.

The forums themselves served a similar purpose: they allowed the residents of Fayetteville to see their city from new perspectives. The visitors who spoke were from other places and, in the case of the historians, figuratively from other times. Their vantage points provided a salutary distance. In looking through their eyes, the residents of Fayetteville were able to discern beneath the familiar, patterns and possibilities which had until then been unimagined.

Vision, the second characteristic, is a more elusive matter. In speaking of vision, I am not suggesting that some speakers were "visionaries" and other were not and that those who were spoke with more authority. Vision, in the sense I have in mind, is not something one has, but something one testifies to. An experience at the final forum first clarified my thinking on this matter.

The choice of speakers for that last program had been less fortunate than with the previous programs. The two speakers had defined their topic--how to control urban growth and encourage change--somewhat narrowly, and their remarks focused largely upon a discussion of mechanisms. Both talks were overly specific, and the second was overlong. A general restiveness among the audience was apparent by their conclusion. After several half-hearted stabs at discussion by the panel, which seemed itself non-plussed, a silence like a pall settled over the audience. For a long, unnerving moment all seemed lost: the public

interest and energy which had built over the course of ten weeks would in this, the final forum, be entirely dissipated.

At this point Denny Shaffer rose to speak. He had been trying, he said, to understand why the mood of this meeting was in such contrast to the mood of previous meetings. He thought it had to do with what the speakers had said. The humanists who had spoken at the earlier programs had somehow invited the audience to dream. That invitation had been absent from the presentations this evening. It was the dream, Shaffer thought, which moves us.

And it is the dream, as John Sullivan, a philosopher from Elon College who had spoken at the second forum, which makes us human:

> Perhaps only a city whose vision is larger than itself can be a truly human city. Like the Kingdom of God, such a city already is (in seed) but is not yet (in full actuality). One of the Kennedys liked to quote a saying which goes something like this: "Some men see the things that are and ask why; others dream of what might be and ask why not." The Old Testament speaks of a time when young men will have visions and old men will dream dreams. Martin Luther King took us to the mountain top and shared the vision. "I have a dream," he thundered; and we were moved from our narrowness, shamed in our pettiness, humbled by the sense of what we most deeply share.
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> At the highest level, the city is a dream. And yet, without the dream, our city remains a market place or stays a self-enclosed homestead. In one sense, the dream is quite impractical. In another sense, only with the dream will we be able to see where we wish to go and what we wish to be. So it is the dream which waters our practice, sustains us in our frailty and guides our faltering steps.[59]

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[59]John G. Sullivan, lecture presented in Fayetteville, October 20, 1977.

I say again, vision, in the sense I have in mind, is not something one has, but something one testifies to, something which is always larger than ourselves, something to which we bear witness. To speak such words requires great courage. Hearing such words spoken can often move men to act with similar courage.

The Unimagined City was about empowerment. We--that is, citizens--recover a confidence in our ability to act *by acting.* And it is by speaking that we act. There are two points here: the first, that speech, far from being "idle talk," is action. This means

> . . . not only that most political action, in so far as it remains outside the sphere of violence, is indeed transacted in words, but more fundamentally that finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey, *is* action.[60]

Because public speech always involves a "disclosure of 'who' . . . somebody is,"[61] a kind of "original courage" is implicit in the willingness to leave "one's private hiding place" and "to act and speak at all."[62] It is this act of "original courage"--the second point I wish to emphasize--which empowers people.

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[60]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) p. 26. Italics mine.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 179

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Years have passed, and one can point to many changes in downtown Fayetteville. Many of the "yearnings" articulated in 1977, have found palpable expression in goals realized or commitments undertaken. The 500 block of Hay Street is gone; where it had stood, a new medical complex now stands. In June of 1985, the new downtown mall was dedicated; a year later, a magnificent new central library opened. These brick and mortar changes are quite properly sources of renewed civic pride, as is the status of All-American City which was conferred on Fayetteville in 1985.

I do not wish to suggest that one can trace these successes back to the Humanist-in-Residence project as a first cause; such matters are much more complicated than that. It does seem to me, though, as one witness, that during the autumn of 1977 Fayetteville found that most elusive of civic virtues--the will to act. The words spoken during that long autumn of talk had something to do with that.

The city . . . does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand.

Italo Calvino

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Moveable Cities

"Every explorer names his island, Formosa, beautiful. To him it is beautiful because, being first, he has access to it and can see it for what it is. But to no one else is it ever as beautiful--except," Walker Percy adds, "the rare man who manages to recover it, who knows that it has to be recovered."[1] "After-comers cannot guess the beauty been" not because it has been destroyed, like the grove of aspens in Hopkins' poem;[2] but because it has been made radically *inaccessible*. There are a number of reasons why we have, according to Percy, lost the world; the one of interest here has to do with the limits of language. We are prisoners of our own language which acts to cut short experience, concealing the real behind an almost impenetrable veil:

> . . . at certain hours, in certain places along the street, you see opening before you the hint of something unmistakable, rare, perhaps magnificent; you would like to say what it is,

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[1]Walker Percy, "The Loss of the Creature," in *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975) p. 46.

[2]Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Binsey Poplars" in *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Penquin Books, 1953) p. 40.

> but everything previously said of Fayetteville imprisons your words and obliges you to repeat rather than say.[3]

I concluded Chapter 4 by arguing that speech *is* action, that words spoken within the public realm are revelatory, and that the courage required to speak at all is itself *empowering*. The quotations from the two authors above suggest that this formulation is altogether too simplistic. If nothing else, there are limits to language which it ignores.

It is true that words may be used as readily to conceal as to disclose; and when used thus, speech is not empowering. "Power is actualized only where . . . words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities."[4] But though profoundly true, Hannah Arendt's remarks address not the *limits* of language, but its *abuse*. What I would like to explore in somewhat greater depth is what the quotation from Calvino suggests--a *structural* limitation in language which, against our will, forces us "to repeat rather than say."

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[3]Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1974) p. 67-68. The mythical city named by Calvino is "Aglaura" and, of course, not Fayetteville.

[4]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) p. 200.*

The argument advanced by the authors of *Habits of the Heart* is relevant in this regard. Some definitions are necessary. By "language," the authors mean "modes of moral discourse that include distinct vocabularies and characteristic patterns of moral reasoning."[5] The authors use the term *first language* to distinguish a) "the individualistic mode that is the dominant American form of discourse about moral, social, and political matters" from b) our *second languages*, "primarily biblical and republican, that provide at least part of the moral discourse of most Americans."[6] "[P]ublic life is built upon the second languages and practices of commitment that shape character.

> . . . [They] establish a web of interconnection by creating trust, joining people to families, friends, communities, and churches, and making each individual aware of his reliance on the larger society. They form those habits of the heart that are the matrix of a moral ecology, the connecting tissue of a body politic."[7]

The "first language" of American individualism proves an inadequate instrument to express or to understand these "larger interdependencies in which people live."[8] Time and again, in the many interviews which comprise the book, the authors note the "difficulty [Americans have]

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[5]Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) p. 334.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

articulating the richness of their commitments. In the language they use, their lives sound more isolated and arbitrary than, as we have observed them, they actually are."[9] "[O]ne senses a deeper and more positively defined commitment to the public good than their language can usually articulate."[10]

It is not simply speech that matters, as my remarks in Chapter 4 might suggest. The kind of speech matters. Though, doubtless, "[p]eople frequently live out a fuller sense of purpose in life than they can justify in rational terms;"[11] in a fundamental sense, *we cannot know what we cannot say*:

> . . . whatever men do or know or experience can make sense only to the extent that it can be spoken about. There may be truths beyond speech, and they may be of great relevance to man in the singular, that is, to man in so far as he is not a political being, whatever else he may be. Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, *can experience meaningfulness* only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves.[12]

Empowerment is not enough. We must ask, "empowerment for what ends,"[13] recognizing, as a society, that "justice, not power, is the true

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 20-21.

[10] *Ibid.*. p. 191.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[12] *The Human Condition*, p. 4. Italics mine.

[13] *Habits of the Heart*, p. 215.

end of politics."[14] Ends conflict, in a world of dwindling resources the hopes and aspirations of divergent segments of society collide. Our "first language" of enlightened self-interest arbitrates between conflicting claims by appeal to *procedural* justice. That is, it assumes "competing claims can be resolved peacefully by the creation of neutral *technical solutions* that are beyond debate."[15] It can neither comprehend, much less, resolve the deep chasms that divide us. Only through appeal to *distributive and substantive* claims can we hope to bridge them. We have in our time at least one example of the power of such an appeal. "By combining biblical and republican themes in a way that included, but transformed, the culture of individualism," Martin Luther King, Jr.,

> . . . reappropriated that classic strand of the American tradition that understands the true meaning of freedom to lie in the affirmation of responsibility for uniting all of the diverse members of society into a just social order.[16]

That great words have power to heal and reconcile--to bridge our separate selves and bind us together--is a mystery, a blessing which, like home, we "somehow haven't to deserve."[17] And though it is a human power, when it reveals itself in human affairs, like Mr. Head and Nelson

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

[17] Robert Frost, "Death of a Hired Man" in *Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1949) p. 53.

in Flannery O'Connor's short story, "The Artificial Nigger," we stand before it awed. The two had been estranged by the grandfather's betrayal of his grandson; and now they wander lost through the streets of Atlanta, the grandfather feeling "the boy's steady hate, traveling at an even pace" exactly fifteen feet behind him.[18] The distance that separates them--the distance that separates us--is unbridgeable. And yet it is bridged:

> . . . They stood gazing at the [statue of the] Negro as if they were faced with some great mystery, some monument to another's victory that brought them together in their common defeat. They could both feel it dissolving their differences like an action of mercy.[19]

My research for this dissertation led off in a number of directions, most of them false leads. But one such excursion proved quite fruitful, in that it gave me an analogue with which to think about the city. In following the trail of the Scotch Highlanders who originally settled Cumberland County and the Cape Fear Region, I came across a short history of Longstreet Presbyterian Church, one of three congregations established by the Reverend James Campbell, the first Presbyterian minister to travel the region. I read the narrative, hoping perhaps to find there a vivid account of the raising of a church building in the wilderness. In that

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[18]Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger" in *The Complete Stories* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971) p. 267.

[19]*Ibid.* p. 269.

hope, I was disappointed. One scant paragraph in the twenty pages of the booklet dealt with the church building itself:

> Longstreet has had three houses of worship. The first was built in 1765. It was probably a plain log structure. It stood just north of the present site, and about four hundred yards away. The second house was erected in the early part of the nineteenth century, and was a frame structure. It stood on the west side of the present building and near the corner of the cemetery. It was a rather plain and unattractive house, but commodious and furnished accommodation for very large congregations. The present house was erected between 1845 and 1848, probably finished in 1847.[20]

R. A. McLeod's brief narrative was full of details--the names of church elders and the list of the sister congregations whose growth Longstreet had nurtured. Not details, but a *kind* of detail was lacking. (There was, for example, no mention of the width the roof spanned nor the height of the ceiling.) The absence of such details brought home to me something that I perhaps had known but had not understood: the church is not its buildings nor the hallowed ground they stand upon. The church is a "community of memory;"[21] and its history is held in "the memories that

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[20]Rev. R. A. McLeod, *Historical Sketch of Long Street Presbyterian Church, 1756-1923* (Sanford, NC: Cole Printing Co., No date.) p. 14-15. Mr. McLeod was the last minister to serve Longstreet before the property was enclosed by Fort Bragg and passed into the hands of the government in 1923.

[21]*Habits of the Heart*, 152-55. "Community," as used by the authors, refers to "a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain *practices* . . . that both define the community and are nurtured by it. Such a community . . . almost always has a history and so is also a *community of memory*, defined in part by its past and its memory of its past." p. 333.

cluster around that spot . . . [and the lives of] generations of parents and grandparents."[22] The continuity most essential is not one of place, but one of survival--*and remembrance*--over time.

Could it be that the built environment of a city and its fixed geographical location--that these also are of secondary importance? Is the city, like the church, a "community of memory" which binds its citizens together through the recollection of its collective past?

The Greeks had a saying which became "the watchword of Greek colonization": "Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*." Because the city is constituted not by the buildings it contains, but by the space which "the deeds and stories . . . of [men] acting and speaking" create, it "can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere."[23] Wherever men together can remember the deeds and stories that form their common past, there the city will be. And so there are two cities: the city formed by our buildings and the city formed by our stories.

This second city "lives by remembering;"[24] and the stories which form its collective history "contain conceptions of character, of what a good person is like, and of the virtues that define such character.

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[22]McLeod, p. 18.

[23]*The Human Condition*, p. 198. I have substituted "city" for "*polis*", though the substitution, in the specific context of her argument, blurs somewhat distinctions she is making.

[24]Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961) p. 98.

> But the stories are not all exemplary, not all about successes and achievements. A genuine community of memory will also tell painful stories of shared suffering that sometimes creates deeper identities than success. . . And if the community is completely honest, it will remember stories not only of suffering received but of suffering inflicted---dangerous memories, for they call the community to alter ancient evils. The communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope. They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and see our own efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good."[25]

The problem which we denizens of the twentieth century face is that, for us, "history and hope are [largely] forgotten and community means only the gathering of the similar."[26] We share not history but patterns of conspicuous consumption. A loneliness haunts our private lives; an emptiness pervades our public spaces. If we are to reverse this erosion of the common world, we must fill those empty public spaces with the sound of human speech.

Perhaps the city, understood as "organized remembrance,"[27] is an illusion--not "unimagined" but *unimaginable*. Thus, it is naive to believe that a public realm *can* be recovered and to argue, as I have in this inquiry, that the educational endeavor which public humanities programs represent can assist in this recovery.

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[25] *Habits of the Heart*, p. 153.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[27] *The Human Condition*, p. 198.

In Chapter 3, I suggested that public humanities programs can be understood as a kind of legislation and, as such, they are analogous to the wall the ancients built around the city. Both are *pre-political*, that is, "Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place."[28] The wall defined that space; and the law, its structure. Using this model, I argued that public humanities programs provide a structure for the public conversation of the city. Distinct from an agenda for action, which often emerges out of that conversation, public humanities programs define the space, the boundaries, for public discourse and the human actualization it allows.

If the model is useful in exploring the role and potential of such programs, it also underscores their limitation. Like the physical city itself, the space such programs create is a *necessary, but not sufficient, condition* for human actualization. As our subsequent discussion has suggested, the recovery of the common world hinges upon two other things. To succeed, we need, first, to recover a common language. This calls for, it seems to me, a public re-education in our "second languages" of moral discourse, whose fluency we have lost. Public humanities programs are committed to that task, and it is not unreasonable to hope they might succeed. The second recovery is more problematic. It is the web of stories which bind us together as "communities of memory." I do not know whether that web, once broken,

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

can be re-knit. I do not know if it is possible to recover a shareable past.

"The city . . . does not tell its past." Only men *tell* their past. Only men speak and, by sharing their private history, insert themselves in human world. By this act, they reveal at one and the same time who they are and the grounds of human solidarity. When men do not--or *cannot*--tell their past, the city does not tell it. But it "*contains* it," it holds it mutely, "*like the lines of a hand.*"[29] A fragile reservoir, a thin hope, a flicker of light for dark times.

Public Virtues and Private Goodness

Other ages have witnessed a diminution of the public realm like that of our own times. The Roman empire after Augustus is the obvious comparison. As public life lost its vitality, the Roman "sought in private [life] a new focus for his emotional energies, a new principle of commitment and belief."[30] Christianity, as it developed in late antiquity, was radically *worldless*. The community of Christians was grounded not in the common world they shared, but in the belief in a reality that transcended it. Indeed, the Christian believed "the world

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[29]Calvino, p. 82.

[30]Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) p. 3.

itself [was] doomed and . . . every activity in it [was] undertaken with the proviso . . . 'as long as the world lasts.'"[31]

The similarities between our age and the early Christian era are not, however, what interests me. The "worldlessness" of early Christianity dramatizes a tension that exists between public virtue and private goodness--a tension that is perhaps inherent. Though the examination of this question is somewhat peripheral to the concerns I have focused on in this inquiry, I want to conclude by reflecting on it. I entertain no illusion that my reflection can bring closure to the question.

Is goodness "not only impossible within the confines of the public realm, . . . [but] even destructive of it"?[32] Hannah Arendt maintains it is, and her argument must be summarized at some length:

"Goodness in an absolute sense, as distinguished from the 'good-for' or the 'excellent' in Greek and Roman antiquity, became known in our civilization only with the rise of Christianity."[33] Though the antagonism of early Christianity to the public realm was in part "a consequence of . . . eschatological expectations that lost their immediate significance only after experience had taught that even the

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[31] *The Human Condition*, p. 53.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

downfall of the Roman Empire did not mean the end of the world,"[34] its root goes much deeper. "The one activity taught by Jesus in word and deed is the activity of goodness . . . [which] harbors a tendency to hide from being seen or heard. . . [For] the moment a good work becomes known and public, *it loses its specific character of goodness*, of being done for nothing but goodness' sake. When goodness appears openly, it is no longer goodness, though it may still be useful as organized charity or an act of solidarity."[35]

"Love of wisdom and love of goodness" share some similarities, but "only goodness must go into absolute hiding and flee all appearance if it is not to be destroyed."[36] Though the good man "can never afford to lead a solitary life, . . . his living with others and for others must remain essentially without testimony and lacks first of all the company of himself. He is not solitary, but lonely."[37]

"Good works, because they must be forgotten instantly, can never become part of the world; they come and go, leaving no trace. They truly are not of this world."[38] The good man's "loneliness is so contradictory to the human condition of plurality that it is simply unbearable for any length of time and needs the company of God, the only imaginable witness

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[35] *Ibid.* Italics mine.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[38] *Ibid.*

of good works, if it is not to annihilate human existence altogether. . . [F]leeing the world and hiding from its inhabitants, [goodness] negates the space the world offers to men, and most of all that public part of it where everything and everybody are seen and heard by others."[39]

The text which Hannah Arendt cites to support her argument is from Chapter 6 of Matthew's gospel, where Jesus says:

> Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven. . . [W]hen you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.[40]

These words occur in the Sermon on the Mount, the great inaugural discourse that, in Matthew, begins Jesus' ministry. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, which open the Sermon, are followed directly by teachings which would seem to contradict the passages quoted above:

> You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.[41]

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[39] *Ibid.*, p. 76-7. The dilemma is not exclusively Christian. The Jewish legend of the thirty-six Just Men whose suffering upholds the world and who must remain unknown, even to themselves. Cf. Andre Schwarz-Bart, *The Last of the Just* (New York: Atheneum, 1960).

[40] Matthew, 6:1-6.

[41] Matthew, 5:14-16.

I do not know how to reconcile these two teachings or if they can be reconciled. In the passage which occurs first, our "light" shines precisely because men *see our good works*. In the later passage, we are cautioned not to *parade* our good deeds *to attract praise*. What may be crucial, then, is the matter of intentions; thus, the admonition to hide our good works may be considered within the narrow context of the recurring criticism of the *hypocrisy* of the Pharisees.[42] The intentions of the actor have always been a central consideration in ethical thought:

> In the case of the virtues an act is not performed justly . . . if the act itself is of a certain kind, but only if in addition the agent has certain characteristics as he performs it: first of all, he must know what he is doing; secondly, he must choose to act the way he does, and *he must choose it for its own sake*; and in the third place, the act must spring from a firm and unchangeable character.[43]

Yet this distinction does not seem adequate to resolve the radical tension that exists between the two teachings.

The Moviegoer by Walker Percy dramatizes the tension we are discussing as a conflict between an ethical mode of living and a religious mode of living. "Conflict" is perhaps too strong; it is more

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[42]Matthew 15:7; 22:18; 23:5,13-15.

[43]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Martin Ostwald (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962) p. 39.

that the two modes of living are *incommensurable* in the way that Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometric propositions are incommensurable.

In the novel, the ethical mode is personified in the character of Emily, the paternal aunt of the novel's protagonist, Binx Bolling. One of Percy's striking characterizations of genteel Southern stoicism, Aunt Emily understands human behavior through the matrix of ethical choice. "[I]n all past history people . . . [have] behaved in certain familiar ways, well or badly, courageously or cowardly, with distinction or mediocrity, with honor or dishonor. They are recognizable. They display courage, pity, fear, embarrassment, joy, sorrow and so on."[44] For herself, Emily prizes honor above all; and in her words, we catch the resonance of the ancient Greek understanding of *arete*:

> . . . At the great moments of life--success, failure, marriage, death--our kind of folks have always possessed a native instinct for behavior, a natural piety or grace, I don't mind calling it. Whatever else we did or failed to do, we always had that. I'll make you a little confession. I am not ashamed to use the word class. I will also plead guilty to another charge. The charge is that people belonging to my class think they're better than other people. You're damn right we're better. We're better because we do not shirk our obligations either to ourselves or to others."[45]

Emily has a authoritative presence in the novel which is attributable to the dazzling power of her words, a presence which seems almost to nullify Binx's own tenuous presence in the world. During their

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[44]Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961) p. 220.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 222-3.

conversations, Binx admits he does "not really know what . . . [Emily] is talking about;"[46] and Emily professes not to understand Binx, not to understand his *non-ethical* behavior. Living on different planes, their words no longer "mean roughly the same thing."[47] But that is only a small part of what makes them incomprehensible to one another. Binx (who at the end of the novel begins medical study) listens to Emily's words, as with a moral stethoscope, for the "sickness unto death"--the "despair . . . unaware of being despair" (Kierkegaard) that rattles around in them. Emily does not understand Binx for a more fundamental reason: he does not answer her questions.

Human actions can only be "*humanly disclosed* by words";[48] but *religious actions* are a special case and have about them an absurd character which, for Percy, makes their "explanation" impossible. Literally, "It is impossible to say."[49] What is impossible to say, though it can appear marginally in the human realm, cannot be made humanly intelligible. God is, as Hannah Arendt argues, "the only imaginable witness" to such a life.

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[46] *Ibid.*, p. 54. See also p. 226.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

[48] "Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. The action he begins is humanly disclosed by words." *The Human Condition*, p. 178-9. Italics mine.

[49] *The Moviegoer*, p. 235.

Let me try to make this clear with a specific example. On the train, Kate (Emily's step-daughter whom Binx at the end of the novel marries) tells Binx, "I am a religious person," explaining,

> . . . If God were to tell me: Kate, here is what I want you to do; you get off this train right now and go over there to that corner by the Southern Life and Accident Insurance Company and stand there for the rest of your life and speak kindly to people--you think I would not do it? You think I would not be the happiest girl in Jackson, Mississippi? I would.[50]

Imagine the passers-by to whom, over the long years, Kate would speak. Imagine how mute those passers-by would find the "kindly" words she spoke to them. Imagine, after all such "explanations," how humanly incomprehensible such a life would be.

Unlike public virtues, courage and high-mindedness, for example, no amount of *seeing* will humanly disclose the meaning of religious actions. That it matters not at the end of the novel whether Binx goes to medical school or becomes a service station attendant[51] suggests how unrelated to "reasonable" considerations such actions are. Because they are witness to a reality which transcends the world, their appearance in the world has about it an obstinate ambiguity that words are powerless to dispel. The elegant metaphor which Percy uses to close the action of the novel attests to this essential ambiguity.

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

Sitting with Kate in her car, Binx watches a Negro ("more middle-class than one could believe")[52] park behind them, get out and go into the Catholic church across the street. It is Ash Wednesday; presumably he has gone to receive ashes. When he comes out,

> . . . His forehead is an ambiguous sienna color and pied: it is impossible to be sure that he received ashes. When he gets in his Mercury, he does not leave immediately but sits looking down at something on the seat beside him. A sample case? An insurance manual? I watch him closely in the rear-view mirror. It is impossible to say why he is here. Is it part and parcel of the complex business of coming up in the world? Or is it because he believes that God himself is present here at the corner of Elysian Fields and Bons Enfants? Or is he here for both reasons: through some dim dazzling trick of grace, coming for the one and receiving the other as God's own importunate bonus?
>
> It is impossible to say.[53]

The ashen cross on the Negro's forehead would be a *sign* of what? One cannot be sure; the meaning of the action does not disclose itself through its appearance in the world. But the ambiguity is deeper. Because the action takes place in the precincts of the sacred, it is not even clear what, if anything, has actually occurred.

Is there a way out--some way of reconciling public virtue and private goodness? What I can offer is, at best, "an intimation of a

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[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 234-5.

path."[54] I think there is both a kind of speech and a human being-together which, though both rooted in the sacred realm, can appear in the public realm.

By the kind of speech, I mean what is called in the Protestant tradition "professing" or "witnessing."[55] The Psalmist may refer to the same kind of speech when he says, "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the just and in the congregation."[56] Though the referent of such words lies beyond men's seeing, the man who speaks them among men (in the "assembly") can, by virtue of speaking such shining words, appear to his fellow men.

By the kind of human being-together, I mean the public experience of festivity which is rooted in ritual worship.[57]

> . . . In regarding man and world as *creatura* we imply that our own existence, as well as that of things, is founded upon the non-temporal, non-successive, and therefore still continuing act of creation. Existence . . . does not just "adjoin" the realm of Eternity; it is entirely permeated by it. Not that we can, by our power and volition, "step out of time." Nevertheless, to do so remains among our real potentialities. And these potentialities are realized in the rapture of the

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[54]Hermann Hesse, *Demian*, translated by Michael Roloff and Michael Lebeck (New York: Bantam Books, 1965) p. 4.

[55]In the Catholic tradition out of which Walker Percy writes, one "would never dream of speaking of religion"; and Binx, like the Catholics of his mother's family, of which he is one "after all," shies away from the embarrassment of such talk. *The Moviegoer*, p. 159, 237.

[56]Psalms 111:1.

[57]Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965) p. 53.

> true celebrant [of festival]. Suddenly the walls of the solid here and now are burst asunder and the everyday realm of existence is thrown open to Eternity.[58]

A precondition of genuine festivity is human being-together in the space we call the public realm. The sheer fact of our togetherness is in no small part the root of the joy which allows men--even in the midst of a life of unrelieved pain--to "approve everything":[59]

> We must laugh and we must sing,
> We are blest by everything,
> Everything we look upon is blest.[60]

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[58] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 20. The words are from Nietzsche.

[60] W.B. Yeats, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," in *The Collected Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1956) p. 232.

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