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The Reach of the Mind

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THE REACH OF THE MIND

JOHN HENRY SCHLEGEL*

In one sense for a man only a little more than half his age, I know Jack Hyman way too well to write on an occasion like this. He picked me up at the airport when I came to Buffalo for an interview and then benignly, unobtrusively piloted me through the tenure process. I have worked with his son, own a painting by one of his daughters and have taught the other. My family and I have enjoyed his company and that of both of his wives, a fact that immediately places him in a very elite grouping as the only other person I can say something similar about is Karl Llewellyn. As a student of legal education, as well as an insufferable curator of gossip, I have heard and ferreted out countless stories about the Harvard Law School in the late thirties, the heady times at Buffalo in the forties, the hard work of building a school in the fifties and the obligatory slaying of the fatherdragon by the bright young boys he brought to this school in the sixties, and I have witnessed the personal intellectual renaissance of the seventies. I have heard Jack remark that given my teaching interests I was clearly brought to Buffalo to replace him, a nonfact born out by the real fact that I adopted my moniker—Schlegel—to avoid the confusion of having two Jack's around the place.

At this point, it would be easy to take the cheap shot and say no one could ever replace Jack. But if there is anything I have ever learned from the man, a learning that began with my gulping scotch to calm my nerves while being intensely aware that I was being sized-up by a seasoned observer of teacher-flesh, it is to avoid the cheap shots. There is nothing about Jack that is cheap. Nor does he "take shots"; he carefully prepares them. Indeed, if the opposition isn't very good he will work to improve it before making his own carefully prepared shot. But one thing I have not yet learned from Jack is to curb my tongue. So instead of cheap I will be blunt.

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We will replace Jack Hyman. He has now left us no choice. Of course one person will not get the job. No, not because "No one could ever fill those shoes," but because the odd-shaped packages that are interesting human beings are just not likely to be easily duplicated. Where are we going to find someone simultaneously interested in tort, procedure, constitutional law, legal reasoning, law and medicine, arbitration and collective bargaining in the public sector? I noticed no resumes like this in the A.A.L.S. register this year. Hopefully, all these interests will be parcelled out among us . . . those here and those to come. Similarly, someone will patiently learn the ins and outs of the University's public academic politics—the faculty senate and the myriad presidential advisory committees—and will at the same time bring to the job the patience to deal seriously with the problems of these public bodies, lest the law school be seen by the rest of the University as uninterested or worse. Another will take up the role of rallying interested yet wary faculty to the cause of substantial change in the curriculum we prescribe, without benefit of license, to law students. And I suspect that that someone will even turn out, like Jack, to occasionally play Mr. Nimos, Robert Gordon's noble, tory dog, and assert that "the old ways are the good ways" and thus unhorse an otherwise well thought out, if overly destructive reform. A fourth will work at sizing up appointments' candidates, a fifth at having judgment in guiding juniors through the promotion and tenure maze into good teaching and productive scholarship, and a sixth will take heart and produce some really exciting scholarship after long silence. Yes, we will replace Jack Hyman. But as we do, it will be handy and will keep us honest to have the original around to measure his replacements against, to check the cut of the twill, the fit in the black chair, the reach of the mind.