

Introductory Letter

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“You have never read Tacitus?” Justice Hugo Black said to me on the second day of my clerkship with him, “Why, then, you are not a lawyer.” He made me drop all else until I had read his own highly and very personally annotated Tacitus. Kant and Bentham continue to battle through the casebooks today as they did when Baron Bramwell in the 1870s said that for the convenience of mankind people must put up with such mischief as due care cannot avoid. Was Captain Vere really modelled on Melville’s father-in-law, the great Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, and was Lemuel Shaw himself greatly influenced by his complicated affine? Do Edwin Meese and Robert Bork have anything to learn from the fact that Athol Fugard’s “The Blood Knot” was a dramatically different play a generation ago, when Fugard first acted and directed the play in South Africa, from when he acted and directed it in New Haven recently—even though the words spoken remained the same?

Law feeds and is fed by the world around it. Fortunately, that world is at least as aptly described and understood by the humanities as by the social and natural sciences. Hence, and also fortunately, it is impossible fully to understand law without a deep and sympathetic knowledge of the liberal arts. But that knowledge cannot be just background, it must be a fundamental part of legal scholarship. Similarly, many a problem in the humanities (and in the sciences) would be better understood if scholars in these fields knew what legal scholars, and law itself, had said to the issue.

This *Journal* is dedicated to the kind of mutual nurturing between law and liberal arts that is most needed, especially at the highest scholarly levels. No wonder that it is for me as welcome an initiative as any that I have seen in the thirty or so years that I have been teaching law.