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Augustus

JOHN WILLIAMS

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AUGUSTUS

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ALSO BY JOHN WILLIAMS

Nothing But the Night

The Broken Landscape

Butcher's Crossing

The Necessary Lie

Stoner

John Williams

AUGUSTUS

John Williams was born on August 29, 1922, in Clarksville, Texas. He served in the United States Army Air Force from 1942 to 1945 in China, Burma, and India. The Swallow Press published his first novel, *Nothing But the Night*, in 1948, as well as his first book of poems, *The Broken Landscape*, in 1949. Macmillan published Williams's second novel, *Butcher's Crossing*, in 1960.

After receiving his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Denver, and his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri, Williams returned in 1954 to the University of Denver where he taught literature and the craft of writing for thirty years. In 1963 Verb Publications published his second book of poems, *The Necessary Lie*. In the same year, Anchor Books published *English Renaissance Poetry*, an anthology he edited. The Viking Press published his third novel, *Stoner*, in 1965. It was in 1963 that Williams received a fellowship to study at Oxford University where he received a Rockefeller grant that enabled him to travel and research in Italy for his last novel, *Augustus*, published by the Viking Press in 1972. John Williams died in Fayetteville, Arkansas, on March 4, 1994.

AUGUSTUS

John Williams

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FOR NANCY

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INTRODUCTION

Augustus was John Williams's most successful novel, winning the National Book Award in 1973, and has appeared in America in four editions since then. Using the epistolary form – fictional memoirs, dispatches, letters – it tells the story of Octavius, a sensitive and scholarly nineteen-year-old, who on the death of his great-uncle Julius Caesar finds himself heir to the vast power of the Roman Empire, now plunged in civil strife by Caesar's murder. Gradually, through a combination of luck, guile, ruthlessness and intelligence, he succeeds in bringing what was then most of the civilized world under the rule of law, giving to Rome an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. He became the first Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar (63 BC-AD 14).

To achieve this, he had to overcome many obstacles, not least his own nature, in order to put down the challenges of such men as Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, and finally Mark Anthony. Late in his life he imprisoned and exiled his daughter Julia to a remote island under a law he had enacted for adultery, a daughter he was so devoted to that he supervised her education at a time when it was unusual for a woman to be given any schooling. What emerges from the brilliant play of lights, that the fictional epistles become, is a fascinating portrait in an extraordinary time of a complicated private and public man. Amidst his family, friends and enemies, he deals with the exactitudes that the use and retention of power imposes, and all is brought to such immediate life that it feels as present as Washington today. This is a man who shaped himself in order to shape the world, who put as much faith in superstition as in his intelligence, who loved to gamble on the races and in private to play at dice, preferring the rigours of the battlefield and the solitude of the study to the luxury and pomp of office. As a friend of Virgil and of Horace he wanted nothing more than to be a scholar/writer in his youth. He played, in his time, so many roles that at the end he was able to come into the knowledge of the contrariness hidden at the heart of all experience and the ultimate futility of power.

It was more nearly an instinct than knowledge, however, that made me understand that if it is one's destiny to change the world, it is his necessity first to change himself. If he is to obey his destiny, he must find or invent within himself some hard and secret part that is indifferent to himself, to others, and even to the world that he is destined to remake, not to his own desire, but to a nature that he will discover in the process of remaking.

John Williams's four novels are so different from one another in subject matter, setting and time that it has been said that they could pass for the work

of four different writers. This is at once both true and untrue. Williams himself discounted his first novel *Nothing But the Night*, and while the talent is obvious it is fair to say that it is less achieved than his other novels. In the powerful and savage *Butcher's Crossing*, he turns to three men who ride into Colorado to hunt for buffalo. At a time when buffalo herds were hunted to extinction they get wind of an undiscovered valley filled with buffalo in the high Rockies. They find this Eden of woods and streams and lush grass with a great herd grazing at peace. The leader of the gang is Miller, an experienced hunter, and they are all betrayed by Miller's obsession to kill every head in the herd while the worsening weather cuts off their retreat. In this anti-western there are no heroes and no villains. At times the raw power of the writing is almost unbearable as the story unfolds against all the easy myths Hollywood and the East invented for the West.

Stoner followed, the finest novel I know of university life, and it is the single work that most closely shadows Williams's own life and career, though it is set a generation back, in the first half of the twentieth-century. Williams grew up poor in Texas during the Depression. His grandparents were dirt farmers, his stepfather a janitor in the post office. Before the Second World War he worked as an announcer at small Texas radio stations. In the war he served in the Army Air Force as a radio operator on aircraft transporting supplies and troops in India, Burma and China, and during breaks in these missions wrote *Nothing But the Night*. At a loose end after the war, he rewrote the novel several times. It was accepted by Swallow Press in Denver, which was run by Allen Swallow, who had revitalized the reputations of Yvor Winters and Allen Tate. Swallow encouraged Williams to go to college on the GI Bill and get a teaching degree. Not unlike *Stoner*, he received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Denver, his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri and began his teaching career.

The transition from a buffalo hunt to *Stoner* is dramatic enough by any standard, but the leap from *Stoner* to Augustus Caesar, from an unregarded academic to the most powerful man on earth in his time, is even more so. In a rare and fascinating interview Williams gave to Bryan Wooley in 1985, he argues that the transition from *Stoner* to *Augustus* wasn't as great as it might appear:

I was dealing with governance in both instances, and individual responsibilities, and enmities and friendship. In a university, professors and others are always vying for power, and there's really no power there. If you have any power at all, it's a nothing. It's really odd that these things should happen in a university but they do. Except in scale, the machinations for power are about the same in a university as in the Roman Empire or Washington.

Many years before, after *Butcher's Crossing* and before starting work on *Stoner*, a writer Williams knew, Morton Hunt, showed him the page proofs of a book he had written, *A Natural History of Love*, which was a popular history of various attitudes to love from Greek times to the present. While they were talking casually about the book, Hunt told him the story of Augustus, who

had a daughter, Julia, whom he loved, but he exiled and imprisoned her in order to save the State because she had broken the laws on adultery that he had enacted. This fascinated Williams and he started to read about it. Discovering that Julia had been effectively written out of the histories, the more he read the more he was engaged by what he describes as ‘the ambivalence between the public necessity and the private want or need’ which is at the novel’s core. By the time he came to write the novel, he was steeped in that Roman world. In the interview with Wooley he gave his reasons for deciding on the epistolary form. Williams held to the belief that to read anything without joy or pleasure was stupid, that a novel or poem was there to be *experienced* rather than to be understood or explicated.

I didn’t think I could handle it in a straight narrative style without making it sound like a Cecil B. DeMille movie or a historical romance. And I didn’t want it to sound historical. Those people were very real and contemporaneous to me. I wanted a kind of immediacy in it, but I couldn’t figure out how to do it. I also knew that all educated Romans were great letter-writers. Cicero would write eight, ten, twelve letters a day. And the Roman postal service was probably as good as our postal service is today ... I wanted the characters to present themselves. I didn’t want to try to explain them. I didn’t want to have a twentieth-century vision of the Roman times. So the epistolary form lets the people speak for themselves ... This provincial notion of how much more advanced *we* are – that’s nonsense.

The novel is a triumphant vindication. The world of the Roman Empire is brought as close to us as our own lives. Any serious reading of *Augustus* and the other novels soon dispels the notion that all of Williams’s novels are so diverse as to be the work of so many different writers. In *Augustus* Williams has Gaius Cilnius Maecenas write to Titus Livius (12 BC):

No, it is what I perceive in the tenor of your question that begins to give me offence; for I think (I hope I am wrong) I detect the odor of a moralist. And it seems to me that the moralist is the most useless and contemptible of creatures. He is useless in that he would expend his energies upon making judgments rather than upon gaining knowledge, for the reason that judgment is easy and knowledge is difficult. He is contemptible in that his judgments reflect a vision of himself which in his ignorance and pride he would impose upon the world. I implore you, do not become a moralist; you will destroy your art and your mind. And it would be a heavy burden for even the deepest friendship to bear.

As I have said, we lied; and if I give the reasons for the lie, I do not explain in order to defend. I explain to enlarge your understanding and your knowledge of the world.

Judgement is easy. Knowledge, since it involves an act of the imagination on behalf of others and their situations in the exigencies of the world, is difficult. The diversity of all Williams’s novels is for him a method. In order to render the experience of the world, he chooses first to go by the more difficult paths of the Other before entering the closed world of the Self. The same can be said of Williams’s prose as what he wrote of Ben Jonson in the Preface to his edition of *English Renaissance Poetry*; ‘It is, finally, a language that has passed

from the starkness and bareness of outer reality through the dark, luxuriant jungle of the self and has emerged from that journey entire and powerful'. This may be the reason he is able to write so faultlessly of that most difficult subject, sex and sexual love. The love scenes from *Stoner* are repeated in a lighter, less intense way in *Augustus*, but they are no less pure. In the letter from Octavius Caesar to Nicholaus of Damascus (AD 14) that closes the novel, Augustus writes:

... [I]t is difficult for me to realize that once this body sought release from itself in that of another; and that another sought the same from it. To that instant of pleasure some dedicate all their lives, and become embittered and empty when the body fails, as the body must. They are embittered and empty because they have known only the pleasure, and do not know what that pleasure has meant. For contrary to what we may believe, erotic love is the most unselfish of all the varieties; it seeks to become one with another, and hence to escape the self. This kind of love is the first to die, of course, failing as the body that carries it fails; and for that reason, no doubt, it has been thought by many to be the basest of the varieties. But the fact that it will die, and that we know it will die, makes it more precious; and once we have known it, we are no longer irretrievably trapped and exiled within the self. Yet it alone is not enough.

And in her island-prison, Augustus's daughter Julia confides to her journal:

To one who has not become adept at the game, the steps of a seduction may appear ludicrous; but they are no more so than the steps of a dance. The dancers dance, and their skill is their pleasure. All is ordained, from the first exchange of glances until the final coupling. And the mutual pretence of both participants is an important part of the elaborate game – each pretends helplessness beneath the weight of passion, and each advance and withdrawal, each consent and refusal, is necessary to the successful consummation of the game. And yet the woman in such a game is always the victor; and I believe she must have a little contempt for her antagonist; for he is conquered and used as he believes that he is conqueror and user.

When writing about *Stoner*, I found that the material was next to impossible to paraphrase, since the prose had already been so distilled. Similarly, the world of *Augustus* is so various in the brilliant play of lights the different epistles become that selective quotes seem to diminish the richness the whole lights reveal. Neither *Stoner* nor *Augustus* is any less or more achieved than the other: they are simply different works by a remarkable writer working at the very height of his powers.

JOHN MCGAHERN
2002

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is recorded that a famous Latin historian declared he would have made Pompey win the battle of Pharsalia had the effective turn of a sentence required it. Though I have not allowed myself such a liberty, some of the errors of fact in this book are deliberate. I have changed the order of several events; I have invented where the record is incomplete or uncertain; and I have given identities to a few characters whom history has failed to mention. I have sometimes modernized place names and Roman nomenclature, but I have not done so in all instances, preferring certain resonances to a mechanical consistency. With a few exceptions, the documents that constitute this novel are of my own invention – I have paraphrased several sentences from the letters of Cicero, I have stolen brief passages from *The Acts of Augustus*, and I have lifted a fragment from a lost book of Livy's *History* preserved by Seneca the Elder.

But if there are truths in this work, they are the truths of fiction rather than of history. I shall be grateful to those readers who will take it as it is intended – a work of the imagination.

I should like to thank the Rockefeller Foundation for a grant that enabled me to travel and begin this novel; Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, for affording me a period of leisure in which to continue it; and the University of Denver for a sometimes bemused but kind understanding which allowed me to complete it.

PROLOGUE

Letter: Julius Caesar to Atia (45 B.C.)

Send the boy to Apollonia.

I begin abruptly, my dear niece, so that you will at once be disarmed, and so that whatever resistance you might raise will be too quick and flimsy for the force of my persuasions.

Your son left my camp at Carthage in good health; you will see him in Rome within the week. I have instructed my men to give him a leisurely journey, so that you might have this letter before his arrival.

Even now, you will have started to raise objections that seem to you to have some weight—you are a mother and a Julian, and thus doubly stubborn. I suspect I know what your objections will be; we have spoken of these matters before. You would raise the issue of his uncertain health—though you will know shortly that Gaius Octavius returns from his campaign with me in Spain more healthy than when he began it. You would question the care he might receive abroad—though a little thought should persuade you that the doctors in Apollonia are more capable of attending his ills than are the perfumed quacks in Rome. I have six legions of soldiers in and around Macedonia; and soldiers must be in good health, though senators may die and the world shall have lost little. And the Macedonian coastal weather is at least as mild as the Roman. You are a good mother, Atia, but you have that affliction of hard morality and strictness which has sometimes disturbed our line. You must loosen your reins a little and let your son become in fact the man that he is in law. He is nearly eighteen, and you remember the portents at his birth—portents which, as you are aware, I have taken pains to augment.

You must understand the importance of the command with which I began this letter. His Greek is atrocious, and his rhetoric is weak; his philosophy is fair, but his knowledge of literature is eccentric, to say the least. Are the tutors of Rome as slothful and careless as the citizens? In Apollonia he will read philosophy and improve his Greek with Athenodorus; he will enlarge his knowledge of literature and perfect his rhetoric with Apollodorus. I have already made the necessary arrangements.

Moreover, at his age he needs to be away from Rome; he is a youth of wealth, high station, and great beauty. If the admiration of the boys and girls does not corrupt him, the ambitions of the flatterers will. (You will notice how skillfully I touch that country morality of yours.) In an atmosphere that is Spartan and disciplined, he will spend his mornings with the most learned scholars of our day, perfecting the humane art of the mind; and he will spend

his afternoons with the officers of my legions, perfecting that other art without which no man is complete.

You know something of my feeling for the boy and of my plans for him; he would be my son in the fact of the law, as he is in my heart, had not the adoption been blocked by that Marcus Antonius who dreams that he will succeed me and who maneuvers among my enemies as slyly as an elephant might lumber through the Temple of the Vestal Virgins. Your Gaius stands at my right hand; but if he is to remain safely there, and take on my powers, he must have the chance to learn my strengths. He cannot do this in Rome, for I have left the most important of those strengths in Macedonia—my legions, which next summer Gaius and I will lead against the Parthians or the Germans, and which we may also need against the treasons that rise out of Rome.... By the way, how is Marcius Philippus, whom you are pleased to call your husband? He is so much a fool that I almost cherish him. Certainly I am grateful to him, for were he not so busily engaged in playing the fop in Rome and so amateurishly plotting against me with his friend Cicero, he might play at being stepfather to your son. At least your late husband, however undistinguished his own family, had the good sense to father a son and to find advancement in the Julian name; now your present husband plots against me, and would destroy that name which is the only advantage over the world that he possesses. Yet I wish all my enemies were so inept. I should admire them less, but I would be safer.

I have asked Gaius to take with him to Apollonia two friends who fought with us in Spain and who return with him now to Rome—Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa and Quintus Salvidienus Rufus, both of whom you know—and another whom you do not know, one Gaius Cilnius Maecenas. Your husband will know at once that the latter is of an old Etruscan line with some tinge of royalty; that should please him, if nothing else about this does.

You will observe, my dear Atia, that at the beginning of this letter your uncle made it appear that you had a choice about the future of your son. Now Caesar must make it clear that you do not. I shall return to Rome within the month; and, as you may have heard rumored, I shall return as dictator for life, by a decree of the Senate that has not yet been made. I have, therefore, the power to appoint a commander of cavalry, who will be second in power only to me. This I have done; and as you may have surmised, it is your son whom I have appointed. The fact is accomplished, and it will not be changed. Thus, if either you or your husband should intervene, there will be upon your house a public wrath of such weight that beside it my private scandals will seem no heavier than a mouse.

I trust that your summer at Puteoli was a pleasant one, and that you are now back in the city for the season. Restless as I am, I long for Italy now. Perhaps when I return, and after my business is done in Rome, we may spend a few quiet days at Tivoli. You may even bring your husband, and Cicero, if he will come. Despite what I say, I am really very fond of them both. As I am, of course, of you.

BOOK I

CHAPTER ONE

I. The Memoirs of Marcus Agrippa: Fragments (13 B.C.)

... I was with him at Actium, when the sword struck fire from metal, and the blood of soldiers was awash on deck and stained the blue Ionian Sea, and the javelin whistled in the air, and the burning hulls hissed upon the water, and the day was loud with the screams of men whose flesh roasted in the armor they could not fling off; and earlier I was with him at Mutina, where that same Marcus Antonius overran our camp and the sword was thrust into the empty bed where Caesar Augustus had lain, and where we persevered and earned the first power that was to give us the world; and at Philippi, where he traveled so ill he could not stand and yet made himself to be carried among his troops in a litter, and came near death again by the murderer of his father, and where he fought until the murderers of the mortal Julius, who became a god, were destroyed by their own hands.

I am Marcus Agrippa, sometimes called Vipsanius, tribune to the people and consul to the Senate, soldier and general to the Empire of Rome, and friend of Gaius Octavius Caesar, now Augustus. I write these memories in the fiftieth year of my life so that posterity may record the time when Octavius discovered Rome bleeding in the jaws of faction, when Octavius Caesar slew the factious beast and removed the almost lifeless body, and when Augustus healed the wounds of Rome and made it whole again, to walk with vigor upon the boundaries of the world. Of this triumph I have, within my abilities, been a part; and of that part these memories will be a record, so that the historians of the ages may understand their wonder at Augustus and Rome.

Under the command of Caesar Augustus I performed several functions for the restoration of Rome, for which duty Rome amply rewarded me. I was three times consul, once aedile and tribune, and twice governor of Syria; and twice I received the seal of the Sphinx from Augustus himself during his grave illnesses. Against Lucius Antonius at Perugia I led the victorious Roman legions, and against the Aquitanians at Gaul, and against the German tribes at the Rhine, for which service I refused a Triumph in Rome; and in Spain and Pannonia, too, were rebellious tribes and factions put down. By Augustus I was given title as commander in chief of our navy, and we saved our ships from the pirate Sextus Pompeius by our construction of the harbor west of the Bay of Naples, which ships later defeated and destroyed Pompeius at Mylae and Naulochus on the coast of Sicily; and for that action the Senate awarded me the naval crown. At Actium we defeated the traitor Marcus Antonius, and so restored life to the body of Rome.

In celebration of Rome's delivery from the Egyptian treason, I had erected the Temple now called the Pantheon and other public buildings. As chief administrator of the city under Augustus and the Senate, I had repaired the old aqueducts of the city and installed new ones, so that the citizens and populace of Rome might have water and be free of disease; and when peace came to Rome, I assisted in the survey and mapping of the world, begun during the dictatorship of Julius Caesar and made at last possible by his adopted son.

Of these things, I shall write more at length as these memories progress. But I must now tell of the time when these events were set into motion, the year after Julius Caesar's triumphant return from Spain, of which campaign Gaius Octavius and Salvidienus Rufus and I were members.

For I was with him at Apollonia when the news came of Caesar's death....

II. Letter: Gaius Cilnius Maecenas to Titus Livius (13 B.C.)

You must forgive me, my dear Livy, for having so long delayed my reply. The usual complaints: retirement seems not to have improved the state of my health at all. The doctors shake their heads wisely, mutter mysteriously, and collect their fees. Nothing seems to help—not the vile medicines I am fed, nor even the abstinence from those pleasures which (as you know) I once enjoyed. The gout has made it impossible for me to hold my pen in hand these last few days, though I know how diligently you pursue your work and what need you have of my assistance in the matter of which you have written me. And along with my other infirmities, I have for the past few weeks been afflicted by an insomnia, so that my days are spent in weariness and lassitude. But my friends do not desert me, and life stays; for those two things I must be grateful.

You ask me about the early days of my association with our Emperor. You ought to know that only three days ago he was good enough to visit my house, inquiring after my illnesses, and I felt it politic to inform him of your request. He smiled and asked me whether or not I felt it proper to aid such an unregenerate Republican as yourself; and then we fell to talking about the old days, as men who feel the encroachment of age will do. He remembers things—little things—even more vividly than I, whose profession it has been to forget nothing. At last I asked him if he would prefer to have sent to you his own account of that time. He looked away into the distance for a moment and smiled again and said, “No—Emperors may let their memories lie even more readily than poets and historians.” He asked me to send you his warm regards, and gave me permission to write to you with whatever freedom I could find.

But what freedom can I find to speak to you of those days? We were young; and though Gaius Octavius, as he was called then, knew that he was favored by his destiny and that Julius Caesar intended his adoption, neither he nor I nor Marcus Agrippa nor Salvidienus Rufus, who were his friends, could truly

imagine where we would be led. I do not have the freedom of the historian, my friend; you may recount the movements of men and armies, trace the intricate course of state intrigues, balance victories and defeats, relate births and deaths—and yet still be free, in the wise simplicity of your task, from the awful weight of a kind of knowledge that I cannot name but that I more and more nearly apprehend as the years draw on. I know what you want; and you are no doubt impatient with me because I do not get on with it and give you the facts that you need. But you must remember that despite my services to the state, I am a poet, and incapable of approaching anything very directly.

It may surprise you to learn that I had not known Octavius until I met him at Brindisi, where I had been sent to join him and his group of friends on the way to Apollonia. The reasons for my being there remain obscure to me; it was through the intercession of Julius Caesar, I am sure. My father, Lucius, had once done Julius some service; and a few years before, he had visited us at our villa in Arezzo. I argued with him about something (I was, I believe, asserting the superiority of Callimachus's poems to Catullus's), and I became arrogant, abusive, and (I thought) witty. I was very young. At any rate, he seemed amused by me, and we talked for sometime. Two years later, he ordered my father to send me to Apollonia in the company of his nephew.

My friend, I must confess to you (though you may not use it) that I was in no profound way impressed with Octavius upon that occasion of our first meeting. I had just come down to Brindisi from Arezzo and after more than ten days of traveling, I was weary to the bone, filthy with the dust of the road, and irritable. I came upon them at the pier from which we were to embark. Agrippa and Salvidienus were talking together, and Octavius stood somewhat apart from them, gazing at a small ship that was anchored nearby. They had given no sign of noticing my approach. I said, somewhat too loudly, I imagine: "I am the Maecenas who was to meet you here. Which of you is which?"

Agrippa and Salvidienus looked at me amusedly and gave me their names; Octavius did not turn; and thinking that I saw arrogance and disdain in his back, I said: "And you must be the other, whom they call Octavius."

Then he turned, and I knew that I was foolish; for there was an almost desperate shyness on his face. He said: "Yes, I am Gaius Octavius. My uncle has spoken of you." Then he smiled and offered me his hand and raised his eyes and looked at me for the first time.

As you know, much has been said about those eyes, more often than not in bad meter and worse prose; I think by now he must be sick of hearing the metaphors and whatnot describing them, though he may have been vain about them at one time. But they were, even then, extraordinarily clear and piercing and sharp—more blue than gray, perhaps, though one thought of light, not color.... There, you see? I have started doing it myself; I have been reading too many of my friends' poems.

I may have stepped back a pace; I do not know. At any rate, I was startled, and so I looked away, and my eyes fell upon the ship at which Octavius had

been gazing.

“Is that the scow that’s going to take us across?” I asked. I was feeling a little more cheerful. It was a small merchant ship, not more than fifty feet in length, with rotting timbers at the prow and patched sails. A stench rose from it.

Agrippa spoke to me. “We are told that it is the only one available.” He was smiling at me a little; I imagine that he thought me fastidious, for I was wearing my toga and had on several rings, while they wore only tunics and carried no ornaments.

“The stench will be unendurable,” I said.

Octavius said gravely, “I believe it is going to Apollonia for a load of pickled fish.”

I was silent for a moment; and then I laughed, and we all laughed, and we were friends.

Perhaps we are wiser when we are young, though the philosopher would dispute with me. But I swear to you, we were friends from that moment onward; and that moment of foolish laughter was a bond stronger than anything that came between us later—victories or defeats, loyalties or betrayals, griefs or joys. But the days of youth go, and part of us goes with them, not to return.

Thus it was that we crossed to Apollonia, in a stinking fish boat that groaned with the gentlest wave, that listed so perilously to its side that we had to brace ourselves so that we would not tumble across the deck, and that carried us to a destiny we could not then imagine....

I resume the writing of this letter after an interruption of two days; I shall not trouble you with a detailing of the maladies that occasioned that interruption; it is all too depressing.

In any event, I have seen that I do not give you the kind of thing that will be of much use to you, so I have had my secretary go through some of my papers in search of matters more helpful to your task. You may remember that some ten years ago I spoke at the dedication of our friend Marcus Agrippa’s Temple of Venus and Mars, now popularly called the Pantheon. In the beginning I had the idea, later discarded, of doing a rather fanciful oration, almost a poem, if I may say so, which made some odd connections between the state of Rome as we had found it as young men and the state of Rome as this temple now represents it. At any rate, as an aid to my own solution to the problem that the form of this projected oration raised, I made some notes about those early days, which I now draw upon in an effort to aid you in the completion of your history of our world.

Picture, if you can, four youths (they are strangers to me now), ignorant of their future and of themselves, ignorant indeed of that very world in which they are beginning to live. One (that is Marcus Agrippa) is tall and heavy-muscled, with the face almost of a peasant—strong nose, big bones, and a skin like new leather; dry, brownish hair, and a coarse red stubble of beard; he is nineteen. He walks heavily, like a bullock, but there is an odd grace about