

thrust give way to domestic squabbles. After a while, the new is no longer new, and we require drama. It's how we perceive the world.)

Our survival mechanism orders the world into cause-effect-conclusion.

Freud called music polymorphous perversity. We take pleasure in the music because it states a theme, the theme elaborates itself and then resolves, and we are then as pleased as if it were a philosophical revelation—even though the resolution is devoid of verbal content. Like politics, like most popular entertainment.

Children jump around at the end of the day, to expend the last of that day's energy. The adult equivalent, when the sun goes down, is to create or witness drama—which is to say, to order the universe into a comprehensible form. Our sundown play/film/gossip is the day's last exercise of that survival mechanism. In it we attempt to discharge any residual perceptive energies in order to sleep. We will have drama in that spot, and if it's not forthcoming we will cobble it together out of nothing.

The Perfect Ball Game

What do we wish for in the perfect game?

Do we wish for Our Team to take the field and thrash

the opposition from the First Moment, rolling up a walkover score at the final gun?

No. We wish for a closely fought match that contains many satisfying reversals, but which can be seen, retroactively, to have always tended toward a satisfying and inevitable conclusion.

We wish, in effect, for a three-act structure.

In act 1 Our Team takes the field and, indeed, prevails over its opponents, and we, its partisans, feel pride. But before that pride can mature into arrogance this new thing occurs: Our Team makes an error, the other side is inspired and pushes forth with previously unsuspected strength and imagination. Our Team weakens and retreats.

In act 2 of this perfect game Our Team, shaken and confused, forgets the rudiments of cohesion and strategy and address that made them strong. They fall deeper and deeper into the slough of despond. All contrary efforts seem for naught; and just when we think the tide may have turned back their way, a penalty or adverse decision is rendered, nullifying their gains. What could be worse?

But wait: Just When All Seems Irremediably Lost, help comes (act 3) from an unexpected quarter. A player previously believed second-rate emerges with a block, a run, a throw, that offers a glimmer (a *glimmer*, mind) of the possibility of victory.

Yes, only a glimmer, but it is sufficient to rouse the team to something approaching its best efforts. And the team, indeed, rallies. Our Team brings the score back even and, *mirabile dictu*, makes That Play that would put them ahead.

ONLY TO HAVE IT CALLED BACK, yet again, by fate, or by its lieutenant, a wrongheaded, ignorant, or malicious official.

But see: the Lessons of the Second Act¹ were not lost on Our Team. This or that one might say it is too late, the clock is too far run down, our heroes are Too Tired, yet they rouse themselves for One Last Effort, One Last Try. And do they prevail? Do they triumph, with scant seconds left on the clock?

They *all but* triumph. As, in the final seconds of the play, the outcome rests on That Lone Warrior, that hero, that champion, that person upon whom, in the Final Moment, all our hopes devolve, that final play, run, pass, penalty kick—Yes.

But wait: that Warrior we would have chosen for the

1. We, caught up in the drama of that moment, did not recognize at the time that the second act *had* lessons. We watched and understood it as a series of both random and unfortunate happenings. In *retrospect* we intuit/perceive its operation as part of a whole—i.e., we perceive it as part of a drama.

task, that Champion is injured. No one is left on the bench save a neophyte, et cetera, et cetera.

In which conceit we see that not only does the game recapitulate the drama, but each act of the game (the Perfect Game, mind you) recapitulates the game (following the paradigm: “Yes! No! But wait . . . !”), just as each act of the play recapitulates the whole. The ball game, then, is perhaps a model of Eisenstein’s Theory of Montage: the idea of a SHOT A is synthesized with the idea of a SHOT B to give us a third idea, which third idea is the irreducible building block upon which the play will be constructed.

The Defense of Team A and the Offense of Team B are synthesized in THE PLAY, the one play, after which the ball will be found at a different position. And to that new position (a ball in the same position but at a later time is, of course, still in a new position) we, the audience, internalize/intuit/create/assign a philosophical meaning.

For we rationalize, objectify, and personalize the process of the game exactly as we do that of a play, a drama. For, finally, it *is* a drama, with meaning for our lives. Why else would we watch it?

It is enjoyable, like music, like politics, and like theater, because it exercises, it flatters, and it informs our capacity for rational synthesis—our ability to learn a lesson, which is our survival mechanism.

This Play, which May or not Take Place, but which we *perceive* (we can find a similar satisfaction, for example, if we're feeling philosophical, in the interplay of clouds) because we must, because it is our nature, can, at one end of its operation, makes us better, make the world better, perhaps, because of what we have perceived. At the other end of its operation, it can soothe (or, for that matter, enrage and debauch) simply by exciting our capacity for synthesis—as the lovely kitten playing with the ball of string is happy because she practices torture, as patriotic groups are similarly happy because they rehearse—in however embryonic a form—the license of war.

It is difficult, finally, *not* to see our lives as a play with ourselves the hero—and that struggle is the great task of religion, of which drama used to be a part before the Fall.

Anti-Stratfordianism

We, in show business, are told that first this and now that superstar of the stage or screen demands all co-workers sign an agreement not to look at him or her—when the superstar appears, the lowly must avert their gaze.

One musical star now insists that he has no name—just a glyph, or a symbol, and the name is unpro-

nounceable (a distinction heretofore reserved for a certain deity, beloved by my people, the Jews).

Considerable sections of the populace insist that Elvis did not die.

In these cases, the mortal has been raised, or is auditioning to be raised, to the status of a god. Today, as in ancient Rome, when all avenues of success have been traveled and all prizes won, the final prize is the delusion of godhead.

The same grandiosity serves the egos of not only the high but of the low. If voters-viewers-devotées are necessary—in their complicity, if in nothing else—for the act of deification, does that not make *them* greater than a god?

We see the quest for godhead in the affection for the ideas of reincarnation and “channeling.” In each the correct-thinking defeat death, that indignity to which the nonelect are unfortunately subject.

The anti-Stratfordians hold that Shakespeare didn't write Shakespeare's plays—it was another fellow of the same name, or of a different name. In this they invert the megalomaniacal equation and make themselves not the elect, but the *superior* of the elect. Barred from composing Shakespeare's plays by a regrettable temporal accident, they, in the fantasy of most every editor, accept the mantle of *primum mobile*, consign the (falsely named)