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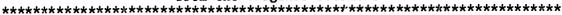
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ABSTRACT

Recent critics of community colleges wrongly argue that early junior colleges in California were created not to democratize education, but to keep the university exclusive. The first state junior college law was passed in California in 1907, allowing high schools to offer 2 years of postsecondary work at a time when high schools were not yet required to offer grades nine through twelve. Benjamin Ide and Alexis Lange of the California State Board of Education and Anthony Caminetti of the Senate Committee on Education were key players in the bill's passage. The first junior college, established in Fresno in 1911, was plagued with image problems and low enrollment. By 1917-18, there were 1,561 students enrolled in 21 California junior colleges, but by 1922-23, there were only 1,416 students in 18 institutions. Revisionists criticize early junior college advocates of diverting junior college students into vocational programs to maintain the existing social order, but California was a new frontier with a dynamic evolving middle class where farmers, ranchers, and miners later became successful businessman. The California junior college was a hybrid product designed to reflect the economic interests of local communities through different technical and vocational programs. For newspaper editors, magazine and business writers, and real estate brokers, the colleges were an asset to local boosterism, making the surrounding communities appear to be superior in status and culture. California boosters held the vision of creating a new society in a new land. The new society had one new educational institution for the new century, the public junior college. (KP)

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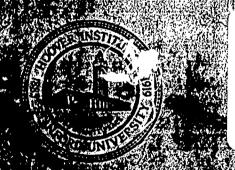
Working Paper Series in Education

Nonsense and the Junior College:
Early California Development

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Nonsense and the Junior College: Early California Development

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Recent critics of the community junior college have distorted the factors associated with the early development of two-year institutions. These "revisionists" claim that the major underlying goal of early junior colleges in California "had little to do with the democratization of higher education." The "aspirations of the masses for upward mobility through education" had to be "rechanneled in more realistic directions." According to one revisionist, "the real goals of educational systems... are to serve the potential of only a few." The "few come basically from the elite or most powerful classes." Referring to the first junior college enabling law in the United States, he stated that "all of this lobbying, which culminated in the 1907 legislation, had nothing at all to do with extending higher educational opportunities to the masses. Quite the contrary: it was all in the cause of making the university more exclusive. The story of the founding of California's first junior college in Fresno makes this all perfectly clear." 1 Critics of the Community junior college have relied on a largely false set of assumptions about its origins and mission. Leaders like Alexis Lange, Director of the Education Department democratized higher education in California during the Progressive Era. California later became a model for development of junior colleges in other states. Junior college promoters were aided by local professionals and small businessmen-community boosters.

The 1907 Junior College Law in Perspective

The first state junior college law was passed in California in 1907. It was merely a permissive law granting authority to high schools to offer two years of postgraduate work. The complete law consisted of the following two sentences:

The board of trustees of any city, district, union, joint union or county high school may prescribe post-graduate courses of study for the graduates of such high school, or other high schools, which courses of study shall approximate the studies prescribed in the first two years of university courses. The board of trustees of any city, district, union, joint union, or county high school wherein the post graduate courses are taught may charge tuition for pupils living without the boundaries of the district wherein such courses are taught.²

In some ways, the passage of this law in California in 1907 was incredible. For example, the state was not advanced in the development of its high schools. The California constitution of 1879 had not been very friendly to them. It had prohibited the use of state money for all secondary education, only sanctioning financial support for primary instruction. This encouraged primary schools to extend upward into the



secondary period. The state school districts were on a 8-4 basis in some areas and on a 9-3 basis in others.³

Through a series of acts, California had attempted to remedy its relatively weak secondary system. Prelimitary legislation had recognized the authority of primary schools to extend upward. In 1902, the Constitution was amended to enable the legislature to levy a special state tax to support high schools. It was amended in 1908 to permit evening sessions in California high schools to share state expenditures with the day sessions. But it was not until 1911 that high schools were required by law to offer a four-year sequence. Was it not strange that in 1907 the state legislature would permit high schools to offer grades thirteen and fourteen when it did not yet require them to offer grades nine through twelve?

The 1907 junior college law in California was incongruous for another reason. One might assume that the law was a response to a popular demand for the upward extension of the high school. Actually, there was little local interest in the junior college then. The demand followed the legislation, for not until three years later did any board of education establish a junior college department within a high school.

The question remains, "What factors were responsible for the 1907 law?" The answer lies, largely, in the persons working for its passage. Under the Constitution, the membership of the California State Board of Education included the Governor, the President of the University of California, the principals of the State Normal Schools, and the Director of the Department of Education at Berkeley. President Benjamin Ide Wheeler and Director Alexis Lange, both in favor of the junior college idea, were thus members of this board in 1907. Moreover, Lange occupied the strategic position of chairman. As the constituents of the board were ex officio members of the Senate Committee on Education, they could participate in the initiation of education bills. As chairman of the Board, Lange gave the information for the junior college bill to the committee.

Anthony Caminetti, of Amador County, who introduced the junior college bill in the legislature, was a member of the Senate Committee on Education and a long-time friend of educators. Two decades earlier, he had introduced the bill authorizing the establishment of high schools in the state as upward extensions of the primary schools. Caminetti had served several terms in the State Senate and was a leader in the Democratic Party. He was a leading foe of the railroad machine in the California Legislature and later an active promoter of progressive reform during the administration of Governor Hiram Johnson.⁵



In gaining support for his bill, Caminetti emphasized geographical considerations. The distance from it rkeley and Stanford to many California cities was hundreds of miles; distance would create additional financial costs for university students dependent upon the railroad. Furthermore, distance would prevent many parents from visiting their children more than once or twice each year. Legislators were aware that Victorian parents in California were reluctant to sever home ties with their children. If local high schools added two years of work, students could stay at home and save money, and parents could supervise their children until they were more mature. The progressive mind was infused with morality, and keeping young people at home with their parents and away from the temptations of liquor and vice had an appeal in many communities.

While ordinary citizens in California were not aware of the 1907 enabling legislation, a prominent resident of Fresno was. Chester Rowell, editor of the <u>Fresno Morning Republican</u>, commented on Caminetti's bill in an editorial soon after it was introduced in the state senate. He stated:

"Senator Caminetti, all inadvertently, has introduced a bill for one of the most important educational reforms in California...authorizing the high schools to give a two-years graduate course, equivalent to the first two years of the university. And there he blundered on a real educational truth. For, as our educational system is now constructed, the high schools stop two years short of the work real secondary schools ought to do, while the university takes its students two years before they are ready to do university work. A six-year course, not for all high schools, but for the principal ones, scattered over the state within easy access to all the people, will solve the problem".⁶

Chester Rowell was perhaps the most important promoter of the Lincoln-Roosevelt League and one of the "intellectual" leaders of the California progressive movement.⁷ Why was he so interested and knowledgeable about the 1907 bill? Rowell had studied philosophy as an undergraduate and graduate student, under George Sylvester Morris and John Dewey at the University of Michigan. In Germany, Rowell studied German, French, public health, education and the government delivery of social services. After returning to the United States, Rowell accepted a faculty position in the German Department at the University of Illinois. His academic career ended when he accepted his uncle's offer to become editor of the Fresno Morning Republican. He served on a California Education Commission advocating several major educational reforms.



A significant number of California Progressives were journalists and Rowell became their intellectual leader promoting the public interest. California, a "new" state, did not yet have a well-defined public interest and this allowed Rowell and educators to emphasize education as an important part of that public interest. It was not a coincidence that the first public junior college in California would be at Fresno.

The 1907 Law in California remained unused for three years. There was little or no interest in establishing junior colleges among ordinary citizens. The Sierra Educational News, the official periodical of the California Teachers' Association, did not mention the law until its June, 1909 issue. A more pressing concern than junior colleges was the dreadful state of the secondary education in California and the rest of the nation. In their writings, revisionists fail to consider how inefficient America's secondary schools were at the that time. As late as 1910, only 15.4% of American fourteen to seventeen year-olds attended high school and only 8.6% of the seventeen year-olds were being graduated.8

Interest in the junior college was part of a growing concern among California educators in keeping many more young people in school. Support for the junior college was often united with support for the junior high school. Alexis Lange was a member of the Berkeley Committee of Nine which recommended the establishment of a junior high school. Members were influenced by G. Stanley Hall's study of adolescence and Thorndike's study of pupil elimination. According to Hall, secondary school students should be permitted to choose subjects according to their interests and abilities rather than compelling them to select subjects to meet rigid college entrance requirements. Hall's attack on college domination of secondary education was vigorous. The high school should find its own aims related to the psychological interests and needs of adolescents, rather than follow the dictates of college faculties. Secondary education existed for youth rather than fitting youth for school and college. Moreover, the college might open wide its doors as "entrance standards should admit all who are in a stage of development to profit more by its grade of work than by a lower." 10

Armed with Hall's "expertise", Frank Bunker, Berkeley Superintendent of Schools, convinced the school board to group grades seven, eight and nine into a "junior high school." He sought to increase the attractiveness of schooling for those pupils who were dropping out at the end of the fifth or sixth grades. He especially hoped that the new organization would encourage children of "working class" families to remain longer in school. The Berkeley Board of Education adopted the junior high school proposal as



early as 1910 but the actual separation of high school and junior high school could not take place until a bond issue was passed.¹¹

Revisionists have portrayed Lange as an elitist who advocated junior colleges to keep the mass of high school students away form the University of California. Lange's writings indicate his strong interest in increasing the number of high schools graduates, the number of students taking post-high school courses in their high schools or their junior colleges, and the number of students transferring to the University of California. As Lange stated, "the junior college must do something far more vitally significant than to improve the care and culture of the privileged few and to ameliorate the sad lot of universities...the call to realize a progressively efficient secondary school system means also one that is accessible to a steadily increasing number." 12 In a letter to Will C. Wood, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, his views on the democratization of higher education were clearly stated:

- "1. I assume that there will be in existence soon one <u>core</u> of prescriptions for all high school courses leading to graduation. You and the State Board will see to that.
- 2. I assume further that you will insist strenuously that any recommended high school graduate who has taken this core shall be admitted to the freshman class at Berkeley. Neither the Engineering College nor Agriculture must be allowed to compel high schools to set up additional requirements that must be met before entering at Berkeley.
- 3. I assume, once more that the University accepts without limitation as to quantity high school work of the so-cailed vocational type."¹³

The preceding quotation reveals Lange's frustration with some of his colleagues, as university faculty members and some administrators were slow to be persuaded on the desirability of the junior college idea. The University of California had gradually moved in a direction to accommodate six-year high schools. The first significant step was the admission of transfer students to junior standing with two years of academic credit. A second step, in 1903, was the adoption of the "junior certificate" to be given to students upon the completion of six years of combined high school and university work. This arrangement applied only to the College of General Culture (Literature, Science, and Arts). The third step involved the application of the junior certificate to the professional departments and schools. According to Lange, the adoption of these plans, especially the granting of the junior certificate, "tended strongly to encourage the conviction that what was to be known as the Junior College idea had been virtually



institutionalized at Berkeley."¹⁴ It should be noted that it was not until 1920 that Stanford worked out an arrangement comparable to that at Berkeley.

The Fresno Junior College and Its Problems

Three years after the passage of the first junior college law in the United States, an extended high school appeared at Fresno. This city was the chief distributing point for agricultural products of many types...fruits, vegetables, grains, lumber and cattle. Fresno by 1910 had become the main city of the San Joaquin Valley, an area of wide expanse and tremendous possibilities. It was a city of diverse ethnic groups: Armenians, Russians, Japanese, Chinese, Blacks, Indians, Mexicans and an assortment of migrants from the Middle West. A teacher might handle five or six different ethnic groups in a single primary school classroom. There were sometimes severe language problems among the pupils requiring special instruction.¹⁵

The Fresno Junior College, California's first, was established as a confluence of state and local politic. School Superintendent Charles L. McLane was interested in securing a state Normal School for Fresno. Three of these mainly primary school teacher preparation institutions were already located at Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco. Governor Gillette was opposed to the project, apparently because Fresno had not supported his gubernatorial campaign. Since the state legislature did not approve locating a normal school there, McLane decided to act under the Caminetti Law, authorizing the addition of grades thirteen and fourteen to the high school. Chester Rowell, a Progressive opponent of the conservative Governor Gillette, agreed to help publicize the proposal. In addition, McLane had circulars distributed in the community to gauge public sentiment. He used correspondence with university experts, Jordan and Lange, to persuade the Board of Education to adopt his proposal. McLane knew Lange through membership in the California Teachers Association, especially through their work on the California Council of Education. McLane summarized his relationship with Lange as follows:

Practically every movement for the advancement of educational work in California during the past quarter of a century has had the advantage of Dr. Lange's counsel and advice...One of these problems was the organization of the first Junior College in 1910. I still have his letters giving advice and encouragement to this movement in response to my appeal to him.¹⁶



The Fresno School Board approved the creation of "the junior college" after hearing reasons for its establishment: no college within two hundred miles of Fresno, many high school graduates lacked the maturity or the finances to leave home. Some persons wanted only a few vocational courses, while they remained fully employed. Courses in mathematics, English, Latin, modern languages, history, economics, and technical subjects were offered during the first year. A.C. Olney, Fresno High School Principal, developed the plan for starting the junior college work for the 1910-1911 school year, but he accepted a position at Santa Barbara and Frederich Liddeke was appointed to replace him.¹⁷

The new venture at Fresno had serious problems right from the beginning. A normal school was finally authorized and established in 1911 and was connected to the Junior College in two ways. First, the state normal school and the junior college were both temporarily housed in the same high school building. The public was, no doubt, confused why there were two "colleges" housed in the same building. To many observers, one college might seem to duplicate the other. And could a "college" really be a college if it were housed in a high school building? Actually, in the Fresno Public Schools Annual Reports, the "junior college" was sometimes referred to as the "collegiate division of the high school." 18

There were also problems of faculty, administration and finance. The junior college classes were financed out of the high school budget and they were taught by high school teachers. Some high school teachers had one college class, some had two, while one instructor had three. It was feared that the faculty members had too many course preparations and the classes might not be as 'thorough' as those given at the University. The classes were small and the overall enrollment in the Fresno Junior College was limited, starting at twenty-eight and only reaching fifty-three in 1914. Many of these junior college students were high school students taking college courses. The normal school and junior college competed for students; better understood by the public, the former was superior in the market place. Finally, McLane was not only superintendent of schools, but also President of the normal school. The normal school and junior college were "united" through a joint committee formed through the two boards. Not until 1913 was the state normal school made separate. 19

Where was the great influx of students taking advantage of the collegiate education previously denied them? The fact is that there had been little demand from the people. The junior college idea had been conceived and implemented by an educational elite: experts like Jordan and Lange, and educational promoters like McLane, Olney and Liddeke. The junior college was a new kind of college and the



people needed to be persuaded that it was in their interests to attend. In Fresno, local educators had to persuade young people that the junior college was a better place to be than at one of the city's nineteen pool halls, or its several dozen taverns.²⁰

While California was way ahead of other states in the establishment of public junior colleges, the movement could hardly be labeled a success. Other cities followed Fresno's lead in creating extended high schools, according to Alexis Lange, "partly owing to intercommunal belimeather—and—sheep relations combined with the spirit of emulation." by 1916, junior colleges were operating in Los Angeles, Fullerton, Long Beach, Riverside, Ontario, Pomona, Azusa, Sacramento, Whittier, Santa Ana, San Luis Opispo and San Diego.²¹ While there were 1,561 students enrolled in twenty-one California public junior colleges in 1917-1918, there were only 1,416 students in eighteen institutions in 1922-1923. A lack of adequate finances caused the "failure" of numerous colleges (i.e. the abandonment of once created colleges). World War I contributed to the decline in college enrollments and some struggling junior colleges failed to survive.²²

Revisionist Assumptions and California Realities

Revisionists have assumed that there was a strong desire among young people to gain a higher education and have "blamed" the junior college advocates for promoting junior colleges to educate the masses, thereby keeping the universities unavailable to them. But there was relatively little demand for higher education in California junior colleges until the secondary school curriculum could be broadened and more "practical" courses included. The exceedingly high drop-out rate of the high school had to be reduced so there might be more junior college students. High school pupils had to be persuaded to finish high school before being convinced to attend the local junior college.

Revisionists have another problem in their interpretation of California junior college development. They criticize early junior college advocates like Lange for diverting the mass of in-coming junior college students into vocational-technical programs to maintain the existing social order. It is interesting to note that junior college advocates had to combat the work ethic to get students. Lower middle class and working class students wanted to work and earn money rather than continue their schooling. While the desire for education varied among ethnic groups, it was difficult to persuade secondary students to remain in school and take traditional courses rather than earn money in a job. Decades later, junior colleges would attract many students who would both take classes and hold jobs.



Most California cities were too new and growing too rapidly to have well-established, stable social class systems. Rapid technology, coupled with economic and social changes combined with conflicting cultural backgrounds of people migrating from the South, Midwest and West "kept the status system in flux..."²³ Revisionist views have been based too much on educational developments in the older, static, well-established social class system of the East. California, by contrast, was a frontier state in the process of development. C. Wright Willis, the famous sociologist, concluded that the West constituted the only section of the country in which the business elite came largely from the lower classes.²⁴ Earl Pomeroy, a leading historian of the West, stated that "disproportionate rewards went to men who soiled their hands or their consciences." Many farmers, ranchers, and mine operators, who in their early years worked with their hands, later became successful businessmen.²⁵

Pomeroy's quote seems especially applicable to the Japanese who settled in California. In spite of a great deal of discrimination, they responded to California's educational opportunities with an intensity unequaled, except for possibly Jewish immigrants in the East. The Nisei worked hard, especially in agricultural jobs, and saved their money in order to send their children to college so that they would not be "inferior" to other Americans. They wanted "to excel in education, for it would be the key to overcoming the 'handicap' of discrimination." In the 1920s, about 65% of the Japanese in California lived on farms, but less than 10% of the Japanese children planned to remain on them. Education was viewed as their ticket to "a better life." Young Japanese Americans in accelerated numbers were graduated from high school and college. Their average educational level by the late 1920s was two years of college--far above the national average.²⁶

Revisionists have argued that the junior college was established, in part, to maintain the existing social class structure. They incorrectly argued that the occupational education function developed early in two-year institutions as a part of "the sorting process." Working class youths would be screened out of the university preparation 'track' and placed in vocational-technical programs. This, it has been alleged, kept them in the working class. But as Pomeroy noted, many Californians starting out in farming or trades ended up as successful businessmen. Lange and other junior college advocates believed that graduates of vocational-technical programs might be as successful economically as those students attending the universities. Furthermore, the middle class social structure in California was in the process of being developed unlike other parts of the United States. While San Francisco had a social class structure, like cities in the Middle West and East, it must be noted that early junior colleges did not develop there. They developed in rapidly growing cities which contained dynamic



social structures. They appeared around the San Francisco bay area early, but in the city late. A political consultant in Fresno recently remarked about his community's "egalitarian" attitude:

"The nice thing about Fresno, I could go to what was then Diane's Coffee Shop and everyone was dressed in boots and Levis and T-shirts and driving pickups with a fair amount of dirt," he said. "One guy is worth \$5,000, the next guy is worth \$5 million, and an outsider could never tell the difference."27

Boosters and the Junior College

Historian Daniel Boorstin stated in <u>The Americans: The National Experience</u> that Western cities became the natural habitat of local boosterism. While population growth, money-making and increased trade were among the earliest concerns of the boosters, cultural institutions followed. Local critics of the excess of boosterism often dwelt on the lack of concern for cultural attainments. Given the heavy influx of Mid-westerners, public education was bound to be mentioned, in part, as a kind of compensation for the lack of well-established cultural institutions.

Who were the California boosters? Newspaper editors, magazine writers, authors of local business publications, real estates brokers and a variety of small businessmen. Merchants, real estate speculators and developers, and some small manufactures allied with local journalists promoted the alleged advantages of living in their communities. Professionals such as school administrators, clergymen, lawyers and physicians offered ideas in the local discussions. School superintendents and school principals associated with persons from the ranks of local businessmen and professionals, i.e. the occupational groups furnishing local school board members.

California colleges made the surrounding communities appear to be superior in status and culture. They also might stimulate residential development. Local merchants welcomed student consumers while landlords hoped many students would rent rather than commute. School districts and colleges sometimes sold real estate to increase their revenues. Competition among California cities for business and the establishment of colleges led to municipal slurs. San Franciscans call their city, "The Paris of The West" while Los Angeles was deemed a "cow town." Pomona College advertised itself as "one of the best known and strongest institutions of learning west of the Rocky Mountains" where there was "no liquor" and "no pool rooms." Claremont College was promoted as "Claremont the Beautiful" and "a college town among the orange groves." 28



An attractive feature of the junior college to California boosters was that no specific legislation was necessary to have one and any community having a high school could start one. A normal school or university needed specific state legislation, but a junior college only needed local school board action.

The California junior college was a hybrid product conceived by Alexis Lange and other educators, and implemented by civic-minded business and professional school board members. It was understood that cities would evolve with different economic interests and that those interests might be reflected through different vocational-technical programs. Local colleges were expected to reflect local interests. Courses in soils, minerals, and crops would be emphasized at Fresno Junior College because of its central location in what became "the richest farming region in the history of the world." In the Fresno region, farms became "ranches", farmers became "growers", and farming became "agribusiness".²⁹

The primacy of agriculture has been a recurring theme in American literature. It appeared in some early junior college curricula, as a vision of California growth. Urban editors, publicists and civic leaders stressed how agriculture was the primary interest of the community—other interests tracing their life and dependence on the soil. California boosters held a vision of creating a new society in a new land.³⁰ Such a society might have at least one new educational institution for the new century and that institution would be the public junior college.



NOTES

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- ² California Department of Public Instruction, School Law of California. (Sacramento: State of Caifornia, 1907), sec.1681, 94.
- ³ William C. Jones, "Chapters on the School Law of California," <u>Miscellaneous Papers</u>, I (University of California Archives at Berkeley).
- ⁵ Herbert C. Jones, "On California Government and Public Issues". Unpublished manuscript in Bancroft Library of the University of California, P.192: Franklin Hichborn, Story of the Sessions of the California Legislature, 1909. (San Francisco: James H. Barry Co., 1909), Table G and pp. 282-283.
- ⁶ <u>Fresno Morning Republican</u>, February 27, 1907.
- ⁷ George E. Mowry, <u>The California Progressive</u> (Chicago:Quadrangle Books, 1963), 647,85,107,111,123.
- 8 Thomas James and David Tyack, "Learning from Past Efforts to Reform the High School," Phi Delta Kappan (February, 1983), 401.
- ⁹ G. Stanley Hail, <u>Adolescence</u>, Il (New York: Appleton and Company, 1905),521-528; Edward L. Thorndike, The Elimination of Pupils from School, United States Bureau of Education Bulletin No. 4 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing office, 1907), 10; Frank F. Bunker, The Junior High School Movement-Its Beginnings. Washington, D.C. W.F. Roberts Comapny 1935),29.
- 10 Hall, op.cit.
- 11 Bunker, op. cit.
- 12 Arthur Chamberlain, ed. The Lange Book. (San Francisco: The Trade Publishing Co, 1928), 90.
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- 16 C.L. McLane, "The Fresno Junior College Bringing the First Two Years of the University to the Student's Door," California Weekly, III (July 15, 1910) 539-540; James L. Ratcliff to the writer, September 11, 1990; Merton E. Hill, "The Junior College Movement in California," unpublished essay in Psychology/Education Library at the University of California at Berkeley, 11-15.
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- ²⁶ Takaki, op. cit., 217-218.
- 27 San Francisco Chronicle, May 20, 1992, sec A,6.
- 28 John R. Thelin, "California and the Colleges," Part 2 California Historical Quarterly, LIV, No.3 (Fall 1977), 230-249.
- 29 Gerald W. Haslam, The Other California, (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1990), 15.



³⁰Henry Nash Smith, <u>Virgin Land: The American West As Symbol and Myth</u>, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) 141-162, 182-183 Kevin Starr, <u>Inventing the Dream</u>. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 46-47.



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