extreme virtue

Crispin Sartwell

TRUTH AND LEADERSHIP IN FIVE GREAT AMERICAN LIVES

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Dedicated to the memory of Richard Abell,
and the hope embodied by his grand-daughter, Jane Winik Sartwell.

Thanks to Lynn Gorchov, who read the manuscript in its entirety
and suggested many alterations,
and to Marion Winik, who did the same.

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Introduction

To admire someone deeply can change your life. This book is about the public figures I most deeply admire, people whose lives have informed and transformed mine: anarchist leaders Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre, arch-conservative politician Barry Goldwater, Lakota Sioux holy man John Fire Lame Deer, and black nationalist Malcolm X. These five very different people embody distinct facets of civic virtue and of the meaning of leadership. But I believe the stories of their lives also coalesce into a coherent understanding of these matters. Here I introduce these people and the account of civic virtue that will be implicit throughout this book, culminating with the idea of truth as the cardinal virtue in public life.

Civic Virtue and Public Persons

The idea for this book originated in my reflection and newspaper writing about the Monica Lewinsky scandal. I had quite a complicated reaction to the revelation that President Clinton had had an affair with an intern in the Oval Office. Practically no one would regard that act as morally defensible, and yet as the congressional Republicans lambasted Clinton's character and declared that his behavior disqualified him to lead the country, it struck me that many people who are widely and rightly admired—Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Jefferson, John F. Kennedy, and so on—did things that were similar, as did some of Clinton's rabid accusers. For me, *l'affaire Lewinsky* did not itself disqualify Clinton from being a man of civic virtue.

But something else did. What I found viscerally despicable about Clinton is that I didn't believe that he believed what he was saying. My

gut sense was that there was little or nothing that he believed so deeply that he wouldn't sacrifice it on the altar of his personal ambitions. I suppose that that is something one could say about most successful politicians: the beliefs they avow are, for the most part, calculated to win votes and keep poll numbers high. Clinton, in my view, lacked serious commitment to anything more important than his own aggrandizement. That single insight—if it is an insight—set off the series of ruminations that led to this book, as I tried to account for the importance to me of the sort of truth that Clinton lacked and tried to see how far that sort of truth could be detected and understood and whether it could be made the basis of an account of virtue proper to leadership.

Bill Clinton has many admirable qualities of character. He is extremely intelligent and articulate. He seems to have what is still called "charisma" or, at any rate, charm, and the ability to make people feel immediately comfortable and important in his presence. It is instructive that the qualities that one admires in Clinton are inextricable from the qualities that arouse one's disgust. Even his quick wit, his sheer facility, is unfortunate when it is put into the service of lies or rationalizations. He seems to seduce the people around him one by one or en masse: that is both what made him a successful politician and what almost brought him down. And the idea that one's admirable qualities also are destructive is a fundamental point in this book.

Although intelligence and charm are admirable qualities, they are not *morally* admirable; they do not at all tend to support the claim that the person who has them is a good person. So my reflection on the Lewinsky scandal led me to reflect more widely on what it is that makes a public person morally admirable. Because I seemed to be rather stuck for any general account of what is admirable in public figures, I undertook to develop such an account by reflecting on the lives of those whom I admired, which is why this book consists of biographical sketches of five of my heroes. Each is an American I have looked up to in a variety of ways and contexts, and each is a person I have read, thought, talked, and written about in a sustained way. I admired each of them before I thought about why I did; I spontaneously and involuntarily regarded each as a model of what a leader could be. I auditioned a number of other possibilities—John Peter Altgeld, Tillie Olson, Margaret Fuller, Crazy Horse, Henry David Thoreau, Eugene McCarthy, John Brown, and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, among others—but I kept returning to my original group.

The figures discussed here have not been selected based on a specific principle. They appear here simply because they are actually my heroes. Indeed, I might almost go so far as to say that these are my *only* heroes; I am not much given to putting people on pedestals. But the structure of reflection in this book is "empirical": I admired these folks before I tried to delve deeply into why I admired them. What I'm trying to do is take my spontaneous and fundamental admiration and systematize it, to derive from it some coherent and useful way to think about public virtue and moral character. I believe that ethics is an empirical inquiry—that system, if any, follows experience—and I have tried to make that idea my method in what follows.

The list of virtues that I give later in this introduction may seem merely arbitrary, and it would be disingenuous to claim any necessity to the structure I derive or to claim that it can be demonstrated to be the best account. I don't think ethics is that sort of discipline. While my preferences have causes, they do not admit of decisive rational justification. The justification, rather, is inductive, and the persuasion I hope to achieve is, of course, logically noncompulsory. In fact, this book consists of a kind of bootstrap operation in which the cardinal virtues of public figures emerge from the biographies, while the biographies themselves are in part constructed to display these same qualities. I learn what is admirable by observing people I admire, and I also learn who is admirable by exploring the question of what is admirable.

Such a rough methodology perhaps would not be satisfactory in a philosophical system of ethics, but it mirrors the process by which, for the most part, we actually do come to learn moral concepts and the process by which our views change over time. That is, people are set before us as moral examples. We both learn moral concepts from an examination of their characters and evaluate moral exemplars with reference to those concepts. Eventually our concepts and their concrete expressions achieve a kind of equilibrium, and we have a rudimentary way to make moral evaluations, but in real situations and with regard to real people, roughness within reason is a virtue, and rigid system is a vice. We want to be open to learning new moral lessons and to revising our moral evaluations. As Aristotle insisted with regard to ethics, in a slogan that is often quoted and rarely taken with sufficient seriousness by philosophers, we should not expect more precision than the subject matter admits, and where the topic is human lives and values, we had better be willing to tolerate a great deal of vagueness and ambiguity. To the extent that moral

concepts can be crystallized and rendered concrete, they are crystallized and rendered concrete in the actual lives of specific people. A metaphysics of morals is not likely, finally, to change the way we live or the way we think about the way other people live, but encountering good people can have an immediate effect.

STRANGE SAINTS

Two of the figures discussed in this book, Malcolm X and Lame Deer, might broadly and primarily be thought of as religious leaders, though the differences between Malcolm's Nation of Islam and Lame Deer's traditional Lakota spirituality are immense. Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Barry Goldwater are political figures, though Goldman and de Cleyre were revolutionaries who were many times imprisoned, while Goldwater was precisely the sort of person they were revolting against: a businessman and government official. On the other hand, all three had in common a deep suspicion of state power: each took up an honorable position in an American antistatist tradition that includes figures as disparate as Thomas Paine, Henry David Thoreau, and Abbie Hoffman. Indeed, I hold—though I will reserve the argument for another occasion—that what makes the five figures distinctively American is a suspicion of power and a vision of individual liberation.

Lame Deer and Goldman conceived of their positions on the political spectrum as progressive, as Goldman showed in her advocacy of feminism and free love and Lame Deer in his ministry to the American Indian Movement. It is reasonable to consider Goldwater and Malcolm conservative figures. Both of them wanted to invigorate the present by infusing it with what they thought of as traditional values, and both endorsed capitalist ingenuity and traditional moral discipline. De Cleyre occupies that interstitial position where the extreme Right and the extreme Left meet. She emphasized individual freedom and rejected ideology on the ground that it forecloses the future of human creativity.

None of these five is what we might think of immediately as a saint or a person of transcendent personal purity. There are no Gandhis or Mother Theresas on the list. One key lesson that these lives teach us is that personal moral perfection of the sort we might associate with sainthood is not required in order for a person to be an excellent example of public virtue. What these people have in common is not purity or even

temperance. In fact, though Malcolm and de Cleyre essentially were ascetics, the other three had streaks of what others considered "libertinism." But when we think of heroes of public life, we really do not judge them by a standard of purity or perfection. The question is, rather, one of inspiration and emulation, and in order for us really to experience the possibility of emulating someone, they must expose to our view a basic humanity. That basic humanity includes an acquaintance with sin, though what inspires us is what is done with sin, or how experience is transformed into power.

These people may not be saints, but they are heroes—at any rate, my heroes. So we—or, at any rate, I—need to ask: in virtue of what qualities of character are they heroic? The list of virtues emerging from religious and philosophical traditions is long: faith, hope, love, friendship, justice, constancy, courage, cleanliness, industry, temperance, charity, chastity, honesty, patience, kindness, and many others. To get from such a laundry list of admirable traits to a useful account of the virtues of leaders, we might start by asking which traits of character distinguish, let us say, Malcolm X from, let us say, Richard Nixon. This procedure, admittedly rather impressionistic, has yielded the following conclusion: the leaders treated in this book possess in common four primary virtues: commitment to something greater than their own ambitions, self-reflection, integrity, and connectedness. In an examination of the lives of Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, Malcolm X, Lame Deer, and Barry Goldwater, these qualities of character emerge as fundamental and indispensable, though they are differently compounded in each person. Each figure is aligned, in the chapters that follow, with one of these cardinal virtues: Goldman with commitment, de Cleyre with self-reflection, Goldwater with integrity, and Lame Deer with connectedness. I treat Malcolm X as exemplary of leadership and truth in all of its aspects.

Virtue

Some systems of ethics start with principles, others with persons. One thing that can be said in favor of the latter is that they are easier to teach and to apply. Compare the number of people who have committed themselves to Christian morality by an abstract examination of ethical arguments to the number of those who have striven toward goodness through an understanding of the life of Jesus. In fact, virtually all of the great

religious systems—and surely most morality originates in or is connected to religious life—begin by providing exemplars: lives to be studied, understood, and emulated, such as Buddha, Lao Tzu, Yudisthira, Moses, Confucius, Muhammad, leaders and sages whose stories have been told and retold, lived and relived.

These two starting points—principles and persons—have also directed the history of philosophical ethics. Kant, for example, sought a principle that, acted upon, could guarantee right action. He called it the "categorical imperative" and formulated it roughly this way: act so that the principle on which you act could be a universal law. But for the ancient Greeks and, most particularly, for Aristotle, the primary question was not what made an action right but what made a person good. They understood right action as what a good person would do in a given situation. One strength of that approach is its adaptability to particular circumstances, because the general principles of right action that philosophers have provided always seem to admit exceptions. For example, according to Kant, the categorical imperative entails that every lie is equally a violation of the moral law, and yet it is not hard to think of circumstances in which a lie is morally permissible or even morally required, as when a small untruth can spare a person a good deal of pointless pain.

But even if one starts with principles, the question of what makes a good person cannot ultimately be deflected. For we turn, or ought to turn, to ethics in order to learn something about how we should live. We turn, or ought to turn, to ethics in order to examine and transform how we act and, hence, who we are. If an ethics cannot transform our action and identity, then it is useless. But then we need an interesting or accurate account of what it is that makes a person good. That is the task that Aristotle set himself in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The approach has been called "virtue ethics," and it has undergone a massive revival in recent years, both in academic philosophy (e.g., as represented in Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*) and in popular consciousness (e.g., as represented, in William Bennett's *Book of Virtues*).

I am not an advocate of virtue ethics as an exclusive approach. I think that it is likely that many questions in ethics cannot be answered in terms of virtue, including some questions concerning standards for right action. Good people can do bad things and, indeed, all of the people discussed here did bad things. Many of those things were actually expressions of their virtues, of their fortitude or frankness, for example,

so to fully understand why they were wrong, we would need a separate account of right action. Furthermore, I do not believe that virtue ethics is a sufficient basis for political philosophy. If we are asking questions about how we should organize ourselves collectively and what institutions we want to generate and live within, then we can go some of the way in terms of virtue, but not all the way. I do not believe that virtue ethics gives us any reason to prefer democracy to monarchy, for example, though it enjoins presidents and kings alike to be good people. Thus I favor a pluralist approach to ethics, one that does not answer all questions in terms of virtue, moral principle, or public justice. On the other hand, I think that in all of these matters, virtue as a fundamental concept is indispensable. Democracy without virtue is a nightmare, but then so is monarchy. But with virtue, either is survivable.

I am not going to enter into the philosophical debate about the definition of virtue in any elaborate way here, though I hope to do so in the future. But to give a somewhat simplified characterization, virtues, in my view, are simply morally admirable qualities of character. As qualities of character, they must be comparatively enduring, not simply momentary impulses or preferences. They are in some sense central to the moral identity of the people who possess them over a relatively extended time (say, a period of years, though perhaps, and often, a lifetime). Civic virtues, then, would be admirable qualities of character suited to and manifested within public life and discourse. The goal of public discourse, at least in the American polity, is the public welfare within the context of democracy, a context that demands access to decision-making procedures and participation.

Philosophers such as Aristotle, John Stuart Mill, and MacIntyre have held that virtue is definable in terms of goals or purposes. Their views, that is, are teleological. For Aristotle, the goal in question is human happiness over a lifetime; for Mill, who believes an account of virtue can be compatible with his utilitarianism, the goal is the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people and, for MacIntyre, goals are more local and time bound, articulated within social practices, such as the practice of American democracy. Again, I will not enter the theoretical issues in a sustained way, but here I want to say that, for reasons that will become apparent, my view divorces virtue from goals altogether. Virtues may in a given situation be destructive of one's happiness and the happiness of others, and they may contribute to the destruction of the very social

practices in which they arise and are expressed. An American politician who spoke spontaneously and said what she really thought would be displaying an important set of virtues and also contributing to the destruction of American politics as it is currently constituted. Indeed, though I think that virtues have histories and are always expressed within a particular social context, I also think that they can have a significance that cuts across practices or even cultures. This is so because persons, though they are in part social constructions, also face within social structures a set of what might be called "existential challenges," including the challenge to resist being entirely swallowed up by those very structures.

Four Cardinal Virtues and Their Sum

It is a common observation that the virtues, to some extent, go together: that, for example, one cannot have sympathy without a portion of charity. If someone claims to be very sympathetic but is not willing to do anything charitable to demonstrate that sympathy concretely, we would do well to be skeptical of that sympathy. Each of the four cardinal virtues that I have adduced is accompanied by a variety of other important qualities of character, such as courage, rebelliousness, and passion, but these can be derived from the four primary virtues as deployed in particular situations. To repeat, I generated this treatment or taxonomy of civic virtue from studying the lives of the people treated in this book, but I start with the taxonomy itself, because I want you to bring it to bear on the biographies. That will allow you to see why I regard these figures as exemplary.

Commitment to a cause greater than one's own ambitions does not entail that one is not personally ambitious; indeed, all of these figures, with the possible exceptions of Lame Deer and Voltairine de Cleyre, were conspicuous by their aspiration to go down in history. But real commitment does entail that one's ambitions are not merely personal, that one hopes to transform the conditions under which other people live. Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre advocated a profound liberation of the human body and the human spirit that they called "anarchy" and associated with joy. Malcolm X tried to instill a sense of identity, purpose, and discipline in an oppressed people, so that they could transform their oppressive conditions. Barry Goldwater sought a revival of self-reliance

by dismantling world communism and governmental control over people's lives in the United States. And Lame Deer tried to formulate a way to affirm the world profoundly—even or particularly in its wild and questionable aspects—to draw us into that affirmation with him and, hence, to transform our lives. They fought hard for these goals throughout their public lives.

Commitment is not primarily something cognitive; it is a passionate state, and its strength varies with the strength of passion. It is fueled by empathy for others, and it is focused into constructive action. It motivates and underlies a capacity for hard work. But in itself, it is an emotional relation to certain beliefs and projects and persons. Thus I disagree with those who hold personal morality to be primarily a form or result of reasoning. The commitment that these figures bring to their projects might be involuntary: it is experienced as a calling or even as a trial to which they are subjected, and it easily enough can lead to moral lapses. For example, Goldwater deeply regretted his neglect of his wife and children for his political career, while Malcolm X retracted some of the extreme statements he made as a spokesman for the Nation of Islam. Nevertheless, the achievements of each of these people would have been impossible without an absolutely serious core of belief. Their commitment was certainly a key part of what in them inspired others, of what made them leaders, and in a leader, the quality of commitment separates true inspiration from mere seduction: separates the people discussed here from, for example, Clinton.

Commitment cannot be manifested without courage, but the courage is derivative from the commitment. It is perhaps obvious from my title and selection of figures that I am drawn to extremes. That is partly because great public virtue is more obvious in cases where one has to advocate one's views over the objections of a majority, or in the face of authority, or both. If one was a courageous advocate of, let us say, Keynesian economics, or "targeted tax cuts," then one's courage would have no opportunity for expression. And the heroic quality of these figures derives in large part from the courage with which their commitment was expressed. What separates them from their own followers is that they said what they believed in public at great risk to themselves. It is commitment that underlies their endurance, their ability to hold to their course over the long haul, despite seemingly or actually insuperable barriers.

Brutally frank, each of these figures was fundamentally unafraid to take controversial positions and stick to them in the face of a withering attack. They were all rebels. Though each attracted a group of like-minded souls or people drawn to their force of personality, each would have held to an advocacy of their fundamental beliefs, even if completely alone in doing so. They had a basic response of rebellion to what we might broadly called the "social consensus," and I find that admirable. Indeed, one of the fundamental ways we might categorize people is by whether they essentially seek to belong in a consensus or whether they instinctively attack accepted opinion. I'm afraid that no one could be a hero of mine who simply embodied or reiterated a consensus, even if I were in agreement with it.

To me it matters less what these people believed than how they believed. I realize that this is problematic: it seems to involve a kind of abstraction from content to form. And yet I think it is a perfectly reasonable claim that good people could have radically different positions on the same issues and that, on the other hand, fundamentally despicable people could take up the right positions, or at least positions with which one agrees. Often it seems to me that people confuse their own disagreement with the views of some public figure with the evil of the figure, and often they make the inverse mistake and believe that whoever agrees with their own positions or tries to enact them must have an admirable character. Indeed, when I told various friends of mine that I was going to write about Barry Goldwater as an example of public virtue, they seemed shocked, as they believed his political positions to be false or immoral. (Most of my friends could be broadly described as "leftists.") But what I admire about Barry Goldwater is his commitment and his honesty, and those qualities may be displayed even by opponents of the Great Society.

Of course, there are limits to an approach that associates character with the way a position is taken up rather than the content of the position itself. If someone is advocating genocide, for example, that is obviously an immense moral failure. But short of truly extreme cases, there is wide scope for disagreement among good people. As I already admitted, the people I admire had an extremist streak, and yet their near-fanaticism is absolutely inseparable from what made them admirable: that they had certain fundamental beliefs that motivated them to be public figures in the first place, and that they were, finally, unwilling to compromise. At the same time, all of these figures took up positions that

I disagree with or took actions in the expression of their beliefs that I think were wrong.

Emma Goldman, for example, advocated terrorism and participated in a conspiracy to commit assassination. I think that that is a terrible moral error, but it is inextricable from the things that made Emma a profoundly admirable and liberating figure. Malcolm X, for much of his public career, declared the superiority of black people over white people, and he often edged toward something like an advocacy of race war. But that position was inseparable from what enabled him to redeem lives from drugs and violence and to instill pride and purpose in thousands of people. Lame Deer was a womanizer, a drunk, and a thief. And yet he himself declared that to be holy, a man had to experience everything that life, had to offer, had to learn to love life, even in its most questionable aspects. Barry Goldwater lent comfort to segregationists and racists by declaring that federal enforcement of integration laws violated the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. When he ran for president just as jim crowism was breathing its last breath, he carried only his home state of Arizona and the five Deep South states that were most resistant to racial justice. Yet Goldwater's strict constitutional constructionism is inseparable from what enabled the movement he founded to achieve a renaissance of American culture and beliefs.

Self-reflection is a force that moderates or tempers commitment, a quality that prevents commitment from degenerating into mere fanaticism. For one thing, knowledge of self underlies all humility, and leaders become dangerous in proportion to their self-inflation or grandiosity. An acute consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge and abilities mitigates commitment with realism and introduces a healthy dose of hesitation.

One thing that I will not be able fully to convey in writing is the gleam of humor in Malcolm X's eye as he called white people "devils" on national television. There is no doubt that Malcolm had a lot of rage. I personally believe that his rage was, given the circumstances, itself a virtue. Malcolm, however, always had a slight distance from his rage: he saw himself as enraged, and he cultivated his rage. Thus he could use his rage and the rage of his audience rather than let it use him. White people heard or read the words of Malcolm X with fear and anger, but when they met him, they experienced a certain gentleness generated in his self-reflection and a certain comfort generated by the fact that he did not take himself perfectly seriously.

Malcolm's development after he left the Nation of Islam was an adventure in self-reflection. Seldom has any person wrestled so publicly with developments in his own belief system. And the power that is manifest in Malcolm's autobiography derives from the power of his amusing and withering self-awareness. He was not a fanatic, because he knew the sources of his beliefs and his rage, and because he maintained a sort of self-deprecating humor. If demagogues such as, say, George Wallace, had had Malcolm X's power of self-reflection, the character of their public advocacy would have been entirely transformed, and what they advocated could itself have been transformed, as Malcolm's beliefs were in the last two years of his life. And, in fact, George Wallace did undergo such a transformation, but in his case it occurred after he had left the public stage, and after all of the damage that he could do to American race relations had been done.

Self-reflection is closely related to sense of humor, because the distance that humor yields on the self opens possibilities of reflection. A sense of humor is not a luxury in our world: it is essential for sanity. Humor is at once the outcome and the fuel of reflection, and the true fanatic regards himself or herself and the world as an utterly serious thing. Humor lends one a lightness or deftness of touch that affects the meaning of all of one's words, and it lends living in this world, with all of its absurdity, evil, and suffering, a sense of openness, possibility, and joy. If one tries to conceive of a profound human liberation, then one has to conceive of human life as potentially the arena of comedy, because if one stares squarely at the world without some admixture of humor, then all one sees is pointless pain. Thus humor is redemptive, and it absolutely does not preclude one from acting or also taking the world's pain seriously. A humorless person does not see her own foibles and errors as the stuff of comedy. Such a person is fundamentally dull or fundamentally dangerous, or both.

Indeed, Lame Deer was as much a comedian as a spiritual leader, and for him these were intrinsically connected. To find joy and irony in the world was essential to Lame Deer's experience of the world as God's presence. Lame Deer thought of himself as the Great Spirit's clown or jester, and humor certainly is central to the effect that Lame Deer has had on others. It makes his own autobiography a delight to read, and it will keep *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* on people's shelves and in people's hearts for a long time.

The English term *integrity* derives from the Latin "integer," meaning whole or complete. A person who possesses integrity is of a piece: "integrity" indicates that the person who possesses it holds together. The sort of wholeness relevant here is achieved by keeping faith with oneself in the public sphere. That is, one shows oneself in public to be the person one is in private. The public persona of a person of integrity is not a sham or a mask or an act: it is the reality of oneself. Public life is a constant challenge to integrity in this sense. It is a constant temptation to manufacture and deploy a false self that can be presented on the hustings and in the media. This is the most conspicuous moral failure of American politicians. When people say that they don't trust politicians, they don't only or even primarily mean that they don't believe what a politician says. They mean that there is a pervasive failure of reality in the politician's public persona. It's not that you don't believe what he says; it's that in some sense you don't believe what he *is*.

What finally attracts me most deeply about all of these figures is that they wore no mask: their commitment was not fundamentally or only to a set of positions but it was to be absolutely themselves. They were not actors or performers; they had the guts not to try to be what people wanted them to be, but to try to see what they could do in public as themselves. Al Gore, for example, is not present in his public persona, which is why people refer to him as an automaton or a robot. They sense the carefully constructed and focus-grouped false self that Gore performs on the public stage. That is in exquisite contrast to, say, the approach of Barry Goldwater, who was a hilarious, straight-talking bastard in public, just as he was in private. Gore can't be a real leader, because he's not there; it is essential to the quality of leadership that I find admirable that it bears an intrinsic connection to the identity of the person who wields it. So one could think of integrity as entailing a certain kind of honesty. It is an honesty of truth telling, of the courage to tell hard truths, but it is more deeply an honesty of being, of keeping faith with oneself.

Another way to get at the notion of integrity is through its opposite: hypocrisy. The Greek term *hypocritēs* essentially means "actor." Of course there is nothing wrong with being an actor, but according to the structure developed here for understanding leadership and civic virtue, those functions have nothing to do with acting. Indeed, though acting and leadership both involve public performances, one could think of them as opposite ways of taking up those performances: one is a craft of deception,

while the other is a craft of truth. Or if acting, too, can bring us truths, then it does so by deception, whereas civic virtue comes straight out of reality and heads straight at the truth. I hold hypocrisy to be the cardinal vice of public life, and we might characterize it most generally as a detachment of private self from public persona. In hypocrisy, we might say, self and persona are at war, and the values that one violates the other espouses. That is simply the everyday reality for most public persons. They get the suit on and take the stage and start muttering platitudes that they themselves don't believe when they get home. People like that shouldn't (and usually don't) inspire others no matter what positions they advocate, and their hypocrisy is, by and large, evident precisely in their public personae.

This notion of integrity seems to presuppose an account of the self as a unitary thing, as an authentic identity that can be displayed or betrayed in public space. The notion of the self as unified—what is sometimes called "the Cartesian self"—is out of fashion in the academic world, even if it still passes for something like common sense elsewhere. People whose work falls broadly under the rubric of postmodernism hold the self to be "multiple," "fragmented," "contested," and so on. I too reject the notion of the self as a single, unified field or force or entity.

But I think that the notion of integrity can be retrieved, no matter what one's account of the self turns out to be. I do not think that the human self is necessarily consistent over time. I do think that it really is constituted by its relations to other people and to the world, and yet I have had the experience of being called into a social role and feeling that I myself am absent or false in the performance of that role. If you have had that experience, then you know what I mean by integrity, because you know what it's like to fail at it. Obviously that experience is itself compatible with any possibly true account of what the human self is, since it's an experience that people very commonly have.

Finally, all of these figures possessed very intense connections to people, to places, and, if they were believers, to God. *Connectedness* allowed these figures to avoid power madness, even in cases, such as Malcolm's, in which they wielded great power over a group of people. Indeed, one could even account for self-reflection and integrity as connections of the self to itself. The sort of connectedness to which I refer takes many forms. Voltairine de Cleyre's powerful empathy with and compassion for the poor, immigrants, and even animals—the compassion

and empathy that were the driving force of her career as an agitator and a writer—manifest connection, as does Goldwater's attachment to the land of Arizona: its rivers, mountains, animals, and sky. All of these figures had considerable capacity for loyalty and friendship, which are modes and expressions of connection. Social and spiritual connection to the Nation of Islam and its members and its Allah allowed Malcolm X to transform himself from drug addict and thief to minister and inspirational figure. But it is Lame Deer, above all, who lived in total devotion to connection. Every aspect of his politics and his spirituality, and even his clowning, even his drunkenness, was about losing a sense of the separation between self and world. "Connection" expresses the deepest teachings of Lakota spirituality, and all ceremony and prayer is devoted to becoming part of what is or, rather, to breaking through the delusion that one is separate from what is.

The philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch argues that whatever intensifies the self, makes it into one's entire world, and locks one up inside it is evil. The self, she says, is narcissistic, obsessive, a trap that ensnares one and slowly makes the people and places and ideas that surround one seem unreal. Once the world seems unreal, one can be tempted toward any enormity; one experiences one's own acts as moves in a game and the people around one as pawns. Goodness, for Murdoch, consists of an emptying of the self into the world. To make oneself transparent to reality in this way is to open up the possibility of seeing the truth. Such transparency is the prerequisite of knowledge, as knowledge is of goodness. The intense self is delusory. When one ponders the monsters of history—its genocidal killers such as Pol Pot, or its dangerous madmen such as Rasputin—one sees people who were utterly trapped within themselves, people for whom the reality of others has lost its moral claim. They lived in a shadow play in which people and the earth were reduced to props or puppets. Respecting persons and respecting the earth require the acknowledgment of their reality—a sense both of their genuine externality to and their profound connection with the self. Those who feel and acknowledge that reality with particular intensity become moral heroes.

This series of thoughts, which Murdoch associates with Plato, is present in many of the world's great ethical and religious belief systems. The Golden Rule of Jesus and Confucius is a version of the idea: it enjoins an experience in which, through empathy, one is taught the

reality of other people. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" requires permeability to the experiences, ideas, and emotions of other people, acknowledging the reality of other people as being the same as one's own. The practice of meditation in Zen and other traditions is a discipline of self-clarification, a discipline of rendering oneself transparent, of emptying and clarifying the self until one is no longer separate from the world. The highest expression of these approaches is reached in an experience in which one feels one's connection to all things simultaneously, in which the delusion of the ego, the self's bondage to itself, is dissolved. With the exception of Lame Deer, none of these figures achieved that sort of sagacity, but they each achieved very intense forms of connection, and much that was great about them emerged from that connection. Their connection was both a source of their passion and what tempered it. It was the center of their effect on the world and of the world's effect on them.

The sum of the virtues of commitment, self-reflection, integrity, and connection is *truth.* This is the elusive but immediately recognizable quality that Malcolm X, Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, Barry Goldwater, and Lame Deer share. In order to be true to oneself and the people one loves and the world, a person must have the capacity for self-examination that allows her to avoid self-betrayal, and that requires the most serious moral commitment not to betray oneself, not to "sell out." But it requires as well a distance from the self that allows a wedge of self-deprecation: if one understands oneself truly, one's sense of oneself will be leavened with a core of humor, humanity, and humility. It also requires a deep sense of situatedness in a world of people and things. Where integrity emerges in a resolution within the self, truth in the sense that I use it also requires connectedness: it is, in part, a transparency to the world. Living and leading in truth, one is true to other people and the world, and one keeps faith with them.

LEADERSHIP

We should think of true leadership as a legitimate form of interpersonal power. Leadership must originate within the self of the leader, and it must transform the selves of the led, else it is tyranny or emptiness. Leadership without truth is either sheer demagoguery or sheer bureaucracy. The kind of truth that I am talking about is not primarily a matter of what one says or what one believes; rather it is a matter of one's

relation to what one says or believes. It is not a coincidence that the one position that all of these figures were equally committed to was liberation. This follows directly from the way they exercised leadership—not by constraining other people to behave as they ought but by inspiring them to. All of these people had a deep respect for the autonomy of the people they inspired: none of them was a dictator in waiting. Goldwater is sometimes referred to as a "fascist," but this is a deeply disingenuous misapprehension. Indeed, it was Goldwater's opponents who favored beefing up the authority of the state, while Goldwater always pursued its dismantlement. And Malcolm X's leadership finally became incompatible with the authoritarian structure of the Nation of Islam. He found that he himself could no longer commit himself to a deference to that authority, and that he could no longer impose it on others.

True leadership is something we give to people, not something they seize from us. Thus ultimately it is incompatible with dictatorial power, not because we can't voluntarily cede dictatorial power over ourselves, but because if that power is indeed given voluntarily, it can always be taken back. None of these figures in their most thoughtful stage ever claimed power over anyone that the person over which it was exercised didn't give enthusiastically. For each of them, their own leadership had to be compatible with the autonomy of the people in collaboration with whom it was generated and exercised.

Power over other people that is seized or exercised by force and in violation of their autonomy is illegitimate power and hence not leadership as I am using the term. That is why, for example, the power of the American government is supposed to derive from the consent of the governed, and it is why many theories of the legitimacy of the political state reach for some sort of social contract, because if there were a social contract of this kind, it would derive the power that is wielded over people from the autonomy of those people themselves. These are acknowledgments that true leadership must ultimately be compatible with freedom, that where leadership is exercised by force rather than inspiration, it is false.

Reconceiving Virtue and Vice

If this sort of truth is key to understanding the character of public people, then character must be considered holistically. It is not enough, in evaluating character, to list a set of virtues, even the list I myself gave

above. The most important question is whether and how the aspects of someone's character hold together. Kant famously objected to Aristotle's virtue ethics in the following way. Aristotle said that courage was a virtue, but courage in an evil man simply makes that man more dangerous: he would have done better to be a coward. Aquinas, as well as some recent philosophers, argues that, contrary to appearances, a disposition to do good (which is essentially how they conceive of virtue) cannot cause or explain a bad act. The arguments for that defense of Aristotle (e.g., that what appears to be physical courage in, let us say, an act of terrorism, is actually a kind of cowardice), it is fair to say, are strained. The conclusions that Kant drew from his objection need not divert us here; the conclusion that I'd like to draw is that people's characters usually are all-or-nothing propositions: if they're courageous, then they're potentially dangerous as well as admirable. A closely related conclusion is that the very things that make a person good or admirable or even great also can be the most dangerous, bizarre, or even evil aspects of character. There is no quality of character as it is manifest in real people that does not have this double-edged quality. Nowhere in nature or in human nature does one find pure goodness, and where some saint or hero does approach that condition the very purity is problematic. You'll find a fanatic, or someone who is terribly boring, or someone who seems to transcend the human altogether and, hence, who is of limited use as a moral example. Characters come whole or not at all; virtues are vices, and vices are virtues. Even the summing virtue that I ascribe to these people—their truth—while it is what I most deeply admire, is double edged. It is the great achievement of these figures, but it is also perhaps their downfall.

The insight that virtue is vice and vice is virtue, which is related to the insight that greatness brings great suffering, danger, or violent death, is a fundamental ethical insight. It is the tragic sense of life. It is the subject of much of the world's great art and literature, but it has not been sufficiently appreciated within the tradition of virtue ethics. I hope to illustrate the tragic sense in this book and to bring it back into the ethical tradition.

I am a nominalist about virtues: the general concepts are parasitic on the characters of particular people. The question is not about courage in general, the question is about Emma Goldman's courage. Courage enabled her to throw into question many of the beliefs about gender, sexu-

ality, art, and government that were presumed to be natural or inevitable in her own time. But courage also led her to something approaching fanaticism. It is impossible to conceive of Goldman without her courage. Without it, she would have been someone else. But, on the other hand, it is impossible to conceive of the particular courage that Goldman displayed outside of the context of her character as a whole and, for that matter, outside of the social and geographic contexts in which she lived her life. Moral concepts have histories; meanings shift slowly over time in response to external world conditions and human connections to those conditions. Goldman's courage expressed itself in a questioning and defying of social conventions. That is not just one way in which the universal notion of courage can be expressed, but it is essential to *Goldman*'s courage. For example, a warrior might have the courage to face great danger in combat but not to disobey a direct order from his superior officer. I have no idea how Goldman would have behaved in combat, but I know that ordering her around was literally impossible. She would have chosen death rather than submission.

It is not simply that there are several varieties of courage. "Courage" is an abstraction from the real characters of real persons, and each such person's courage is unique in its composition, its relations to other aspects of character, historical circumstances, and expressions. The usual treatise on philosophical ethics proceeds backward from abstractions to the real world, but here we see that the abstractions can only constitute a derivative of that world. They are simplifications or, as it were, shadows of the real world and cannot be understood in isolation from it.

Aristotle held virtue to be a mean between extremes. Courage, for example, was supposed to be a midpoint between cowardice and foolhardiness. Yet none of the people discussed here were people of moderation: in fact, they were all drawn powerfully to extremes. And the point at which they drifted to the extreme is the point at which their essential characters were manifest. Contrary to Aristotle, it is also the point at which they are most interesting and admirable, but compatibly with Aristotle, it is the point of their greatest failings. In Barry Goldwater's famous dictum that "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice, and moderation in pursuit of justice is no virtue," we see the man encapsulated. That sentence shows why Goldwater was a unique and an inspiring public figure, and also why he could not win the presidency. It was Goldwater's commitment to liberty that fueled an evolution toward a

belief in women's and gay rights late in his life. But Goldwater's extremism also, as we shall see, goes a long way toward explaining the great failure of his character: his fitful blindness to the oppression of people whose experience he did not understand. Goldwater's extremism was at once his greatest virtue and his greatest vice, and one cannot edit people the way one edits a document—simply deleting portions of the existing text and refining others. By the time people are mature, and even well before that, they come all of a piece. Would Goldwater have been a better man if he were more moderate? The simplicity and seeming good sense of that question mask the basic misapprehension that underlies it. A more moderate Goldwater could not have taken up the position in public life that the real Goldwater did.

One thing that follows from this is that the virtues cannot be inculcated as abstract concepts. Bennett and MacIntyre are right, in other words, to suggest that one should start with characters and narratives. For example, it is worse than useless to tell my child to be courageous, then perhaps set out some definition of courage. One needs to *show* her particular instances of courage, courage as it expresses itself in somebody's life. And so one tells her stories and shows her exemplars.

What I am aiming for in this book is a way to affirm the people I admire in their wholeness, to show that greatness and rebellion and moral purpose and extremism are inseparable as they are expressed in these personalities. This book is an attempt to affirm my own heroes, but where that affirmation takes us is into a rethinking of heroism itself. I want to show that, somehow, the moral wrongness or even evil of the people I discuss is redeemed, because what makes them great also is precisely what makes them wrong or even evil. This is a dangerous undertaking, obviously, at least if anyone takes what I am saying to heart. But it is a necessary undertaking in that anything else is destructive of human personality, because it purports to break it down into component parts. This distinction of persons into bits or traits is uselessly abstract, because no person actually comes separated into bits. My experiences of the people I am writing about have transformed my life, and I believe that with all of their mistakes and incoherences, they can show us all how to be a little more true, that is, a little better. And they can help us see that, for all of us, what condemns us also is what redeems us. That is our tragedy and our hope.

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1

Emma's Passion

(Commitment)

On April 26, 1908, a soldier, William Buwalda, went to a lecture at Walton's Pavilion in San Francisco. When it was over, he walked up and shook the hand of the lecturer. For that, Buwalda was court-martialed and sentenced to five years at Alcatraz. Perhaps he should have known better: Emma Goldman was the most notorious woman in America. By her own admission she had helped plan the shooting of industrialist Henry Clay Frick, which was carried out by her friend and lover Alexander Berkman. Her name had been widely, if erroneously, associated with the assassination of an American president and an Italian king. She was known as an anarchist, an atheist, and a proponent of free love: she was everything repellent to the religious and moral ideals of America. If the notion of shaking someone's hand as a criminal offense ever made any sense, it made sense in the case of "Red Emma."

I am not defending assassination as a form of political discourse, but though I think the shooting of Frick was criminal and counterproductive, one must understand the circumstances. On July 6, 1892, Frick's hired guards killed nine striking steel workers in Homestead, Pennsylvania (the strikers also killed several guards). Berkman and Goldman were intensely sensitive to the plight of the strikers, whose working conditions were miserable; they took the killings personally. Such empathy for the suffering of others, while it led in this case to attempted murder, is itself admirable; it is a quality shared by martyrs and saints through the ages. The passion and compassion that led Goldman to take such a drastic step

when she was just twenty-three consumed her whole life, and that made that life one of the most interesting and emblematic in American history.

Emma Goldman was an incredibly passionate person in every aspect of her life: in her sexuality and commitment to love, her politics, and her absorption in the arts. Goldman lived, loved, and hated with total intensity, and the people around her, and, indeed, finally the world, lived more intensely because of her.

EMMA AND ANARCHISM

Journalist William Reedy gave the following description of Goldman at the height of her notoriety and charisma: "She's a little woman, somewhat stout, with neatly wavy hair, a clear blue eye, a mouth sensitive if not of classic lines. She is not pretty, but when her face lights up with the glow and color of her intense enthusiasm she is remarkably attractive. She has a fine manner, easy without swagger, free without trace of coarseness, and her smile is positively winsome. Conversationally, she is a delight. Her information is broad, her reading in at least three languages is almost limitless. She has wit and humor too, and a compelling sincerity" (LA, 12).

Emma Goldman was born in Lithuania, then part of Russia, in 1869. She emigrated to the United States in 1885 and settled in Rochester, New York The rest of her immediate family also eventually settled in Rochester. Factory workers throughout the country were agitating for an eight-hour workday, and soon after Emma arrived in the United States, during a demonstration in Chicago's Haymarket Square, a bomb was thrown that killed seven policemen. Anarchist leaders were arrested and sentenced to death on scant evidence. Goldman, like many other American radicals, later traced her political awakening and interest in anarchism to those events.

These days, "anarchism" sounds like a crazy advocacy of chaos, associated with a lunatic fringe. But at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, anarchism was a widespread and serious political position. Anarchism is, simply, the doctrine that state power should be minimized and, ideally, eliminated. It seemed particularly compelling to Europeans who lived miserably under autocratic regimes, such as those of Russia and Germany, and the view had such brilliant

nineteenth-century exponents as Mikhail Bakunin and prince and scientist Peter Kropotkin. Goldman herself was attracted to what one might call the "spiritual liberation" that anarchism promised: she foresaw a flourishing of the arts, of sexuality in all of its forms, and of human knowledge. Eventually, Goldman heard lectures by Sigmund Freud, who argued that many ills of the individual and of societies were caused by the repression of sexual and creative energies. Freud's theories struck an immediate chord in a woman who was conflicted about her own ardent sexuality and about femininity. Goldman was also deeply immersed in the thought of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, history's greatest and most poetic opponent of Christian morality, though Nietzsche himself would have associated Goldman's egalitarianism precisely with Christianity.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century and in the first two of the twentieth, Russian and German immigrants came to the United States seeking economic and political liberation, but they often found that their new country was not a material improvement over the old. America was in the period of its most rapid industrial expansion, and immigrants, many of whom had been farmers, shopkeepers, or professionals at home, were introduced to the drudgery of production in factories or in industries that supported factories, such as steel and coal. Immigrants brought the politics of the radical Left and its critique of capitalism with them, and they found clear applications for these ideas in their new country. The two main camps on the intellectual landscape of the Left in the late nineteenth century were anarchism and Marxist socialism. The Marxists favored the nationalization of industry and centralized state authority after a proletarian revolution. Anarchists urged a general decentralization and saw state power as being allied with the economic power of industrial capitalism. They believed that the elimination of the state could lead to a golden age in which human creative potential would be unlocked. Goldman says this in her famous autobiography, *Living My Life*: "I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things" (LL1, 56).

This may strike you as a completely unrealistic ideal. Emma Goldman might well have agreed with that. The distance between the ideal and the reality in which she lived was, for her, an inspiration, though also, of course, a deep torture. She fought her whole life long to keep hold of her ideal in the face of a reality that, as she aged, seemed to become ever

more recalcitrant to transformation, both in the public sphere and in her personal life. "I'd rather do without reality if my ideal is forever to be abused, insulted, spat upon, dragged through the mud" (LA, 4), she wrote in a letter to a lover. Goldman always struggled to make ends meet. She worked in a clothing factory as a young woman in Rochester, and she tried, at one time or another, salesmanship, freelance writing, massage, cooking, running an ice cream parlor, and nursing. She founded and edited the magazine *Mother Earth*, and she struggled constantly to make enough as a lecturer to keep it operating. She was as aware as anybody could be of the pressures on average working people and of the distance between those struggles and the possibilities that could be released in a true liberation.

But she did not allow those possibilities to degenerate into a useless utopian ideology. She fought, first of all, to live by them and to live up to them. An important formative experience occurred early in her career as an agitator. Johann Most, perhaps the most eminent American anarchist, had sent her on a lecture tour to present his views. Most declared himself opposed to half-measures, and he argued against reducing the workday to eight hours on the grounds that to do so would only disguise the basic exploitation inherent in capitalism. Goldman gave a speech to that effect in Buffalo, a speech filled with biting sarcasm about those who would devote themselves to such a tiny goal as reducing the workday by a few hours. When she was finished, a tired old workman got up and told her that he was unlikely ever to see the overthrow of the capitalist system, but that a few more hours of leisure each week could transform his life in a very practical way. Goldman was ashamed of her own argument, and though she never let go of her distant ideal, she also never again despised small, practical reforms.

SEXUALITY AND LIBERATION

Emma Goldman was, shall we say, extremely sexually active. Indeed, she seems to have viewed it as her right or perhaps even her responsibility to take her pleasure as freely and fully as possible. And yet as she describes each of her affairs in her autobiography, we find that she always united sex with love: her passions were not merely sexual; they were simultaneously spiritual. When she was forty, she struck up an affair with Ben

Reitman, a man known as "The King of the Hoboes," of whom her friends thoroughly disapproved. She found, as time went on, that this disapproval had been well earned: Reitman was pursuing numerous women and embezzling funds from Goldman's political work. Though she eventually found the strength to break with him, she describes the titanic struggle in her soul between passion and good sense. A major theme of her autobiography is a conflict between her public persona of what might be considered ultramasculine confrontation and her desire for something approaching traditional gender divisions in her love relationships.

Since Goldman's correspondence with Reitman came to light and was reproduced in Candace Falk's biography, the extreme tension with which Goldman lived in sexual roles and relations has become even more obvious. Goldman was by no means the first American advocate of "free love" and the sexual liberation of women; Victoria Woodhull held many of the same positions in the 1870s, for instance. Among other things, Goldman rejected monogamous marriage and the various constraints that lovers and spouses impose on one another in their relationships. She was, hence, committed to a kind of political critique of jealousy as an emotion that, as we would now put it, serves the patriarchy by tending to treat people as possessions. But her jealousy of Reitman is palpable and rendered all the more irritating by her attempt to deny that it motivates her. Indeed, it is fair to say that there is a certain desire for submission to Reitman portrayed in this correspondence that seems surprising and disappointing in a radical of her stripe and that, sadly, expresses itself in an incessant carping, whining, and begging, all to the effect that he should act in a more responsible and recognizably masculine way. In part, though, this simply makes her pursuit of an ideal of sexual liberation more poignant and more urgent. Indeed, various traditional sexual roles have proven to be some of the most intractable to reform of human characteristics, because they are some of the earliest and most definitely inculcated. Goldman's internal conflicts have been shared by generations of feminists, but that of course hardly vitiates the critique of gender roles; rather, it renders it all the more personal and important. And if at the worst it leads to a certain sort of hypocrisy in which the ideal that is advocated publicly is violated privately, it also lends the advocacy of the ideal a personal urgency: one knows what the constraints are as intimately as possible and, hence, one also stands most deeply in need of the liberation that one prescribes.

Goldman reflected on her own conflicts in this regard and used them to help move toward a vision of sexual equality. Over and over, she found that her lovers wanted to marry her and limit her political work; even the most radical men she took up with had the impulse to make her a homemaker. And perhaps more disconcertingly to her, she found that she herself wanted her lovers to be faithful and attentive. Indeed, one of the most basic themes of her voluminous correspondence with Reitman is her attempt to justify her desire for his fidelity in a way that is compatible with her advocacy of free love. She never solved such conflicts satisfactorily, and, indeed, a theme of her entire life is her inability to find lasting and satisfying love. But living simultaneously on both sides of this dilemma brought humanity to her analysis of what it meant to be a woman and her vision of a free sexuality. After a failed affair, she declared, "If I ever love a man again, I will give myself to him without being bound by the rabbi or the law, and when that love dies, I will leave without permission" (LL1, 36). Her vision of liberation was expressed when, as a young woman in Rochester, she went to a party and danced with an enthusiasm that was regarded as sexually inappropriate by her family. Goldman's characteristic response was: "I will dance! I will dance myself to death!—what more glorious end!" (LL2, 19). A few years later, when an anarchist activist informed her that it was unseemly for such a famous agitator to dance, she replied that anarchism meant freedom of expression and a release into every form of beauty and pleasure. Thousands of T-shirts have quoted Emma: "If I can't dance, it's not my revolution".

Her version of feminism was remarkable for its comprehensiveness and for its radical critique of gender roles: "[Woman's] development, her freedom, her independence, must come from and through herself. First by asserting herself as a personality, and not as a sex commodity. Second by refusing the right to anyone over her body; by refusing to bear children unless she wants them; by refusing to be a servant of God, the State, society, the husband, the family, et cetera, by making her life simpler but deeper and richer" (A, 211).

The young Goldman was sexually abused by one of her teachers, and at fifteen she was a victim of what we would today call "date rape." "After that," she writes, "I always felt between two fires in the presence of men. Their lure remained strong, but it was always mingled with violent revulsion" (LL1, 23). This conflict was played out again and again as Goldman found ecstasy with a man and then came to feel constrained. About sex

with her lover Ed Brady, she wrote: "I understood its full beauty, and I eagerly drank its intoxicating joy and bliss" (LL1, 120). But she and Brady eventually split because he could not understand her commitment to political activism; he wanted her home, cooking his meals. Goldman's sense that marriage involved sexual coercion reflected previous feminist attacks on marriage as "legal prostitution," influenced the critique of marriage by radical feminists later in the century, and governed her personal commitment to remain single.

Goldman's was a conflict typical of women early in the twentieth century who attempted to question or defy traditional women's roles. She posed nude for a drawing by her lover Modest Stein; the drawing was later destroyed in a jealous rage by Ben Reitman. The price one paid for adhering to traditional roles—limitation of life prospects to those of a wife and mother, ceding of economic and personal power to men—was at least matched by the price one paid for defying them. If a woman attempted to have a serious professional career, she might expect to be shunned by some men and socially ostracized in some respectable circles, though possibilities were opening up in the figure known as the "new woman." Goldman wrote as follows about women she knew in the first decade of the twentieth century: "Most of the women claimed to be emancipated and independent, as indeed they were in the sense that they were earning their own living. But they paid for it by suppression of the mainsprings of their nature; fear of public opinion robbed them of love and intimate companionship. It was pathetic to see how lonely they were, how starved for male affection, and how they craved children. Lacking the courage to tell the world to mind its own business, the emancipation of women was frequently more of a tragedy than traditional marriage would have been" (LL1, 371). Goldman felt this dilemma acutely in her own life. She decided not to have an operation that might have made it possible for her to have children, and she took sexual companionship in a variety of unconventional ways. But she remained very aware of what she had sacrificed in the process and of the concrete dilemmas standing in the way of a true liberation of American women.

Goldman's sexual passion was volcanic from her adolescence to her old age, and she asserted her passion, claimed it, and tried to gratify it at a time when to do that was a truly radical gesture. Most of her sexual career was spent trying, as a feminist and a critic of conventional morality, to find love and pleasure in a world of constraints.

Her sense that sexuality could be coercive and also liberating led to her commitment to making information about birth control publicly available. The Comstock laws made it illegal to distribute birth control devices or information through the mails, an offense for which Goldman was arrested and jailed several times. Her advocacy of birth control was bound up with her sense that having many children greatly diminished the life choices of poor women: "Most of them lived in continual dread of conception; the great mass of the married women submitted helplessly, and when they found themselves pregnant, their alarm and worry would result in the determination to get rid of their expected offspring. It was incredible what fantastic methods despair could invent: jumping off tables, rolling on the floor, massaging the stomach, drinking nauseating concoctions, and using blunt instruments" (LL1, 185–86). The inability to control whether they became pregnant made sex for poor women a hated task, and it drove them toward abortion. And though Goldman, as a nurse, knew how to induce abortions, she could not bring herself to do so. She concluded that birth control was an absolute necessity for the economic, sexual, and medical well-being of women, and she lectured on the subject all over the country. It is a bit hard for us now to imagine an era when birth control was regarded as criminal and unnatural, but Goldman risked her freedom every time she raised the subject.

The phrase "free love" came in the 1960s to refer basically to indiscriminate sex, but for Goldman, as for her predecessors such as Woodhull, it concerned not promiscuity but voluntariness: it meant simply that love was to be given and taken without coercion. "Free love," for Goldman, was a political critique of the institution of marriage. She opposed all institutions that she saw as limiting freedom, and it did not take a great deal of research to see that the institution of marriage often was not a free choice for women at the turn of the century. When Goldman was newly arrived in Rochester and working as a "factory girl," she married Jacob Kersner. She left him quickly, upon finding out that he was impotent, and that they were incompatible on other grounds as well. Nevertheless, Kersner made it hard for her to extricate herself from the marriage, and it is not clear whether they were ever actually divorced. Kersner gave her American citizenship, but little else, and Goldman turned decisively against the institution of marriage as being unutterably limiting to women's prospects. She also came to appreciate the importance to women of free sexual expression for all persons. "Sex is the source of life. . . . Where sex

is missing, everything is missing. . . . [S]exual sensibility [is] greater and more enduring in woman than in man" (LA, 160). She defended the rights of homosexuals and was among the first Americans to do so publicly, and it is probable that she had at least one brief affair with a woman.

To say that endorsing these positions and living this life took courage is an understatement. Goldman was almost alone in speaking with complete frankness to large audiences about the whole constellation of issues concerning the sexual liberation of women, and, indeed, of men. If she had not already been regarded as a monster for her general political views, she would have been for this. Even to speak of homosexuality, except perhaps in the context of abnormal psychology, to say nothing of endorsing it as a legitimate form of sexual expression, was grounds for being ostracized. Advocating such positions in public made her a whore and a pariah in the eyes of most Americans. The sense that one gets from *Living My Life*, however, is that Goldman herself did not regard speaking of such things in public as particularly difficult or heroic. Rather, by her own account, she had no choice: once she had figured out what she believed, she simply had no option but to say it. Her passion impelled her to speak. That is something that many heroes have in common: they do not regard themselves as heroes. Many people who have done great or difficult things say later that they did it because they had to. Goldman was one of them: she spoke her truth with great courage and power but never lost her humility.

The Political Agitator

Goldman lived fully and loved utterly, but she would not be known to us at all were it not for her work as an author and agitator. For she tried not only to live up to her ideals personally but to make them real for everyone. Her public persona was unprecedented for a woman in America, and, indeed, precious few American men have ever displayed her guts and dedication. She spent the first ten years of the twentieth century on a virtually unending lecture tour of the country, speaking sometimes to a few farmers in Nebraska and sometimes to audiences of thousands in major cities, such as at the rally at which Buwalda shook her hand. When she arrived at that rally in San Francisco, she found a huge police presence, literally hundreds of officers. It turned out that a rumor was abroad

that Emma Goldman intended to blow up the Pacific fleet, which was then moored in the harbor. Indeed, the chief of police had valiantly declared that he would protect the fleet from "the whole bunch of Emma Goldman and her gang" (LL1, 426). With a typically Goldmanesque flourish that both defused the ridiculous rumor and expressed her defiance of the police, she declared from the platform that such an act would be a waste of perfectly good bombs.

Goldman was arrested dozens of times, and attempts of all kinds were made to silence her. After William McKinley was assassinated in 1901, several states passed blatantly unconstitutional laws against the public advocacy of anarchism specifically to keep her from speaking. Goldman and Berkman finally were deported to Russia in 1919 in the wake of their agitation against the First World War. (The night before they left, Henry Clay Frick died. Berkman's famous remark: "deported by God." [LL2, 709]) She entered the United States only once after that, but she never ceased to regard it as her home.

Goldman's opposition to American involvement in the First World War was as controversial as any position she took in her career and, again, led directly to her deportation. She was not opposed to war in general; as an advocate of armed revolution, she certainly was no pacifist. Some leftists supported American involvement in the war; they saw it as a battle against German tyranny. But Goldman's analysis, like that of the Socialist Party under Eugene Debs, was that the war was a struggle among capitalists for control of world markets; thus she opposed all sides. She advised men to avoid the draft and held mass meetings to urge them to do so. That was a crime, and she was, as usual, arrested several times. In England, she lectured against the war and was shouted down, but she managed in the end to articulate her analysis. That analysis must have been compelling, for the audience passed a strong antiwar resolution with only a single dissenting vote. Goldman addressed the dissenter as follows: "There is what I call a brave man who deserves our admiration. It requires great courage to stand alone, even if one is mistaken. Let us all join in hearty applause for our daring opponent" (LL1, 257).

Goldman and Berkman, like many American leftists, particularly those of Russian birth, raised money and other forms of support for the Russian revolution. They were among the first Americans to declare their support for the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky, and Goldman crisscrossed the country speaking about the situation in Russia and raising

support for the Bolsheviks. After she was deported to the Soviet Union in 1919, however, it did not take her long to realize that the Soviet system was as autocratic as the monarchy that it had replaced, and indeed that in many ways it was a greater and more systematic threat to freedom. Anarchists had helped bring Lenin to power, but they were almost immediately imprisoned. Those who voiced their misgivings about the revolution often were exiled to Siberia, "disappeared" into the gulag, or summarily executed. The Cheka, Lenin's secret police, introduced a massive system of surveillance and converted a significant portion of the Russian population into spies. When sailors in Kronstadt, many of whom were anarchists, rebelled, they were put down in a Bolshevik bloodbath. The command economy instituted by Lenin and Trotsky was a miserable failure as factories and farms lay idle while people starved.

Nevertheless, most American radical leftists stayed faithful to the Bolsheviks. John Reed, for example, whose career was dramatized by Warren Beatty in the movie *Reds,* continued to write glowing dispatches for the American press. When he met Goldman in Petrograd, he endorsed the execution of dissidents enthusiastically: "To the wall with them! I say. I have learned one mighty expressive Russian word, '*razstrellat*' (execute by shooting)" (LL2, 740).

Goldman, like Berkman and other anarchists (including Kropotkin), quickly became a dissident in the Soviet Union, just as she had been in the United States. Indeed, her experiences in the former eventually tempered her condemnation of the latter. When as a distinguished revolutionary she met with Lenin, she did what very few people had the guts to do: she confronted him with his own horrors. She protested to his face the treatment of those who disagreed with him politically and the economic policies that were leading to mass starvation. In the United States, she had refused to work through the system, on the grounds that the government simply represented the interests of capitalist oligarchs. In Russia, she believed at first that the government was a revolutionary force acting on behalf of the people, and she protested and petitioned that government over and over regarding its injustice to others. She soon realized, however, that the Soviets were even less interested in political freedom and justice than were those who had tried to silence her in and deport her from America. She spoke out in Russia at the risk of her life, and she and Berkman spent much of the rest of their lives fighting the false image of the Soviet Union held by leftists throughout the world.

Her break with the Bolsheviks—early, consistent, and vociferous—alienated her from the international Left. By the end of her life, she was desperately poor, exiled from America (which, in spite of all her attacks, she loved), disheartened, and largely forgotten by the public. But she continued until the very end of her life to fight for her positions, and she was extremely active in supporting the anarchists in the Spanish Civil War. She died in 1940 in Toronto, after having a stroke during a card game. Her last words were: "Goddamn it, why did you lead that?" (LA, 513)

PROPAGANDA BY DEED

Let us now consider the matter of Emma Goldman and assassination. In their early twenties, Goldman and Berkman planned the assassination of Henry Clay Frick. Berkman, like Goldman, was an immigrant and an anarchist, though he was more rigid and doctrinaire in his positions than she. Berkman eventually wrote such books as *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* and *What Is Communist Anarchism?,* which are among the best documents of the anarchist movement.

Henry Clay Frick was perhaps the most hated industrialist of his era, world famous for his brutality toward and exploitation of his workers whether they were on strike or not. After his Pinkertons fired on strikers at Homestead during a pitched battle, Berkman swore an oath to kill him, and Goldman gave him her support. Berkman tried to make a bomb, but his experiments failed. In order to supply Berkman with a revolver and in order to pay for her own ticket to Pittsburgh to help him, Goldman resolved to "go out on the street" as a prostitute. Indeed, prostitution was a theme in Goldman's life: she later lived in a brothel and still later worked as a nurse for one of New York's most prominent madams. By her account, however, she never actually had sex for money. Her first customer turned out to be a benefactor who realized that she was a novice and gave her money just to talk. Still, she got her revolver.

Berkman travelled to Pittsburgh, forced his way into Frick's office, and shot him three times. When some of Frick's workers pulled him away, Berkman struggled free, and seeing that Frick was still alive, slashed at him with a dagger. He was then subdued. Frick survived, while Berkman went to prison for fourteen years. Goldman celebrated him from the

speaker's platform as a hero and a martyr, while privately berating herself for not raising enough money for a better pistol.

Johann Most, though he was ostensibly an advocate of armed struggle and had a few years earlier declared his love for Goldman, repudiated Berkman's attempt on Frick and even hinted that Frick himself had paid Berkman to attack him as a public relations stunt. The next day, Goldman attended a rally at which Most spoke. She demanded loudly that Most withdraw what he had said about Berkman. When he refused, she pulled a whip from her cloak and horsewhipped Most across the stage. She then broke the whip over her leg and threw the pieces at him.

Later she hatched a scheme with Berkman to break him out of the Western Penitentiary in Pittsburgh by tunneling under the prison from the basement of a nearby house. Her friends succeeded in opening a hole into the yard, but the tunnel was discovered and reported by children playing in the deserted house. No one was ever arrested for the escape attempt, but it was widely and rightly believed that Goldman was one of the planners.

In 1896, four years after the attempt on Frick, the prime minister of Spain, Canovas del Castillo, had 300 trade unionists arrested in connection with an explosion during a religious procession. Many of the prisoners, among whom were a number of anarchists, were tortured. Confessions were extracted, and some of the prisoners implicated others. Goldman started a campaign to bring the conditions of the prisoners to the attention of the American public. At a large public meeting, she said that "if I were in Spain now, I should kill Canovas del Castillo" (LL1, 189). A few weeks later, Castillo was indeed assassinated by an anarchist. Pursued by the press, Goldman denied knowing the assassin (though he frequented anarchist circles in London with which Goldman was familiar) but also praised him for acting while others had only talked. Of the lesson she learned from this event she wrote: "behind every political deed of that nature was an impressionable, highly sensitized personality and a gentle spirit. Such beings cannot go on living complacently in the sight of great human misery and wrong. Their reactions to the cruelty and injustice of the world must inevitably express themselves in some violent act, in supreme rending of their tortured soul" (LL1, 190).

While Goldman was in France in 1900, studying medicine and exploring the European anarchist movement, an Italian-American anarchist, Gaetano Bresci, from Paterson, New Jersey, shot and killed King

Umberto of Italy, probably to protest the killing of starving rioters by Italian soldiers in Milan in 1898. It was the third attempt on Umberto's life. Goldman had known Bresci in New Jersey, and she had admired his Italian-language anarchist newspaper. There is no reason to suppose that Goldman was directly involved in the killing, and this time she expressed reservations to her friends about the political uses of murder. But she again publicly defended the assassin, and even decades later, in her autobiography, she referred to his "great sacrifice" (LL1, 289).

The following September, President William McKinley was in Buffalo for the opening of the Pan-American Exposition. He was shaking hands in a receiving line when anarchist Leon Czolgosz pulled out a pistol concealed in a handkerchief and shot him twice. Though the wounds were not considered mortal, the president died eight days later as the result of an infection. Goldman, back in the United States now, was thirty-two. She certainly knew Czolgosz, who had attended a number of her lectures and had favorably impressed her with his earnest manner and what she called his "dreamy" eyes. Goldman denied any complicity in the assassination, however, and no evidence was ever produced that she had anything directly to do with it. But the first headlines after the assassination specifically implicated Goldman. The papers claimed that Czolgosz had confessed that Goldman had done the planning. Goldman was in St. Louis on a lecture tour, and she was chased around the country by dozens of detectives. As she took a train from St. Louis to Chicago, she overheard passengers, not knowing that the notorious Emma Goldman was on the train, calling her a "bloodthirsty monster" and saying that she should be hung. Her friends in Chicago thought that, innocent or guilty, she would be beaten or killed in police custody. They had good reason for their fears: Czolgosz was in such poor shape from beatings that he could barely attend his trial.

Her friends urged her to flee the country and offered to help smuggle her out, but detectives burst into the house where she was hiding in Chicago. Goldman was the only one there. She pretended to be a Swedish maid, and she was bringing off the ruse successfully until one of the detectives found a fountain pen with her name on it. She was arrested, interrogated at a grueling pace over several days, and accused of everything short of actually pulling the trigger. She was allowed to communicate with no one, except to receive letters threatening her life. On one occasion, she was indeed beaten. When she was told that she would have

to undergo a "full body search," she told the matron, "you'll have to kill me first" (LL1, 307). But there was no evidence against her, and eventually she was freed.

She immediately began to raise money for Czolgosz's defense and described him in speeches all over the country as an idealist, a dreamer, and a patriot. Putting it mildly, that kind of approach to an assassin is morally questionable, and Goldman, though she later expressed some reservations, never unequivocally repudiated the killing. But defending Czolgosz also took almost unbelievable fortitude. She had already been condemned as a murderer in many of the country's newspapers and by many politicians, not only for McKinley's assassination but for the attempt on Frick. The anarchist movement itself was thrown into utter disrepute by McKinley's assassination; if the Haymarket riot established the caricature of the insane, bomb-throwing anarchist bent on mindless destruction, then the McKinley assassination confirmed it. The assassination was the occasion for a national crackdown on anarchism and the passage of laws against its advocacy. Berkman's attack on Frick decisively turned public opinion against the strikers at Homestead and even made Frick something of a hero. In fact, 100 years later, the public attitude toward anarchism has not recovered from this spate of killings and assaults: it was strategic idiocy.

But Goldman did not back down for a moment, though in order to find a place to live she started using a pseudonym. When crowds jeered or attacked her, she stood her ground, often defusing the situation with deft humor, as when she said that killing McKinley or any American president was hardly worth the trouble, on the grounds that American presidents had little real power. Other anarchists, including Johann Most, immediately disassociated themselves from Czolgosz. But just as she had with Berkman a decade earlier, Goldman defended Czolgosz, even while privately expressing her regret for the McKinley assassination. In an interview given to a Chicago newspaper while she was in jail and McKinley struggled for life, she said that if she were allowed to, she would try to nurse McKinley back to health; she was working as a nurse at the time, and she viewed it as her obligation to relieve the suffering of any human being. But she also expressed her sympathy with Czolgosz and her belief that the inhuman treatment of working people led inevitably to acts of violence, and that this treatment, rather than Czolgosz himself, should be blamed for McKinley's death.

Such declarations took tremendous physical and moral courage. Goldman continually faced arrest and deportation, and many people thought she should be killed and threatened to kill her. I do not think that Goldman purposefully fed this hysteria, but she was heroically indifferent to it. Indeed, in a long life of extreme hardship caused by her beliefs, I do not believe that there is a single instance in which Goldman allowed what she said to be affected by the tone of public opinion, or by the likely consequences to herself of her advocacy. She was provocative, but not for the sake of provocation; she was provocative because she always said exactly what she thought.

Czolgosz was strapped into the electric chair at dawn on October 29, 1901, and was pressed one last time to implicate Goldman in the assassination. His refusal to do so constituted his last words. He was then electrocuted. When Goldman died almost forty years later, the obituaries still associated her with McKinley's assassination. She herself had summarized her position in a letter to Reitman in 1910: "What we do insist upon and maintain is that violence is only the last medium of individual and social redress. If no other method is left, violence is not only justifiable, but imperative, not because anarchism teaches it, but because human nature does and must resist repression" (LA, 139).

ASSESSMENT

If Emma Goldman lacked any of the four cardinal virtues described in the Introduction—commitment to something greater than one's own ambitions, integrity, self-reflection, and connectedness—it was reflection. First of all, she was not an original thinker. She took up a series of already well-staked-out feminist positions. Her anarchism was that of Peter Kropotkin. The greatest personal influence on her opinions was Alexander Berkman, whose version of communist anarchism she endorsed almost without exception or qualification. In the 1,000 pages of her autobiography, there is virtually no sign of growth or change in her positions from the time of her first political awakening after the Haymarket executions to her death in Toronto in 1940. One might put the best face on this and say that Goldman was consistent, but frankly her consistency is unnerving. In *Living My Life,* she several times briefly expresses doubts about assassination as a political technique, but these expressions are quick,

superficial, and followed by elaborate rationalizations. Goldman would have been more important as a thinker, though perhaps less effective as an agitator, had she reflected critically on her own opinions and had she allowed events to throw those opinions into doubt. Her rigidity kept her from being an important political thinker, and left her defending actions that were indefensible.

Nevertheless, Emma Goldman's life, though problematic, was also deeply heroic. The heroism is inseparable from the problems; Goldman's virtues and vices are of a piece. Her passion and commitment know few equals in American history, and rarely have passion and commitment found conditions that required more courage. But passion and reflection are qualities that are difficult to hold in solution: passion tends to overwhelm reflection and reflection to hold passion in check. Even Goldman's greatest flaw as a public figure—her lack of reflection—was necessary to her astonishing life.

Arrested and jailed many times for her opinions—including a year in the federal penitentiary in Jefferson City, Missouri—she could not be silenced. She explored fearlessly topics that were utterly taboo, such as homosexuality and abortion. Indeed, she created a public persona that was itself taboo, and she demonstrated by example a new way to be a woman. Goldman fought for freedom her whole life, and her life demonstrated what she meant when she spoke of freedom. Hence, it also showed how severely freedom was limited. Goldman endured a lifetime of struggle and the hatred of millions of people in order to live freely and help others achieve freedom.

In that sense, Goldman was a prototypical American: though an immigrant, she saw herself as the inheritor of Samuel Adams and Tom Paine, as an advocate of the American ideal of freedom and as a gadfly reminding Americans how far they were from realizing that ideal. Her particular combination of vaudeville and subversion could have happened nowhere else, and it was taken up by figures such as Abbie Hoffman a half century later. She took up the same gadfly role in the Soviet Union, in England, and late in life in Canada and in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. She lived, believed, wrote, and fought with total intensity and total authenticity: she had the guts to be exactly herself and to do that on the largest possible stage. When she first spoke in public, she froze and could not even remember her subject, but she persisted and became one of the most accomplished public speakers in American history. People

flocked to see her, in part because they could not believe that she was really saying such things, or simply being Emma Goldman, in public. Indeed, one vaudeville impresario, noticing her ability to attract crowds, offered her a lucrative deal to take the stage between the acrobats and comics.

What Goldman had, then, was rare passion and authenticity. These are virtues in public life that are less common than is commonly supposed. Because she possessed these virtues in abundance, Goldman opened this century toward a new way of understanding gender roles and the meaning of freedom. But passion and authenticity, it might be argued, also were Goldman's vices. The very same strength of character that allowed her to upbraid Lenin to his face when everyone else who had done so had suddenly disappeared allowed her to plan the assassination of Frick and defend assassination in general as a legitimate form of political expression, ultimately doing great harm to her own causes. The same passion that allowed her to explore her sexuality in a way that few women could also moved her toward extremism. The commitment made her stick to her guns in any situation and that made her an equally effective critic of John D. Rockefeller and Trotsky also was the rigidity that, by her death on May 14, 1940, had made her seem largely irrelevant to world events.

People are more complicated than ethics. We might try to figure out whether Goldman's overall effect on the world was positive or negative, but any such utilitarian calculation would be too elaborate and conditional to be useful. We might try to tote up the morally admirable and morally reprehensible acts that she committed: the lives she saved and the lives she helped take, for example, but that too is an obscure procedure. To assess Goldman accurately, we must squarely address her character. I have been trying to do that by listing her virtues and vices, as Aristotle and perhaps William Bennett might suggest that I do. But what we see when we do this is that Goldman's virtues *are* her vices.

Take away Goldman's passion and Buwalda never goes to Alcatraz, Frick never gets shot, and perhaps McKinley survives. But take away her passion, and you take away one of the first explicit political defenses of homosexuality, take away the impassioned critique of American institutions that led finally to a new respect for freedom of speech, and take away the writings and speeches that exposed to the world what the Soviet system was really like.

Take away Goldman's passion and you eliminate her personal excesses, for example, her commitment to Ben Reitman, a love that alien-

ated her from her movement and cost her years of psychic torture and a tremendous price in self-respect. But take away her passion and you have a mere propaganda machine. When William Buwalda saw her speak, he was a soldier with fifteen years of exemplary service. He disagreed with what she was saying, but he was swept into confusion by her passion, and he shook her hand to express his respect for the depth of her beliefs. Buwalda became an anarchist not when he heard her speak but rather at the moment he was arrested for shaking her hand. Then he realized that the system Goldman fought was indeed oppressive; he came to believe that her passion was justified. Goldman was the opposite of the contemporary American politician who sketches out a series of positions through polling and focus groups: she endorsed only what she passionately believed, and she endorsed everything that she passionately believed. Even more important, perhaps, is that she allowed herself to believe passionately; she allowed herself to experience a deep empathy with those who suffered, and to express their pain in her own voice.

Emma Goldman, I am arguing, cannot be pulled into pieces. If we love what is admirable about her, we love also what is vicious, and that is really the dilemma of love: that you cannot pull a person apart and love only what you want to love. What you endorse in a person is inextricably bound up with what you despise. You cannot take what you like and leave the rest: bundles of virtue often are also bundles of vices: people are whole; they are not fissionable into moral atoms. We might say truly that Goldman was an extremist, perhaps a fanatic, or we might say truly that she was courageous, consistent, and passionate. What is most deeply interesting and troubling is that, finally, those qualities are the same as they are concretely expressed in Goldman's person.

In pursuing the ethics of virtues and vices, it is all too easy to fragment people in impossible ways, to turn them against themselves. If you condemn Goldman's extremism, you condemn her integrity. That is what I mean when I say that all of the qualities I have enumerated amount to one thing: truth. Whatever else Goldman was, she was true to herself, though sorely tried in particular by her relations with men and her resolution to transform gender roles in her own person. Buwalda disagreed with what he heard her say, but he knew, deeply, that she was utterly committed to its truth. Goldman never misrepresented herself in public in order to achieve popularity or win adherents. Instead, she offered a public example of authenticity: on the public stage before thousands or in the privacy of her own bedroom, she was absolutely Emma Goldman.

Again, in the history of ethics, there are two basic approaches. One can judge acts, or one can judge character. The first sort of ethics focuses on what people do, the second on what people are, but it is obvious that these two are inseparable. What you do demonstrates who you are, and your character leads, in most cases, to your actions. When we judge someone's character, we do it on the basis of what that person does and says: that's all we have to work with. And when we judge someone's actions, we take those actions to show something about who the person is. For example, we imprison criminals not only because they did something wrong, but because we believe that what they did shows something about who they are, and that their character makes it likely that they will do such things again in the future. It cannot be the case that someone consistently does morally reprehensible things and yet is really a good person: there is an inseparable connection between what you do and who you are.

So it matters, in an assessment of Goldman's character, what she did, and the context in which she did it. It matters that she conspired to assassinate Frick, for example. It also matters that Frick ruthlessly exploited his workers and had some of them shot. Many held Frick responsible for the Johnstown flood of 1889, which killed 2,209 people. The badly maintained dam that burst on May 21 of that year and sent a torrent as strong as Niagara Falls rushing into a residential neighborhood was owned by a hunting club, the dominant members of which were Frick and his partner and employer Andrew Carnegie. This accusation fitted Frick, because it painted him as avaricious down to sums that would have been insignificant to him, and callous to the point of criminality. In short, there have been worse candidates for assassination. It matters, too, that no convincing evidence has ever been provided that Goldman conspired in the assassination of McKinley or of anyone other than Frick, though we may regret that she lionized the assassins, and may even suspect some degree of complicity in some cases. As the Greenwich Village raconteur, Mabel Dodge said of Goldman and her friends: "I felt they had Plans. . . . I knew they continually plotted and planned and discussed times and places. Their obvious activity seems to be publishing the anarchist magazine *Mother Earth*, but beneath this there was a great busy humming complex of Planning; and many times they referred to the day when blood would flow in the streets of New York" (AM, 144).

It would have been better, in short, if Emma Goldman had been a saint. Or, we might put it this way: like all of us, Goldman would have been better had she been better. If her anarchism was accompanied by Gandhi's nonviolence, for example, then Goldman might have been a moral beacon to the ages. (Dorothy Day did try this approach.) But what I am saying is that the thought-experiment in which we mate Goldman and Gandhi is nonsense. Goldman could not have been an advocate of nonviolence and continued to be Goldman. If we take seriously the personality that we have found—its volcanic emotions, its extreme capacity for empathy, its thirst for opposition, and its overpowering spirit of adventure—then we must admit that it is not the personality of a saint. But it is the personality of a remarkable woman, of a woman who made a difference in a hundred ways for the twentieth century. Emma Goldman provided an example for all women in the affirmation of her sexuality and her internal struggle with gender norms; she provided an example for all human beings in her total disrespect for the evil of institutions. She advocated freedom, which is admirable, but she lived freely in a world enslaved, which is heroic.

SOURCES

Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984) (LA). Falk, who discovered a cache of correspondence between Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman, focuses on Goldman's love life and deemphasizes other aspects of her biography. Much of the correspondence is acutely embarrassing and shows Goldman carping incessantly. Thus, intentionally or not, Falk's book tends to deflate Goldman as a historical figure.

———, ed. "Emma Goldman: A Guide to Her Life and Documentary Sources," The Emma Goldman Papers, sunsite.berkeley.edu/goldman/guide.

Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1969) (A). Emma Goldman was not primarily a theoretician, and her charismatic speaking style is lost on the printed page. So these essays, while they are interesting, are not vastly impressive. Also, they suffer in comparison to the comparable writings of Voltairine de Cleyre.

———, *Living My Life* (2 volumes) (New York: Dover, 1970) (LL 1, 2). This book, first published by Knopf in 1931, is one of the best autobiogra-

phies of the twentieth century, despite Emma Goldman's penchant for purple prose.

Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000) (AM). Puts Emma Goldman and her friends and enemies into a historical context as part of the Greenwich Village scene in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The portrait of Emma Goldman that emerges is amusing and balanced.

Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* (New York: Pantheon, 1984). The best biography of Emma Goldman.

2

Voltairine de Cleyre

Priestess of Pity and Vengeance

(Self-Relfection)

Emma Goldman is buried in the Waldheim cemetery in Chicago near Voltairine de Cleyre. De Cleyre is today an almost forgotten figure, but she committed her life to a vision of human liberation, a vision that encompassed even the man who tried to kill her. She was an incandescent writer and an original thinker, though she also lived much of her life in despair, to the point of suicide. If Joan of Arc were to be reincarnated as an American atheist, then she'd be Voltairine de Cleyre. She and Goldman in their own time often were mentioned in the same breath as the two great women of American anarchism. They had much in common. Both were celebrated speakers and writers, and both mounted scathing critiques of sexual oppression and the institution of marriage. They were active in the same circles and on the same issues, though de Cleyre was centered in Philadelphia, Goldman in New York.

But Goldman and de Cleyre were opposite poles of the same world. Where Goldman was a communist anarchist, de Cleyre was an individualist, at least early in her career. Where Goldman was an immigrant, de Cleyre grew up in rural Michigan. Where Goldman drew on the work of European thinkers such as Kropotkin and Bakunin, de Cleyre associated her thought with Americans such as Paine, Jefferson, Emerson, and the individualist writer Benjamin Tucker. Where Goldman was given to the free expression of desire, de Cleyre spent much of her youth in a

nunnery, and even after she rejected organized religion, she remained quite a severe ascetic. And where Goldman was unremittingly social, de Cleyre was fundamentally solitary.

They knew each other and admired each other from the soapbox and in print, though their relationship was not untainted by rivalry. Each thought the other ugly, and said so. Goldman wrote that "physical beauty and feminine attraction were witheld from her, their lack made more apparent by ill-health and her abhorrence of artifice" This is rather an odd assessment, since many of her contemporaries described Voltai (as she was known to friends and family) as pretty, a view that is borne out by pictures. De Cleyre, for her part, accused Goldman of "fishwifery" and "billingsgate" (talking abusively) (A, 135), and thought her vulgar and decadent. They hated each other's boyfriends as well; de Cleyre despised Ben Reitman, probably in part because of his continual sexual advances toward her and anyone else who got within range. And de Cleyre's lover, Samuel Gordon, was a follower of Johann Most and supported him in his condemnation of Berkman's attack on Frick. Recall that when Most repudiated Berkman, Goldman horsewhipped Most in public, and you will understand why she refused to allow de Cleyre to visit her in jail if she brought Gordon.

But they also grudgingly admired and publicly defended one another. In 1894, Goldman was arrested for telling a crowd: "Ask for work; if they do not give you work ask for bread; if they do not give you bread then take bread" De Cleyre delivered a speech in her defense, which is one of the most astonishing documents in American letters. And after de Cleyre's death in 1912, Goldman delivered an extremely moving eulogy in *Mother Earth,* which, though it contains the quoted observations about Voltai's appearance, is also full of praise for her work and her personality.

LIFE

Voltairine de Cleyre was born in Leslie, Michigan, on November 17, 1866. Her mother's father had been an active abolitionist. She was named by her father, who was a "freethinker" (i.e., an atheist) after Voltaire. The family was very poor, and through most of Voltai's girlhood the de Claires (later Voltai changed the spelling of her name for unknown reasons) barely subsisted. Her sister, Addie, said that at Christmas, "We wanted, as all children do, to give our parents and each other something, but

spending money was an unknown quantity with us." She recalls that one year Voltai made a little box for her mother and a case for Addie's crochet-hook out of cardboard (A, 21).

Paul Avrich, the great chronicler of American anarchism, wrote in his biography, *An American Anarchist,* that "Voltairine de Cleyre grew up to be an intelligent and pretty child, with long brown hair, blue eyes, and interesting, unusual features. She had a passionate love of nature and animals. But, already displaying the qualities that were to trouble her personal relations in later life, she was headstrong and emotional. She was 'a very wayward girl,' says Addie, 'often very rude to those who loved her best.' Her eyes could be warm or 'cold as ice.' When only four, her 'indignation was boundless' when she was refused admission to the primary school in St. Johns because she was under age.' She had already taught herself to read, says Addie, 'and could read a newspaper at four!' " (A, 24). She was admitted to the school the next year and continued there until she was twelve.

Possibly because he could not afford to keep her and possibly because he was returning to his lapsed Catholicism, her father placed her in the Convent of Our Lady of Port Huron in Ontario when she was thirteen. She was there, omitting escape attempts, from September 1880 to December 1883. Though she received a decent education, particularly in music (which she loved and taught her whole life), and though she grew close to some of the nuns, it is obvious that her experience in the convent was part of her journey toward extreme antiauthoritarianism. But as well as rebelling against it, she also internalized the convent's modesty and asceticism. Most pictures of her in later life show her in plain, high-necked garb resembling a habit, and her life of extreme frugality and devotion to her calling mirrored that of the nuns who helped raise her. She often was referred to by her acquaintances in religious terms as a "priestess" (journalist Leonard D. Abbott called her the "priestess of pity and vengeance" [A, 245]), or as the "bride" of her cause.

She never attended college but was thoroughly self-educated. After she left the convent, she embarked on the career that supported her, though in poverty, throughout the rest of her life: offering private lessons in English, music, penmanship, and other subjects. In immediate response, by her own account, to her treatment at the convent, where she was often punished for misbehavior and the frank statement of her opinions, she became a free-thinker and began to contribute to atheist periodicals and lecture on Tom

Paine and other subjects around the Midwest. In November 1887, she told a Michigan audience: "I spent four years in a convent. . . . I have seen bright intellects . . . loaded down with chains, made abject, prostrate nonentities. I have seen frank, generous dispositions made morose, sullen, and deceitful, and I have seen rose-leaf cheeks turn to a sickly pallor, and glad eyes lose their brightness, and elastic youth lose its vitality and go down to an early grave murdered—murdered by the church" (A, 40–41). As a lecturer, despite the firmness of her words, she seemed very self-contained. Where Goldman, Most, and many others breathed fire, Voltai did a slow burn. One of her listeners said: "The even delivery, the subdued enthusiasm of her voice, the abundance of information, thought, and argument, and the logical sequence of the same made a deep impression on me" (Jay Fox, quoted in A, 42).

Like Goldman and so many others, she was converted from a vague socialism to anarchism by the execution of the Haymarket leaders in 1887. When, at nineteen, she read the news of the explosion that led to the executions—an explosion to which the anarchist leaders were never convincingly connected—she thought to herself that the anarchists ought to be hanged. She berated herself for the rest of her life for that single thought, and she spoke every year on the anniversary of the executions. But while Goldman gravitated toward Kropotkin's communist anarchism, de Cleyre moved toward the individualist anarchism associated with Josiah Warren, Thoreau, and Benjamin Tucker, and she began to contribute to the latter's journal, *Liberty*. The main practical disagreement between communist and individualist anarchists concerns the institution of property. Communists such as Goldman and Berkman held it to be antithetical to human freedom, whereas individualists such as Warren and Tucker considered it essential. Both, however, were critics of rapacious capitalism, and both shared a vision of voluntary social arrangements. Later, de Cleyre stepped up her critique of capitalism and called herself an "anarchist without adjectives." She held that any attempt to dictate the future development of politics or the economy was itself incompatible with anarchism. As many voluntary systems ought to be tried as there were people who wanted to live in them. Goldman, to her credit, also realized that something like this was the only ideology consistent with anarchism. But for de Cleyre, the origin of a social liberation had to be a personal transformation: for her, ultimately, the liberation of a people had to

proceed through a liberation of each person, and the primordial scene of enslavement and freedom was within the human self.

In 1889, de Cleyre moved to Philadelphia, where she lived, taught, spoke, and organized, largely in the Jewish immigrant community, until 1910. She had several lovers over the years (though nothing like the number that gathered around the young Emma Goldman), and in 1890 she bore one of them, James Elliott, a son. She had no interest in raising the boy, whose name was Harry, and who was cared for by Elliott's family. As Avrich puts it, "Moody and irritable, in chronic illness [, poverty], and desperate need of privacy, she could not face the task of raising a child" (A, 72). Through this period, she was much in demand on the lecture circuit, and she toured the country and later England, though lecturing left her so exhausted and in so much pain that she had to take to her bed afterward. (It is not clear exactly what her illnesses were, though it is apparent that they were extremely serious from a young age and caused her death at age forty-five.) She also contributed poems, stories, and essays to many publications, notably Goldman's and Berkman's *Mother Earth,* which in 1914 published her *Selected Works* under Berkman's editorship. That book is a bit hard to obtain, in part because the U. S. government seized it upon publication. Of all the American anarchists, native born or immigrant, and with the exception of Thoreau, de Cleyre certainly is the most distinguished writer; nevertheless, she is more or less completely out of print.

In March 1902, in an expression of the antianarchist mania that followed the McKinley assassination, Senator Joseph Hawley announced that he would give $1,000 to have a shot at an anarchist. De Cleyre's response was: "You may by merely paying your carfare to my home (address below) shoot at me for nothing. I will not resist. I will stand straight before you at any distance you wish me to, and you may shoot, in the presence of witnesses. Does not your American commercial instinct seize upon this as a bargain? But if payment of the $1,000 is a necessary part of your proposition, then when I have given you the shot, I will give the money to the propaganda of the idea of a free society in which there shall be neither assassins nor presidents, beggars nor senators" (A, 136). Indeed, such flashes of humor, even in the context of extremely serious matters and de Cleyre's extremely depressive personality, are characteristic of her writing and in particular of her correspondence.

On December 19 of that same year, de Cleyre was shot three times at point-blank range. The would-be assassin was not Senator Hawley but a former student of hers, Herman Helcher, who declared to the police that he loved de Cleyre, and that she had broken his heart, despite the fact that it had been several years since they had seen one another. Helcher laid in wait for de Cleyre in a building that she passed daily on her way to give lessons. As she boarded a streetcar, he pulled at her sleeve. When she turned, he shot her in the chest. The bullet spun her around, and then he put two more bullets into her back. She managed to run a block before another of her pupils, a doctor, found her. She was expected to die, but as she wrote later to a friend, "I believe that outside of the actual physical pain of the first three days, my friends suffered more than I did. I don't know what kind of curious constitution I am blessed with, but some way I settled down to the coldest kind of mental attitude in which the chief characteristic was an unshakable determination not to die" (de Cleyre to Maggie Duff, A, 171).

As we ponder de Cleyre's response to the shooting, we need to keep in mind that she had, early on, renounced violence, though she came late in her career to endorse "direct action," largely as a result of her support of revolutionary anarchists in Mexico. But she had also expressed sympathy with anarchist assassins such as Bresci and Czolgosz, saying (as had Goldman) that their actions, while regrettable, were understandable under the circumstances, and that poverty and oppression always led to violence. De Cleyre had criticized the legal and penal system in extreme terms on many occasions, so she refused to identify her assailant or participate in any way in his trial. In fact, she sent an appeal on his behalf to the journal, *Free Society*:

> Dear Comrades,
>
> I write to appeal to you on behalf of the unfortunate child (for in intellect he has never been more than a child) who made the assault upon me. He is friendless, he is in prison, he is sick—had he not been sick in the brain he never would have done this thing.
>
> Nothing can be done to relieve him until a lawyer is secured, and for that money is needed. I know it is hard to ask, for our comrades are always giving more than they can afford. But I think this is a case where all Anarchists are concerned that the world may learn our ideas concerning the treatment of so-called "criminals," and that they will therefore be willing to make even unusual sacrifices.

> What this poor half-crazed boy needs is not the silence and cruelty of a prison, but the kindness, care, and sympathy which heal.
>
> These have all been given to me, in unstinted quantity. I can never express the heart of my gratitude for it all. Be as ready to help the other who is perhaps the greater sufferer.
>
> With love to all,
> Voltairine de Cleyre
> Philadelphia, 807 Fairmount Avenue (A, 177)

This letter puts into practice in the clearest way the thoughts contained in one of de Cleyre's strongest essays. Titled "Crime and Punishment," it is not an abstract treatment of issues in penology and jurisprudence but a philosophy of life based on passionate empathy.

> A great ethical teacher once wrote words like unto these: "I have within me the capacity of every crime." [She is attributing this thought to Emerson, though it is an ancient insight and was explored famously by Montaigne.]
>
> Few, reading them, believe that he meant what he said. Most take it as the sententious utterance of one who, in an abandonment of generosity, wished to say something large and leveling. But I think he meant exactly what he said. I think that with all his purity Emerson had within him the turbid stream of passion and desire; for all his hard-cut granite features he knew the instincts of the weakling and the slave; and for all the sweetness, the tenderness, and the nobility of his nature, he had the tiger and the jackal in his soul. I think that within every bit of human flesh and spirit that has ever crossed the enigma bridge of life, from the prehistoric racial morning until now, all crime and all virtue were germinal. (SW, 177)

Thus de Cleyre came to a politics of punishment through empathy with transgressors, and to empathy with transgressors through self-scrutiny. Throughout her life, she subjected herself to withering self-examination (indeed, too withering, for it drove her to attempt suicide). But in a way that Goldman could not—indeed, in a way that only great saints and exemplars ever have—she let her understanding of herself inform totally her understanding of others, even those she most deeply despised. "Ask yourself, each of you, whether you are quite sure that you have feeling enough, understanding enough, and *have you suffered* enough, to be able

to weigh and measure out another's man's life or liberty, no matter what he has done?" (SW, 199, emphasis in original). That attitude led to great self-loathing and great charity. She herself was the poor she was trying to feed, the criminal she was trying to free. And just as truly, she was the industrialist she was trying to overthrow, the president or priest whose doctrine she was dedicated to refuting and whose power she was dedicated to destroying.

According to de Cleyre, then, one was to leave others free not only to live as they liked but to believe and to be as they liked, and the limits of judgment and justice were precisely fixed by the limits of empathy. Anarchism thus transcended any moral system: it opened up the possibility of people inventing and living according to whatever values seemed right to them. On her view, one takes responsibility for oneself and leaves the question of the responsibility of others for themselves to themselves. This view connects de Cleyre with the American libertarian tradition of Josiah Warren and Lysander Spooner, but she develops the thought much more directly out of her own continual charitable and teaching work with the poor and out of her acute sensibility of suffering.

> [T]he difference between us, the Anarchists, who preach self-government and none else, and Moralists who in times past and present have asked for individual responsibility, is this, that while they have always framed creeds and codes for the purpose of *holding others to account*, we draw the line upon ourselves. Set the standard as high as you will; live to it as near as you can; and if you fail, try yourself, judge yourself, condemn yourself if you choose. Teach and persuade your neighbor if you can; consider and compare his conduct if you please; speak your mind if you desire; but if he fails to reach your standard or his own, try him not, judge him not, condemn him not. He lies beyond your sphere; you cannot know the temptation nor the inward battle nor the weight of circumstances upon him. You do not know how long he fought before he failed. Therefore you cannot be just. Let him alone. (SW, 179, emphasis in original)

She adds: "awakening will come when suddenly one day there breaks upon [every person] with realizing force the sense of the unison of life, the irrevocable relationship of the saint to the sinner, the judge to the criminal; that all personalities are intertwined and rushing upon doom together" (SW, 201). De Cleyre's ethics was not based upon abstract

principles, though there is a metaphysics underlying it: an Emersonian metaphysics of the connection of all things. But the metaphysics itself is given in and articulated out of an extremely profound, life-transfiguring experience of that connection that has its origin in self-reflection. And this idea that together we are "rushing upon doom" tempers de Cleyre's politics with an existentialist sense of the finitude and even the futility of human life: she resolves to do good in the face of absurdity, and to love even in the darkness, and to love even the darkness itself.

Helcher's bullets were never removed from de Cleyre's's body, and they contributed to a downward spiral in her physical and emotional health and an ever-darkening outlook on the world. Voltairine de Cleyre died on June 20, 1912.

Darkness and Liberation

Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre were anarchists for different reasons and in different ways. For Goldman, anarchism promised a flowering of life and creativity. She viewed life as a force that could fill all things if it were liberated. De Cleyre, on the other hand, found life a continual trial, and she even toyed with the idea that its universal extinction was preferable to its continuation. Her anarchism was driven by her extremely intense experience of and empathy for suffering. To Alexander Berkman she wrote: "In the last analysis it is life itself I hate, not a fat bourgeois. Life, life this fiendish thing which brings millions of little creatures forth mercilessly, only to hunger, pain, madness. There is not a day when the sufferings of the little waif animals in the street does not create in one a bitter rage against life" (A, 206).

Thus where Goldman turned always toward life as experience—toward art, sexuality, and liberation of human potential—de Cleyre turned away in pity, disgust, and depression. But she also continuously returned. Despite immense physical and emotional problems, she devoted herself to the relief of suffering wherever it might be found. Where Goldman imagined a beautiful ideal and never stopped aspiring to it, even in the most difficult circumstances, de Cleyre had a dark realism and little hope for anarchism or any other ideal. Of all things, she was most acutely aware of the suffering that surrounded her; she made of it her own suffering. She habitually rescued animals and human beings from the

street. After a particularly brutal quarrel with Gordon in the 1890s, they both swallowed poison, though they both survived. And de Cleyre tried to commit suicide at least one other time. By the end of her life, she continued her political work by sheer force of will. "I am not sure of anything," she wrote to Berkman on June 24, 1910. "I am not sure that liberty is good. I am not sure that progress exists. I do not feel able to theorize or philosophize or preach at all. . . . I can see no use in doing anything. Everything turns bitter in my mouth and to ashes in my hands. . . . All my tastes are dying" (A, 215). And to another correspondent around the same time, she wrote: "I have nothing—*nothing* to say. I would like to finish my life in silence" (A, 216, emphasis in original). She was continuously, grindingly ill in body and spirit, and in the last years of her life she experienced terrible headaches and a continual roaring noise in her ears.

This perhaps makes de Cleyre out to be an unremittingly depressed and depressing figure, but against this infinitely dark background, her writing and commitment are incandescent. When she wrote of the suffering of others and the means to achieve its surcease, she wrote with total passion. And in dedicating her life to hope, even in the face of overwhelming continual hopelessness, she displayed a heroic overcoming not only of the circumstances that surrounded her but of herself. Many people who suffer suicidal depression of the sort de Cleyre faced throughout her life turn inexorably inward; the sufferings of others and indeed the external world quite in general come to seem unreal; action becomes impossible.

But de Cleyre used her reflection on her own suffering and her intense desire for a liberation from it as a tool to understand all that suffers, as a connection to the world's suffering, as a motivation for its remediation. So intense were her connections to all things that suffered that she lived much of her life in utter despair. But so intense was it, too, that in the face of that despair she made beautiful language and demonstrated amazing generosity. She died at age forty-five and death was a great relief to her, something that in some sense she had sought all of her life. But that life was made all the more alive by its morbidity. There is a kind of existential nobility that despairs and fights anyway, that defies God or indeed any authority, even as it acknowledges that it can't win and even that it is impossible to know what victory means or whether it is desirable. But it pursues a liberation anyway, acknowledges and shapes the absurdity of life. Where Goldman insisted that life had a meaning

and a goal and lived marching toward it, de Cleyre acknowledged our finitude, impotence, and the inevitability of our failure, our pain, and our death. And even as she did so, she kept fighting to alleviate these conditions. That resolution to hope in the face of hopelessness, that song on the edge of the abyss, marks a courage greater even than that of the idealist.

De Cleyre's prose is paradigmatically American. She is in many ways a florid romantic, but driving the poetical gesture there is muscle. It is hard to quote her briefly, in part because when she's pouring, her sentences are extremely long, and in part because her figures of speech take a very long time to unfold. But when one examines her rhetoric, one also finds that she is remarkably plainspoken, and even at her most poetic and passionate, she is utterly direct. Here is a passage from her essay on Goldman. Recall that Goldman had been arrested for urging the poor to "take bread."

> I do not give you that advice. Not because I do not think that bread belongs to you, not because I do not think you would be morally right in taking it, . . . not that I do not think one little bit of sensitive human flesh is worth all the property rights in New York City; not that I think the world will ever be saved by the sheep's virtue of going patiently to the shambles; not that I do not believe the expropriation of the possessing classes inevitable, and that that expropriation will begin by such acts as Emma Goldman advised, viz.: the taking possession of wealth already produced; not that I think you owe any consideration to the conspirators of Wall Street . . . not that I would have you forget the consideration they have shown to you; that they advised lead for strikers, strychnine for tramps, bread and water as good enough for working people; . . . not that I would have you forget the single dinner at Delmonico's which . . . cost ten thousand dollars! Would I have you forget that the wine in the glasses was your children's blood? It must be a rare drink—children blood! . . . If, therefore, I do not give the advice which Emma Goldman gave, let not the authorities suppose it is because I have any more respect for their constitution and their law than she has, or that I regard them as having any rights in the matter.
>
> No. My reasons for giving that advice are two. First, if I were giving advice at all I would say: "My friends, that bread belongs to you. It is you who toiled and sweat in the sun to sow and reap the wheat, it is you who stood by the thresher, and breathed the chaff-filled atmosphere in the mills, while it was ground to flour; it is you who went into the eternal night of the mine and risked drowning, fire-damp, explosion, and cave-in, to get the fuel for the fire that baked it. . . . My

> second reason for not repeating Emma Goldman's words is that I, as an anarchist, have no right to advise another to do anything involving a risk to himself; nor would I give a fillip for an action done by the advice of some one else, unless it is accompanied by a well-argued, well-settled conviction on the part of the person acting, that it really is the best thing to do. Anarchism, to me, means not only the denial of authority, not only a new economy, but a revision of the principles of morality. It means the development of the individual as well as the assertion of the individual. It means self-responsibility, and not leader worship. I say it is your business to decide whether you will starve and freeze in sight of food and clothing. . . . And in saying this I mean to cast no reflection whatever upon Miss Goldman for doing otherwise. She and I hold many differing views on both Economy and Morals; and that she is honest in hers she has proven better than I have proven mine. Miss Goldman is a communist; I am an individualist. She wishes to destroy the right of property; I wish to assert it. . . . But whether she or I be right, or both of us be wrong, of one thing I am sure: *the spirit which animates Emma Goldman is the only one which will emancipate the slave from his slavery, the tyrant from his tyranny—the spirit which is willing to dare and suffer.* (SW, 214–17) (emphasis in orignal)

De Cleyre was certainly a spirit willing to dare and suffer, and though she lived in want and pain, she spoke and wrote with a courage that was total.

One interesting theme of this speech is de Cleyre's ambivalent relation to the idea of "leadership," whether Goldman's, her own, or anyone else's. She certainly could not, comformably to her own ethics, tell people what to do, even if they were willing to follow her. Her leadership, then, was not Goldman-style rabble-rousing or even large-scale organizing. Rather, she reached people one at a time in a kind of ministry, and when she spoke, she took care that the autonomy of each member of her audience was respected in her words and her delivery. She led, of course, by example, by her purity of purpose, by her deep dedication to helping specific people to survive and thrive. And she led by the inspiring vision given in her writings. But she refused to seize the sort of power that those writings were dedicated to critiquing. In that sense, she provides an alternative model of leadership that is highly personal and self-consciously respects the autonomy of those over whom it is exercised.

Her essay, "Sex Slavery," is one of her most impassioned, and the feminism she puts forward in it is strikingly modern, though like Goldman's it also takes up and pushes forward an existing tradition. She compares

marriage (as it stood in the late nineteenth century) to chattel slavery, and she traces its origin to God and the state. "[T]hat is rape, where a man forces himself sexually upon a woman whether he is licensed by the marriage law to do it or not. And that is the vilest tyranny where a man compels a woman he says he loves, to endure the agony of bearing children that she does not want, and for whom, as is the rule rather than the exception, they cannot properly provide. It is worse than any other human oppression; it is fairly *God*-like! To the sexual tyrant there is no parallel upon earth; one must go to the skies to find a fiend who thrusts life upon his children only to starve and curse and outcast and damn them!" (SW, 345). This is de Cleyre at her blasphemous best, thundering against oppression in a way reminiscent of Malcolm X. "At Macon in the sixth century . . . the fathers of the Church met and proposed the decision of the question, 'Has woman a soul?' Having ascertained that the permission to own a nonentity wasn't going to injure any of their parsnips, a small majority vote decided this momentous question in our favor. . . . The question of souls is old—we demand our bodies, now" (SW, 350). She goes on to assert that women's bodies are entrapped by restrictive and "modest" clothing, by limitations on such activities as team sports and horsemanship, and, above all, by the domination of their sexuality by men. Typically, she finishes by proposing liberty and by saying that no one can see what sorts of relations might be possible in the future between the sexes, but that all the possibilities are permissible as long as they are voluntary.

Yearning

Despite her extreme tendency toward heresy, there remained throughout de Cleyre's life a yearning toward transcendence. It would seem, indeed, to be a yearning for God, though of course we must acknowledge her self-declared atheism. This certainly is the key to understanding her asceticism, her apparent vow of poverty and dedication to self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, and perhaps self-destruction. De Cleyre wanted to erase herself into pure generosity and hence pure emptiness. There is a kind of American Platonism lurking in her renunciation of the beyond and in her love of nature and its transcendence. In a short story, "The Chain Gang," which is reminiscent of some of the contemporary essays of W. E. B. Du Bois, de Cleyre displays her lifelong association with music and relates it to what is certainly a religious experience.

> When you hear that an untaught child is able, he knows not how, to do the works of the magicians of mathematics, has it never seemed to you that suddenly all books were swept away, and there before you stood a superb, sphinx-like creation, Mathematics itself, posing problems to men whose eyes are cast down, and all at once, out of whim, incorporating itself in the wide-eyed, mysterious child? Have you ever felt that all the works of the masters were swept aside in the burst of a singing voice, unconscious that it sings, and that Music itself, a master-presence, has entered the throat and sung? (SW, 415)

The essay/story then describes the way the song "incorporates" itself in black men working on a Georgia chain gang.

> But wide beyond the limits of high man and his little scorn, the great sweet old Music-Soul, the chords of the World, smote through the black man's fibre in the days of the making of men; and it sings, it sings . . . through all the voices of the Chain Gang. And never one so low that it does not fill . . . and bursts out singing things always new and new and new. (SW, 416)

While Goldman never focused on the oppression of black people (a curious omission and serious lapse in consistency), de Cleyre did. She always viewed suffering as a call to transcendence, as perhaps the only road to transcendence of the self. Only one who is deep in soul darkness and self-loathing seeks both immersion in pain and its overcoming through its intensification. And only someone with that power of self-overcoming really understands from inside the expressions of transcendence by which oppressed people transform pain into art. That was the origin of the blues that de Cleyre heard, and, more, celebrated and embodied.

Her philosophy is eclectic and, finally, quite original; she was the opposite of an ideologue, and it is to the credit of Berkman—an ideologue if ever there was one—that he could edit her writings and try to disseminate them. But her philosophy also is characteristically American. I would, again, call her metaphysics "transcendental" in the Emersonian vein. Whereas the philosophy of, say, Hegel, denigrates the physical world or sees it as a mere shadow of the Idea, Emerson and de Cleyre seek the transcendent in the immanent, and they find it. Thus her ethics emerges directly from her metaphysics; it is an ethics that makes use of what Emerson would call the "oversoul," the sense in which or the level at

which we are all connected in one cycle of life and suffering and death and transcendence. Here is how she begins her wonderful essay, "The Dominant Idea":

> In everything that lives, if one looks searchingly, is limned the shadow line of an idea—an idea, dead or living, sometimes stronger when dead, with rigid, unswerving lines that mark the living embodiment with the stern, immobile cast of the non-living. Daily we move among these unyielding shadows, less piercable, more enduring than granite, with the blackness of ages in them, dominating living, changing bodies, with dead, unchanging souls. And we meet, also, living souls dominating dying bodies—living ideas regnant over decay and death. Do not imagine that I speak of human life alone. The stamp of persistent or of shifting Will is visible in the grass-blade rooted in its clod of earth, as in the gossamer web of being that floats and swims far over our heads in the free world of air. (SW, 81)

In de Cleyre's metaphysics, then, the beauty and truth of the eternal, the will that is the source of the cosmos, is inside the world and inside us, or, indeed, is the world and is us. If our suffering distances us from it by enclosing us within ourselves, then it also issues a call for its own amelioration through connection, through concrete acts of charity. And so charity or the relief of suffering brings us to a kind of truth; it lets us see the modes of connection that constitute the human community and the world. From this immanent transcendence, de Cleyre rejects materialism and determinism and holds that one can incorporate an idea in oneself, that one can live toward an ideal, that even in death one is free and connected to the ideas that animate all nature. This is very much related to the sort of ethics developed a century later by Iris Murdoch, which associates goodness with truth and truth with an overcoming of ego. Murdoch's ethics, in, turn, is related to Platonism and to various religious traditions, in particular the *Bhagavad-gita.*

The philosophy that de Cleyre then articulates—both optimistic and intensely realistic—is an original version of the American pragmatism then being articulated by William James and soon to be elaborated in very much the way she does by John Dewey. De Cleyre writes:

> [A]gainst the accepted formula of modern Materialism, "Men are what circumstances make them," I set the opposing declaration, "Circumstances

> are what men make them"; and I contend that both these things are true to the point where the combating powers are equalized, or one is overthrown. In other words, my conception of mind, or character, is not that of a powerless reflection of a momentary condition of stuff and form, but an active modifying agent, reacting on its environment and transforming circumstances, sometimes greatly, sometimes, though not often, entirely. (SW, 82–83)

Here and in many other places, de Cleyre's philosophy and her writing find a pitch of synthesis, originality, and lucidity that certainly no contemporary anarchist ever reached and that, indeed, is rare in any context. Because of the relation of immanence and transcendence in her philosophy, this meliorism becomes a declaration that the world itself can become an arena of transcendence through concrete human action, in particular through a transformation of social conditions.

Compatibly with this philosophy, throughout de Cleyre's writing, one finds the most prosaic and practical observations interrupted by flashes of poetry and radical intuition. I conclude with this long quotation from her essay, "Anarchism," in which she pauses in her discussion of various economic models to deliver a sublime account of the human self in general and herself in particular. (Emphasis in what follows is in original.)

> Ah, once to stand unflinchingly on the brink of that dark gulf of passions and desires, once at last to send a bold, straight-driven gaze down into the volcanic Me, *once*, and in that once, and in that once *forever*, to throw off the command to cover and flee from the knowledge of that abyss—nay, to dare it to hiss and seethe if it will, and make us writhe and shiver with its force! Once and forever to realize that one is not a bundle of well-regulated little reasons bound up in the front room of the brain to be sermonized and held in order with copy-book maxims or moved and stopped by a syllogism, but a bottomless, bottomless depth of all strange sensations, a rocking sea of feeling wherever sweep strong storms of unaccountable hate and rage, invisible contortions of disappointment, low ebbs of meanness, quakings and shudderings of love that drives to madness and will not be controlled, hungerings and moanings and sobbings that smite upon the inner ear, now first bent to listen, as if all the sadness of the sea and the wailing of the great pine forests of the North had met to weep together there in that silence audible to you alone. To look down upon that, to know the blackness, the midnight, the dead ages in oneself, to feel the jungle and the beast within—and the swamp and the slime, and the desolate

desert of the heart's despair—to see, to know, to feel to the uttermost—and then to look at one's fellow, sitting across from one in the street-car, so decorous, so well got up, so nicely combed and brushed and oiled and to wonder what lies beneath that commonplace exterior—to picture the cavern in him which somewhere far below has a narrow gallery running into your own—to imagine the pain that racks him to the finger-tips perhaps while he wears that placid ironed-shirt-front countenance—to conceive how he too shudders at himself and writhes and flees from the lava of his heart and aches in his prison-house not daring to see himself—to draw back respectfully from the Self-gate of the plainest, most unpromising creature, even from the most debased criminal in oneself—to spare all condemnation (how much more trial and sentence) because one knows the stuff of which man is made and recoils at nothing since all is in himself—this is what Anarchism may mean to you. It means that to me.

And then, to turn cloudward, starward, skyward, and let the dreams rush over one—no longer awed by outside powers of any order—recognizing nothing superior to oneself—painting, painting endless pictures, creating unheard symphonies that sing dream sounds to you alone, extending sympathies to the dumb brutes as equal brothers, kissing the flowers as one did when a child, letting oneself go free, go free beyond the bounds of what fear and *custom* call the "possible"—this too Anarchism may mean to you, if you dare apply it so. And if you do some day—if sitting at your work-bench, you see a vision of surpassing glory, some picture of that golden time when there shall be no prisons on the earth, nor hunger, nor houselessness, nor accusation, nor judgment, and hearts open as printed leaves, and candid as fearlessness, if then you look across at your low-browed neighbor, who sweats and smells and curses at his toil—remember that as you do not know his depth neither do you know his height. He too might dream if the yoke of custom and law and dogma were broken from him. Even now you know not what blind, bound, motionless chrysalis is working there to prepare its winged thing. (SW, 113-15).

Sources

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3

Barry Goldwater

Bastard Out of Arizona

(Integrity)

Karl Hess, Barry Goldwater's chief speechwriter, said that Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign "was an unbroken series of Goldwater decisions to say unpopular things simply because he thought they needed saying" (D, 58). The approach, almost by definition, was bad politics, and Goldwater lost in a landslide. But Goldwater's frankness carried him as far as the nomination of the Republican Party: just short of the pinnacle of the American political process. That someone with that much honesty could be a successful politician is a tribute to Goldwater's character, but also to the fact that voters do occasionally have the capacity to value authenticity as well as pandering. Goldwater's willingness to speak from conviction was one of the features that made him among the most controversial and—despite the fact that he evaluated his colleagues and opponents frankly and publicly—beloved figures in American politics.

By 1975, Hess had moved from the Right to the Left on the American political spectrum: he was a tax resister and a member of Students for a Democratic Society. But even then, he wrote this about Goldwater:

> He is a good friend, the sort of person with whom it is pleasant to spend time. He is not pretentious, does not seek or demand deference. He is genuinely interested in ideas, but not stuffy about them. Walking with him on the desert is a special pleasure. He loves that native land, knows it well, relates to it in the best ecological sense. At home in

> Arizona he feels very much a part of nature and not apart from it. . . . I cannot fully explain and certainly would never apologize for the fact that I cannot imagine *not* being a friend of Barry Goldwater—although I sharply disagree with many of his latest positions. (D, 72–73, emphasis in original)

BARRY AND THE SOUTHWEST

Barry Goldwater presented himself as an embodiment of the American West, of the self-reliant hard living, and fierce independence of the frontier. Nor was this mere myth making: Goldwater was born in Arizona in 1909, three years before it became a state, and his Great-Uncle Joe witnessed the shoot-out at the OK Corral. Geronimo died at Fort Sill a month after Goldwater's birth. His mother liked to take the kids car camping far off the beaten track, and she took her rifle along and picked off animals as she drove. Goldwater himself was among the first people to make it down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, a forty-two-day, 700-mile journey. He photographed the journey and went on a lecture tour all over the region describing his experiences. "Sleeping in the open under God's own sky is one of the most overrated of all acts of man or woman," he wrote in his diary. "Bugs of all sizes have promenaded over my body from top to bottom. Bugs with only a cursory interest have wandered over me and, with no more than a 'humph,' have let me be. Others, carrying knives, sabers, and broken bottles, have passed my way and left a diverse collection of tools of torture firmly implanted in my being" (G, 78). Well before he went into politics, Goldwater was a serious photographer of the people and places of Arizona, and though he was no Ansel Adams, he published books of his images and showed them in galleries. His portraits of Navajo and Hopi Indians are particularly forceful: unromantic and clear-eyed, but also dignified and poignant.

The members of Goldwater's father's family were Jewish merchants, and his grandfather emigrated from Poland. In 1852, he set up shop in San Francisco and then eventually moved into the sparsely settled Arizona territory. By the time Goldwater was a young man, the family had assimilated to a mild Christianity, and Goldwater's was the most successful department store in the quickly expanding city of Phoenix. Goldwater was, hence, always financially secure, and he himself managed the store successfully before embarking on a political career by running for the Phoenix City Council in 1949.

Goldwater was also a distinguished pilot, and in hard winters he ran supplies to the Navajo reservations.

> In those days [the late 1940s], I did a lot of flying up in Navajo country. The tribe had some wicked winters. I'd collect food and hay and drop them to Indian families and cattle cut off by snowdrifts. I've probably spent more time with Arizona's Indians than any other white man. It grew from an innocent boyhood interest in Indians when our family camped on their reservations. I had a trading post at the foot of Navajo Mountain with a partner, Bill Wilson, a great outdoorsman. This offered me the chance to get to know many of the Navajo. All of us liked hiking and hunting. We were kindred spirits. . . . Some of this may seem superficial. It isn't. These are outward signs of how something that began as a simple interest and historical hobby became an inner conviction and commitment. From my first campout in Indian country, the red man always seemed as much—if not more—a part of Arizona and America as any white or black person. No member of the U. S. Congress has worked longer or harder on their problems than I. They'll always be my brothers and sisters. (G, 65-66)

Goldwater generally flew himself to his own campaign appearances and took a hand at flying even the large planes he used during the 1964 presidential bid. As he says in his memoir *With No Apologies*, "I have logged more than 12,000 hours of time in 165 different aircraft, helicopters, and gliders. I was the first nonrated test pilot to fly the U-2. I have flown the B-1 bomber, the F-104, the French Mirage, the German-French A-300. I have flown the SR-72 at a speed of Mach 3 at an altitude of 83,000 feet" (W, 29). During World War II, he flew the "hump" route from India over the Himalayas to Manchuria to resupply Chinese troops who were fighting the Japanese. Literally hundreds of pilots were lost in this mission, which involved flying through some of the worst weather in the world over its highest mountains. Goldwater eventually commanded two resupply airlines. As with Indian affairs, Goldwater's experience drove his work in the U. S. Senate: he was the Senate's most eminent expert on and advocate of military air power. When he recommended scrapping a plane, he knew what he was talking about, because he'd flown it.

Flying for Goldwater was a spiritual avocation: "Flying often encourages a feeling of closeness and communication with God. Heaven is a slow, endless climb into clear skies" (G, 72). For Goldwater, flying was a profound experience both of connection and freedom, or perhaps of

connection as freedom. Freedom, in turn, was the concept to which his political career was dedicated. His memoir, *Goldwater*, published in 1988, about two years after his retirement from the U.S. Senate, ends as follows:

> Man's greatest weapon against totalitarianism is freedom. I'm reminded of the meaning of freedom every morning. As I sit at my desk, robins and other birds flit back and forth on a ledge outside my study window. Often I watch them for long periods. We have come to know one another since they will sometimes stop and acknowledge my presence. Freedom has been the watchword of my political life. I rose from a dusty little frontier town and preached freedom across this land all my days. It is democracy's ultimate power and assured its eventual triumph over communism. I believe in faith, hope, and charity, but none of these are possible without freedom. (G, 400)

In his earlier memoir, *With No Apologies*, he wrote: "any pilot can describe the mechanics of flying. What it can do for the spirit of man is beyond description. When you are flying at night in a modern jet at 30,000 feet, the skies and the stars are infinite. . . . The heavens endure; men come and go" (W, 27).

Perhaps the last couple of quotations sound a bit religious, but Goldwater—though he was certainly among the most right-wing mainstream American political figures of his time—was also opposed to religious intervention in politics. In the early 1980s, for example, he pitted himself against Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority. "I once said that the Reverend Jerry Falwell needed a swift kick in the ass" (G, 385). He believed that freedom was threatened by religious politics. "The Moral Majority has no more right to dictate its moral and political beliefs to the country than does any other group, political or religious. . . . My wife [Peggy, an active worker for Planned Parenthood] believed that each woman had the moral and legal right to choose for herself whether she was capable of continuing her pregnancy and then raising the child. I disagreed with her. That's as it is, and must be, in a free and pluralistic America. . . . [I]f either side insists on legislating morality in absolute terms, then the challenge to democratic society is simply too great" (G, 387).

This visceral rejection of the Christian Right led Goldwater in the 1980s to make his libertarianism truly consistent. What signaled the absolute break was his stand on gay rights. Goldwater's grandson, Ty Ross, was gay and HIV-positive, and Goldwater gave an interview to *The*

Advocate in which he said: "The Republican Party should stand for freedom and only freedom. Don't raise hell about the gays, the blacks, and the Mexicans. Free people have a right to do as they damn well please. To see the party that fought communism and big government now fighting the gays, well, that's just plain dumb" (M, 423–24). In 1994, Goldwater became co-chairman of a drive by gay groups to pass a law preventing employment discrimination against homosexuals. In his speeches and interviews, he connected the proposed legislation to the American tradition of allowing people to create their own ways of achieving life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

With the 1964 election, Goldwater established the conservative wing of the Republican Party as a dominant force. Ronald Reagan gave an important fund-raising speech in support of Goldwater's candidacy in 1964; that speech made Reagan a national political figure. It has often been said with justice that Reagan's nomination and presidency could not have occurred without the conservative revolt in the Republican Party that was led by Goldwater in 1964. Many of the people who played key roles in the Reagan campaigns and administration got their start with Goldwater. The sentence that Goldwater used from the beginning of his career to the end to sum up his politics was "Any government which can promise you everything you want can take away everything you have"

He was himself a proud sinner. Here's an anecdote he delighted in telling about events that took place in 1929, when Goldwater was twenty:

> Two buddies—Paul Morris and A. J. Bayless—and I crossed the border at Nogales into Sonora, Mexico. At the time the United States had Prohibition. We decided to beat the law and wash down a few tequilas and beer on the Mexican side of the border.
>
> The three of us were fooling around, sloshing beer out of coffee cans at one another. Somebody aimed too high. Half a can splashed across the mustache, chin, and shirt of a passing Mexican policeman. My pals dashed headlong for the border—and freedom. I had my leg in a cast from an earlier fall and landed in jail.
>
> The Mexican cops saw I had a few bucks in my pockets, so we shot craps. I lost all my money and most of my clothes. We were getting to be *amigos*, so I asked them, as one old *amigo* to another, the price of the bribe to get out. The jailer said twenty-five bucks. With no more money, I asked him if an American check would be all right. They said it was fine among us *amigos*.

> I had a blank check from a Phoenix bank. I knew Bayless had an account there, so I just signed his name to it.
>
> Bayless, who became the owner of one of the state's largest grocery chains, later had the check framed. It hung in his office until he passed away. (G, 42)

This story is extremely Barry Goldwater. In his cussed way, he doesn't take law or propriety or sobriety particularly seriously. Even the sheer fact that he would tell this story about himself, and tell it with such verve, separates him from most American politicians.

Goldwater loved to campaign in bars, and he loved to drink while campaigning. And because they thought that he tended to say more controversial things after a shot or two, and because they thought it was bad publicity, his advisors told him to stop. But Goldwater's response was that he'd trust a man who walked openly into a bar and drank more than he would someone who went home and drank secretly (Nixon, for example). In a way, that was a summary of Goldwater's ethics. You could even be or do wrong, but whatever . . . be true. "Sure, I sometimes still get mad. But that's when an issue is really serious or a person is not telling the truth. It has often been said, 'You don't lie to Barry Goldwater.' I don't like liars—never have. I like stand-up guys who'll say, "Yes, I said it. I'm sorry. I'll try not to let it happen again" (G, 206). And this: "Westerners often admire a man more for standing tall than being right. That might not appear to be the most politic thing to say, but it's the truth" (G, 90). That's why Goldwater was a bastard, but that's also why he's *my* bastard.

TRUTH IN POLITICS

What is most important about Goldwater's career from my point of view is that he showed that it is possible to be a mainstream political figure and a success at it while also speaking the truth. "I've heard Roosevelt talk. I've heard Truman. I've heard all our state governors and sheriffs and local officials. But they never say what they're really thinking. You see them on the golf course or for a drink and they'll give you a whole different story. I think a guy running for office who says exactly what he really thinks would astound the hell out of a lot of people in this country" (M, 39).

The other people discussed in this book were on the fringes of American culture. They were able to be frank or extreme when they deemed it necessary, and their audiences usually could be counted on to remain supportive. But Goldwater was always trying to split the difference: he tried to remain influential in mainstream politics while advocating controversial positions in a completely straightforward way. His wife Peggy didn't want him to enter politics, because she didn't think he could hold his tongue. Throughout his career, various campaign managers tried to put him on a script or stop him from making unrehearsed remarks or simply tried to tone him down. But none of those things proved possible in the long run.

Current American political discourse sticks close to focus-grouped cliches and avoids saying anything controversial or even clear. Here's an example of the quality of American political discourse: "Not a single child can be left behind as we march boldly into the 21st century." George W. Bush tried to build a campaign around that sentence in the 2000 election, but it's something that you can imagine almost any politician producing at any time. It is at once false, trivial, and empty. It's false because many children will be "left behind," no matter who is elected. It's trivial, because no one could possibly disagree with the sentiment that it expresses. And it's empty, because, finally, it bears no relation to the mind or spirit of the person who mouths it: it's sheer script, and the politician might as well be an android or a ventriloquist's dummy. Here is a sample of Al Gore's rhetoric: "We are here at this extraordinary gathering, the very first of its kind, to talk about a subject that lies at the very heart of economic growth and productivity–and even basic political legitimacy–for the 21st century: reforming and reinventing government so that it is smaller, smarter, and more responsive to change in this fast-changing information age."

That was just not the way Barry Goldwater talked. He was an utterly different sort of politician than Al Gore, because Goldwater was present in his words. Even if you thought he was wrong, you knew that he meant what he said. But in part, the emptiness of American rhetoric originates in the 1964 campaign. The lesson that the pros drew from it is that plain speaking gets you beaten. The other key moment in that realization, an ideological mirror image of the 1964 Goldwater campaign, was George McGovern's landslide defeat by Nixon in 1972.

In contrast to the blossoming blank catchphrases with which the professional pol inks the waters like a squid, Goldwater's words were clear

and forceful. That's why the congressional Republicans appointed him to tell Richard Nixon that it was time to resign from the presidency: because they knew he had the guts to say it, and the guts to say it clearly.

> If the War in Vietnam taught the American people and their political leaders anything, it is that truth is their strongest weapon. The Watergate scandal taught the same simple but supreme lesson. Without truth there cannot be freedom or justice, wisdom or tolerance, courage or compassion. Truth is the foundation of a stable society. Its absence was the crux of Richard Nixon's failure.
>
> Unfortunately, despite the positive contributions the former President made to his country, his lies will be remembered longer than his legitimate labors. He was the most dishonest individual I ever met in my life. (G, 255)

This is an advocacy of truth, but it is also an application of that advocacy.

Of Johnson, his opponent in the 1964 presidential race, Goldwater says, "The man didn't believe half of what he said. He was a hypocrite, and it came through in the hollowness of his speech. LBJ made me sick. The last thing Lyndon Johnson wanted to do in life was talk political principles or beliefs. LBJ never believed in either. His only political dogma was expediency" (G, 151–52). But Goldwater was just as straight with his praise as with his abuse: he has nothing but good things to say about Lady Bird Johnson, for example. After John F. Kennedy was shot, Goldwater wanted to drop out of the race, because he knew that Johnson would stop at nothing and would fight dirty. He also had a premonition that Johnson would win, that Americans would not accept three presidents in a year.

It is perhaps a kind of moral blindness as well as a moral sensitivity on Goldwater's part that he could forgive almost anything except lies. That colleagues of his were drinkers or womanizers or (in the case of Joseph McCarthy) demagogues hardly seemed to bother him, or quite the reverse was met with a wink and a laugh.

But Goldwater's basic moral insight was sound. The pervasive moral failing of the political system in which he lived was its lies. In fact, one of the reasons that the drinking and womanizing endemic to Washington were a problem was precisely because of the separation that they induced between the public image of Washington and its tawdry reality. For Goldwater, though, the 1964 election was frustrating, because in some

sense he wasn't running against anyone: just a set of media images crafted by Johnson and Bill Moyers. The election turned into a landslide in part because the more false and fantastic the Johnson campaign became, the more brutally honest and controversial Goldwater got. In one way, this was political suicide: Goldwater ran as though he were pointedly intent on alienating various groups of voters, and as though he wanted to lose by the greatest possible margin. But he also was attempting to make the election an extremely clear choice: not primarily a choice between parties or policies but a choice between reality and hallucination.

His acceptance speech at the Republican Convention, crafted by Hess and Harry Jaffa, was a true act of defiance. The basic attack on Goldwater was that he was a right-wing extremist. If he had been intent on winning the election, he would have shown himself in the most moderate light possible, and there were elements of his record and rhetoric that would have made such a move plausible. Instead, he reacted rebelliously, extolling "extremism in defense of liberty" and condemning "moderation in the pursuit of justice." And though the speech was in one way colossally bad—he probably lost the election then and there if it was not a hopeless cause from the start—it was also in its way a masterpiece of political rhetoric. It was quite general and consisted of a set of inspiring ideas rather than a set of concrete policy proposals, but as an articulation of a political philosophy, it is noteworthy for its clarity and punch. It was an act of rebellion and defiance against the Republican Party and what Goldwater called "the eastern establishment" (above all, Nelson Rockefeller), against the American political establishment, and against the Johnson administration. It is not too much to say that it was a rebellion against the American political system.

That speech was certainly the culminating moment of Goldwater's public life. He had a chance to make his election more likely and to back down from his fundamental positions, or, even more, from his identity as a public figure and a man. He pointedly refused. In a typical statement at the beginning of *Goldwater*, he says "A man stands up, says his piece, then sits down" (G, xi).

Almost uniquely among composers of convention acceptance speeches in the twentieth century, Goldwater and his writers attempted in that speech to articulate a coherent philosophy of government rather than run down a laundry list of promises and programs. In doing that, Goldwater conspicuously refused to placate moderate and liberal elements of the

Republican Party. And, in fact, the NBC film of the speech includes crowd reaction shots in which many delegates are sitting on their hands or actively scowling. It is hard not to believe, whatever Goldwater himself might have said, that he is not intentionally alienating supporters of Rockefeller, Scranton, and Romney.

Most politicians would have gone in precisely the opposite direction, and have. Convention speeches are designed to widen the campaign from the activists who drove it to the nomination to the electorate as a whole. Goldwater early on had decided that he was not going to do that. He was resolved to win or lose based on his actual beliefs. Perhaps the sharpest moment is reserved for Johnson's policy in Vietnam, with Goldwater taking an opportunity to air his dispute with McNamara in an explicit way. "Yesterday it was Korea; tonight it is Vietnam. Make no bones of this. Don't try to sweep this under the rug. We are at war in Vietnam. And yet the president, who is the commander in chief of our forces, refuses to say—refuses to say, mind you—whether or not the objective over there is victory, and his secretary of defense continues to mislead and misinform the American people." It is obvious from this distance that Vietnam was the fatal problem and the greatest moral failing of the Johnson administration.

Goldwater was the candidate of truth not because the positions he endorsed were truer than Johnson's but because he gave the voters an absolutely clear choice between a man and a media image. He cared more about providing that choice than he did about winning. As it turned out, that was one the last gasps of reality in national American political life, which has by now become utterly fictional, a novel in which flimsily conceived stock characters mutter their empty dialogue. (One anomalous sign of life was the 2000 campaign of John McCain for the Republican nomination. McCain occupies Goldwater's Senate seat and was his handpicked successor. And when McCain, a few days before the Virginia primary, went to Virginia Beach, the headquarters of the Christian Coalition, and attacked the religious Right, he was taking up Goldwater's legacy.)

The other contrast between the Johnson and Goldwater campaigns was that Johnson fought dirty. In his memoirs, Goldwater lays most of this at the feet of Johnson's political advisor, Bill Moyers. Goldwater says, for example, that the Johnson campaign planted spies in the Goldwater operation. And Goldwater certainly felt soiled and slandered by what is perhaps the most famous political advertisement in American history—

though it ran only once—in which a little girl plucking petals from a daisy seems to be vaporized in a nuclear holocaust. Here is the concluding voice-over: "These are the stakes: To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die. Vote for President Johnson on November third. The stakes are too high for you to stay home." Johnson made Goldwater out to be an advocate of nuclear holocaust. As we shall see, Goldwater said some things that, at least under certain interpretations, lent some plausibility to that claim, and yet the implication was vicious and false. To his credit, Goldwater never fired back in kind. During the race for the Republican nomination, Goldwater had been attacked pointedly and personally by GOP moderates, especially Nelson Rockefeller and Bill Scranton. Rockefeller perhaps cost himself the nomination when he divorced and remarried in rapid succession. Goldwater writes: "Our staff had been ordered never, under any circumstances, to mention Rockefeller's personal or family life. If anyone had, I would have fired that individual immediately" (G, 171).

During the general election campaign, Johnson's aide, Walter Jenkins, was arrested for homosexual acts in a Washington YMCA. Goldwater says that "the White House anxiously awaited what we were going to say about the matter. It drove them crazy when I refused comment. Here was the cowboy who shot from the hip, the Scrooge who would put the penniless in the street with no Social Security, the maniac who would blow us and our little children into the next kingdom in a nuclear Armageddon. If he would kill a million men and women, why wouldn't he destroy one individual?" (G, 202, 203). Goldwater's advisors wanted him to press on the point of Johnson's and the nation's "moral failings," a card that would be played relentlessly by the Right in the 1980s and 1990s. His reply was:

> It was a sad time for Jenkins' wife and children, and I was not about to add to their private sorrow. . . . This reality never got through to Johnson and Moyers—that winning, even by a landslide, isn't everything. Some things, like loyalty to friends or lasting principle, are more important. Any cause will go on if it's a good one. . . . It reminded me of the great Western writer Willa Cather, who spoke so profoundly of our relationship to the land around us: "We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it—for a little while." (G, 203–204)

In a way, the quote from Cather is oddly placed in this passage. It does not directly address questions of "loyalty to lasting principle," but it is relevant in its context, because it does express Goldwater's deepest spiritual beliefs and shows us something about the source of his public ethics. His notion of public service, or rather of the identity of public servants, was based on a relation to the land and to the people that one could describe as "loyalty" or perhaps "unity." The man emerges from the land and lives in a connection to it. The governance emerges from the principle and lives in that connection. Goldwater would insult you to your face, but he wouldn't stab you in the back, even to win the greatest prize in American politics. Goldwater met privately with Johnson as the general election campaign began and suggested that they not make race relations or the Vietnam conflict issues in the campaign. Goldwater was afraid that a polarizing debate about civil rights could lead to race riots, and that criticism of the war effort could hurt military morale. Johnson immediately agreed, especially because his muddled approach to Vietnam left him widely vulnerable (and, of course, ended his presidency four years later).

TRUTH AND VIRTUE

"Without truth there cannot be freedom or justice, wisdom or tolerance, courage or compassion." What is most interesting about that sentence is that it makes truth the foundation of the virtues. Goldwater often said that his mother was permissive and essentially only disciplined her children for one thing: lying. Nixon was dishonest not only because he told Goldwater and the American people things that were false but because, as the Watergate tapes of Oval Office conversations showed, he lived a double life. Nixon's dishonesty was not a matter of a few lies, or was not only a matter of a few lies. The lies revealed Nixon's underlying character, and that character was fundamentally false and dishonest. But virtue of any sort is a kind of sensitivity to situation, a response of the character to truth. If you don't know the truth, you are not free, because in freedom what is at play is a choice between real options, and in order to know what the options are, you have to know the truth about the situation you are in. And to the extent that you are not free, your acts fail to be clear expressions of your character. Knowing the truth is required in order to be free, which is to say that knowing the truth is necessary

to the virtues. And saying the truth is, hence, a moral imperative, because it makes it possible for the people around you to cultivate and express their moral character. When you lie to people, you attempt directly to control their actions, to deprive them of freedom, and, hence, you reduce the moral content of their responses or even narrow the scope of their personalities, while at the same time you undermine your own leadership, since true leadership itself entails that the people who are led follow freely.

Hence, the concepts of truth, freedom, virtue, and leadership, though they are conceptually distinct, are mutually dependent in the actual moral lives of persons. That relation was the foundation of Goldwater's conservative politics and, indeed, of the American political system as envisioned in the U. S. Constitution. The direction of cultivation runs from truth to freedom to virtue: you must know the truth in order to make free choices, and you must make free choices of what is good in order to be virtuous. But the direction of conceptual dependence runs the other way: each concept has the previous as a necessary condition of its realization. You cannot display virtue without being free; you cannot be free unless you know the truth. Thus public officials must *be true* if the people are to be free and if there is to be the possibility of civic virtue. And it would follow from this as well that it is conceptually impossible to force people to be good: if people are good, it is a result of their free choices. In other words, this set of conceptual connections is an argument for freedom and democracy as well as a description of its necessary conditions. So the particular set of moral predilections that Goldwater displayed was not peculiar or eccentric in relation to American democracy and leadership in a democracy: his obsession with integrity and freedom was absolutely central to any possibility of civic virtue in a republic.

So the rhetorical gruel dished out by politicians like the George Bushes or Bill Clinton and Al Gore is more than just an irritation that we have to tolerate or meaningless white noise. It is a deep and pervasive moral failing that fundamentally compromises the possibility of democracy. Their deep untruth, indeed, their contempt for the truth—for plain speaking, clarity, and forceful assertion—is a vice that makes leadership impossible for them and democracy impossible for the nation. They systematically conceal themselves and their opinions; the whole huge machinery of polling and focus groups replaces their consciences, their beliefs, and, indeed, their minds. They cease to be moral actors and become passive vessels of the deepest vices that public personae can

display. Politicians like this need to read Goldwater's writings and study his speeches. And whether or not they agree with Goldwater's politics, they need, above all, to get a sense of who Goldwater was, of the relation of identity between the public and private man, of the possibility of being an important politician and also a person of deep integrity. The failure of integrity in contemporary politics is a global failure of moral personality that ramifies into the culture as a whole. It is the greatest danger to democracy, even in the simple sense that citizens have no idea at all who they're voting for. And it compromises, finally, even the idea of citizenship itself, because it manifests and encourages a concealment from public life.

When Johnson and McNamara lied about the war effort in Vietnam—lies that practically drove Goldwater to apoplexy—they deprived Congress and the citizenry of the ability to make choices about the conduct of the war, because they obscured or precluded the knowledge on the basis of which such choices could have been made. They made it impossible for legislators and for the people to make informed choices, and thus they made it impossible for legislators and the people to act out of virtue or to express their moral character in their choices. Goldwater never forgave the Johnson administration for lying about the supposed attack on American ships by the North Vietnamese that it used as an occasion for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which gave the war a patina of constitutional legitimacy. "In fact, the attack . . . never took place. . . . There was no doubt about one thing, though: McNamara misled Congress and the American people, particularly by not revealing the critical fact that the *Maddox* was on a secret mission. I later learned that the operation involved U-2 spy flights over North Vietnam, kidnaping North Vietnamese for intelligence interrogation, commando raids from the sea, and parachuting psychological warfare teams into North Vietnam. This was an example of Johnson-MacNamara duplicity—to act and then hide it. We voted on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution with critical aspects of the situation withheld from us" (G, 232). In relation both to Congress and the American people, Johnson's and McNamara's duplicity was manipulative and, hence, incompatible with true leadership: it was an attempt to reduce the proper scope of choice. It remains, of course, hard to determine what would have happened if Goldwater had been president at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. But it is fair to say this: the war effort would either have been straightforwardly scrapped

or straightforwardly prosecuted with extreme prejudice, and the decade-long string of slavish lies and incremental escalations never would have occurred. Goldwater often deplored the rejection by young people of that period of the American government and the idea of service to it or with it. But he also understood that the government had squandered the trust of the people, and that the cynicism and hostility with which people regarded their government had been well earned by Johnson, Nixon, and their lieutenants.

"Without truth there cannot be freedom or justice, wisdom or tolerance, courage or compassion." That sentence is Goldwater's creed as a public man. The reason that, during the presidential campaign, he went to Knoxville and suggested that the government sell off the Tennessee Valley Authority or to Florida to talk about making the Social Security system voluntary was precisely because his deepest respect was for the truth. He had made a conscious decision that the presidency was not worth having if it required lies, obfuscation, or retreat from fundamental beliefs. "For better or worse, I would be myself—a straight-shooting, down-the-line conservative—for the entire campaign" (G, 156). Without truth there is nothing to be wise about, tolerant of, compassionate toward, or courageous in the face of. And it is, above all, cowardice that fuels falsity: one must be willing at every moment to risk one's political career for the truth as one sees it. What's astonishing about Goldwater is that he took that risk (and he paid a high price), but that he remained in the U. S. Senate from 1952 to 1987 (with a gap from 1964 to 1966) as a sort of spokesman for reality.

Iris Murdoch has argued that virtue is a kind of responsiveness to reality. She writes that the self, with its ambitions and obsessions, blocks us from an encounter with the truth of other people. Virtue is found in letting that self-centeredness go and thus genuinely making contact with the world and other people beyond the self. The lies of Nixon and Johnson and the empty mutterings of Al Gore and George W. Bush emerge precisely out of the self-centered obsession that, for Murdoch, is the fundamental source of vice. Virtue, then, entails the keeping faith with the world that is true talking and the keeping faith with oneself that is authenticity. These are qualities that Goldwater possessed more strongly than any other politician of his era, and that is what gave him the status of an icon whom people respected or even loved, even as they disagreed with his basic positions. In the middle of the campaign, he voted against

the 1964 Civil Rights Act; that vote, even if it was wrong, was an act of political courage in the sense that there was nothing to be gained by it politically, or at least even if it did gain him some votes in the Deep South, it cost him many more votes elsewhere. He knew that it would.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND MCCARTHYISM

Barry Goldwater was, however, a deeply problematic political figure. This is most obvious in his support of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the latter's witch-hunts against supposed Communists, and in the aid and comfort he gave to segregationists. Let us, then, examine these failures—and I do regard them as serious failures—in light of Goldwater's character.

When Goldwater entered into his first Senate race in 1952, he was up against Ernest McFarland, who was the majority leader of the Senate. Arizona was a predominantly Democratic state. Few people gave him a chance to win, but he was aided by two factors. First, Dwight Eisenhower won a decisive victory in the presidential race, and he had coattails all over the country. He carried Arizona by a much wider margin than did Goldwater. Second, one of the most popular and controversial American public figures—Senator Joseph McCarthy—campaigned for Goldwater, making two trips to Arizona in his support. "McCarthyism" was already in full swing as the senator carried on "investigations" and made various wild accusations about Communist infiltration of the U. S. government and of American industries. Goldwater, during the race and afterward, aligned himself with McCarthy's anticommunism and his tactics.

Even when Eisenhower, as president, said that he would never get into the gutter with McCarthy, Goldwater joined the most conservative wing of the party in supporting him. This was in part because the two men were similar in many ways: rough hewn, plain spoken, hard drinking, and proud. "Joe McCarthy was the most contentious, controversial, and stubbornly cussed character that I ever met in my life" (G, 129), Goldwater wrote, and many people said much the same about Goldwater, though such remarks were, with regard to Barry, almost always tinged with great affection. McCarthy and Goldwater became close friends. "Do I stick up for McCarthy? Yes, I always have and I will continue to do so. . . . The people who want to get rid of McCarthy are people who coddle communists" (B, 106). In his memoirs, Goldwater points out that there

was genuine Communist espionage occurring at the time; he mentions the Rosenbergs and the famous British spies, Guy Burgess and Kim Philby. "For all his personal problems and excesses, McCarthy's central idea was on target—that not only was world communism a threat to this country and the free world, but its bloody repressions in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, and elsewhere could not go unanswered by civilized men and women" (G, 129). Goldwater was aware of the problems with many of McCarthy's accusations, however, and when McCarthy asserted that there were Communists in the State Department, Goldwater challenged him privately to produce names. When McCarthy could not, Goldwater told him that he was likely to get caught and should be careful. But he never publicly attacked or repudiated the accusations.

McCarthy was an alcoholic, and he died of cirrhosis at age forty-seven, three years after leaving the Senate in disgrace in 1954. "Few people knew how sick he really was," Goldwater wrote. "He used to invite me over to his house near the Capitol. He'd go out into the kitchen with the excuse of making me a drink and would have four or five shots, then return with our drinks" (G, 129). Goldwater many times tried to help McCarthy sober up, discussing his case with Francis Cardinal Spellman, taking him to hospitals, and even flying him to the Bahamas to get him away from the booze. But McCarthy just kept right on, and the more he drank, the more erratic and irresponsible his actions became. When McCarthy's lies were exposed and the Senate voted to censure him in 1954, Goldwater was one of twenty-two senators to vote against the censure, and he hinted darkly that McCarthy himself was the victim of a congressional communist conspiracy. Of those who supported the censure, Goldwater said, "Their motives are a criss-cross of spite, of fear of his political possibilities, and of the ever present and haunting dread that his ranging investigations might lead him to certain dark places in the Washington scene which they desperately want to keep covered up" (B, 108). When McCarthy died, Goldwater entered a eulogy into the Congressional Record, in which he made the ludicrous claim that "Because he lived, America is a brighter, safer, more vigilant land today" (B, 108). But later, Goldwater could write, "I was probably wrong in defending him. . . . McCarthy went overboard in his investigations because of his inability to handle power and alcohol. Joe became enamored of power. That's really what made him sick and changed him into such a drinker. He was off in an unreal world of self-importance and self-indulgence" (B, 130).

It is fair, then, to say that, in a mild way, Goldwater came to regret his support of McCarthy. He ought to have regretted it deeply. Extreme anticommunism was of course deeply compatible with Goldwater's basic political philosophy, and he was certainly right to decry Communist tyranny all over the world. He was right also to worry about Russian spying during the Cold War, but his support of McCarthy shows very clearly the problem with "extremism." McCarthyism was no more compatible with Goldwater's fundamental political commitments than was communism. In fact, had McCarthy gotten his way, he would have instituted a repression of expression that mirrored that of the system he despised. Goldwater allowed his deepest beliefs to be compromised precisely in their own defense. As he continued to defend McCarthy even after McCarthy's death, he demonstrated some of the most admirable aspects of his character: Goldwater always placed great value on loyalty and friendship, and his support of McCarthy did not change at all with the public perception of McCarthy. Goldwater was willing to be associated with McCarthy when McCarthy was popular and powerful, and willing still when McCarthy was disgraced and dead. Few American politicians of any era have that kind of guts. But all of that loyalty and courage in this case simply trapped Goldwater in a betrayal of himself.

Goldwater's vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, surely one of the most important measures to emerge from Congress in the twentieth century, was a huge political risk, though it perhaps also constituted a political strategy. Governor George Wallace of Alabama had done surprisingly well in the Democratic primaries, especially surprisingly well in Northern states, with his undisguised message of apartheid. He received 34 percent of the vote in the Wisconsin Democratic primary and 43 percent in Maryland. The civil rights bill came up for consideration just as the California primary campaign was in full swing. Goldwater won the primary, and that victory was decisive in his run for the nomination. As I have mentioned, Goldwater carried only five Southern states and Arizona in the general election, and the perception that he was a segregationist had an effect on the vote in the South. Many analysts have asserted that Goldwater was pursuing a Southern strategy, and that his vote on the civil rights bill was an attempt to win over the most rabidly racist elements of the electorate. That claim utterly enraged Goldwater, and he called it "demonstrably false." And despite some considerations on the other side, Goldwater surely suffered rather than gained politically by his vote.

Goldwater's record on race was a mixed bag. He declared himself many times to be opposed to Jim Crow laws, limitations on voting rights, and even simply de facto segregation. He voted for two civil rights bills passed by the Senate during the Eisenhower administration. Goldwater's store in Phoenix had a multiracial staff. When Goldwater became commander of the Arizona Air National Guard after World War II, his very first command was that the unit be integrated. He was, for many years, a member and financial supporter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). And yet it is fair to say that the segregationists in Congress and in the public regarded him as an ally, and that they had very good reasons to do so. He never repudiated his opposition to the 1964 civil rights bill.

Goldwater had consulted a seventy-five-page critique of the 1964 bill written by Yale law professor Robert Bork. He objected to Titles II and VII of the bill, which dealt with fair employment practices and public accommodations. These were the provisions of the bill that ended American apartheid, but Goldwater held that they were unconstitutional; in particular, they were violations of the rights of the states and of the people, as set out in the tenth Amendment.

They infringed on the rights of states and localities to set their own policies in local matters and on the rights of businesses to select their own customers. With regard to employment, he also held that the bill would inevitably lead to what has come to be called "affirmative action," which Goldwater held to be a form of discrimination. In his speech in the Senate, he said, "I am unalterably opposed to discrimination of any sort, and I believe that though the problem is fundamentally one of the heart, some law can help, but not law that embodies features like these, provisions which fly in the face of the Constitution, and which require for their effective execution the creation of a police state. . . . If my vote is misconstrued, let it be, and let me suffer the consequences. My concern extends beyond any single group in our society. My concern is for the entire nation, for the freedom of all who live in it and for all who were born in it. This is my concern, and this is where I stand" (G, 172).

When Goldwater argued that racial prejudice was a matter of heart rather than law, he had a point. It is fair to say that the legacy of the civil rights movement and integration by force of law has been mixed. In many ways, progress has been slow, as will be evident to anyone who examines differences in educational achievement, imprisonment rates,

and income in the white and black communities. But the progress of rhetoric has been rapid, and now there is almost no one who talks like a racist might have talked in the early 1960s. Even white supremacists have learned to use code. And so white America has reached a point at which almost no one presents himself as a racist, or thinks of himself as a racist. Yet the structure of racism and even, to a large extent, racial apartheid continues.

So Goldwater had something right. If you change the laws without changing people's hearts, you not only don't accomplish the end of racism, you make racism more elusive. But what he didn't understand was precisely the role of the fight for such laws in the changing of people's hearts. The people, white and black, who were inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr. were key in moving the legislation through Congress as they came together for the massive 1963 March on Washington at which King gave his "I have a dream" speech. The debate about that legislation changed the national mood with regard to race. It made white people acutely aware of the problem and called to their hearts to do something about it. The resolution to integrate various institutions likewise had an effect on many hearts, and if almost no one now explicitly endorses discrimination in housing and employment, that has happened not only by a change in heart but by a change in law. Hearts have then been changed by the concrete situation of integration. Much of this shift started with the movement for the 1964 Civil Rights Act. That Goldwater could so sincerely declare himself opposed to segregation yet also oppose measures to end it by force of law strikes me as a moral failure. And though Goldwater did oppose segregation, one reason he could take the position he did was because he consistently minimized the barriers to the exercise of basic constitutional rights and economic opportunity that African Americans faced. He never understood the power of race and racism in this country, and he did less than nothing in his political career to help reduce that power.

It is appropriate to have serious reservations about a Goldwater presidency. His candidacy, as we have seen, was the subject of one of the most vicious and negative propaganda campaigns in the history of American politics. Goldwater's view that we should continue to accumulate nuclear arms and threaten to use them was in fact very much compatible with defense policy and the national consensus at the time, yet the Johnson campaign was able to make it seem that a Goldwater presidency would

lead to nuclear annihilation. Even today when you mention Goldwater, people will say that he would have blown up the world. The other basic accusation, perhaps even more scurrilous though also less dramatic, was that Goldwater intended to destroy the Social Security system. Though he had reservations about the system, as did and do many American politicians, he pledged to keep it functioning. But as I consider what might have happened in a Goldwater administration, it is race that gives me the most pause, and that makes me grateful (with qualifications) that Johnson was elected. Goldwater's opposition to civil rights legislation and his view (reflected in the convention speech) that racial protestors should be dealt with harshly constituted a formula for disaster. The race riots of 1968 were bad enough; we might have had a virtual race war on our hands had Jim Crow been preserved. And Goldwater's constitutional argument is hardly sound. That the concrete violations of the basic rights of commerce and expression of individuals ought to trump the rights of states and individuals to enforce discrimination should have been clear to Goldwater and was the only position, finally, compatible with his commitment to freedom.

And yet Goldwater's claim that his vote was an act of political courage is not wholly inaccurate. The very qualities of character that made Goldwater a great and unique politician allowed him to stand up and be counted on the wrong side of several issues. Goldwater was one of twenty-seven senators who voted against the civil rights bill, but in *Goldwater,* he misremembers and says that his was the only "no" vote. Goldwater was indeed the lone naysayer on several bills. What emerges from his mistake is that he would have voted against the bill alone if no one else rejected it. That is plausible, given the rest of his career. That Goldwater, even in the midst of the presidential campaign, could vote against this popular and historically significant bill demonstrated his courage, commitment, and fortitude. And his attack on the bill was extremely direct and straightforward, quite characteristic of the best of Goldwater's political rhetoric. So it is precisely the qualities that made Goldwater great that allowed him to take and to defend this deeply wrong position.

One aspect of his failure on this occasion was a failure, we might say, of intellect, a failure ultimately to apply his own principles consistently, for though some people would have their freedom limited by this bill, those limitations were relatively minor. But the abrogation of the freedom of those whom the bill was designed to protect and liberate was

pervasive and destructive of the basic opportunity that Goldwater always said he regarded as being fundamental to the American way of life. In his basic arsenal of principles, Goldwater had the equipment to join liberals in trying to end the American nightmare of racism. Indeed, in some ways, his principles were clearer on that than the liberals' own. He failed to see the ways that his actions violated his own deepest beliefs. But the greatest moral failure of Barry Goldwater with regard to race was not a failure of consistency but one of empathy and compassion. There is no sense in any of Goldwater's speeches or writings that he ever tried to look at racism from the point of view of its victims. Because he himself owned a business, he looked at the matter from the point of view of a wealthy businessman operating under federal regulation. Because he was an official, he looked at race from the point of view of the powerful. Because he wasn't raised as a Jew, he didn't thematize his own minority status. And, finally, because he was white in a racist culture, he didn't look at the issue from the point of view of African Americans.

Of course, there are limits of empathy, limits on the extent to which a white person can enter into the experience of a black person in the context of a culture in which race is an identity-defining difference. There is mirror-image derangement in which white liberals believe that they have entered into such an intense empathy with black people that they are qualified to pronounce and control the experience of black people. That derangement is one of the factors in the failures of the civil rights movement, and it can lead to a kind of cultural annihilation in which the empathy consists of an implicit declaration that there is no difference between black and white cultures, that we are all potentially white people. That is a form of racism. So there are ersatz forms of connectedness that in fact reproduce dominations. Goldwater had the opposite problem: a failure perhaps even to attempt to enter into the experience of black people, a detachment from their experience that also constitutes a form of racism. In fact, it takes up a perfectly familiar place in the most hidebound tradition of American prejudice, because it implicitly rules black folks out of the realm of the fully human. A moral agent relative to a given person is a person who calls forth empathy, or into whose experience one can try to enter. Goldwater's failure of connection was, hence, a failure to treat black people as full-fledged moral agents; as such, it is a dangerous moral mistake and a form of bigotry.

If you start with that failure of connection—a failure that is a mild form of the disconnection that calls forth the horror of Nazism or the

Killing Fields—then the qualities that make you otherwise a good man or woman get twisted toward evil purposes. Goldwater's guts, determination, frankness, and capability served his country well in many ways. He was the signal leader of the American conservative movement, a movement responsible for a reinvigoration of basic American values, especially freedom. But when it came to the question of race, Goldwater's guts, determination, and frankness only made him dangerous. The problem is that you can't get one without the other: you can't take a gutty, determined person and expect him to back down on an issue about which he is passionate. It's extremely important to remember that whatever his failures of connection, Goldwater was absolutely no Nazi. Voting wrongly on the civil rights bill was not an advocacy of fascism or genocide. His failure of connection was not total, as we can see in his deep empathy for the Hopi, for example.

A Couple of Stories

"One evening in Wichita Falls, Texas, I was winding up a serious speech on the meaning of freedom and was dead tired. The sun was slipping behind the Texas plains, making me even drowsier. I was almost asleep on my feet, ad-libbing at the close of the address. If you can make out what I said, be my guest: "There are no heights to which our people can't go. There is no limit to the heights, no limits to their expanse if we go as a free people. I say, as a great man once said, 'Let my people go.' Thank you" (G, 207). It is revealing that Goldwater tells this story; there is a gentle sort of self-ridicule involved that shows a power of reflection sorely lacking in most American politicians. And, in fact, for George W. Bush, say, those sentences would mark a high point of lucidity. Goldwater didn't take himself too seriously, though he took the freedom he defended with the greatest seriousness possible. In fact, his two memoirs are full of self-deprecating jokes that show Goldwater at his most admirable and disarming. He takes ideology seriously; he takes virtue and truth and freedom seriously, but he wears his self and even his own advocacy of virtue, truth, and freedom lightly. And even as the right wing tried to make him out to be a hero and a martyr, he saw himself as just a plainspoken man from Phoenix, doing the best that he could but

screwing up as much as anyone else. That's a symptom of what Murdoch calls "unselfing": a letting go of the obsession with self that allows one to see the world and even oneself with greater clarity and, hence, brings one toward truth and virtue.

I'll let Goldwater leave you with this: "[On] the large, locked door of my old office in the Russell Senate Office Building, I have left [a] message for . . . my successors. In the last months of my tenure, I fired my pellet gun a number of times, notching my remembrance into that door. The notches are Goldwater's mark that he was there—a way of carving my initials for my long love, the U. S. Senate. The marks also speak more eloquently than I ever could of my long frustration with the Washington bureaucracy" (G, 38–39).

SOURCES

Lee Edwards, *Goldwater: The Man Who Made a Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1995) (M). An extremely tendentious work by a man who worked on Goldwater's 1964 campaign; an attempt to exonerate Goldwater for everything except his late-life support of abortion and gay rights.

Robert Alan Goldberg, *Barry Goldwater* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) (B). Solid scholarly biography.

Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Shepherdsville, Ky.: Victor, 1960). This book, written by L. Brent Bozell, William Buckley's brother-in-law and an editor at *National Review*, using Goldwater's ideas and speeches, was a kind of conservative manifesto. It sold several million copies, and it is an extremely clear and quite compelling formulation of conservative principle.

———, *With No Apologies: The Personal and Political Memoirs of United States Senator Barry Goldwater* (New York: William Morrow, 1979) (W).

———, with Jack Casserly, *Goldwater* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) (G). If you want to read one book by or about Goldwater, this should be it. The crusty old bastard is at his hilarious best. Better than *With No Apologies,* perhaps because Goldwater was out of the U. S. Senate and had leisure time and no reason to be politic, though he was never very politic.

Karl Hess, *In a Cause that Will Triumph* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967). Hess's account of the 1964 campaign, written immediately after it.

———, *Dear America* (New York: William Morrow, 1975) (D). This is the autobiography and polemic of Goldwater's speechwriter in the 1964 election. Hess also wrote the 1964 Republican Platform and speeches for Nixon, Ford, and many others. By the time this book was published, however, he considered himself a radical leftist and an anarchist. Hess's writing is extremely uneven: hectoring and unstructured at worst and beautifully aphoristic at best.

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4

Lame Deer

Spiritual Adventurer

(Connectedness)

Of all American Indian peoples, the Lakota Sioux are, with the possible exception of the Navajo, the most studied by non-Indians. The reasons are complex, but they certainly include the elusive factors that make Lakota religion especially attractive. That religion has been the subject of numerous popular treatments and is practiced with more or less seriousness by people all over the world. The group known as the Sioux (the word is apparently French) is broken into three divisions. "Lakota" refers to the dialect spoken by the Teton or western Sioux, who at the time of white contact were a nomadic people occupying parts of what is now South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, and Wyoming.

Many anthropologists are, with some justification, suspicious of the popularizations of Lakota spirituality, and the appropriation of that spirituality is deeply problematic on political, humane, and religious grounds. But the popularizations have a great virtue: they express particular human experiences in a way that scientific anthropology cannot. And the appropriations, at their best, reflect the real spiritual needs of the people who are doing the appropriating. At any rate, perhaps the two best-known popularizations of Lakota spirituality are *Black Elk Speaks*, by the holy man Black Elk as told to John Neihardt, and *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions*, by John Fire Lame Deer, with Richard Erdoes. The centrality of the latter is certainly due to the status and character of its subject. As one

of the greatest repositories of traditional Lakota Sioux wisdom in the era between the generation that survived the victory over Custer at Little Big Horn and the massacre at Wounded Knee and the revival of traditional Lakota ceremony in the 1970s, John Fire Lame Deer was charged with the preservation of a culture on the verge of extinction. He helped keep his people alive. That is the greatest single achievement in public life of any of the people portrayed in this book.

If I were to venture a compressed and simplistic account of Lakota beliefs as represented by Black Elk and Lame Deer, I would say that it represents a kind of monotheistic pantheism, a worship of *Wakan Tanka*—the great spirit, power, or mystery—in and as all things. The emphasis is on the interconnection of all things and of the interpenetration or identity of spirit and matter. These connections are enacted in a ritual cycle that includes the *inipi* or sweat lodge, in which the fluid of the body is mixed with the fluid of the earth; the pipe ceremony, in which the breath is mixed with the sky and the spirit; and the Sun Dance, which, as we will see in some detail, is a dramatic embodiment of all forms of connection and individuality simultaneously. A Lakota holy man, or *Wikasa Wakan*, usually receives a vision when he is a child or an adolescent in which he gains the power to interpret and lead ceremonies, and to heal.

THE FIND-OUT

Lame Deer's grandfathers, Crazy Heart and Good Fox, both fought Custer at Little Big Horn in 1876, the greatest Indian victory in the Plains wars. Good Fox also survived the massacre at Wounded Knee—December 29, 1890—in which about 300 Sioux were slaughtered during an army crackdown on the Ghost Dance ceremony, which was supposed to return North America to its state before the European invasion. Lame Deer was born in 1903 in a small cabin between the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations in South Dakota. He was raised by Good Fox and his wife, Plenty White Buffalo. It is traditional among the Lakota to be raised by one's grandparents, as was Lame Deer's own son, the medicine man Archie Lame Deer.

As a child he spoke Lakota and did not learn any English until he was forced to go to school. "We lived in that little hut way out on the prairie, in the back country, and for the first few years of my life I had no contact with the outside world. Of course we had a few white man's

things—coffee, iron pots, a shotgun, an old buckboard. But I never thought much of where these things came from or who had made them" (L, 23). He describes at age five seeing his first white man as one might describe an encounter with an alien. And, "when I was real bad, Grandma would say, '*Wasicun aningi kte*'—the white man will come and take you to his home,' and that scared me all right" (L, 27).

The white man did indeed come and take Lame Deer, as happened to most other Lakota children in the first half of the twentieth century, and took him to a day school on the Rosebud reservation. There he was forced to speak English and to renounce his religion, though he managed in six years to get very little of this "education": "It took me three years to learn to say 'I want this' " (L, 35). And he says that he didn't learn to read or write until much later when he was in the army. He spent six years, from ages eight to fourteen, in the third grade. When he was fourteen, the family was forced to send him to a boarding school. Such schools were the central institutions of cultural annihilation, and Lame Deer and his son belonged to the generations during which the Bureau of Indian Affairs was most intent on destroying Indian languages, arts, and spiritualities: his grandfather had grown up on the free Plains, and his grandson grew up in an era of cultural revival.

That this revival was possible is due to the work of Lame Deer and people somewhat older than him, such as the holy man Chips, of whom Lame Deer says, "Without him, maybe our religion would have died out. During the darkest years he kept his vision alive, worked it for the good of the people. If he hadn't taught us, there would be no medicine men left among us now. He did this almost by himself" (L, 159). Chips was of Lame Deer's father's generation. But much the same could be said of Lame Deer himself. So much was lost during the era of government "education," but it is more astonishing what the Lakota managed to preserve and reinvigorate. And when young Lakota as well as white people wanted to understand and reinvigorate Lakota traditions, Lame Deer was one of the principal sources of information and inspiration, performing and teaching the ceremonies and the worldview underlying them to several generations.

Lame Deer says:

> It is hard for a non-Indian to understand how some of our kids feel about boarding schools. In their own homes Indian children are surrounded with relatives as with a warm blanket. Parents, grandparents,

> uncles, aunts, older brothers, and cousins are always fussing over them, playing with them, or listening to what they have to say. . . . Indian children are never alone. If the grownups go someplace, the little ones are taken along. Children have their rights just as the adults. . . . The schools are better now [the book was published in 1972] than they were in my time. They look good from the outside—modern and expensive. . . . But in these fine new buildings Indian children still commit suicide. I know of a ten-year-old who hanged herself. These schools are just boxes filled with homesick children. (L, 34-35)

The forced relocation of Indian children as a policy of the federal government ended in 1934 with the Indian Reorganization Act, but the cultural destruction continued as the government turned over education on the reservations to religious groups (in Lame Deer's case, the Catholics), who were concerned with destroying the vestiges of native spiritualities.

Lame Deer himself maintained his sanity and identity by rebellion: "I wouldn't cooperate in the remaking of myself. I played the dumb Indian. They couldn't make me into an apple—red outside and white inside. From their point of view, I was a complete failure" (L, 35). He describes throwing a live chicken at his teacher and spraying her with ink, for which he was whipped and locked in the basement. "We full-bloods spent much time down there. I picked up some good fox songs in that basement" (L, 35). Like de Cleyre at the nunnery, Lame Deer escaped but was recaptured. "They didn't have much luck redoing me, though. They could make me dress up like a white man, but they couldn't change what was inside my shirt and pants" (L, 33). "I was more of an Indian when I left than when I went in" (L, 36).

John Fire Lame Deer's son Archie, a holy man who, like his father, wrote a book with Richard Erdoes, describes his boarding school experience more elaborately. He calls the day he started at St. Francis Catholic boarding school at Rosebud "*anpetu sicha*, the worst of all days, the day of doom." He says: "we were forbidden to speak our language, to pray in Lakota to the Great Spirit with the Pipe, or to go to the Inipi [sweat lodge] or on the Vision Quest. They tried to make us forget . . . all our ancient beliefs. They wanted us to love their white gods. And, if we did not, they would try to beat that love into us with a strap or a ruler. . . . The priests and nuns tried to make us into little white people, and I began to suspect that their god loved white people more than he loved Indians"

(G, 46-47). Archie ran away many times and finally succeeded in disappearing into the back country and dropping out.

In *Black Elk Speaks* and *The Sacred Pipe,* by Black Elk as told, respectively, through John Neihardt and Joseph Epes Brown, the best-known and perhaps most profound Lakota holy man to be presented in print relates with great sorrow the destruction of the way of life of his people. But for Black Elk, knowing or remembering that culture was not a project: he had been raised on the free Plains and lived through Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee. In remembering his culture, he remembered his life, and in remembering his life, he remembered his culture. But for John Fire Lame Deer and his son, finding, cherishing, and conveying knowledge of their own culture was an act of rebellion, an achievement. Where Black Elk converted to Catholicism and tried to integrate it into his own religion, Lame Deer's spirituality was an open act of defiance, and he was always concerned not only with the preservation of the traditions of the Lakota but with a critique of the traditions of white America. In fact, Lame Deer despised Black Elk for his compromise with white society, as well as his seriousness, calling him a "cigar-store Indian" (I, xxxvii).

In this connection, Lame Deer relates the events following the death of his mother, when he was seventeen.

> [I]n 1920 they wouldn't even allow us to be dead in our own way. We had to be buried in the Christian fashion. It was as if they wanted to take my mother to a white boarding school way up there. For four days I felt my mother's *nagi*, her presence, her soul, near me. I felt that some of her goodness was staying with me. The priest talked about eternity. I told him we Indians did not believe in a forever and forever. We say only the rocks and mountains last, but even they will disappear. There's a new day coming, but no forever, I told him. "When my time comes, I want to go where my ancestors have gone." The priest said, "That may be hell." I told him that I'd rather be frying with my Sioux grandfather or uncle than sit on a cloud playing harp with a pale-faced stranger. I told him, "That Christian name, John, don't call me that when I'm gone. Call me Tahca Ushte—Lame Deer." (L, 37–38)

When he was in the army, he told a general "Shit, I don't like this white man's army. Teach us to shoot, but forget about the rest. You are wasting our time. . . . I don't mind fighting, but you can't make a wind-up toy out of me" (L, 68).

After his mother's death, Lame Deer's father gave him sixty horses and turned him loose. He sold the horses, bought a Model T, and started traveling around the West, following the rodeo circuit. "My life was a find-out," he says. "If somebody said 'That's bad,' I still wanted to experience it. Maybe it would turn out to be good" (L, 38).

> I had a thirst for women. I wanted to know them. I loved many girls, more than a hundred. Their soft moaning had something to teach me. It could also get me killed. At a dance on one reservation—I won't mention the name of the place, because they could come and want to shoot me again—I met a girl and took her out, brought her to my hideout nearby. Then I noticed that I had left my coat at the powwow and went to get it. When I got there I ran into her husband, pawing the ground, looking mean. Of all things he turned out to be one hell of a big policeman and he had seen me sneaking off with his wife. He had his gun out in a flash and started banging away at me, calling me some very bad names at the same time. I didn't stop to listen, but jumped on the nearest horse and away I went. He fired all six shots after me. He didn't hit me, but one of the bullets hit the horse in the rump. Poor horse, he hadn't done a thing. (L, 40)

Soon Lame Deer was roping and bucking in the rodeo, drinking like a fish, and loving every woman he could find. Eventually he settled into a role as a rodeo clown. He created the character of Alice Jitterbug, with two pillows stuffed into his shirt. He'd show his red bloomers to the bulls to distract them from the fallen cowboys. In fact, the first time that Archie Lame Deer met his father was when Archie was fourteen and saw him perform at a rodeo:

> The most conspicuous figure at the rodeo was a strange woman who was tall, skinny, raw-boned, awkward, and very funny. She was dressed entirely in red. She had bright red hair, a red dress, red high-heeled shoes, a red purse, and a red umbrella. The man at the loudspeaker announced, "Folks, give a big hand to Alice Jitterbug, our famous rodeo clown." . . . I watched Alice's grotesque antics and posturing. Everybody was laughing at the funny things she did. It was all so comic that one could easily overlook the fact that hers was the most dangerous job at the rodeo. Whenever one of the huge Brahma bulls threw its rider, that red-haired woman had to put herself between the man and the bull, diverting the enraged animals' attention from the fellow

> lying helplessly on the ground. Every time she intervened, she was risking her life; invariably, the bull tried to gore her with its enormous horns. Sometimes she saved herself by diving into a large wooden barrel, which the mad bull would promptly toss around like a soccer ball. I said, "Lekshi, Uncle, that is the bravest woman I have ever seen." Uncle Norris laughed and told me, "Look closely. That ain't a woman. It's John Fire, your dad!" (G, 50)

Archie, too, had his performing phase in a circus as the world's drunkest trapeze artist, and for many years as a stuntman in Hollywood.

Clowning has a spiritual aspect in Lakota culture, as is the case in several other Indian tribes. The Lakota holy clown, or *heyoka,* does things backwards and purposely acts as perversely and embarrassingly as possible. And the *heyoka* has the power of giving children secret names. So Lame Deer regarded even his role as a rodeo clown as training in *wakan,* the mysterious or the holy. He worked as a square dance caller, a potato picker, a shepherd, a bootlegger, a pool hall/casino operator, a farmer, a soldier, a cattle rustler, and a tribal policeman: "I was known as the relationship cop; everybody was my relative. Now when your cousin gets drunk you don't arrest him; you take him home. I followed that policy. When I saw a drunk I told him, 'Cousin, I am a real mean man. Instead of taking you to jail, I take you to your old woman, let her use the rolling-pin on you. That's how mean I am' " (L, 66).

The funniest section of *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* is his description of a multistate crime spree in which, during a blizzard, he stole a car and used it to swipe some rolls of baling wire, which he traded for moonshine. Then he got the car stuck in a snowdrift, stole another, picked up some more moonshine, passed out, came to, stole some more, drank some more, and so on, until he had a goodly portion of the South Dakota and Nebraska police forces chasing him around the West. They finally apprehended him at home. His trial went surprisingly well.

> I had been drunk when I borrowed those cars. My buddies and everybody I had become in contact with had been drunk. All the witnesses had been drunk. Some of the police had been hitting the bottle, and even the owners of the cars we took, the reason those guys were not behind their wheels was probably that they were holed up someplace putting the hard stuff away. There must have been something in the air at the time of my joy ride, maybe the Cayuse wind blowing all that soft

> snow our way, making every man in South Dakota, white or red, suddenly get up and say, "Let's get drunk!" (L, 87)

So the witnesses contradicted themselves and one another, and since there also had been a couple of other Indians out on "little, half-sized sprees," they couldn't get clear on who had done what. Still, he was convicted of transporting a stolen car across state lines. In jail, he learned to paint signs, a profession that he pursued throughout the rest of his life whenever he needed a little money. "I couldn't live on the glory of my great-grandfather, who had died fighting General Miles. Going on that joy ride was for me like going on the warpath, like counting coup" (L, 90).

But even as Lame Deer was experiencing life and experiencing sin (which seem to amount to the same thing), he was also exploring Lakota spiritual traditions under the tutelage of old healers and holy men such as Chest and Chips. What makes a boy a *Wicasa Wakan* (holy man) is a vision he receives as he becomes a man. Black Elk's great vision is one of the most famous, and one of the most poignant aspects of *Black Elk Speaks* is his conviction that his vision failed, that he was meant to save his people but could not. (The accuracy of this interpretation of Black Elk's words by Neihardt is under dispute.) But the victory of the vision of Black Elk, George Sword, Chips, and others, who were the last holy men to know the free Plains, is the sheer fact that they were able to convey their vision through the generations: the victory of Black Elk's vision is precisely the existence of later generations of *Wicasa Wakan,* including such figures as Fools Crow, John Fire Lame Deer, Archie Lame Deer, Leonard Crow Dog, and so on. John Fire Lame Deer is absolutely key in this transmission, because he (as also Frank Fools Crow, but few others) bridged the gap between the destruction of Lakota culture at the hands of white people and its self-conscious revival during the 1960s and 1970s. This revival culminated in the standoff at Wounded Knee in 1973, during which John Fire Lame Deer acted as spiritual advisor, healer, and inspiration.

Lame Deer received his vision on a hilltop when he was a young man. Chest and other medicine men performed an *inipi*. He went up onto that hill and cried for his vision, staying in the vision pit for four days. He held a gourd which, in a traditional manner, contained forty pieces of flesh that his grandmother had cut from her arm. A huge bird appeared to him; he felt its wings. The bird told him that he would be a *Wicasa Wakan*. Then he saw his great-grandfather Lame Deer, who had

been chief of the Minneconjou Sioux and was among the last Sioux killed in battle with whites. His great-grandfather was dripping with blood from a gunshot wound inflicted by white soldiers. He knew then that he would take his great-grandfather's name. "Then I felt the power surge through me like a flood. I cannot describe it, but it filled all of me" (L, 16).

Whereas Black Elk was a syncretist, trying to bring Lakota tradition together with Christianity, Lame Deer was, to the end, a traditionalist. But preserving or indeed resuscitating or perhaps reinventing Lakota tradition was itself an act of defiance and innovation. "I listened to many white preachers of all denominations, simply because I was curious about what they had to say. But I had no need of their churches. I carried my own church within me. . . . I wanted to see with *cante ista*—the eye of the heart. . . . I was going through a change. I didn't resist it. I gave myself up to it wholly. Always I tried to find out. I met a medicine man, one of my uncles. 'Tell me about the Great Spirit,' I asked him. 'He is not like a human being, like the white god. He is a power. That power could be in a cup of coffee. The Great Spirit is no old man with a beard.' This answer made me happy" (L, 39–40).

"The find-out," he says "it has lasted my whole life" (L, 65).

Living in Truth

"It was almost as if I was several different people—a preacher, a spud-picker, a cowhand, a clown, a sign painter, a healer, a bootlegger, a president of the Indian YMCA. I managed to be both a Christian and a heathen, a fugitive and a pursuer, a lawman and an outlaw" (L, 80). With an insatiable appetite for experience and a perfect humility, John Fire Lame Deer went out and tried to get as much life as he could. Then he used what he had gathered to help his people survive as a culture and recover some of what they had lost. That is, Lame Deer was a leader. But what it means to be a leader among the Lakota is radically different than what that means in white American culture. Think, for example, about how vague reports of drug use long in the past by Bill Clinton and George W. Bush were treated as great scandals. A single, twenty-year-old incident of marijuana use doomed the Supreme Court nomination of Douglas Ginsburg. Obviously, Lame Deer was quite the sinner, and he didn't even really have the decency to regret his life.

Rather, he used his experience to understand himself, other people, and the universe. His experiences made him a better healer, and he performed hundreds of healings during his life. "I am no wino or *pishko*, but I am no saint either. A medicine man shouldn't be a saint. He should experience all the ups and downs, the despair and the joy, the magic and the reality, the courage and the fear of his people. He should be able to sink as low as a bug, or soar as high as an eagle. Unless he can experience both, he is no good as a medicine man" (L, 79). Lame Deer's way of being holy carries with it the imperative to have the broadest possible range of experiences. The holy man of the Western tradition is thought of as a more upright or ascetic person than the average, and American political and religious leaders are specialists in appearing to be holy men of this sort. Manufacturing that appearance results in the severe dishonesty and hypocrisy that is American public discourse. Lame Deer himself was aware of that.

> [My] kind of medicine man is neither good nor bad. He lives—and that's it, that's enough. White people pay a preacher to be "good," to behave himself in public, to wear a collar, to stay away from a certain kind of women. But nobody pays an Indian medicine man to be good, to behave himself and act respectable. The *wicasa wakan* just acts like himself. He has been given the freedom—the freedom of a tree or a bird. That freedom can be beautiful or ugly; it doesn't matter much. (L, 156)

This sounds rather simple, if potentially reprehensible. The moral status of the holy man is the moral status of a tree or a bird, of which it is absurd to say either that it is good or that it is evil. A tree is what it is, and if we conceive of human beings as fully natural things—as the traditional Lakota do—then the same is true of each of us. Lame Deer's advice, then, is to be like a tree: just be whatever you are: "He lives—and that's it, that's enough" (L, 156). But, in fact, this resolution to become or relax into what you are is an extraordinarily difficult task.

Kierkegaard argues in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that becoming what you are is the most arduous human task "because everyone wants to be something more or different." Nietzsche declares in *The Gay Science* that the task of the "free spirit" is to become what he already is. There is an art and a discipline in the task of becoming what one is, which in its simplicity coincides with one's entire life and makes of it a challenge.

One might call this the challenge to live in truth, to come to exist in reality. Nietzsche envisions the task of becoming oneself as becoming the artist of oneself: both maker and work, and that is Kierkegaard's vision of the holy man, the Knight of Faith. The Knight of Faith, according to Kierkegaard, is indistinguishable from the tax collector; he is the tax collector who finds God within the task of becoming himself, that is, a tax collector. Kierkegaard's greatest example of this astonishing thought is the story of Abraham and Isaac. Abraham miraculously has a son in his old age, whom he loves more than life. Then God demands that he kill Isaac. Abraham is willing to take on this trial, or to commit this monstrous crime, but at the last moment, God substitutes a ram for Isaac and returns Isaac to Abraham. When the whole process is over, Abraham's life is indistinguishable from what it was when he started: he is a father, a husband, a patriarch, a man of faith. He ends precisely where he began, but he also becomes what he already was with greater intensity or deeper truth.

Lame Deer is precisely that sort of Nietzschean artist of the self, cultivating experiences until he makes of them a self that is capable of helping his people to live, to heal them individually and collectively, indeed, to try to contribute to the healing of a broken world. He resolves above all to let himself be what he is, and to enjoy that, celebrate it. He allows himself to become Lame Deer with ever-greater profundity and intensity, then he presents himself to others; or, he becomes himself and then enacts himself publicly, even in what Nietzsche would call his "questionable" aspects. And people respond to him by following him or listening to what he says or by allowing his presence to remake their lives. This is not a leadership that he claims or enforces; it is a leadership that people give to him in virtue of the intensity with which he is himself and the intensity of his connection to their traditions. That is why his leadership is true, why he is in truth a leader, because he lives in truth internally and enacts his truth outwardly. And that is why people believe him and believe in him. When people mistrust politicians and think that they're liars, it's not by and large because they have detected some untruth in what the politician says, but because they detect the pervasive failure to live in truth. The problem isn't that the politicians are liars; the problem is that they are lies. This external enactment of a false self may reflect a falsity within the self, a self that conceals itself from itself, that is systematically deluded about its own motives, emotions, and even history. Or it may simply reflect a resolution to conceal the truth from others.

In that case, however, the external enactment becomes ever-further detached from the self, until it no longer makes sense to think of the self as having integrity. Eventually what you do in the external world simply is who you are. An example of this phenomenon that I have developed elsewhere is the American slave master who professed himself and indeed believed himself to be a good Christian. But even as he tried to maintain a relationship to the lamb of God in his head, he was breaking people's bodies. Eventually, the truth about the person becomes what is enacted externally, so that the inner life is a lie, a massive self-delusion. One loses oneself in the process by which one attempts to preserve oneself, to hold on to a secret authentic center. Thus a leader who succumbs to the temptation to seal his self off from its external enactment endangers precisely his internal life, which in an uncontrollable reaction is polluted all the way to the ground by the lie. At a certain point, in other words, the truth is the public lie, not the desperate attempt to hold back the true self from the public. At a certain point, the self dissolves or ceases to exist except as a self-delusion.

But the journey into truth also can be made in the opposite direction. The attempt to keep one's truth from leaking into public space pollutes the self with falsity, but the attempt to show one's truth publicly cleanses this pollution. Showing the truth publicly reflects, first, self-knowledge, and then a resolution in the self to truth. One attempts to render the self transparent, visible to the depths to anyone who cares to look. This is the function, for example, of the public confession: an attempt to hold on to or to fashion a decent self through public acts of self-disclosure. And that is why *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* is, among other things, a confession, albeit a delighted and delightful one. That confession lends the book credibility, though we also may suspect that there are moments of *heyoka* playfulness or pretend. But *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* also is a lovely example of how the inner self becomes true in proportion to its external expression. Indeed, the inner and the outer are, finally, utterly inextricable, for the source of self-knowledge is also external exploration. Lame Deer's "find-out" was, of course, both external action and self-exploration, and his life as a holy man was an enactment of his self-knowledge. In hypocrisy, one must lose the self, but in the circle of self-knowledge, self-enactment, and external exploration, one creates the self that is known; one becomes the artist of oneself, becomes what one is.

John Fire Lame Deer told his son: "I know that when I smoked the Pipe, I released something of myself that wanted to be free to roam the universe as part of the Circle Without End. With the Pipe, I made peace with my greatest enemy—myself" (G, 214). That is why the most sacred rites of the Lakota are all bound up with the concept of truth: the pipe ceremony is, above all, a resolution to truth: the smoking material in the pipe represents all things, which are immolated and taken into the body, then released into the air, toward *Wakan Tanka*. The Sioux belief is that during the ceremony one cannot speak falsely, that in relation to the Great Spirit and one's fellow worshipers, one is purged of falsehood. And the most holy rite of the Sioux, the Sun Dance—which we will soon explore at length—is an art of self-knowledge, collective celebration, and, finally, truth.

What also is implicit is an articulation of the self in and as its connections: a vision of the self as composed of its relations to other things. The human self is always being made and remade in its experiences, in its interchanges with the external world: with persons, animals, earth. What renders the self necessarily false is the attempt to insulate it from its relations. That, as it appears in public life, is hypocrisy. In other contexts, it appears as self-centeredness, egomania, solipsism. But it is finally and utterly a self-delusion, because the self is inextricable from its physical and social world. That is the deepest truth of Lakota spirituality, a spirituality of "all my relations," a spirituality that finds leadership and worship in the connections of self to world and, hence, to truth. Indeed, we might define "truth" as an experienced and acknowledged relation of the human self to reality. Truth is the transparency of the self to the world.

Thus Lame Deer begins to show us an alternative form of leadership as it originates within the self. "It was almost as if I was several different people": the point is not to render oneself coherent by some external standard but fully to be all of the things that one is. There is no gap between the public religious leader and the private man: no sham, no mask, no disguise. And though, ironically, that sort of integrity sounds amoral (and though, indeed, Nietzsche uses this thought to push "beyond good and evil," as does Lame Deer), it also embodies a profound set of values, values that we have explored in every biography presented here but that are at their most intense in Lame Deer. Above all, this way of life holds dear honesty and integrity, and, above all, it *understands* honesty and integrity in their primordial sources within the self and in

relations out of which the self is compounded. This makes possible an integral self through which external enactment remains coherent with the inner life.

> Am I a *wicasa wakan*? I guess so. What else can or would I be? Seeing me in my patched-up, faded shirt, with my down-at-the-heels cowboy boots, the hearing aid whistling in my ear, looking at the flimsy shack with its bad-smelling outhouse which I call my home—it all doesn't add up to a white man's idea of a holy man. You've seen me drunk and broke. You've heard me curse or tell a sexy joke. You know I'm not better or wiser than other men. But I've been up on the hilltop, got my vision and my power; the rest is just trimmings. That vision never leaves me—not in jail, not while I'm painting funny signs advertising some hashhouse, not when I'm in a saloon, not while I am with a woman, especially not then. (L, 157–58)

A white American leader typically engages in the opposite discipline, which is perhaps even more rigorous: he must never let his private experiences leak into his public persona, and so the public persona sooner or later becomes sheer lie, sheer cant. The function of a political speech by a major-party presidential candidate is precisely to conceal the person making the speech; what he actually says is of little moment (being largely a collage of cliches anyway); the point is to consign himself ever further into obscurity, to lose himself in the darkness so that no one can detect who he actually is. And as I have just argued, this renders the self thoroughly false from the ground up, or it actually subjects the self to dissolution. Kierkegaard thought it comic that people who really had no self wondered whether they were immortal, that is, whether they would remain the same for all eternity, after they hadn't been the same for ten minutes running in their entire lives. Lame Deer is then a completely different model of selfhood and, hence, of leadership, which admittedly emerges in a different cultural context. That it does so emerge, however, constitutes a critique of white culture for its lies. No one knows the price of the lie better than the Lakota, to whom our leaders have lied continually since the first contact of the peoples. But that even a successful white politician can have this kind of integrity if he has the will and the guts is demonstrated by the life of Lame Deer's contemporary, Barry Goldwater.

Having the full range of human experience was for Lame Deer a way of connecting to the people that he was charged to lead, preserve, and

heal. He both participated in a culture that was disintegrating and held it in its integrity to give to the future. But for Lame Deer, this exploration and even his own disintegration were also spiritual exercises, ways of coming into a fuller relation to the world and to God.

> Sickness, jail, poverty, getting drunk—I had to experience all that myself. Sinning makes the world go round. You can't be so stuck up, so inhuman that you want to be pure, your soul wrapped up in a plastic bag, all the time. You have to be God and the devil, both of them. Being a good medicine man means being right in the midst of the turmoil, not shielding yourself from it. It means experiencing life in all its phases. It means not being afraid of cutting up and playing the fool now and then. That's sacred too. Nature, the Great Spirit—they are not perfect. The world couldn't stand that perfection. The spirit has a good side and a bad side. Sometimes the bad side gives more knowledge than the good side. (L, 79)

Thus for Lame Deer, experiencing life in its questionable or even evil aspects is a mode of spiritual practice and connection to the world and the world's spirit. In one way, this is the very opposite of the asceticism that we will see in the life of Malcolm X. But, nevertheless, it also resembles Malcolm's spiritual journey as he went from sinner to saint but never repudiated the sinner in himself or his people and used it as an emblem for his people and as a way into their collective experience.

Sun Dance

One of Lame Deer's signal achievements was his contribution to the preservation and revival of the most beautiful and profound Lakota ceremony, the Sun Dance, which was prohibited from 1883 into the 1950s. That it came out on the other side and is practiced today is again due to heroic measures by holy men such as Black Elk and Sword, who had participated in the dance before the ban and who found ways to preserve knowledge of it. They taught it to younger generations of holy men, such as Fools Crow and Lame Deer, and they gave accounts of it to white anthropologists and poets. It seems probable that they also held secret Sun Dances during the period of the ban. In fact, Archie Lame Deer asserts flatly that the Sun Dance was celebrated every year during the

ban, and he says that he attended a dance in 1939, at which the dancers were some of the old legendary Sioux warriors, including American Horse. But only three men engaged in the rigors of the dance on that occasion, which suggests that by 1939, the celebration was virtually vestigial.

As Clyde Holler argues in his wonderful history of the dance, *Black Elk's Religion: The Sun Dance and Lakota Catholicism*, no two Sun Dances are the same, and the holy men who supervise the dance have broad leeway in conducting the ceremony. In addition, the Sun Dance was never a static ceremony, and its conduct and meaning have undergone many shifts from the time of early white contact.

Nevertheless, I will venture to describe its essential elements. Traditionally, the Sun Dance is an annual event. It lasts several days under the supervision of a *Wicasa Wakan,* who is known as the "intercessor" and who is assisted by other holy men. Archie Lame Deer, who has officiated at many dances, describes the function of the intercessor this way: "The intercessor is the messenger from the Creator to the people. But in another sense he is like the seed that goes from the man into the woman. He is as high as the sky and as low as the Earth of which he is a part. He is the 'man-in-between' " (G, 233). A Sun Dance circle is articulated as an arbor or an enclosure, open on the east side, oriented and ornamented according to the symbol system of the four cardinal points of the compass, which play a role in almost all Sioux ceremonies. This renders the ritual space a microcosm of the universe. The dance circle is usually about sixty feet in diameter, but its size depends on the number of those who have pledged to make the dance. Preparations are made through pipe ceremonies and purification in the *inipi*. An altar is constructed using a buffalo skull, and the buffalo itself is central to the symbolism of the dance, which was once connected to the hunt. The skull and other items, including the bodies of the participants, may be painted red, which is associated with the sun and more generally with the *wakan*. A cottonwood tree is located, cut down, and moved in a ceremonially specified way to the center of the circle, where it is fixed upright in the ground. Archie says that "The cottonwood is sacred above all other trees. The white fluff from its seeds represent downy eagle plumes, and its heart-shaped leaves are like the heart of the nation" (G, 235). Silhouettes of a man and a bison cut from buffalo hide are hung from the tree. These have huge penises, and there are elements of fertility imagery throughout the dance.

The dance proper is accompanied by singing and drumming. The dancers are pierced with knives or awls in the upper chest, back, or arms. Pegs or claws are pushed through the piercings. Then those pegs are attached by thongs to the central tree. There are other forms of piercing as well: sometimes the thongs are attached to buffalo skulls, which are dragged around the circle. The most extreme form of piercing has the dancer attached by two pegs in the back and two pegs in the chest to four stakes. The dancers, who have been prepared by fasting and cleansed in an *inipi*, are either fully suspended from the tree, or they dance away from the tree as they attempt to free themselves. They gaze into the sun and blow on eagle-bone whistles as they dance, and after a great struggle, they either pull free, tearing skin and muscle, are pulled free by others, or are cut down if they faint. Others, often women, cut pieces of their own flesh, usually from the upper arms, and offer them at the tree. The dance often is accompanied by a giveaway, and traditionally dancers were required to give most of what they owned to the poor. The purpose of the dance is, again, to ensure the health and welfare of the people and their success in war or the hunt.

Fundamentally, the dance is conceived of as a sacrifice, as undergoing pain in order to propitiate *Wakan Tanka*, an offering of what is most difficult to give: one's own flesh. As John Fire Lame Deer says:

> The way I look at it our body is the only thing which truly belongs to us. When we Indians give of our flesh, our bodies, we are giving the only thing which is ours alone. If we offer *Wakan Tanka* a horse, bags of tobacco, food for the poor, we'd be making him a present of something he already owns. Everything in nature has been created by the Great Spirit, is part of him. It is only our own flesh which is a real sacrifice—a real giving of ourselves. (L, 198)

The dance, then, is a systematic test of virtue: of courage, fortitude, generosity, and sincerity. In the modern era, sincerity is paramount, and the dance has become a test of one's commitment to Lakota traditions, serving as a kind of initiation ceremony into the traditional revival. The revival of the dance corresponded to some extent to the founding of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and in that context it took on some of its old symbolism as a ceremony for warriors.

When the Sun Dance was revived for public consumption in the 1970s, it was conceived of as a public performance; it is not too much

to think that it was revived in "official" reservation dances sponsored by tribal councils basically as a simulation, as a kind of native Colonial Williamsburg. Tourists brought their cameras, and the intercessor sometimes was identical to an announcer speaking over a PA system. But in the back country, where probably the Sun Dance had always been performed secretly at least annually, Lame Deer and others in the 1970s tried to bring the dance back not as a simulation but as a holy rite. In this they were only partly successful, though Archie Lame Deer and Leonard Crow Dog, among others, have conducted many serious traditional Sundances up until the present. Archie's own explanation of the purpose of the modern traditional dance is this:

> We pierce and suffer and pray for the renewal of all life in order to honor the women who suffer in bringing forth new life. For this reason, very traditional women do not do the Sundance, except for extreme reasons and/or when there is no man in the family to do it—for example, in time of war or when there are heavy alcohol, drug, or health problems in the family. We pierce and offer our suffering for our families and for the life of the Sacred Hoop. In other words, we "pierce" in order to help someone. We undergo the pain of piercing because this might take pain away from someone we love. (G, 227)

This is an echo of some of the early sources on the dance. For example, Thomas Tyon told James R. Walker in 1910 or 1911 that "If a man's child is very sick, or his wife, or if enemies shoot at him in a fight and he fears very much, yet he survives and is not killed, in such a case he may vow the Sun Dance" (B, 176).

The social aspect of the ceremony both as a way to preserve the people and as a collective celebration has of course been key to the dance from its origins. Traditionally, the Sun Dance festival was the primary social gathering of the Sioux people. In the nineteenth century, the dance camps could be huge: a circle of tipis miles in diameter echoed the central dance circle. The people themselves were spoken of as a circle that was in turn embedded in the circle of the universe. In Black Elk's account, the fundamental purpose of the dance was "so that the people may live." Clyde Holler has called this an "innovation," in that it represents the needs of the Lakota in the era of cultural genocide rather than in the era of the hunt and battle. And of the contemporary dance, Archie says, "As long as we dance, we will survive as a people and the nation will live"

(G, 250). But of course the hunt also was performed so that the people might live, and this is surely the meaning of the fertility symbolism, so that Black Elk's and Archie's accounts of the purpose of the Sun Dance are continuous with the tradition. John Fire Lame Deer also emphasizes the social aspect of the dance and relates it to a wider series of connections: "*Wi wanyang wacipi*—the sun dance—is our greatest feast which brings all the people together. I told you of *hanblechia*, the vision quest, one man, alone by himself on an isolated hilltop, communicating with the mystery power. Well, the sun dance is *all* the people communicating with *all* the mystery powers. It is the *hanblechia* of the whole Sioux nation" (L, 199, emphasis in original.). Members of other tribes also were welcome to attend, even those such as the Crow, who might the rest of the year be hostile.

The sacrificial aspect of the dance might be likened to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac: it is a test of faith. But it is also an opening of the body to the deity, literally an allowance of oneself to be penetrated in connection to God. In this sense, the Sun Dance resembles Christ's passion, and that resemblance has not been lost on Christian/Lakota bireligionists such as Black Elk and Fools Crow, and also by John Fire Lame Deer, who was no bireligionist and says:

> The difference between the white man and us is this: You believe in the redeeming powers of suffering, if this suffering was done by somebody else, far away, two thousand years ago. We believe that it is up to every one of us to help each other, even through the pain of our bodies. Pain to us is not "abstract," but very real. We do not lay this burden onto our god, nor do we want to miss being face to face with the spirit power. It is when we are fasting on the hilltop, or tearing our flesh at the sun dance, that we experience the sudden insight, come closest to the mind of the Great Spirit. Insight does not come cheaply, and we want no angel or saint to gain it for us and give it to us secondhand. (L, 208)

However, with regard to the symbolism of the Sun Dance circle itself, *Wakan Tanka* appears in and as the world: the dance circle is the circle of all life. One finds *Wakan Tanka* precisely in this circle made out of the four directions, which are symbolized by four colors, four animals, four powers, and so on. In that sense, the Sun Dance is incompatible with Christianity; it is, above all, a celebration of the immanence of God in

nature and community, and hence it is an enactment of connection. The communal festival is an enactment of connection within the community, but the connection to nature and hence to *Wakan Tanka* is enacted in the most literal way possible: by affixing the connection on one side to oneself in pain, and on the other to the central tree.

The connection to the world is the source of our pain and death and also the very possibility of our life and liberation; the connection to the world that occurs in the dance embodies all of the modalities of human existence in the world. We are in constant interchange with the environment: we are in it, and it is in us. It is fitting to connect this once again to the idea of truth, and Sioux warriors (including American Horse) told James R. Walker in 1896 that "If one has scars on his breast or his back that show that he has danced the Sun Dance, no Oglala will doubt his word" (B, 182). The Sun Dance brings this continual, total relation or truth to an ecstasy of pain and release, in which one is impaled on the world by the world and hence on God by God. The Sun Dance is a most perfect ceremonial expression of the ways human beings exist, an intensification and a performance of our being in the world. John Fire Lame Deer describes the torture and its purpose this way:

> The dance is not so severe as it once was, but even today it asks much of a man. Even today a man may faint for lack of food and water. He may become so thirsty blowing on his eagle-bone whistle that his throat will be parched like a cracked, dry riverbed. He may be blind for a time from staring at the sun so that his eyes see only glowing spirals of glaring whiteness. The pain in his flesh, where the eagle's claw is fastened in his breast, may become so great that a moment arrives when he will no longer feel it. It is at such moments, when he loses consciousness, when the sun burns itself into his mind, when his strength is gone and his legs buckle under him, that the visions occur—visions of becoming a medicine man, visions of the future. Insights gained at such a price . . . are truly *wakan*—sacred. (L, 200)

All of Lakota spirituality is devoted to connection and, hence, to virtue, as I am using the term here. Many or perhaps even all spiritual disciplines are devoted to connection in a broad sense, but the Sun Dance is particularly thorough, poignant, and felicitous. In many Christian ceremonies, for example, the purpose is a transcendence of the world: the connection to God is conceived to be incompatible with a connection to nature. In the Sun Dance, the connection to God is achieved in

a total immanence in the world and in a communal celebration and sacrifice, so that the modes of connection are themselves connected and simultaneous or, rather, are conceived of as identical. Black Elk, expressing the basic meaning of the Sun Dance, says: "We are related to all things: the earth and the stars, everything, and with all these together we raise our hand to *Wakan Tanka* and pray to him alone" (S, 72). The metaphysics of the dance, we might say, are monistic and immanentalist: the forms of connection are collapsed into a sheer identity in the dancers' attachment to the tree. But then there comes the moment of release, in which the single human being emerges again into his separate existence, though opened up or wounded by the world. And then one takes the mark of identity and openness into one's separate existence, bearing on the skin—the boundary between oneself and the world—the marks of one's community in the ritually achieved scars. As the circle is the microcosm of the universe, the attachment and release of the dancer encapsulates and enacts, captures and releases, the human situation.

Conclusion

Insofar as Lame Deer participated in the preservation and renewal of the Lakota tradition, he deserves our admiration. But of course the tradition in renewal could not have the same meaning that it had before white contact. Even had nothing been lost, even if there had been no influence by white culture and spiritualities, still the fact that the tradition was something endangered that had to be fought for would in itself change the meaning of that tradition. Lakota spirituality became extremely self-conscious as something to be preserved, to be fought for in the face of cultural genocide. So the people who embodied the most conservative Lakota elements, the "traditionals," were in this case also the rebels and innovators. Then the danger lurks the other way: that white Americans in flight from their own tradition will appropriate native spiritualities in a superficial or even an exploitative way. And, indeed, if the tradition could not be killed by those who tried to repress it, then it could be killed by those (including perhaps myself) who intend to celebrate it. We who write and think about Lakota traditions and perhaps also participate in them need to remember that we are not Lakota, that we lack all context for understanding the tradition as we first found it, or as it has been revived. It is a profound tradition, but it is not ours.

And yet there also is something that I almost want to say is universally human about Lame Deer's life story and relation to Lakota tradition. It has something of the story of the prodigal son, or of the songs of innocence and experience. Lame Deer is all of us in his pollution and his purification, in his sin and his redemption and his sin, in his knowledge and his ignorance, and in his clowning and his deep seriousness. Lame Deer lived larger than most of us, but he lived in the world we all live in and finally in the way we each live, as an "in-between" person, an intercessor, in an incredibly intense relationship to all things simultaneously. We are each, as it were, a zone of this flight or traversal, a location within the connections that all things bear simultaneously to all other things. Lame Deer shows us how to find this out about ourselves and how to use it to save ourselves.

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5

Furious Purity

Malcolm's Truth

Malcolm Little was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on May 19, 1925. His parents—Earl Little, who grew up in Georgia, and Louise Little, who came from the Caribbean island of Grenada—were both activists in Marcus Garvey's organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey's group was the first mass movement of black nationalism in the United States (though Garvey himself was from the Caribbean, and the UNIA had chapters all over the black world). Garvey hoped to lead black Americans back to Africa, but more immediately his aim was to establish something like a black nation in the diaspora; his strategy was to teach black history, instill racial pride, and establish economic self-sufficiency through black-owned businesses. Garvey's vision was in conflict with that of other black leaders, such as W. E. B. DuBois and the NAACP, who at that time urged integration if not outright assimilation and amelioration of the situation of black Americans through government programs. The basic point of black nationalism, on the other hand, has always been to stop petitioning the oppressor for admission into the dominant culture and start the work of power through a consolidation outside of that culture. That was Garvey's view, and it was basic to Malcolm's approach throughout his career as a leader.

Malcolm and his family experienced severe forms of racism throughout his youth, though his interpretation of some of the events in his own childhood is controversial. The Littles moved to Lansing, Michigan, in 1928, and on November 7, 1929, their house was burned to the ground.

The family and many of their neighbors believed that this was an act by white racists to dislodge them from their mostly white neighborhood, as well as perhaps a message about how white people regarded their work with the UNIA. On September 28, 1931, Earl Little died underneath the wheels of a streetcar in Lansing. The death was ruled an accident, but the family and many neighbors believed that Earl Little was murdered by white racists.

Malcolm's family then became dependent on state aid, and Malcolm (with Alex Haley) writes eloquently in his autobiography about the humiliation that his mother suffered at the hands and under the eyes of the welfare bureaucracy. Slowly Louise's mental health was compromised, and the family slid into poverty, dependence, and finally disintegration. Malcolm was placed in a detention home and various foster homes and went to mostly white schools, where he was popular and a good student. Louise Little was institutionalized in 1939 and didn't emerge from the State Mental Hospital in Kalamazoo until the early 1960s, when Malcolm and his siblings finally got her released.

In 1941, Malcolm moved to Boston to live with his half sister (his father's daughter), Ella Collins. There he started to dress in zoot suits, listen to swing music, and hustle, as he worked several different jobs: soda jerk, shoeshine boy, railway porter, and dishwasher. He observed black people in Boston who worked menial jobs for white people and who tried to act like Brahmins. From the very beginning, the practice of black folks trying to ape white's drew his ire: he sneered at janitors and housekeepers who tried to speak with aristocratic accents and to simulate wealth and power and look white or at least look good by white standards. While many black leaders looked on such developments as progress, Malcolm—who already viewed the world through a black nationalist lens—viewed them as symptoms of self-loathing and self-betrayal.

By 1943, Malcolm Little was living in Harlem, where he was known as "Detroit Red" or "Big Red." He worked as a waiter at Small's Paradise and Jimmy's Chicken Shack, and as an entertainer under the names Jack Carlton and Rhythm Red. He was well known as a dancer, and in his autobiography, he elaborately describes the culture of the jitterbug. He also engaged in any sort of hustle or petty crime that could bring him some money, including numbers running, selling marijuana, and steering white people slumming in Harlem to black prostitutes. He met and

befriended some of the great entertainers of the era in Harlem, including Duke Ellington, Red Foxx, and Billie Holiday. He also managed to dodge the draft, telling the draft board that he wanted to join the Japanese army so that he could kill white people.

Harlem eventually became a bit too hot for him, because of troubles with the law and with other hustlers, and Malcolm returned to Boston late in 1945 and started a brief career as a burglar with a small band that included several black men and two white women. Malcolm was arrested when he tried to retrieve a stolen watch that he had pawned. The authorities threw the book at him, in part because of his sexual and criminal involvement with white women. He was sentenced to eight to ten years for grand larceny and breaking and entering. He was in prison from February 27, 1946 until August 7, 1952.

In prison, Malcolm experienced a deep personal crisis, tremendous intellectual growth, and his first conversion. Feeling utterly lost and in withdrawal from drugs, he slid into rage and depression. One aspect of this was a deep self-loathing, not because he had engaged in criminal activities per se (he was never very impressed by the majesty of the white man's laws), but because he had lost control of his life, had descended into vice, and had wasted a great deal of time. That period of rage and depression started him on a search for meaning. He started reading voraciously through the prison library and embarked on what amounted to a self-inflicted college education, copying out the dictionary and eventually reading very widely in history and philosophy. Throughout his public life, Malcolm displayed the quirky erudition of an autodidact, but of an autodidact who had an excellent teacher.

In the Concord reformatory, Malcolm met a prisoner he called "Bimbi" (John Elton Bembry). Bimbi had the respect of the prison population, because he spoke eloquently and knowledgeably about history, philosophy, and politics, and because he did not let his rage overwhelm his reason. Bembry also was an atheist, as was Malcolm at the time. Malcolm emulated Bembry, who helped shape Malcolm's program of reading. Later Malcolm put Bembry's lessons into practice with a prison debate team that tackled university debaters, including some from Harvard. At Concord, too, Malcolm received a letter from his brother Reginald, saying that Reginald and other members of the family had converted to the Nation of Islam. He himself converted after seeing a vision in his cell that he took to be the Nation's "savior," W. D. Fard.

The Nation was established in 1930 in Detroit by Fard, an itinerant preacher/peddler. After Fard disappeared while being pursued on a variety of charges by the police, the Nation was eventually consolidated under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad (Poole), who, like Malcolm's father, was a preacher without portfolio from Georgia. The Nation was not the first group to combine a black nationalist political and economic agenda with a schismatic or an idiosyncratic Islam: the Noble Drew Ali, for example, had started a similar movement, the Moorish Science Temple, but the Nation proved to be a much more solid and enduring movement, one without which it is impossible to understand twentieth-century black history. Many black figures, including very powerfully Frederick Douglass, had attacked the use by whites of Christianity to justify slavery and other forms of racist oppression. But such figures, including Garvey, had stopped short of repudiating Christianity and had instead suggested that its true spirit had been distorted. The association of Christianity with slavery (though it also had its liberatory moments and effects) and also with the notion of loving one's oppressor made a rhetorical shift to Islam all but inevitable. First, Islam could be associated with Africa, though the Nation always overestimated the pervasiveness of Islam on that continent. Second, Islam provided an occasion to withdraw from the white man's culture by withdrawing from what the Nation called the "white man's religion." Importantly for Malcolm, Islam did not teach one to offer the other cheek when one was slapped. Malcolm taught the right of self-defense throughout his career, but he never advocated violence for any other purpose, contrary to his portrayal in the white media in the early 1960s.

The initial teachings of the Nation were a hodgepodge of Garveyite nationalism and metaphysical mumbo jumbo, with a superficial overlay of the Koran. Certainly the Nation was not an orthodox sect of Islam, and in fact some of its teachings (especially the divinity of W. D. Fard) were flatly heretical. It is easy to ridicule teachings such as that there is a spaceship hovering above North America waiting to take black people to the promised land, or that white people are the result of a monstrous genetic experiment by an ancient mad scientist. When Elijah Muhammad called white people "devils," he seemed to mean that literally, whatever exactly that might be taken to signify. Malcolm more often appeared to be using the term simply to express a moral condemnation. But the Nation taught that apocalypse was imminent, and that in that apoca-

lypse, only black people would be redeemed. Malcolm himself in the mid-1950s preached that devils' heads would be rolling in the streets, and that the white man's world would be consumed by fire (O, 106). But plausible or not, the idea that "so-called Negroes" were the chosen people, beset by the devil and wandering in the "wilderness of North America," was a teaching of tremendous power for a people who had been despised and oppressed for centuries. (Malcolm famously said: "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock; Plymouth Rock landed on us.") Such teachings not only instilled pride and encouraged self-determination, they created a sense of urgency, mission, and belonging. It is easy to underestimate how compelling were the teachings of the Nation with regard to racial pride, self-determination, and self-discipline. The Nation of Islam has saved many hundreds of lives of prisoners, drug addicts, and criminals, and it has given thousands a sense of purpose and direction. Such consolidations of pride and autonomy are a necessary phase of any liberation movement.

During his time in prison, Malcolm converted inmates and petitioned the authorities in order to be allowed to observe his new religion. (The prison ministry was from then on one of the Nation's basic recruiting devices and one of the basic arenas of Malcolm's activism.) Upon his release, he joined the temple in Detroit and met Elijah Muhammad, with whom he had corresponded while in prison. He moved to Chicago, rose quickly to become a minister, and was then assigned to make converts and organize temples on the East Coast. The Nation grew into a national movement, largely because of Malcolm's astounding talent and energy as an organizer, a speaker, and a representative of a new way of life. Often making converts from the lowest strata of black life, the Nation was the largest and best-organized nationalist group in the country by the late 1950s. Though Malcolm spoke on the streets of Harlem to increasingly adoring crowds, and though the Nation held public worship services, the size and internal disciplinary structures of the Nation remained, for the most part, hidden from the public.

That changed on April 4, 1957, when a Nation brother, Hinton X, was beaten by police. Hinton X had tried to intervene as two policemen violently broke up a fight on the street. His skull was fractured, but he received no medical attention, instead being held in a cell at the 123rd Precinct. A crowd of people from Harlem, tired of routine police brutality, gathered outside. Malcolm marched out of Temple #7 with a contingent of members of the Fruit of Islam, the all-male Nation organization

that had a paramilitary aspect: dozens of stone-faced, perfectly disciplined brothers dressed in pristine suits. They took control of the situation outside the station. Malcolm entered the precinct and demanded medical care for Hinton, and when the police—glancing (one supposes) nervously out the windows—agreed, he dispersed the entire crowd with a wave of his hand. Suddenly everyone in New York became curious about Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam.

In 1958, Malcolm married the former Betty Sanders, a Moslem sister. Eventually they had six daughters (Attila, Quilah, Ilyasah, Amiliah, Malaak, and Malikah). The saga of the lives of Malcolm's wife and children after Malcolm's death is as extraordinary and problematic and affecting as his own, including a plot by one of his daughters to kill Louis Farrakhan (whom the family held responsible for Malcolm's assassination) and the death of Betty at the hands of her own grandson.

In 1959, while Malcolm was touring the Middle East (he met, among others, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt) in advance of a trip by Elijah Muhammad, television station WTNA in New York broadcast a five-part report on the Nation, "The Hate That Hate Produced," which was largely responsible for bringing the Nation to the attention of white America and for the image of the Nation as a "hate group" and a "black supremacist movement." Almost immediately, various "mainstream" black leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Roy Wilkins felt compelled to distance themselves from the Nation and to condemn it for "reverse racism." Malcolm himself began a series of tirades in which he condemned those leaders in turn as "house negroes" and "Uncle Toms." In 1960, he also met in the Hotel Theresa in Harlem with Fidel Castro, whom he attempted (without success, or so one guesses) to convert to Islam.

On April 27, 1962, the Los Angeles mosque, which had been organized by Malcolm X, was attacked on a flimsy pretense by the police. Several Muslim brothers were wounded, and a close friend of Malcolm's, Ronald Stokes, was killed. When Malcolm heard the news, he wept (O, 184). He flew immediately to Los Angeles and was busily devising a response when he was instructed by Elijah Muhammad to "play it cool." The Nation took no active steps to protest the attack on a large scale, much less to avenge it, and Malcolm was told by Muhammad that revenge should be left in the hands of Allah, and that he should stick to the spiritual side and leave politics to the politicians. (Eventually the Muslims were convicted and the police exonerated.) Malcolm's response

to this event was perhaps the first public sign that a rift was developing between himself and Elijah Muhammad and, indeed, between two factions of the Nation of Islam, one of which viewed it as primarily a black nationalist political movement and the other of which conceived it exclusively as a religious organization. He was visibly impatient and visibly restraining himself when he spoke publicly of the incident.

Malcolm was, by this time, continually being consulted and quoted as a radical civil rights leader and was less and less treated primarily as a minister. By 1963, Elijah Muhammad was issuing directives to Malcolm not to ally himself with civil rights figures in political coalition. But it was Malcolm who was the face of the Nation in the media; Elijah Muhammad was utterly unimpressive as a speaker and was, at any rate, ill and reclusive. Malcolm's visibility incurred the envy of the Nation hierarchy in Chicago and also started a scramble among young, charismatic Nation preachers such as Louis X (Farrakhan) to rise to a similarly eminent position. And though Malcolm continued to defer to Elijah Muhammad—sometimes it seemed in every sentence he uttered—he was visibly restraining himself from more explicit forms of political activism.

Furthermore, Malcolm's defense of Nation dogmas was growing more strained. He himself was studying orthodox Islam and continuing his voracious reading in history, and it is fair to say that at some level he was well aware that the Nation's teachings were not only heretical but often ludicrous, and that he himself often looked ludicrous advocating them. Nation doctrine could not have had a more clever, articulate spokesman; nevertheless, in interviews conducted during this period, one watches Malcolm hastily changing the subject when confronted with some particularly ridiculous dogma.

In 1963 as well, Malcolm began to hear rumors, confirmed by his own eyes and by Elijah Muhammad's son, Wallace (who became leader of the Nation after his father's death in 1975 and led it toward orthodox Islam), that Elijah Muhammad had fathered several children with his underage secretaries. Malcolm had recommended some of these young women to the Chicago headquarters, and he felt responsible for them. He knew also that Muhammad, who lived a lavish lifestyle funded in large measure by money raised by Malcolm, had refused to support his children. Furthermore, Malcolm himself had disciplined many Nation members for adultery: the standard punishment was a five-year suspension, though one could petition for reinstatement after one year. Malcolm

had accepted a doctrine about Elijah Muhammad that was tantamount to a declaration of infallibility, and Malcolm held himself to extremely strict moral standards. All of that combined to constitute the revelations a spiritual and personal crisis.

When John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Elijah Muhammad issued a directive that no Nation minister was to comment on the assassination. The next day, Malcolm spoke to a Nation rally in New York. He didn't mention the assassination during his speech, but someone asked him about it during a question-and-answer period. He said that Kennedy was a case of the chickens coming home to roost (Autobiography, 347) a reference to various assassinations and coups carried out with the cooperation of the CIA and other agencies of the U. S. government under Kennedy's command, including especially that of Patrice Lumumba of the Congo. Elijah Muhammad immediately issued an order "silencing" Malcolm for a period of six weeks. This order seems later to have been extended indefinitely, and to have led to the final break.

Malcolm maintained his silence for awhile and even took something like a vacation (his first in a decade), serving as a spiritual advisor for Cassius Clay as the latter prepared for his title fight against Sonny Liston. But eventually he realized that he had already been removed from the Nation, and he also realized that he was being condemned as a "hypocrite," and that his life was in danger. He started threatening in return to reveal the truth about Elijah Muhammad's sex life and his misuse of funds in an attempt to secure the safety of his family. Before long, the schism was completely public, as were Elijah Muhammad's sexual proclivities. Meanwhile, Malcolm started his own religious organization—the Muslim Mosque, Incorporated—with a membership largely drawn from former Nation members.

In April 1964, Malcolm made his famous pilgrimage to Mecca. He was welcomed as a Moslem and had an experience that was spiritually and politically transformative. First, it is fair to say that it was only at this point that he fully converted to orthodox Islam. But second, he was deeply impressed by the fact that on the Hajj, thousands of people of all colors gathered as equals, as pilgrims, and prayed in brotherhood. He sent back many postcards and letters that astonished his friends with their vision of racial equality and spiritual inspiration. Here, too, he only emerged from under the spell of Nation dogma during the Hajj: he came to see that white supremacism was not a biological defect in white people

or a spiritual pollution that came with white skin but the product of specific social forces in the United States. "You may be shocked by these words coming from me," Malcolm wrote, "but I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experiences and knowledge unfold it" (O, 209). However, many people who lionize King have wildly overestimated Malcolm's movement toward nonviolence and integrationism. Malcolm remained utterly committed to self-defense and black nationalism until the end.

After the Hajj, Malcolm toured Africa, meeting the leaders of several countries. Here Malcolm explored again his Garveyite roots, which he had never abandoned, and his politics from then on could perhaps best be described as Pan-Africanism: he conceived of racism as an international economic and spiritual condition and sought ultimately to unify people of African origin on the continent and in the diaspora. Upon his return, therefore, Malcolm formed a political group—the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU)—to complement the Muslim Mosque. The program of the OAAU was black nationalism and black internationalism. Neither of his organizations was terribly well organized or successful by the time of Malcolm's death, largely because he had spent so much time abroad during his last year.

By late 1964 Malcolm was involved in a dispute with the Nation over the ownership of the house where he and his family lived in East Elmhurst. After many threats, the house was firebombed on February 14, 1965. On February 21, Malcolm was shot and killed by several men as he began to speak at an OAAU rally in Harlem in front of his wife and children. Eventually three members of the Nation were convicted of the murder. In November of that year, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was published, and Betty Shabazz gave birth to twin daughters.

Quest for Truth

Malcolm X was an extraordinary leader when he was alive and has been an extraordinary icon since his death. He was invoked by black power activists of the late 1960s, by Third World revolutionaries in the 1970s, and by cultural leaders of the 1980s and 1990s, such as Spike Lee and Cornel West. He has become a symbol of pride and power inseparable from the African-American experience. That legacy is problematic in

various respects, some of which are discussed below. But we also need to take seriously Malcolm's power and, above all, his truth. Truth was the source of Malcolm's leadership: what he embodied and came to symbolize.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X, one of the most widely read American books, has the form of the first Western autobiography, Augustine's *Confessions*. It is a conversion narrative; thus it narrates the greatest sort of life change of which people are capable: a global shift in belief system, moral orientation, and everyday activities. There are many problems for an interpreter of the *Autobiography*, and one of them is common to the interpretation of many conversion narratives: the narrator may be tempted to embellish or exaggerate his preconversion life of sin and ignorance in order to make the conversion all the more miraculous and redemptive. (There are internal reasons to think that this is true of *Confessions*, for example, as Garry Wills has argued.) But there are complications peculiar to Malcolm's book as well. First, though most of the book was composed when Malcolm was a minister of the Nation of Islam and dedicated to describing Malcolm's conversion by Elijah Muhammad, it was completed after Malcolm's second conversion experience to orthodox Islam. Second, the book was written with Alex Haley and was completed and published after Malcolm's death. So the relation of Malcolm himself to the narrative is complex. Furthermore, some of the important claims of the book about Malcolm's own life have been called into question, most notoriously by Malcolm's biographer Bruce Perry.

With some fairly trivial exceptions bearing on events before Malcolm was born or very early in his childhood, I believe the *Autobiography* to be essentially accurate. Of course, the events are arranged into a coherent narrative, but insofar as that is a falsification of an actual life—making it neater and more pointed than it was as a lived experience—it is common to all autobiographies. Perry's vicious and bizarre hints, for example, that Malcolm's father and Malcolm himself lit their houses on fire with their children inside, for example, are, to say the very least, inadequately supported. I believe Malcolm, and I will tell you why. I have seen him speak (on film); I have read his speeches and articles; and I have immersed myself in his legacy for a decade. Think for a moment about why you trust the people you trust. It has something to do with lack of solid evidence that they have deceived you. But that is a kind of icing on the cake; the real trust emerges from an inchoate sense of character and connection that is intrinsic to the relationship. Your trust starts with your

sense of who this person is. That sort of trust is finally not cognitive, not a matter of examining evidence, though evidence might reinforce or destroy it. I believe Malcolm, and indeed my sense is that he dedicated his life, above all, to the project of speaking and living the truth. That was Malcolm's power in the black community, as many commentators have pointed out: he dared to say what millions were thinking. And that also was the preternatural threat he presented to the white community: his very existence was a challenge to the lies in which white racism shrouded itself. That is not to assert that everything Malcolm ever said was true; indeed, I think that despite the fact that I am white, I am not the devil. But what I am asserting is that more than anyone I can think of, Malcolm spoke what he believed.

That is why the doubleness of Malcolm's conversion narrative is absolutely key to understanding his life. Malcolm underwent a profound shift in belief that began while he was still in the Nation of Islam and proceeded apace after he left. And it proceeded publicly: rarely in American history has there been such a public soul searching. People are uncomfortable with what appears to be inconsistency or indecisiveness in their leaders. Once one becomes associated with a set of doctrines frozen into one's image and presented through the media, self-reflection is extremely difficult. One may take oneself to be the "representative" of the views that others associate with one's name and call on one daily, publicly, to avow. Leadership and media visibility constitute temptations to exempt oneself from self-reflection and to cease spiritual or intellectual development. Even in cases in which the development is obvious in retrospect, a narrative must be produced according to which one has really not changed that deeply at all, or in which one's previous views were the products of immaturity. In one way, the conversion experience is a ground for such a narrative. But a conversion is not fully narratable: there is inevitably a *break* in a conversion, a finally unjustifiable commitment and rationally arbitrary transformation. The conversion experience draws one across the interstices between incommensurable belief systems. To undergo such an experience while remaining in the public eye as a leader is a task of extreme difficulty, hedged around with possible disasters, and requiring deep courage.

The change in Malcolm's views in his second conversion is easy to exaggerate: as I say, he certainly considered himself a black nationalist after the split, and he never renounced the use of violence in self-defense.

His chastisement of white America, while no longer ornamented with the bizarre "historical" and "scientific" claims of the Nation, never abated. But the key point is that Malcolm's book does not fall into the neat form of the conversion narrative in which a miserable sinner finds the "truth" and then lives in it for the rest of his life. Malcolm's book, rather, takes the form of a quest for truth, a quest that takes him from Garveyism to a life of vice to prison to conversion to ministry to heresy to conversion. Malcolm's life, in part because he died so young, is open-ended, something that cannot be finished: it is like science conceived of as an ever-closer approximation to truth that never achieves finality but is rather constantly provisional and in process, radically open to new experiment and experience. But the open-endedness of Malcolm's life is not simply the product of the fact that he died in process at age thirty-nine; rather, it is the product of Malcolm's own relation to belief, his own radical openness to truth. Many commentators look at Malcolm's progress and believe that he finally would have become Martin Luther King Jr. Jr., that he finally would have endorsed the creed of nonviolence and the rhetoric of universal brotherhood. I don't think we can know whether that is true or not (though I doubt it), but to me what's important is not to complete the narrative in some specific way. What is interesting is its very openness. And what I would have hoped for a living Malcolm is simply that he kept his ability to learn and kept speaking what he found to be true in the strongest way he could. As Amiri Baraka says: "Malcolm's very ideological movement, his groping and seeking, his stumbling and continuous rising from confusion to partial clarity and on, are something that should be taught and studied and widely understood by all of us who would make sweeping social change and revolution" (I, 33). That example is more powerful and (dare I say it) more universal than any particular account of the racial situation. Malcolm's openness is a variety of connection to the world and to other people, it is the product of self-reflection, and it is a deep and complete form of integrity.

It is one thing to change one's beliefs or at any rate one's asservations according, let us say, to polling data, as an expedient in the political arena or as a pitch to media, but it is quite another to make oneself radically open to the truth at the risk of one's own life. Malcolm knew himself extremely well: he understood why he became a criminal, why he needed the Nation of Islam, and why he left. His faith in Elijah Muhammad, which was a variety of fundamentalism, was in its own way perversely admirable, and it must be understood as coming from the fact that, as he

saw it, Malcolm X had been redeemed from a life of crime and vice by that faith. And he saw the faith in action in the lives of many others as well; Malcolm's and in general the Nation's prison and street ministries saved and redeemed thousands of lives. So though clinging to the belief system of the Nation manifested a kind of irrational perversity with regard to doctrine, it also manifested a perfectly sober assessment of the actual role of the Nation in his own life and in the lives of others. But as Malcolm was exposed to other people and experiences, as he moved back toward the Pan-Africanism of his parents and out into the realm of world Islam, he opened himself up to new information. It was not just that he qualified his beliefs or edited them; he allowed himself to undergo a set of experiences that profoundly transformed his personality in many ways. One of the beautiful paradoxes of Malcolm's life, therefore, is that he was capable of great, and even perverse and rigid, faith, but he was capable too of the deepest personal transformations. He was open about and proud of these transformations, and he served as a sign of the possibility of transformation for countless black people and for some white ones.

Ascetic

It is impossible to discuss Malcolm in any full way without talking about asceticism. His friend, Louis Lomax, said, "He was the most puritanical man I ever met" (R, 79). Certainly the arc of Malcolm's own life as he himself saw it was a movement from pollution to purity, from wallowing in illegal drugs and illicit sex to an iron self-discipline, and that was absolutely central to his inspirational effect on others. Malcolm's furious purity is the center of his ministry. Now asceticism is itself hard to defend in a deep way, and I have in fact in previous chapters expressed my admiration of both Emma Goldman and Lame Deer for the reverse of asceticism. Of course, there is nothing admirable per se about "sin," but for Goldman and Lame Deer, it was consistent with their values and with their own "ministries," and in its own way, it formed part of the connection between them and their people. They knew the experience of women, or Indians, and they learned to undergo and affirm these experiences even in their most problematic aspects. Malcolm also knew the sins peculiar to the oppressed: the means of escape into momentary pleasure or self-medication that, under certain circumstances, were necessary or even liberating. But he himself chose to repudiate these experiences, to

fashion the self as a fortress, to renounce the world's complexity and filth and discover or produce a pure self. This self was pure of such sins as fornication and drunkenness, but it was also pure in the sense that everything was burned away, except the inner heart of truth and rage. Malcolm's power over others originated in his power over himself, and that lent his ministry to others itself a kind of perfect integrity and fire of purpose. His ministry to others was a perfect reflection of, or rather was identical to, what was happening inside of himself, which made him someone who people desperately wanted to emulate, though emulating Malcolm was extremely difficult. People lived their own conversion through his and through him; they saw themselves through him, because, as it were, he was transparent; the depths were visible in the public persona.

Now what you must understand about Malcolm's transformation from sin to asceticism is that it was a matter of life and death for Malcolm and for many of his people. Asceticism for a drug addict or prostitute can be the difference not only between degradation and apotheosis but between death and survival. This choice presented itself to Malcolm in the most stark possible terms, and he made the choice in the most stark possible way. Once he embraced asceticism, he embraced it with a whole heart and a whole mind, and he lived it for the rest of his life. His commitment was personal, political, spiritual, total, and permanent. Often asceticism is treated (as most famously in Nietzsche) as a turning away from life and from the world. For Nietzsche, asceticism is a rejection of embodiment; originating in such doctrines as Augustine's Original Sin, it paints the world as fallen and seeks to transcend the world through mortification of the flesh or in (as in the story of Jesus) death. Perhaps for de Cleyre and innumerable monks and nuns in European history, it was precisely a response to the too-poignant experience of the world as polluted and evil, really, finally, an embracing of death. But Malcolm's asceticism was nothing like that: it was not a shrinking back but a kind of attack; it was at the heart of his rage and his power; it manifested a masterful will and a resolution to total engagement in the world. Certainly it was no rejection of embodiment; one of the features most noted by those who saw Malcolm was his physical presence. And one of Malcolm's favorite themes as a minister was the Nation of Islam's rejection of the afterlife: as Bob Marley puts it in "Stand Up for Your Rights," "If you know what life is worth, you will look for yours on earth." Malcolm was not preparing for bliss; he was mobilizing for a transformation of worldly oppression.

Other followers simply would have looked the other way at Elijah Muhammad's moral failings or would have detached the doctrines of the Nation from the man who put them forward. But for Malcolm there was literally no distinction between doctrines and persons: he set himself to *embody*, not merely advocate, his beliefs. That constitutes not only a powerful resolution but, as it were, a theory about what belief is according to which a belief is an intrinsic property of persons rather than an ornament or a profession or possession. For Malcolm, one's beliefs constituted oneself, which is perhaps the deepest meaning of faith. And more, one's self constituted one's beliefs: Malcolm understood the lies of the Nation through his understanding that Elijah Muhammad himself was a liar. The doctrines were in Malcolm's view true if they were truly believed, if they truly transformed and constituted the self. That is the deepest variety of commitment, and it renders a personality not only impressive and passionate but beautiful.

It is obvious that ascetics turn away from certain pleasures, or try to renounce some of their desires. But it also must be understood that asceticism itself yields certain pleasures, that self-possession of the sort that Malcolm so conspicuously displayed can be enjoyable and is, in any case, a difficult achievement. Asceticism yields a pleasure in power, a power that uses the self as an arena and then radiates outward toward others. An ascetic embodies his own truth, shows in his own body his commitment, exercises power over others legitimately, because that power derives basically from the awareness of those over whom it is exercised that the person exercising it is extraordinary, and that what he asks of others is less than what he asks of himself. That is why asceticism is associated with sainthood: not fundamentally because it is a repudiation of life or the world, but because it makes over the person who has it into an extraordinary human being and, hence, it acts as a moral claim. The power of the ascetic is not the gift of others; it is the intrinsic exercise and claim of the self.

Manhood

Malcolm X has been criticized by many feminists (e.g., see Patricia Hill Collins's and Patricia Williams's articles in I) as a male supremacist. And, indeed, the place of women in the Nation of Islam was subordinate, and there are many places in his writings and speeches in which Malcolm

expresses sentiments that certainly today would be called "sexist." This is a specific example of an even more general problem in Malcolm's public advocacy: he really did not have a picture of universal human liberation, and he was consistently parochial in his concerns. This made him a more powerful voice in and for the black community, but it also severely limited his appeal outside of that community, and in some sense it threatened to vitiate his ministry. Indeed, one might see this as an internal inconsistency of his black nationalism and of the Nation of Islam. No one was going to give Malcolm X the Nobel Peace Prize. But of course that he spoke as and to the black community instead of as and to the human condition as a whole is precisely why he became perhaps the most powerful icon of the black experience and its transformation. At any rate, Ossie Davis, in his eulogy, famously said of Malcolm that he was "our manhood," and when one ponders Malcolm, the icon, almost the first thing that comes to mind is a sort of hypermasculinity. Though many people have, like Davis, found that admirable, many others have pointed to its oppressive potential and its problematic relation to traditional gender categories. Malcolm's views included opinions about the "place" of women that connected him to the most problematic traditions of Islam and of European and American white culture. And though of course the women who entered the Nation of Islam did so voluntarily, it is true that none ever rose to a leadership position, except in the women's organizations within the Nation.

But Malcolm's masculinity was a complicated matter, especially when considered in relation to his asceticism, for though he felt that women were subordinate to men, his own sexual self-control led him to treat the actual women he came across with a great deal of respect. He did not use women merely as a means to satisfy his sexual needs, and I wonder whether the same could be said of King, or for that matter of many radical men who have advocated the liberation of women but have practiced their use as sexual objects.

One also must place Malcolm's hypermasculinity in the context of a crisis of emasculation that has persisted from slavery until the present. The oppression of African Americans has taken the form, among other things, of a constant humiliation of their masculinity (which is, of course, itself a cultural construction). In slavery, one's marriage had no sanction, and one's wife could be legally raped; in Jim Crow one was undergoing a constant humiliation through signifiers of subordination at the hands

of white men; the economic disaster that has been African America from beginning to present often has not allowed black men to support their families or even themselves, which also has taken the form in the modern welfare state of enforcing dependence and rewarding single motherhood. Black men have been in crisis throughout the twentieth century, and often the only reasonable responses are crime and substance abuse, which themselves are connected to masculinity. If masculinity revolves around power and status, then in some situations isolated acts of violence and self-destruction may be the only ways that it can be enacted. In a context in which masculinity is simultaneously valued and feared, encouraged and made impossible, an assertion of a traditional form of masculinity as directly embodied in Malcolm arrives with deep spiritual and political power. In relation to his asceticism, it was a kind of miraculous transcendence of the political and economic conditions in which he found himself, and that, above all, was the theme of his conversion narrative. The basic idea that Malcolm preached was self-determination, and he displayed it (problematically, to be sure) in its relation to traditional masculinity. Malcolm was black nationalism and self-determination personified, and those things can be seen as aspects or effects of black masculinity.

If you will bear with me briefly, I would like to offer a brief defense of "traditional masculinity" (as understood, for example, within American culture in the mid-twentieth century) in relation to leadership. If traditional masculinity entails self-possession, autonomy, courage, and defiance, then to some extent it is extremely desirable in a leader. When contemporary politicians seem to have no real commitments and to focus-group their every phrase, then one reason they are despicable whether they are men or women is that they have no balls; they have far too little capacity for defiance, self-reliance, and self-assertion. It is impossible to conceive of Malcolm apart from both the positive and negative aspects of masculinity, and what is admirable in Malcolm certainly arises in part from a very direct assertion of "manhood." This is certainly something that many women have admired, including his wife.

I do not mean to dismiss or minimize the concerns of Patricia Hill Collins, Patricia Williams, Angela Davis, and others who have written about Malcolm's problematic sexual politics, but insofar as such thinkers use the theme to discredit Malcolm as a whole, I think that they are misguided. Malcolm's sexual politics were one source of his liberating power in his context, though the liberation he preached and displayed

was not, unfortunately, universal. And insofar as the notion driving these critiques is that Malcolm would have been a better or more admirable figure if his sexual politics had been less problematic, I want to insist that they are not then imagining Malcolm at all, that if you strip Malcolm of his particular brand of masculinity, you aren't dealing with Malcolm anymore or with a person that could possibly have had similar transformative effects on the black community. Malcolm's preaching was a masculine preaching; Malcolm's defiance of authority was a masculine defiance; and Malcolm's authority itself was a masculine authority. There are other models of defiance and authority, but they could not have been Malcolm's, and they could not have done what Malcolm's did.

Rage is certainly associated with masculinity. It is, indeed, the only emotion truly allowed of the true man as conceived under the auspices of traditional gender roles. And, of course, rage is a deeply problematic emotion, both as it consumes the self and, potentially, as it consumes the world. Rage drives one to violence and abuse, and it is intolerable to experience rage continually over a long period of time: one's head becomes an impossible place to live. What is admirable about Gandhi or King is precisely that each transcended rage in situations that could have been expected to cause it, that each overcame rage with love. But, first, it is important to keep in mind that these really were situations in the face of which rage was a predictable response: to be broken, humiliated, impoverished, dehumanized, and excluded is going to make most people angry. And where King sought to channel and then cure rage, Malcolm tried to make it articulate, both for himself and for his people. Malcolm was incomparable at articulating the rage that many black folks felt: their rage merged with his and made the experience of identification with him and hence of his leadership extremely intense. He told a truth that King tried to overcome. When the cities of America burst into flames in the summers of the 1960s, they were consumed by a black rage that Malcolm understood and embodied. Cornel West connects Malcolm's rage to love: "Malcolm X was the prophet of Black rage primarily because of his great love for Black people. His love was neither abstract nor ephemeral. Rather, it represented a concrete connection with a degraded and devalued people in need of *psychic conversion*" (I, 48, emphasis in original).

But it also is important, and also connected to masculinity, that Malcolm did not merely let fly or lash out. As one watches him on film, one has the vivid sense of a rage that possesses his body but that also is

contained and channeled by his will. That rage in Malcolm becomes articulate itself shows that he was using it rather than letting it use him. Whereas the rage of many men is diffuse and trained on whatever happens to be close by, Malcolm's rage is focused and lent power by his self-control. In Malcolm, black rage is made articulate, but of course to become articulate, rage must be transformed. Malcolm's speeches and sermons simultaneously gave expression to the rage of his people and transfigured their rage into a creative force. His expressions of rage were works of art; his rage was self-conscious and self-reflective, and his destructiveness was a creation. That fact about Malcolm connects him to the jazz players he knew and admired and to today's rappers, many of whom invoke his memory. The transformation of oppression into power and rage into art is one of the signal achievements of black America, so much so, in fact, that black American art has affected more or less the entire world.

But though there is much to admire in Malcolm's rage, there was more to Malcolm than rage. His rage was tempered by humor and by a kind of gentleness, and that became ever more evident late in his life. Spike Lee's movie about Malcolm's life, in which Denzel Washington plays Malcolm, is an accurate treatment of the autobiography as far as it goes, but there is something important missing. Washington plays Malcolm as a grim and an angry man, but many who knew him commented first on his smile and his tenderness. People, including white people, felt immediately at ease with him, and often the first thing they commented on was his easy grin. As Malcolm's biographer, Louis DeCaro Jr., writes:

> Charles Keil . . . was a [white] student at Yale University who heard about Malcolm X from a black friend and came to Harlem repeatedly for sessions with him at the Muslim Luncheonette. "I told people at the time that far from feeling threatened or uncomfortable across the table from Malcolm, I felt clear and relieved of the burden of having to play a role or a game . . . the general feeling was one of basic equality." Keil was set at ease by Malcolm's "pervasive sense of humor." (O, 175–76)

That response to Malcolm is quite typical of the people who knew him at all off the public stage, including his biographer, Peter Goldman: again and again, they remark on his humor and openness.

Benjamin Karim said: "Malcolm had a rich, full laugh—not loud but full—and he'd slap the side of his thigh, as if he couldn't contain himself,

so you felt his whole body laughing, and his soul" (R, 69). When I teach the autobiography, I make sure that my students see actual footage of Malcolm in a variety of situations. It's not that he wasn't angry and extreme and dangerous; it's just that he was in control of those things, and that he also was gentle and funny and friendly. His rage was, I think, perfectly justified; indeed, in some sense, it is almost the only humanly possible response to extreme oppression. And rage is a kind of power: for Malcolm, it was a power that connected him to his community in an intense way: he spoke the community's rage. But rage wasn't the only thing he had, or the only thing he gave.

SELF AND POWER

The power to render the self coherent or to manufacture a coherent self in the face of tremendous barriers was Malcolm's deepest message, and it can be understood only in relation to his asceticism, his rage, and his absolute commitment to speak the truth. As Karim, writes: "Our job . . . was to help our sisters and brothers correct four centuries of the white man's lies. First, though, we had to correct the lies within ourselves" (R, 99). Perhaps the most famous passage in the autobiography is Malcolm's description of the meaning of the "conk" or black chemical hair processing, something which is as popular now as it was in the 1940s. Malcolm's view was that black folks tried to straighten their hair in order to look more like white people. They had internalized white standards of beauty and landed in a thorough self-loathing. Now Malcolm's treatment of the politics of black hair is extremely problematic and simplistic, as many commentators have pointed out, but the point is not finally about hair, it is about the forms of self-division and self-loathing that are manufactured by oppression. Surviving oppression is a matter of constant compromise with those who despise you and whom you despise. The classic formulation of the point is W. E. B. DuBois's idea of double consciousness, which derives from a double social placement in a dominant culture that devalues and dehumanizes every aspect of one's body and experience and a subculture in which this devaluation must be simultaneously dealt with and left behind if the people in that community are to survive.

I have discussed these forms of self-division (and the corresponding divisions in the minds of white folks) at great length elsewhere, but for

now it suffices to say that racism is an existential as well as a social crisis. Malcolm was concerned with the transformation of social conditions, but he was, above all, concerned with a spiritual transformation of a people who, to one degree or another, and as we would put it today, have "internalized their oppression." His call primarily was for his people to free themselves, not to accept release from oppression as a gift of the oppressor, but to find their freedom within themselves and then to externalize it, to make it real in the world. One then becomes the agent of one's own freedom through pride and self-control, a black nationalism of the mind that alone could make a social black nationalism something liberating. As DeCaro has argued in his excellent two-volume biography, Malcolm's life must be understood as a ministry and his call as a spiritual call: he calls people one by one to a conversion experience of the sort that he himself had undergone.

Ascetic discipline is above all the attempt to make oneself over into a single thing, to give oneself a coherent personhood through the imposition of the masterful will. The ascetic is, above all, the maker or artist of himself: he frees himself into and from himself. Malcolm experienced oppression fundamentally as an internal drama of self-division and his conversion to the Nation as the opportunity to become the artist of his own life, to take absolute command of himself. If one can do that, then one is free even in one's oppression: one's life is a continual testimony to pride, defiance, and liberation. That is why I suspect Malcolm would never have led a mass movement in the sense that King did: he was essentially about the task of transforming souls one by one, from the inside out. Of course, one cannot simply liberate oneself from the world, and the transformation of individuals cannot take place in isolation from the social world, nor did Malcolm think it could. But Malcolm's power in the black community consisted fundamentally in his teaching that their liberation was in their own power, that they did not have to beg their oppressors to be free. Indeed, a freedom that is given by one's oppressor is a freedom that is canceled in its own enactment, but a freedom that originates in the self and in the oppressed community is a freedom that restores selves to the wellsprings of their selfhood. Malcolm's power, finally, was that he was absolutely free in an unfree world, because he was perfectly in control of his responses, both internal and external, to that world.

Thus Malcolm developed a kind of stoic politics, a politics in which the fundamental arena of freedom is internal and in which social

transformation is achieved in the self-control of individuals. I am aware of the drawbacks of this position: it seems to disable us from political action by hinting that it is useless, but I will share with you my view that a forced social transformation that does not originate in people's hearts is simply a new oppression. Political action that does not well up from selves is hopeless or nightmarish. That is not only Malcolm's teaching, but in one way or another, it is the teaching of all of the people discussed in this book. It is one thing that separates Malcolm or Goldman from Stalin or Mao, and it presents a particular model of leadership, a model according to which the task of the leader is to show people to themselves and bring them to themselves. That was certainly Malcolm's power as a leader: it wasn't a matter of a mass movement: indeed, even at its height, the Nation of Islam probably had less than 10,000 real adherents, and the OAAU was considerably smaller than that; Malcolm's was indeed a call to action, but it was first of all addressed to each person one by one, and it called for a conversion experience in which that person could unify and become herself. The most powerful device by which Malcolm gave this teaching was his account of his own life as a quest for self-discovery, and after his death, his autobiography brought that teaching to millions of people.

SOURCES

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Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). For many years, the best source on Malcolm other than his autobiography, Goldman's book remains basic, especially for anyone interested in theories about Malcolm's assassination and its investigation.

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Bruce Perry, *Malcolm* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill, 1991). This massive biography contains valuable information, but all conclusions that Perry draws must be held in suspicion. Many of them are radically undersupported or simply represent a bizarre, seat-of-the-pants Freudianism.

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Afterword

Soren Kierkegaard tells the story of an inmate in an insane asylum who escapes and heads toward town. As he walks along, he comes across a rubber ball and puts it in the tail pocket of his coat. Each time he takes a step, the ball hits him on the backside. The thought occurs to him that when he reaches the town he is going to have to convince the townsfolk that he is sane, and that the best way to do that is to say only things that are objectively true. So every time the ball hits him, he says "Bang, the earth is round." When he gets to town, he marches around the square saying, "Bang, the earth is round. Bang, the earth is round." The townsfolk promptly drag him back to the asylum. But, asks Kierkegaard, is the earth not round?

Speaking the truth is not the same as living the truth. If this were not the case, then a parrot or a tape recorder could be as good a leader as a human being. But leadership is a connection between persons, a relation of inspiration and emulation. There are many things that Malcolm X and Barry Goldwater said that I think are false, and many things that Lame Deer and Emma Goldman did that I think they shouldn't have. (Voltairine de Cleyre, on the other hand, was more or less always right.) But I can see that they said and did those things truly. I venerate them for that, and I propose them to you as models by which we can understand what is valuable in our public lives and in ourselves.

Source

Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941). This is about as good a book as has ever been written. The passage about the inmate appears on page 174.

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