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DURRENMATT'S HEROES

Elizabeth Johns

Friedrich Durrenmatt states in his essay *Problems of the Theatre*¹ that our age is non-tragic; he classifies his plays as comedies. Yet his most striking dramatic creation is the hero who breaks out of the comic world. Our age does not offer the possibility of traditional heroic action. Power has become abstract, so that no individual has the freedom to be responsible for his actions. Not only is man not free in traditional terms, he cannot find a traditional order in the universe: both of these are conditions which presuppose comedy. Yet what Durrenmatt writes reveals the possibility of a fleeting freedom and momentary unit within this comic universe.

Although God exists, and is merciful, his universe is inscrutable to man; thus the world in Durrenmatt's plays is chaotic. His characters stake their lives on order, either an order they think already exists in the universe or an order they invent in the faith that it will be confirmed. They assume they have the freedom to commit their lives to a direction that is meaningful. Most of Durrenmatt's characters never realize the illusory nature of the order on which they have depended; these characters are comic. But in each of five of Durrenmatt's comedies, one character, faced with the meaninglessness of a life purposefully lived, recognizes and accepts his absurdity. He has what Durrenmatt calls a "frightening moment" in which he looks into this "abyss that opens suddenly" (*Problems*, p. 32). In accepting the hopelessness of his position, he exercises the only freedom he has and he confers on the chaotic world the only order that is real.

For just as the heroic world of the Greeks presupposed a divinely sanctioned order, the heroic world of Durrenmatt presupposes a divinely pitied disorder; the Greek tragic hero probed what was possible in an orderly universe, and the Durrenmatt hero finds what is possible in a chaotic universe; the Greek hero recognized his guilt, incurred by his own freedom; the Durrenmatt hero recognizes his absurdity in his inability to act freely. For Durrenmatt, the recognition, and this alone, makes man heroic. When he avoids this moment he leaves himself comic. Durrenmatt writes in *Problems* that "the world (hence the stage which represents this world) is for me something monstrous, a riddle of misfortunes which must be accepted but before which one must not capitulate . . . I have neither the right nor the ability to be an outsider to this world" (p. 32).

Because Durrenmatt's understanding of the nature of heroism is a criticism of the traditional Greek conception, his dramatic method is to parody materials implicitly based on this tradition. He complains (in *Problems*, p. 35) that literary scholars and historians have interpreted so completely the events of history and myth that a dramatist who uses this material traditionally has only closed structures to work in. Thus in

Durrenmatt's use of traditional materials — the fall of Rome, the chaos of modern political revolution, the arrogance of Babylon, the ritual of scapegoat murder, and the dilemma of the modern scientist — he inverts the usual conclusions. These are the conclusions that man does have power, that some order can be brought from chaos, and that sacrifice is meaningful. In each of Durrenmatt's plays, the hero sees that these possibilities do not exist, but none of the plays is nihilistic. Durrenmatt's parody is affirmative: man does have dignity, man can achieve heroic stature. But dignity and heroism are attainable only when one has seen through the illusions of the traditional faiths. The heroism is that of accepted meaninglessness.

In *Romulus the Great* (second version, 1957)² Durrenmatt places in juxtaposition several traditional conceptions of heroic behavior, advertising with his subtitle, "An Historical Comedy without Historical Basis," this parodic use he is making of the subject of the fall of Rome. Durrenmatt's hero, Romulus, is the last emperor of Rome. Until Act III we are convinced that Romulus cares nothing for Rome and that through his insipidity the Teutons will bring the Empire to its final collapse. However, he reveals himself in Act III as a moralist determined to bring his country to ruin in expiation to the world of her excesses. But when the Teuton chief, Odoaker, invades the city, instead of murdering Romulus and thereby fulfilling Romulus' moral sacrifice of himself and his country, he wants to capitulate to him to prevent what he fears will be barbarism in future Teutonic rule. Romulus' twenty years as Emperor are thus instantly vitiated. His agonized response is to accept the absurd end to which he has come: he will retire meekly to a country estate, Odoaker will rule the Empire, and barbarism worse than either can imagine will descend upon the world when Odoaker's nephew Theodoric assumes the throne.

Durrenmatt's gradual revelation of Romulus' plans creates four types of heroic action, only the last of which is real. The first is that of the anti-hero. Romulus appears to be a fool until Act III. His primary concerns are for his body comforts and his chickens, whom he has named after previous Roman emperors; he eats throughout Act I, sleeps most of Act II, and delights in a hot bath at the beginning of Act III. Apparently complacent, matter-of-fact, and sensual, he tells his chamberlain Achilles, "after such a depressing day nothing helps as much as a good bath. Such days are not for me. I am an untragic human being, Achilles" (p. 85).

In Act III Romulus suddenly seems to present himself as having been all along not a fool, but a realist. Scoffing at his wife Julia, he rejects the possibility of heroic resistance to the Teutonic invasion because it would be fruitless: "Resistance at any price is the greatest nonsense there is . . . If we defend our-

selves, our fall will be bloodier. That may look grandiose, but what is the sense? Why burn a world already lost?" (p. 87).

Almost immediately, however, he reveals himself further as a man with a vision of moral judgment who has acted the fool in order to force this judgment on the world. Romulus responds to Julia's disgust with his passivity by telling her that he became Emperor out of "political insight" (she was the illegitimate but only heir of the Emperor Valentian, and Romulus the son of a patrician family; the marriage was the result of his calculation) and he defines his insight as the insight to do nothing: "To do nothing as Emperor was the only way in which my doing nothing could make sense. To do nothing as a private citizen is completely ineffectual" (p. 89). In this sudden unveiling of Romulus' scheme, Durrenmatt offers not only a surprise of characterization but an explicit challenge to the traditional value of purposeful action. Romulus reveals himself as a man after a goal of heroic proportions, the collapse of a system he judges corrupt; to achieve this traditional goal he has apparently nontraditionally refused to act.

In fact, however, he has planned to take the most drastic action of all, as he next reveals: to kill himself and take his country with him. "The Teutons will kill me. I have always counted on that death. That is my secret. I sacrifice Rome through sacrificing myself" (p. 94). This strong willfulness in putting the world under one's control, and justifying it through self-sacrifice, is the most extreme of the traditionally heroic roles. To Durrenmatt it is not heroic; it is arrogant. In judging a world and determining its course, Romulus has the ultimate responsibility to be right in his judgment. Durrenmatt objects to Romulus as "a human being who proceeds with the utmost firmness and lack of consideration for others, a man who does not shrink from demanding the same absoluteness of purpose from others. He is indeed a dangerous fellow, a man determined to die" (p. 119).

But even this desperate attempt at heroic action fails. Romulus' arrogant condemnation and self-righteous sacrifice are denied him by Odoaker's refusal to kill him. Romulus sees the meaninglessness of his attempted heroism: "My whole life was aimed at the day when the Roman Empire would collapse. I took it upon myself to be Rome's judge, because I was ready to die. I asked of my country this enormous sacrifice because I, myself, was willing to be sacrificed. By rendering my country defenceless, I allowed its blood to flow because my own blood was ready to be spilled. And now I am to live; my sacrifice is not being accepted. Now I am to be the one who alone was saved . . . All I have done has become absurd" (p. 113). As Durrenmatt states Romulus' reversal: "If Romulus sits in judgment over the world in Act III, the world sits in judgment over him in Act IV" (p. 119).

Romulus' real heroism lies in his reevaluation of human freedom after his reversal. He tells Odoaker:

My dear Odoaker, I wanted to make my destiny and you wanted to avoid yours . . . We thought we could drop the world from our hands, you, your Germania, and I, my Rome. Now we must busy ourselves with the pieces that are left. I wanted Rome's end because I feared its past; and you, you wanted the end of Germania because you shuddered at its future. Two spectres ruled us, for we have power neither over what was nor over what will be. Our only power is over the present. But we did not think of the present and now we founder on it . . . Reality has put our ideas right. (p. 115)

In accepting the inevitable fate of every man to be limited by unexpected, unseen forces, Romulus becomes heroic. The heroic life is thus ultimately not one of action, plans, or integrity, but one of acceptance.

Romulus' mistaken heroism, his earlier seizure of power, is contrasted to Odoaker's anti-heroism, his attempts to refuse power. Odoaker has spent his life fighting against his people's rage for a traditional hero, and at the moment of the Teutons' successful invasion of Rome his greatest fear is that his barbaric nephew will seize power because "he dreams of ruling the world and the people dream with him" (p. 111). The final horror for Odoaker will have arrived, he tells Romulus, when the Teutons "shall have become, once and for all, a people of heroes" (p. 112) — a people who live by the expectation that the world is orderly and can be controlled. Odoaker's own attempts to control the future, like those of Romulus, have been made meaningless. But because he never expected to succeed, his position at the end of the play is that of a disappointed man, but not an absurd man.

In ostensibly evaluating in this play the responsibility of a citizen to his country, Durrenmatt is actually commenting on the relationship between man and the universe and the consequent nature of heroism. Romulus tells his wife Julia: "I don't doubt the necessity of the state. I merely doubt the necessity of our state," one which has institutionalized murdering, plundering, taxing, and suppressing (p. 90). In response to his daughter Rea's question about loving one's country above all else, Romulus replies: "No, one should never love it as much as one loves other human beings . . . a country turns killer more easily than any man" (p. 93). To Emilian, one of Romulus' most trusted soldiers, Romulus speaks of Rome's collective depravity and demands: "Do we still have the right to defend ourselves? Do we still have the right to be more than victims?" (p. 101). The response of man to the world is like that of the intelligent citizen to the state. He cannot overpower it, and he must refuse to be overpowered by it. Romulus tells Zenon, the deposed Emperor of Constantinople: "We are provincials for whom the world has grown too large. We can no longer comprehend it" (p. 66).

In *Romulus* man has no dependable power; he can find no order in the universe; and even his sacrifice is meaningless. But despite Romulus' early statement that "people whose number is up, like us, can only understand comedy" (p. 52), he becomes more than an actor in a comedy the very moment that he accepts his absurd end and tells Odoaker: "Once more and for the last time, let us play this comedy" (p. 115).

From the very beginning of the play *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi* (revised version, 1957)³, the world is obviously chaotic. The action occurs in a room with two windows, the scene out of one being northern European and the scene out of the other being Mediterranean. The character introducing the play suggests three alternate titles it could have had with equal justification. This speaker, Saint-Claude, one of the main characters of the play, anticipates the action with the statement that the play "concerns the somewhat regrettable fate of three men, who, for various reasons, had taken it into their heads to change and save the world and who then had the appalling bad luck to run into a woman who could be neither changed nor saved" (p. 48). The men are Saint-Claude, a communist revolutionary, Florestan Mississippi, a public prosecutor, and Count Ubelohe, an aristocrat turned medical missionary; the woman is Anastasia, who loves and betrays each one of them. Saint-Claude warns in his introductory speech that "as the plot develops every project finally comes to nothing" (p. 48): the communist revolution fails and Saint-Claude is executed; the public prosecutor, in his zeal to exact Mosaic vengeance, is ousted by his government for political reasons and poisoned by Anastasia by accident; Ubelohe, who has fled the country in a sacrifice of his career to Anastasia's selfishness, is rejected by her; and Anastasia herself is poisoned by her husband, the public prosecutor, in his attempt to extort a death-bed confession of her honesty. She is dishonest to the death. The minister of justice, Diego, survives the revolution and the play, riding to power as the new prime minister when he restores order after Saint-Claude's revolution fails. And Ubelohe, crushed by the meaninglessness which Anastasia's rejection of him confers on his life, survives. Diego is comic. Only Ubelohe recognizes his absurdity.

In this play, not just one but several attempted heroic actions fail. In an epic speech to the audience, Ubelohe states that Durrenmatt "was concerned to investigate what happens when certain ideas collide with people who really take them seriously and strive with audacity and vigour, with insane fervour and an insatiable greed for perfection, to put them into effect" (p. 78). As the play has begun with Saint-Claude's revelation that all comes to naught, here in the midst of the play Durrenmatt is reinforcing the meaninglessness of the frantic dedication of the doomed characters: "The curious author sought an answer to the question of whether the spirit — in any shape or form — is capable of changing a world that merely exists and is not informed by any

idea . . . he wished to ascertain whether or not the material universe is susceptible of improvement" (p. 78).

Mr. Mississippi, the public prosecutor, bent on obtaining a record number of death penalties in court, has staked his life on his insistence that a moral law pervades the universe. This law, which he believes that he alone represents, is the Mosaic law of absolute retribution. The salvation of mankind, he claims, is "a question of reversing the course of world history, which has lost the Law and gained a freedom devoid of all moral responsibility" (p. 60). On discovering that his first wife had taken Anastasia's husband as a lover, he poisoned her in fulfillment of the Mosaic death penalty for adultery; he then ascertained that Anastasia had poisoned her husband in what she claimed was a fit of jealous passion over his mistress (Madame Mississippi). Mr. Mississippi demands that they marry each other as the punishment which the Law demands of them both for their actions. But he makes a clear distinction between his and Anastasia's murder of their mates: "No, Madam. I am not a murderer. Between your deed and mine there is an infinite difference. What *you* did in response to a dreadful impulse, I did in obedience to a moral judgment. You slaughtered your husband; I executed my wife" (p. 60).

Yet he is assailed with doubts about his faith in this Law of retribution, as he reveals in his poisoning of Anastasia. When she swears (falsely) that she has been faithful to him, he sees confirmed his dedication to the ennobling quality of punishment: "Then the Law is not senseless? Then it is not senseless that I have killed? Not senseless these everlasting wars and revolutions that add up to one single trumpet-blast of death? Then man does change when he is punished? Then there is sense in the Last Judgment?" (p. 116). The terrible irony of his comfort is felt by the audience when he justifies this murder to Saint-Claude, one of his wife's lovers: "To me she was the world. My marriage was a terrible experiment. I fought for the world and won" (p. 117). As the order which Mr. Mississippi posits in the universe is illusory, so his death is ridiculous. He drinks the poison which Anastasia has prepared for Saint-Claude.

As a revolutionary, Saint-Claude has dedicated his life to an order also, but his is an order instituted by man, and not by God. As a communist he is dedicated to the salvation of man's body; as a moralist Mr. Mississippi was dedicated to the salvation of man's soul. Saint-Claude argues that the public prosecutor's course is futile. To Mr. Mississippi's "There is no justice without God!", Saint-Claude replies, "There is only justice without God. Nothing can help man but man . . . Man cannot keep God's law, he has to create his own law" (p. 75). But Saint-Claude is defeated. Justice of neither kind can prevail in the world because there is no order; attempted heroic action postulated on a non-existent world order is meaningless.

One of the play's survivors, Diego, fittingly the minister of justice, has no illusions about order or justice. The only constant in this universe is society, he claims, and the individual can prevail if he recognizes this mindless power: "As though a revolution directed against an individual were to be feared. You sacrifice the individual, and the bitch known as society remains untouched. That's a well tried rule — the beast called society is indestructible, if we put our money on the beast we shall stay on top for ever" (p. 94). Morality is relative, determined by practicality: "Everything in the world can be changed, my dear Florestan, except man" (p. 68). And because this is so, Diego will not be in power long. His is the illusion that because he recognizes the mindlessness of the universe, he is exempt from its consequences.

Anastasia, who on convenient impulses gives herself to and then betrays each of the main characters, is a paradigm of Durrenmatt's world: a resisting but formless mass. Saint-Claude tells us she "could be neither changed nor saved" (p. 48), and Ubelohe describes her as "not modelled upon heaven or hell, but only upon the world" (p. 79). Diego understands her: "You are an animal, but I love animals. You have no plan, you live only in the moment . . . For you what is will always be stronger than what was, and what will be will always triumph over the present" (p. 83). This is a description of the world as Romulus came to perceive it.

Only Ubelohe, because he has lost everything and recognizes it, has Durrenmatt's fleeting moment of freedom and thus breaks out of the comic world. As a wealthy physician, he was Anastasia's lover when she was married to her first husband. She asked him for poison to relieve her sick Pekinese from his misery and promptly used it to murder her husband. Ironically, the public prosecutor obtained poison from the Count under a similar guise and "executed" his wife with it. With the conviction that the poison would be traced to him, his reputation ruined, and he himself prosecuted, Ubelohe fled the country to become a missionary in the miserable jungles of Borneo. Five years later, during the action of the play, he returns with his health broken by the tropics to see Anastasia for one last time. He expects to find her in prison. The futility of his flight, of his lost health, of his lost fortune, and of his love which he has borne all these years for Anastasia hits him when he finds her, unprosecuted, the wife of the public prosecutor, himself guilty and unprosecuted. However, he risks losing himself again when he allows himself to be convinced by Anastasia that she had no choice but to marry Mississippi and that she still loves Ubelohe above all else.

Ubelohe tells the audience before he enters Anastasia's living room on his return from Borneo: "Thus he [Durrenmatt] created me, Count Bodo von Ubelohe-Zabernsee, the only one whom he loved with all his passion, because I alone in this play take upon myself the adventure of love, that sublime enterprise which,

whether he survives or perishes in it, endows man with his greatest dignity" (p. 79).

After waiting with Anastasia for Mississippi's return from the streets so that they might confess their love to him, Ubelohe berates Mississippi when he refuses to believe that Anastasia has betrayed him, citing as evidence for his faith the ennobling effect the punishment of the marriage has had on her. Man is loved by grace, not for his works, insists Ubelohe: "You fool . . . How can you love a woman for her works? Do you not know that the works of man lie? How petty is your love, how blind your Law; *I* do not love your wife as a just woman, I love her as an unhappy one" (p. 100).

Anastasia's response to Ubelohe's love, like that of the world to man's plans, is to deny to Mississippi that she loves Ubelohe. Thus Ubelohe's every course has made him ridiculous. "Everything I set my hand to is ridiculous. In my youth I read books about the great Christians. I wanted to become like them. I fought against poverty, I went to the heathen, I became ten times sicker than the saints, but whatever I did and however terrible the things that happened to me, everything became ridiculous. Even my love for you — the only thing left to me — has become absurd" (p. 91). He leaves Anastasia, after she has denied her love for him, with a clear vision of his absurdity in a world without order. His meaning now resides not in the meaningfulness of his works, which have been made ridiculous, but in the grace, the moment of freedom, he finds in recognizing his absurdity. This is his tragic moment; he freely accepts the existence of the abyss:

Thus I have been flung upon a world that is
now beyond salvation,
and nailed upon the cross of my absurdity,
I hang upon this beam
that mocks me,
exposed unprotected
to the gaze of God,
a last Christ.

(p. 105)

In Durrenmatt's world the price of love is that of heroism: the lover/hero becomes absurd. The man who makes demands on the world pursues a meaningless course, as do Saint-Claude and Mississippi, because all demands are resisted by chaos. Even Diego will eventually come to naught, for governments topple. However, the man who gives to the world, whether his gift is his love or his meaning, acts heroically. He does not demand from the world a non-existent external order but gives to the world his inner order achieved, however fleetingly, in the relinquishing of himself. That his gift will usually be rejected makes him absurd, but the paradox of experience is that choosing absurdity in the formlessness of the world is acting with the only vision of order that is not illusory.

A dance of cosmic futility is evoked at the end of this play. The dead characters rise to speak of their continual return to earth to pursue aggressive, angry, lonely, and hungry lives. Ever comic, they never realize their futility: "Again and again we return, as we have always returned . . . In every new shapes, yearning for every more distant paradises" (p. 119).

Only Ubelohe, seen jousting at a windmill, is aware of the absurdity of his position. He shouts at the windmill:

Look at Don Quixote de la Mancha,
who knighted a drunken innkeeper,
who loves a pig-girl in Toboso

Many times battered and beaten, many times jeered at,
who yet defies you.

Forward then!

As you lift us up with your whirling hand,
horse and rider, both of them wretched,
as you hurl us into the swimming
silver of the glassy sky

I gallop on my sorry jade
away over your greatness
into the flaming abyss of the infinite

An eternal comedy

Let His glory blaze forth,
fed by our helpless futility (p. 120)

Heroic man appears again and again: first hopeful, then vanquished, and finally absurd. His faith, itself absurd, is that "in this finite Creation God's mercy is really infinite" (p. 79).

In the play *An Angel Comes to Babylon* (1957),⁴ Durrenmatt uses fantasy to make dramatically explicit his conviction that meaningfulness comes only to the man who gives up everything, as have Romulus and Ubelohe. In this play God sends His Grace, the lovely young Kurrubi, to be a gift to the lowliest of mankind. An Angel unfamiliar with the earth escorts Kurrubi with instructions to give her to Akki, the last beggar in Babylon. But he is thwarted. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has outlawed begging in his plan to rule the perfect state; only Akki has resisted his edict. Nebuchadnezzar, in disguise as a beggar from Ninevah in order to convince Akki to change his mind, unwittingly confuses the Angel and Kurrubi is given to him instead of to Akki. But Nebuchadnezzar does not want God's Grace if he has to be poor to receive it, and, exasperatingly, Kurrubi will stay with Nebuchadnezzar only if he is poor. She wants nothing to do with him as a King. Indeed no one in the play wants Kurrubi,

beautiful as she is, because of her demand that she be received in poverty. Only Akki, the beggar who knows the futility of wealth and power, wants God's Grace. Together they flee the ugly clamour of the insulted Babylonians, Kurrubi still loving Nebuchadnezzar in his disguise as a beggar, and Akki loving the earth for its faults and its promises.

The characters in this play who are comic — King Nebuchadnezzar, his prime minister, and his theologian — are those who do not realize the illusory nature of the systems of order they have imposed on the universe. Like the political leaders of *Romulus* and *Mississippi*, they interpret the universe in terms of orders which do not exist: material abundance, which is transitory; personal power, which is ephemeral; and non-empirical syllogisms, which bear no confirmed relation to experience. The reality is that man is a metaphorical beggar in this world, controlling nothing and knowing nothing. His only dignity comes from the mercy that God feels for him in his helplessness. Man cannot therefore make his own dignity, nor can he propel himself to heroic action. Dignity and heroism come to him only in the moment in which he recognizes and accepts his helplessness.

Nebuchadnezzar, incredulous at being given God's Grace as a beggar, has difficulty comprehending this paradox. In response to his rather delicate suggestion that Kurrubi might better have been given to a King, the Angel tells him: "Kings do not interest Heaven. On the contrary, the poorer a man is, the more pleasing he is in the sight of Heaven" (p. 225). And further, "Learn, once and for all, that ruling the world is Heaven's business and begging is mankind's" (p. 226).

As King, Nebuchadnezzar is pursuing single-mindedly his dream of political order, ignoring the implications of his and Nimrod's perpetual cyclical replacement of each other, one always King, the other footstool, one libertarian and the other socialist. His work is to improve mankind, and he believes that he can achieve political perfection: "Perfection, by definition, contains nothing superfluous. Yet a beggar is superfluous" (p. 208), because a beggar supports no system but lives only for each moment.

When he realizes that God's gift of Grace has been bestowed purposely on him as a beggar rather than as a King, Nebuchadnezzar is outraged. It is as a King that man wants God's sanction. "When will Heaven ever learn to give each man what he needs?" (p. 228). To dramatize that a beggar is unworthy of God's attention, Nebuchadnezzar throws Kurrubi to the floor.

But Kurrubi loves Nebuchadnezzar anyway; however, as a figure for the only meaning which God grants man, she will not come to him when he is King but only when he is a beggar. In refusing to marry him as King, she condemns his illusory security: "You are make-believe: the beggar I seek is the reality . . . Your power is weakness . . . your riches are poverty. Your love for me is

self-love. You neither live nor are you dead. You exist, but you have no existence" (p. 279). Man's reality is his absurdity. But his reality is also that God loves and pities him in his absurdity. For Kurrubi, rejected by Nebuchadnezzar, flees Babylon asking: "How could I live on this earth without the love I have for my beloved?" (p. 233).

Nebuchadnezzar realizes at the end of the play that as he has rejected God's Grace for the sake of his power, everyone else (except Akki) has also rejected Kurrubi for the sake of something: "The Minister betrayed her for reasons of state, the priest for the sake of his theology, all of you for the sake of your property" (p. 285). Unable to see, however, that his power is illusory, he vows to use it to curse God in return for God's insult to man. He will enslave his people and build the Tower. His last vision reveals what his power will come to: his idiot son and only heir balances across the stage on a tightrope.

Akki the beggar, however, has no illusions. He lives in the humility of each moment, witty, discerning, capable, but eschewing the temptation to depend on anything. Highly successful as a beggar, he avoids the dangers of becoming wealthy by throwing most of his proceeds into the Euphrates. Throwing away, he explains to Kurrubi, "is the only way of maintaining a really high standard in beggary. Prodigality is essential" (p. 232).

Akki has existed since the beginning of time. He claims to have been Lilith's lover and has the sarcophagus that carried him through the Flood. He offhandedly tells the disguised Nebuchadnezzar that he has been King seven times. In a rhetorical dialogue with the poets who are thronging his living quarters (under a bridge over the Euphrates), Akki relates the story of his life: he was a merchant's son until the financial collapse of the world (the poets summarize, "Nothing was saved from the wreck" p. 237); the adopted son of a prophet until the perishing of the religion ("Nothing was saved from the wreck"); and the protege of a general until the subjugation of the dynasty ("Nothing was saved from the wreck"). Akki's conclusion is that man should be like sand, for sand doesn't show footprints. Only beggars are saved from the wrecks (p. 238) of systems and institutions. Beggars alone do not commit themselves to systems which collapse, they do not impose an illusory order on the universe: "Secret teachers, we are, educators of the people. We go in rags as a tribute to man's wretchedness, and we obey no law, that freedom may be held in honor. We eat as greedily as wolves and drink like drunkards to expose the appalling hunger and torturing thirst which poverty brings with it; and we fill the arches of the bridges under which we sleep with the treasures of long-forgotten empires, to show that everything ends up with the beggar in the course of time" (p. 223).

Although there are no systems which are permanent in the world, Akki recognizes that there are situations which throughout

time mark the boundaries of man's existence. He agrees with the Hangman that "the hidden framework of the world is bureaucracy, beggary, and hanging" (p. 252). Always will there be a Prime Minister or a King, imposing a short-lived civil order, always a beggar, having nothing and depending on nothing, and always the hangman, ending man's life unexpectedly. The beggar is the only one without the illusion of power.

Because Akki depends on nothing, he alone is receptive to God's Grace, Kurrubi. He cherishes and cares for her when she stays with him, but he freely relinquishes her when the people demand that she become King Nebuchadnezzar's queen: "I have no right to you. You came to me, a fragment of Heaven, in a chance bargain, and clung to me, like a thread of God's Grace, uncomplaining and cheerful, until another puff of wind has come to carry you away again" (p. 248). But when Kurrubi is rejected by King Nebuchadnezzar in favor of his power, she returns to the humble Akki and they flee Babylon together.

Akki is a fantastical creature who has always seen the world for what it is. Although he thus does not have the tragic moment that Romulus and Ubelohe have in facing their human absurdity, he is Durrenmatt's hero not only because he recognizes the absurdity of power and wealth, but because, like Ubelohe, he gives himself to the world in love. He hurries from collapsing Babylon with the words:

I love an earth which still exists; an earth of beggars, lonely in its happiness, and lonely in its dangers, colourful and wild, wonderful in all its possibilities; an earth which I conquer again and again, maddened by its beauty, entranced by its face, ever oppressed and never defeated . . . what faces us? . . . at the last, a land that forgets the past; a land rising in the silver light of a new dawning, full of new persecutions, but full, too, of new promises, and full of the songs of a new morning.

The world of the play *The Visit* (1956)⁵ is a chaos that encourages meanness of action, a chaos more oppressive than that of the other plays. The play concerns the small central European town of Gullen, which is in the grip of a deep economic depression despite prosperity everywhere else. Into the town comes Madame Claire Zachanassian, a sixty-three-year old millionairess who has grown up in the town, with an offer to the Gulleners of a million dollars. Her condition is that she receive "justice": that the citizens murder their leading citizen, Ill, because he inflicted an injustice on Claire forty-five years earlier. He had made her pregnant and then, perjuring himself and two witnesses, denied his paternity in a court of law. Claire as a result had spent several years in a brothel until she was found by the oil millionaire Zachanassian. The shocked Gulleners, although ab-

ject in their poverty, refuse Claire's offer with professions of deeply held humanistic principles. But the temptations of material comforts are too strong for the Gulleners, and they slowly lose their principles. As they move toward a readiness to kill Ill, he moves toward an acknowledgment of his earlier guilt. He finally is able to see the absurdity of his penalty and to relinquish himself to it. At his death, he is heroic, but the Gulleners, rejoicing in their new prosperity, remain unaware and comic.

In this play Durrenmatt presents several types of reactions to the chaotic world which are attempts to impose order on it or to accommodate to it with the least possible difficulty. Claire lives a life of single-minded dedication to revenge for an evil perpetrated on her which she cannot forget. The Gulleners, although they claim a dedication to moral and humanistic principles, adapt themselves to the possibility of material improvement of their lot by ignoring the spiritual implications of their adaptation. And Ill, at first stupidly self-satisfied with his past, rises to a meaningful death when he is able to face his guilt and the absurdity of that guilt affecting him after forty-five years.

In her preoccupation with one event out of the chaos that each man lives in, Claire has become like a stone idol (p. 88). Her outrage at the injustice done her is out of proportion to the length of time she has lived since the event and certainly to the comfortable circumstances in which she has since existed. She tells Ill in their first interview after her return to Gullen that she has "grown into hell itself" (p. 29); in their last talk she admits "my love could not die. Neither could it live. It grew into an evil thing, like me, like the pallid mushrooms in this wood, and the blind, twisted features of the roots, all overgrown by my golden millions" (p. 88). Her response to evil has been to reflect it back on the world: "with financial resources like mine you can afford a new world order. The world turned me into a whore. I shall turn the world into a brothel" (p. 67). She imposes her order everywhere possible, even on every detail of the lives of her nine husbands. She is like "an avenging Greek goddess . . . spinning destiny's webs herself" (p. 26), observes the town Schoolmaster, but Durrenmatt, in his afterword, emphasizes her humanness: "The old lady is a wicked creature, and for precisely that reason mustn't be played wicked, she has to be rendered as human as possible, not with anger but with sorrow and humour" (p. 108). Her response to the universe, although lamentable, is fixed and unseeing and therefore comic.

Although the Gulleners slide slowly away from their professed moral values, Durrenmatt is not cynical about their reaction to the promise of material improvement. He writes in the play's notes that *The Visit* "is told by someone who feels himself at no great remove from the people involved, and who is not so sure he would have acted differently" (p. 105). Throughout Act II, when the Gulleners begin buying small luxuries on credit, they do

not seem to sense that their buying is taking them in any inexorable direction; they are sure, as we learn in the Doctor and Schoolmaster's appeal to Claire in Act III, that other arrangements may be made for the financial recovery of Gullen. The threat is too outrageous to be real, argues the policeman (p. 48), and another citizen convinces himself that Claire meant her demand for Ill's death only as a "figure of speech for unspeakable suffering" (p. 68). Even Ill's family, in their slow retreat from him, have Durrenmatt's sympathy: prosperity, such a relief after their long deprivation, inhibits their vision; they cannot believe that something horrible would really be the price for these comforts which so many men enjoy as a matter of course. Limited in their vision and comic in this limitation, the Gulleners are nonetheless pitiable, and Durrenmatt's sympathy parallels that of the God who in *An Angel Comes to Babylon* has mercy on man in his absurdity.

The Schoolmaster has the educated vision of the Humanist tradition, but he too participates in the slow capitulation of the Gulleners. He describes Claire as "that damned old woman, that brazen arch-whore changing husbands while we watch, and making a collection of our souls" (p. 76). Nonetheless he feels his own horrified participation in the movement of the Gulleners toward Claire's "justice": "They will kill you. I've known it from the beginning, and you've known it too for a long time, even if no one else in Gullen wants to admit it. The temptation is too great and our poverty is too wretched. But I know something else. I shall take part in it. I can feel myself slowly becoming a murderer. My faith in humanity is powerless to stop it" (p. 77). In a perversion of the tradition he has espoused and taught for more than twenty years, the Schoolmaster presides over the assembly of the Gulleners when they gather before the unsuspecting press to vote to accept Claire's "gift." With sophistic rhetoric he molds the Gulleners into a group committed to a high purpose, which is interpreted by the press as being a glorious passion for justice, but which is known by the Schoolmaster and the Gulleners as being an inglorious passion for material comfort.

The Priest similarly retreats into the rhetoric of his position when Ill turns to him for help. He avoids evaluating the Gulleners' responsibility to Ill by advising Ill to examine only his own guilt. "You should fear not people, but God; not death in the body, but in the soul" (p. 56). Ill discovers that the priest has joined the Gulleners in their march toward prosperity on credit: he has bought new bells for the church. Seeing Ill's recognition of his capitulation, the Priest is agonized: "Flee! We are all weak, believers and unbelievers. Flee! The Gullen bells are tolling, tolling for treachery. Flee! Lead us not into temptation with your presence" (p. 58). Thus the Priest and the Schoolmaster have the moment of insight which distinguishes the Durrenmatt hero; but for these men the moment is simply a recognition of the disparity

between what they say and what they do. They do not become heroic, for they do not relinquish themselves or their action.

Ill, however, comes to realize that he will relinquish himself. Like everyone else in the play, he has been the victim of a chaotic world that encourages malignity. He and the Gulleners have lived poverty-stricken lives because of Claire's rage for vengeance (she had, after marrying Zahanassian, bought all the businesses in Gullen so that she could close them and send the town into depression); Claire herself has lived a life in petrified response to the cruelty inflicted on her when she was seventeen. But these people are not only the victims of cruelty, they perpetrate. Ill abandoned Claire, she inflicted suffering on an entire community, and the townspeople come to murder Ill. The meaninglessness of this cycle of malignity is caught by Claire in her declaration to the Doctor and the Schoolmaster: "Your hopes [that Gullen would come out of its depression] were lunacy, your perseverance pointless, and your self-sacrifice foolish; your lives have been a useless waste" (p. 66).

Ill begins his escape from this uselessness when he admits his culpability. His first reactions are to toss off carelessly his youthful irresponsibility to Claire: "Oh, it's an old story. I was young, thoughtless" (p. 37). "I'm an old sinner . . . who isn't. It was a mean trick I played on her when I was a kid" (p. 43). Then he excuses himself because as an ultimate result of his abandonment of her Claire became a millionairess. Eventually, Ill sees that he is guilty. He tells the Schoolmaster, "I'm not fighting any more . . . I've realized I haven't the least right on my side" (p. 76). "I made Claire what she is, and I made myself what I am, a failing shopkeeper with a bad name. What shall I do, Schoolmaster? Play innocent? It's all my own work, the Eunuchs, the Butler, the coffin, the million. I can't help myself, and I can't help any of you, any more" (p. 76).

But his admission of guilt does not exonerate the Gulleners for their guilt in murdering him. He will not commit suicide to ease their task. He tells the Mayor: "You *must* judge me, now. I shall accept your judgment, whatever it may be. For me, it will be justice; what it will be for you, I do not know. God grant you find your judgment justified. You may kill me, I will not complain and I will not protest, nor will I defend myself. But I cannot spare you the task of the trial" (p. 81).

In Ill's progress toward heroism, he has faced his earlier guilt honestly. But his final acceptance involves his recognition that the penalty exacted of him is absurd. He alone has been picked out of the malignity of the chaos to suffer the ultimate penalty; what he deserves is justice, but everyone else deserves justice also. In the inconsistency of events he relinquishes himself. His

heroism is tempered only by his demand that his fellows face their absurdity as he has faced his.

With the play *The Physicists* (1962)⁶ Durrenmatt has moved away from considerations of the comic limitations of political power, wealth, and morality to an examination of the comic — and horrible — limitations of rationality. The play involves three scientists who reside in Fraulein Doktor Mathilde von Zahnd's villa-insane asylum. The scientists appear at first to be quite mad. Of the two fairly recent arrivals, one claims to imagine himself as Sir Isaac Newton and the other as Albert Einstein; the third physicist, Mobius, who has been in the asylum for fifteen years, claims that he sees visions of King Solomon. In apparent lunacy each scientist has strangled his nurse. Sudden and strict security measures ordered by the police inspector to prevent any more stranglings force "Newton" and "Einstein" to reveal to Mobius and to each other that they are physicists acting as intelligence agents for their respective governments and are in the asylum to abduct Mobius. Mobius is considered by both of them to be the greatest physicist of all time; each of their governments wants access to his knowledge. Mobius confesses that he, too, is not mad; he has feigned insanity for fifteen years in the realization that the consequence of his knowledge is the risk of the existence of humanity. He convinces Newton and Einstein that his position is the only moral one that a physicist can take: because a physicist cannot control the use of his knowledge, he must withhold the knowledge if it represents a threat to humanity. The three physicists agree to remain in the asylum to protect humanity, meaningfully sacrificing not only their own lives but the lives of the nurses they had murdered when the women had begun to suspect their secret. Fraulein Doktor interrupts their self-congratulation. She reveals that, under the orders of King Solomon, she had photocopied Mobius' brain during the entire time of his stay. With this knowledge she has seized control of the world. All three physicists are her prisoners now; their murders of their nurses, which she aggravated, certify their derangement to the world so that they are completely powerless to expose her. Their plans and sacrifice are made absurd. In resignation they reassume their pretended identities. Mobius, as King Solomon, laments: "My wisdom destroyed the fear of God, and when I no longer feared God my wisdom destroyed my wealth. Now the cities over which I ruled are dead, the Kingdom that was given unto my keeping is deserted . . . the radioactive earth" (p. 94).

The Physicists is ostensibly a statement about scientific knowledge. The basic assumption of the points of view represented by Einstein and Newton is that knowledge cannot be held privately. A man's intellectual discoveries are the property of humankind, argues Newton when he tries to persuade Mobius to

leave the madhouse: "With all respect to your personal feelings, you are a genius and therefore common property. You mapped out new directions in physics. But you haven't a monopoly of knowledge. It is your duty to open the doors for us, the non-geniuses" (p. 74).

The genius can give his knowledge to mankind with either of two points of view. The first is that the scientist is not responsible for the uses and consequences of his discoveries. Newton boasts:

It's nothing more nor less than a question of the freedom of scientific knowledge. It doesn't matter who guarantees that freedom. I give my services to any system, providing that system leaves me alone. I know there's a lot of talk nowadays about physicists' moral responsibilities. We suddenly find ourselves confronted with our own fears and we have a fit of morality. This is nonsense. We have far-reaching, pioneering work to do and that's all that should concern us. Whether or not humanity has the wit to follow the new trails we are blazing is its own lookout, not ours. (p. 76)

The second point of view is that the scientist *is* responsible for the consequences of his knowledge; therefore he must maintain enough power to control these consequences. This point of view is advocated by Einstein: "Admittedly we have pioneer work to do. I believe that too. But all the same we cannot escape our responsibilities. We are providing humanity with colossal sources of power. That gives us the right to impose conditions. If we are physicists, then we must become power politicians. We must decide in whose favor we shall apply our knowledge" (p. 76).

Mobius elicits from both of them the confession that neither justification works in reality because of the nature of the governments which control mankind. In the first alternative, governments use an individual's scientific knowledge for destruction: they advance their military defense systems; and in the second alternative, political parties have an autonomy which leaves the would-be physicist-politician ultimately powerless.

Mobius' argument against Einstein and Newton is that knowledge, when it risks the destruction of humanity, is of necessity a private concern. For the sake of mankind, the physicist must refuse to explore such knowledge. That it is inevitably dangerous is verified not only by Newton and Einstein's reported experiences but by Fraulein Doktor's seizure and perversion of Mobius' discoveries to establish herself as dictator of the world.

But Durrenmatt's play is more profound than an investigation of the uses of knowledge. He is revealing the cost of rationality. Unless the discoveries of rationality are used with a concern for mankind, they may destroy mankind. Man is saved by

rationality, but he may be destroyed by it too. The ultimate irony of *The Physicists* is that in our inscrutable universe the rationality with which we make ourselves meaningful is the same rationality with which we may make ourselves meaningless. Because it is used by undependable man, rationality is itself irrationally, or absurdly, undependable.

As a statement about the possibilities for heroic action in this world, *The Physicists* is bleaker than the earlier plays. In this play the consequences of the impossibility of traditional heroic action are ultimate: the destruction of humanity. And yet Durrenmatt's analysis is still that the hero is the man who recognizes and accepts his absurdity. However, in this play the hero sees that the absurdity involves consequences horrible to the world. He cannot privately pay the penalty, and thus he cannot be responsible even for his own rationality.

As in the earlier plays, Durrenmatt presents several perspectives on heroism. Scientists dedicated to the progress of knowledge regardless of its consequences, Einstein and Newton sacrifice several years of their lives in their intelligence missions in the madhouse. Their resulting permanent incarceration by Fraulein Doktor causes them suffering, but it is not unexpected, nor does it lead to their recognition of their lives as absurd. They remain comic. The nurse Monika, in offering herself to Mobius as his wife, wants to sacrifice herself: "For five years I've been looking after sick people out of love for my fellow-beings. I never flinched; everyone could count on me: I sacrificed myself. But now I want to sacrifice myself for one person alone, to exist for one person alone, and not for everybody all the time. I want to exist for the man I love. For you . . . I have no one else in the world! I am as much alone as you" (p. 52). But her offered heroism is illusory, as through it she is hoping to gain an identity rather than resigning herself to losing one. Finally, Fraulein Doktor, who works singlemindedly in the comic, insane conviction that King Solomon wants her to achieve world power, cannot see her absurdity. She recognizes her triumph as grotesque ("It all adds up, and the answer comes out in favor, not of the world, but of an old hunchbacked spinster" p. 92), but not as illusory. She cannot see her absurdity in being the last of a strange family line, the presiding psychiatrist over an institution full of her insane relatives, and the manipulator of a world cartel when the world could blow up.

In contrast, Mobius has come to terms with the irrationality of the universe fifteen years before the opening of the play. In careful use of his limited power, he has carried out a sacrifice of himself believing that he will thus preserve human life. Fraulein Doktor's revelation that his disguise was penetrated and his knowledge stolen from him strips his sacrifice of its meaning.

However, Mobius seems to have seen the possibility of this absurd end much earlier in his life. He has chosen King Solomon

as his "informer." I Kings 3:9 tells the story that Solomon, on becoming king as an inexperienced young man, asked God not for wealth or power but for understanding: "Give thy servant therefore an understanding mind to govern thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to govern this thy great people?" Solomon was given wisdom "beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore" (I Kings 4:29), and in addition, because he had not asked for them, wealth and power. In his old age Solomon departed from God's ways, and in retribution God stripped Solomon's son Rehoboam of power and wealth when he became king.

Mobius uses King Solomon as a metaphor for the insight he has into the irrationality of the universe. The "wisdom and understanding beyond measure" which are Solomon's in the traditional sense are Mobius' in a contemporary sense: Mobius has the largeness of vision to see that rationality is illusory. Mobius tells Monika: "But I have always remained faithful to King Solomon. He thrust himself into my life, suddenly, unbidden, he abused me, he destroyed my life, but I have never betrayed him" (p. 53). At that time we assume he is speaking as an insane man of the penalties of a vision we consider to be imaginary. In retrospect we can see that, perfectly sane, Mobius is insisting on the irrevocable quality of man's moment of realization that the universe is incomprehensible and that man is absurd.

After Fraulein Doktor's announcement, Mobius sees himself as a representative of mankind, an old King Solomon who has lost his kingdom. In the absurdity that man must bear guilt for his intellect, Mobius is responsible for the loss of the kingdom. But Newton, Eistein, and Fraulein Doktor are guilty also. Only Mobius sees what has happened and mourns the loss. He has broken out of the comic world; his tragedy, and that of Romulus, Ubelohe, and Ill, is that he can go no further because there is no other world.

Durrenmatt's heroes, although they are shaped by the heaviness of disappointment, meaninglessness, and absurdity, are not ponderous. Durrenmatt's plays reverberate with comedy from beginning to end: stock comic situations, frivolous banter, scenery flying up and down, and epic speeches contribute to the lightness of atmosphere with which he captures the profound sadness that is at the center of life. Art, Durrenmatt writes, appears where least expected. "Literature must become so light that it will weigh nothing against the scale of today's literary criticism; only in this way will it regain its true worth" (p. 39, *Problems*). Similarly, the Durrenmatt hero is so transparent, having relinquished every illusion in his recognition of the absurdity of the world, that he "weighs nothing" against the standards of society. Only in his

INCOME PROFILE OF SAVANNAH RESIDENTS: A COMPARISON OF THE STATUS OF BLACK AND NON-BLACK FAMILIES

Max Theo Johns

I. Introduction.

The decennial United States Census of Population contains massive volumes of statistics on social and economic aspects of American life. It is a fact, however, that these data are usually not made publicly accessible to the degree of yielding more than a small fraction of their potential information. There have not in the past been sufficiently energetic attempts to transform sterile numerical census *data* into the kind of social and economic *information* that is needed to inform the non-expert citizen about his society and community.

Recent censuses have provided particularly interesting statistical series which, when analyzed and interpreted satisfactorily, provide very relevant information about American society from a variety of viewpoints. It is possible today to extract from the census much information on the social and economic conditions of the local community. There are, for instance, detailed treatments of economic and social data¹ given for each of the nation's 240 or so standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA's). These statistical treatments are in the form of census tract² breakdowns. Analyses and interpretations such as those presented below are made possible by the availability of such detailed "grassroots" materials as these.

The term SMSA denotes a geographical unit composed of a city and its contiguous environs, the total population of the unit being at least 50,000. Census economists, in developing the concept of SMSA, sought to create a geographic unit which possessed economic integrity and which, therefore, could be considered to be an economic system in its own right. The goal of this endeavor was to frame, for census focus, geographic units which have greater economic integrity than the state, which is too inclusive, and the corporate city, which usually excludes a substantial portion of its actual economic system. The county is the basic building block of the SMSA, each one being composed of one or more counties. There are six SMSA's located wholly or partially in the state of Georgia. These SMSA's and the counties which

1. The term "census" normally denotes total count of the population. However, most of the socio-economic data gathered by presentday U. S. censuses are from samples of 20 percent of the population. One out of every five subjects contacted gives answers to a large set of social and economic questions in addition to the demographic questions which are answered by all subjects. Error in the socio-economic data resulting from the use of samples rather than total count is small due to abundantly large samples.

2. The data which are analyzed and interpreted here come from the volume entitled *Census Tracts, Savannah, Georgia Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (PHC(1)-193), Census of Population and Housing, 1970, U. S. Bureau of the Census.

comprise them are: Savannah: Chatham³; Augusta: Richmond and Aiken (S. C.); Chattanooga: Walker, Catoosa, and Hamilton (Tenn.); Atlanta: Cobb, Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Clayton; Columbus: Muscogee, Chattahoochee, and Russell (Ala.); Albany: Dougherty.

The census tract was created in an effort to establish a homogeneous microgeographic observation unit within the city or SMSA. In order to develop the actual census tracts for a city the Census Bureau works with local experts to draw up the geographic boundaries of the tracts. They attempt to establish statistical units which correspond to neighborhoods whose residents tend to have similarity with respect to such economic elements as race, education, and income. Within the Savannah SMSA there are fifty-four populated tracts. It is the Savannah census tract which forms the observation unit for this study.

Information extracted from the census can provide answers to many questions of importance to the community. The important questions which this paper attempts to answer have to do with variation in the economic well-being of families in the Savannah area. The following pages show that wide variations in family income exist throughout the city as one examines and interprets the census statistics from neighborhood to neighborhood. Family income ranges from \$1,956 per year in the poorest neighborhood to \$12,186 per year in the most affluent. There is also demonstrated to be extreme variation between families along racial lines. Average annual income for Black families, at \$4,723, is less than half as high as average yearly income for non-Black families, \$9,772. More interesting than such single-value comparisons as these are the probability income distributions given in Table 3. These show, in terms of mathematical probability, the propensity, in neighborhood after neighborhood, for Black families to fall into the lower income classes and the inclination of non-Black families to receive incomes in higher income categories.

II. Income Profile.

The economic well-being of a community is best measured by median family income. Family (as opposed to individual) income is the most meaningful income magnitude since most economic activity is carried out for the ultimate purpose of supporting family households. Further, most goods and services are purchased and consumed on a household-family basis. The median as a measure of central tendency (average) for community income is preferable to its alternative, the arithmetic mean, since the median provides a measure which is more solidly grounded to the typical family income in the community. Median family income is

3. The Bureau of the Census has recently decided to add two counties to the Savannah SMSA: Effingham and Bryan Counties.

the level of income above which half of the families earn and below which half the families earn. This measure of average family income tends to be an accurate indication of the economic well-being of families in a community since its value is determined jointly by the size of incomes and by the distribution of families along the income scale. The arithmetic mean, on the other hand, is calculated by summing up all family incomes and dividing by the number of families in the community. Given the number of families, then, the arithmetic mean is determined solely by income size. Relative to our present need this variable can be given an unrealistically large or small value by the occurrence of a few very high or a few very low incomes. In either case the mean would be a measure of central tendency which is distorted by the extreme values and thus is not representative of typical family income.

To obtain a preliminary focus on the spread of family incomes between census tracts within the Savannah SMSA, look at Table 1. This table arrays the area's census tracts relative to median family income and provides the total population for each

Table 1. Array by Median Family Income, Census Tracts of Savannah SMSA

Census Tract Number	Median Family Income	Population
2	\$1,956	557
7	2,297	883
1	2,534	1,051
5	2,608	2,776
12	2,744	1,001
17	2,890	1,953
10	3,541	2,115
13	4,000	1,701
8	4,290	915
20	4,356	3,784
6	4,393	7,428
18	4,453	1,918
19	4,574	2,025
23	4,638	3,916
11	4,884	4,085
44	5,237	1,491
32	5,450	2,096
24	5,887	2,991
15	5,907	1,295
21	5,996	3,520
45	6,143	4,033
106.02	6,552	2,680
25	6,725	1,173
28	6,760	3,816
27	6,967	3,404

33	7,069	4,980
26	7,112	2,139
9	7,433	1,006
37	7,744	2,284
43	7,929	4,236
36.01		4,600
102	8,088	1,216
105	8,284	4,278
3	8,523	1,512
35.01	8,589	3,475
108	8,699	7,908
107	8,727	5,135
22	8,935	4,732
109	9,221	1,672
38	9,265	2,243
106.01	9,329	5,619
101	9,354	3,194
36.02	9,407	5,352
35.02	10,205	4,764
34	10,374	6,282
110	10,650	5,106
42.02	10,701	4,539
39	10,988	4,439
29	11,097	3,554
111	11,389	6,618
30	11,527	2,524
41	11,646	2,050
40	11,843	7,830
42.01	12,186	11,760

Source: *Census Tracts, Savannah SMSA* (PHC(1)-193).

census tract as well as its identification number⁴. Viewing the distribution of Savannah census tracts as an array, from the lowest median family income to the highest, one is able to see clearly that there is considerable dispersion of family incomes prevailing between the tracts. The range of the distribution is \$10,230, the difference between the bottom census tract (median family income of \$1,956) and the top (median family income of \$12,186). The median level of these median incomes falls equally on two census tracts since, with an even number of tracts, 54, there is not a single one lying on the median point. The median tracts are number 26, with a median family income of \$7,112, and number 9, with a median family income of \$7,433. Both of these

4. The Savannah SMSA *Census Tract* volume (PHC(1)-193) provides a map of the area which identifies by this number the boundaries of each census tract within the area.

tracts lie within the city proper and have, for Savannah, a moderate degree of residential integration. Census tract number 26, with Black people making up almost one-fifth of its population, is bounded on the north by 34th Street, on the west by Habersham Street, Victory Drive on the south, and on the east by Atlantic Avenue. Tract number 9 has seven percent of its population composed of Negro people. Lying in the inner city, it faces Liberty Street on the north, Bull Street on the west, Gaston Street on the south, and Price Street on the east.

Our present purpose, however, is not to study overall family income as such. Quite interesting socio-economic information can be gained from the data if they are reworked somewhat. There are separate listings in the census tract volume for each tract which contains more than 400 Negroes. The data reported in these listings follow closely the tabular forms found in the total population listings. One can use these Negro series to separate out data pertaining only to non-Blacks. By doing this one creates data series for the comparison of socio-economic variables between Black and non-Black families for the 32 census tracts in which there is a significantly large Negro population. The 22 census tracts in which the Black population numbers less than 400 are considered to be all non-Black. There are two census tracts in which all the residents are Negro. Comparisons of socio-economic variables between Black and non-Black families are much more pertinent than the comparison of Black variables to those of the total population. Only the latter, a relatively weak type of comparison, can be accomplished with the census data in its published form.

Table 2 is used to demonstrate the steps which were taken to rework the basic census material so as to provide the data for some of the analysis presented later in the report. Black v. non-Black comparative income data were needed. Census tract number 5 has a total of 591 families, 405 of which are Black. Since the tract contains more than 400 Black people there are separate Negro data series which parallel the total population series. The Negro listings, however, take a troublesome departure from the total population listings in the deletion of specific income classes above the level of \$10,000 family income per year.⁵ Specific

5. Throughout this paper the present tense is used with respect to values of the socio-economic variables studied. It must be remembered, however, that the data are from the census taken in 1970 and are, therefore, at least three years old. The income data are actually 4 years old, being based on earnings for the preceding year, 1969. One could effect an acceptable adjustment for 1973 in the income data by incrementing each by some twenty percent, in accordance with increases in the consumers' price index which have occurred since 1969. Such mechanical adjustments as this will generally suffice at the present, a point in time relatively close to the time of the census. However, the reliability of estimates obtained this way diminishes rapidly over the passage of years. This is one good reason why Congress should be encouraged to fund a program for 5-year censuses which has been proposed by the Bureau of the Census.

classes are supplanted by the open end class "\$10,000 or more" which, for this census tract, contains 14 Black families are apportioned among the high income classes according to the proportions obtaining in the total listing. This procedure brings about an equality of proportions between Black and non-Black families

Table 2. Census Tract Number 5, Income Distribution Among Families

Income Class	Total Families in Income Class	Black Families in Income Class	Non-Black Families in Income Class*
Less than \$1,000	66	53	13
\$1,000 to \$1,999	131	83	48
\$2,000 to \$2,999	162	112	50
\$3,000 to \$3,999	63	41	22
\$4,000 to \$4,999	50	45	5
\$5,000 to \$5,999	28	19	9
\$6,000 to \$6,999	17	17	0
\$7,000 to \$7,999	13	13	0
\$8,000 to \$8,999	14	8	6
\$9,000 to \$9,999	0	0	0
\$10,000 to \$11,999	11	(3)	8
\$12,000 to \$14,999	22	(7)	15
\$15,000 to \$24,999	6	(2)	4
\$25,000 to \$49,999	0	(0)	0
\$50,000 or more	8	(2)	6
Total	591	405	186
Median Family Income	\$2,608	\$2,594	\$2,640*

*data obtained by manipulation of census series.

Source: *Census Tracts, Savannah SMSA* (PHC(1)-193).

within the high income classes. This is doubtless at odds with reality, giving an upward bias to the income distribution of Black families. However, let it be noted that the upward bias does not affect the estimated median income (see below) since its position is determined by location of incomes along the scale and not by the sizes of incomes in the extreme regions of the scale. Most certainly, moreover, the slight distortion resulting from this apportioning constitutes a smaller loss than the gain for the analysis resulting from the retention of specific income classes in the above \$10,000 range. The rightmost column of Table 2 shows the number of non-Black families that remain in each income class after the subtraction of the Black families.

The median non-Black family income for the census tract is estimated according to a conventional interpolation procedure which uses the following formula:

$$\text{Median} = L_m + \frac{N/2 - S}{N_m} (C) \text{ where}$$

- L_m = lower limit of income class in which median is found,
 N = total number of families,
 S = sum of families in income classes prior to median class,
 C = size of median income class, and
 N_m = number of families in median income class.

When the values of these variables for census tract number 5 are plugged into the equation the following results are obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Median non-Black Family Income} &= \$2,000 + \frac{93 - 61}{50} (\$1,000) \\ &= \$2,640. \end{aligned}$$

Median family incomes for both Black and non-Black families living in each census tract are presented in Table 3. One is able to appreciate the sharp income differences between these groups by comparing their median family incomes for each census tract. But of greater interest than this single-value comparison of economic wellbeing is the more comprehensive picture of the income

Table 3. Probability of Family Having Income of a Given Level, Black (B) versus Non-Black (NB), for Residents of Savannah SMSA Census Tracts

Income Level:	Census Tract Number					
	1		2		3	
	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	61	0	78	100	0	17
3,000-6,000	36	0	22	0	0	21
6,000-9,000	3	0	0	0	0	15
9,000-12,000	0	100	0	0	0	22
12,000-15,000	0	0	0	0	0	6
Above 15,000	0	0	0	0	0	19
Med. Family Income	\$2,477	\$9,500	\$2,000	\$500	—	\$8,523
Total Families	212	5	148	4	0	283
% Black	97.7		97.4		0	

	Census Tract Number					
	5		6		7	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	61	60	35	85	75	0
3,000-6,000	26	19	29	15	19	0
6,000-9,000	9	3	21	0	6	0
9,000-12,000	1	4	9	0	0	0
12,000-15,000	2	8	4	0	0	0
Above 15,000	1	6	2	0	0	0
Med. Family						
Income	\$2,608	\$2,640	\$4,393	\$2,222	\$2,297	—
Total Families	405	186	1721	20	180	0
% Black		68.5		98.9		100.0

	Census Tract Number					
	8		9		10	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	19	0	23	39	0
3,000-6,000	0	51	0	21	47	0
6,000-9,000	0	9	0	17	8	100
9,000-12,000	0	2	0	15	3	0
12,000-15,000	0	3	0	12	1	0
Above 15,000	0	16	0	12	2	0
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$4,290	—	\$7,433	\$3,472	\$6,500
Total Families	0	258	0	193	522	17
% Black		0		0		96.9

	Census Tract Number					
	11		12		13	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	37	19	56	0	39	32
3,000-6,000	27	0	26	0	35	16
6,000-9,000	21	0	14	0	20	14
9,000-12,000	10	45	2	0	4	11
12,000-15,000	3	19	0	0	1	13
Above 15,000	2	17	2	0	1	14
Med. Family						
Income	\$4,665	\$10,692	\$2,744	—	\$3,739	\$6,222
Total Families	717	58	191	0	299	63
% Black		92.5		100.0		82.6

	Census Tract Number					
	15		17		18	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	31	10	54	60	32	0
3,000-6,000	26	35	31	40	40	0
6,000-9,000	33	26	8	0	21	0
9,000-12,000	5	15	6	0	5	100
12,000-15,000	1	7	1	0	1	0
Above 15,000	4	7	0	0	1	0
Med. Family						
Income	\$4,850	\$6,667	\$2,895	\$2,889	\$4,387	\$9,500
Total Families	119	154	428	15	415	7
% Black	43.6		96.6		98.3	

	Census Tract Number					
	19		20		21	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	37	37	32	0	11	8
3,000-6,000	20	28	36	0	43	37
6,000-9,000	27	28	18	0	22	25
9,000-12,000	8	1	10	25	11	15
12,000-15,000	5	3	1	25	6	7
Above 15,000	3	3	3	50	7	8
Med. Family						
Income	\$4,417	\$5,167	\$4,338	\$15,000	\$5,734	\$6,667
Total Families	330	105	845	4	495	364
% Black	75.9		99.5		57.6	

	Census Tract Number					
	25		26		27	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	20	21	12	16	
3,000-6,000	0	21	22	16	42	25
6,000-9,000	0	30	34	26	14	23
9,000-12,000	0	7	5	13	12	14
12,000-15,000	0	7	7	8	12	13
Above 15,000	0	15	12	16	8	9
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$6,725	\$6,538	\$7,267	\$5,843	\$7,165
Total Families	0	318	88	485	139	830
% Black	0	15.4		14.3		

	Census Tract Number					
	28		29		30	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	23	16	0	11	0	6
3,000-6,000	23	26	0	16	0	10
6,000-9,000	23	28	0	12	0	16
9,000-12,000	15	16	0	16	0	21
12,000-15,000	8	7	0	15	0	20
Above 15,000	8	7	0	30	0	27
Med. Family						
Income	\$6,615	\$7,029	—	\$11,097	—	\$11,527
Total Families	639	337	0	1063	0	731
% Black	65.5					

	Census Tract Number					
	32		33		34	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	29	8	13	0	31	3
3,000-6,000	32	49	27	34	18	13
6,000-9,000	18	21	29	0	16	21
9,000-12,000	18	22	18	22	11	22
12,000-15,000	2	4	9	22	7	12
Above 15,000	1	3	4	22	17	29
Med. Family						
Income	\$5,128	\$6,091	\$7,054	\$11,500	\$6,250	\$10,667
Total Families	326	158	1143	9	164	1648
% Black	67.4		99.2		9.1	

	Census Tract Number					
	35.01		35.02		36.01	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	7	0	6	8	10
3,000-6,000	0	23	0	10	19	18
6,000-9,000	0	23	0	23	30	32
9,000-12,000	0	24	0	24	26	25
12,000-15,000	0	14	0	18	11	10
Above 15,000	0	9	0	19	6	5
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$8,589	—	\$10,205	\$7,775	\$8,000
Total Families	0	960	0	1214	121	1044
% Black	0		0		10.4	

	Census Tract Number					
	36.02		37		38	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	6	0	8	0	7
3,000-6,000	0	16	0	25	0	17
6,000-9,000	0	23	0	26	0	22
9,000-12,000	0	30	0	26	0	26
12,000-15,000	0	14	0	9	0	16
Above 15,000	0	11	0	6	0	12
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$9,407	—	\$7,744	—	\$9,625
Total Families	0	1423	0	672	0	611
% Black		0		0		0

	Census Tract Number					
	39		40		41	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	4	0	4	0	3
3,000-6,000	0	7	0	8	0	13
6,000-9,000	0	24	0	18	0	16
9,000-12,000	0	23	0	21	0	21
12,000-15,000	0	18	0	13	0	24
Above 15,000	0	24	0	36	0	23
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$10,988	—	\$11,843	—	\$11,646
Total Families	0	1112	0	2126	0	532
% Black		0		0		0

	Census Tract Number					
	42.01		42.02		43	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	3	0	4	0	4
3,000-6,000	0	6	0	12	0	18
6,000-9,000	0	14	0	22	0	38
9,000-12,000	0	25	0	23	0	19
12,000-15,000	0	24	0	19	0	10
Above 15,000	0	28	0	20	0	11
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$12,186	—	\$10,701	—	\$7,929
Total Families	0	3101	1218	0	505	
% Black		0		0		0

	Census Tract Number					
	44		45		101	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	24	0	23	21	5	9
3,000-6,000	41	32	26	17	13	11
6,000-9,000	20	46	21	45	24	28
9,000-12,000	10	22	16	6	27	23
12,000-15,000	5	0	9	7	16	15
Above 15,000	0	0	5	4	15	14
Med. Family						
Income	\$4,989	\$8,000	\$6,032	\$6,575	\$9,667	\$9,205
Total Families	323	28	803	99	168	492
% Black		92.0		89.0		25.5

	Census Tract Number					
	102		105		106.01	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	17	0	9	34	5
3,000-6,000	0	19	0	16	34	15
6,000-9,000	0	24	0	35	10	21
9,000-12,000	0	28	0	24	10	26
12,000-15,000	0	8	0	11	7	20
Above 15,000	0	4	0	5	5	13
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$8,088	—	\$8,284	\$4,460	\$10,036
Total Families	0	298	0	1216	261	1252
% Black		0		0		17.3

	Census Tract Number					
	106.02		107		108	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	32	8	27	5	34	7
3,000-6,000	36	19	48	17	36	12
6,000-9,000	27	28	13	28	26	31
9,000-12,000	3	32	5	27	2	24
12,000-15,000	2	9	4	14	1	13
Above 15,000	0	4	3	9	1	13
Med. Family						
Income	\$4,326	\$8,403	\$4,586	\$9,042	\$3,981	\$9,012
Total Families	279	383	96	1186	163	1836
% Black		42.2		7.5		8.2

	Census Tract Number					
	109		110		111	
Income Level:	B	NB	B	NB	B	NB
Below \$3,000	0	13	28	9	0	4
3,000-6,000	0	16	34	10	0	12
6,000-9,000	0	19	14	17	0	15
9,000-12,000	0	21	9	20	0	23
12,000-15,000	0	13	4	11	0	15
Above 15,000	0	18	11	33	0	31
Med. Family						
Income	—	\$9,221	\$4,722	\$11,088	—	\$11,389
Total Families	0	435	107	1237	0	1834
% Black		0		8.0		0

situation of Black and non-Black residents of Savannah census tracts which is provided by the probabilities of Table 3.

The probabilities section of Table 3 is constructed as follows. The number lying to the right of a given income class indicates the probability of a family, Black (B) and non-Black (NB), living in the designated census tract, earning an income within that income class. For example, consider census tract number 13. Black families living in that neighborhood have a median income of \$3,739. But one can understand more thoroughly the economic situation of Black families in that census tract by examining the income probability distribution. Observe, first, that the probability of a family's earnings lying in the lowest income class is 39; that is, a black family residing in census tract 13 has 39 chances out of 100 of earning income less than \$3,000. The family's probability of earning from \$3,000 to \$6,000 is 35. Further, the probability of its earnings being below \$9,000 per year is the sum of the probabilities of all income classes below the \$9,000 to \$12,000 class, or 94. To look at this probability from the other end of the income scale, the Black family residing in this census tract has only six chances out of one hundred of earning income greater than \$9,000 per year. Note that non-Black families living in the same census tract have a probability of 38 of earning an income of at least \$9,000.

Consider some cases that are important with regard to their statistical positions. Look at the census tract in which Negro family income is the lowest. This is tract number 2, located in the northwestern corner of the inner city. It is bordered on the north by the Savannah River, on the west by Fahm Street, on the south by Hull Street, and it faces West Broad Street on the east. Residing in this census tract are 148 Black families whose median income is \$2,000. The probability of a Black family earning income less than \$3,000 is 78. The probability is 100 (certainty) that the Black family in this neighborhood receives less than \$6,000. It is interesting to note that the probability is certain

non-Black families living in this census tract to have an income of less than \$3,000. The four non-Black families living in this census tract have a median income of \$500. No family can survive on income this small. Therefore, these families are supported from economic sources which are outside the census Bureau's categories of income. A possible source is help from relatives. There are doubtless such anomolous cases present in all census distributions. But they are usually not of sufficient importance to affect materially the estimate of group average as they do here.

The median position in the Savannah distribution of median family incomes for Negroes is shared by two census tracts, numbers 107 and 11. The first of these tracts lies to the northeast of the city and encloses the town of Port Wentworth. The 96 Black families residing in this tract have a median income of \$4,586. The most probable income class for these families is between \$3,000 and \$6,000, there being 48 chances out of 100 for the family to have income of that magnitude. The probability of earning in the respectable class of \$6,000 to \$9,000 is 13 and there is even a probability of 12 of the Black family receiving above \$9,000. However, the chances of a Black family living in Port Wentworth receiving a poverty income of less than \$3,000 is 27 out of 100.

The above income probabilities should be compared to the expectations of the 1186 non-Black families residing in this census tract. The most likely income class for a non-Black family in Port Wentworth is \$6,000 to \$9,000, the chances for that class being 28 out of 100. But there are only slightly less chances for family earnings to be between \$9,000 and \$12,000, the probability for that class being 27. There is a probability of 23 for the non-Black family to earn in excess of \$12,000 per year and only a five percent probability for its earning less than \$3,000.

Census Tract number 11, in which is found the other median income level for Black families, is located in the northeastern section of the city in the old Brownsville area. It lies on both sides of Wheaton Street between the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and Jones Canal, being bounded on the south by Herndon Lane and Bolton Street and on the north by the city line. The median family income for Negroes in this section is \$4,665. The probability of any of the 717 Black families that live there receiving income of \$3,000 or less is 37. The chances out of 100 of a Black family earning in the income class \$3,000 to \$6,000 are 27 and they are 21 for reaching the level \$6,000 to \$9,000. Beyond this income level are found few Black families, the probability being 10 for receiving a yearly income between \$9,000 and \$12,000, and only 5 percent for earning in excess of \$12,000.

The 58 non-Black families living in census tract number 11 have a median income of \$10,692, with the probability being 81 that earnings will exceed \$9,000 per year. A family in this group has 17 chances out of one hundred of receiving more than

\$15,000. Yet there is a rather large probability, 17, for the non-Black family to receive a poverty income of \$3,000 or less.

Perhaps the most interesting census tract of all in the Savannah area income profile for Negro families is number 101, which has the highest median income for Black families. This tract is in two parts. The northern part lies directly east of the city between the city line and the Savannah River, being composed mainly of unhabited meadowlands and marshes. The southern part of number 101 corresponds to the town of Thunderbolt. There are 168 Black families in this census tract, a community which is contiguous to Savannah State College. With a median income of \$9,667, the Black families living in this tract are the most affluent families in the whole Savannah Negro community. The chances are 15 out of 100 of a family earning income greater than \$15,000. The probability of earning in excess of \$12,000 is 31 percent and it is 58 percent for earning more than \$9,000. Further, the chances are only 5 out of 100 of the Black family receiving \$3,000 or less per year.

The high incomes earned by Negro families in the Thunderbolt community are unquestionably due to the influence of Savannah State College. Many people with professional training who are associated with the College live in this community. And professional levels of education command relatively high incomes.

III. Summary and Conclusion.

On preceding pages the reader has been invited to compare incomes and income class probabilities as they differ between Black and non-Black families in census tracts selected from Table 3. You are now asked to look at some comparisons for the whole Savannah metropolitan area. Table 4 has been constructed from census summary statistics for the entire Savannah SMSA. The non-Black entries were obtained by the method used for Table 2, page 8. Savannah median income for Black families is \$4,723 and for non-Blacks, \$9,772. The ratio of the former to the latter is .483.

Another basis for comparison of Black with non-Black family incomes is provided by the probabilities of Table 3. Look, for instance, at the following summary probabilities for the lowest and highest income classes:

	Black Families	Non-Black - Families
Median Probability of Lowest Income Class	31.5	8.5
Median Probability of Highest Income Class	3.0	11.5

The probability of falling in the lowest income class is more than 3 times as great for the Black family in Savannah as it is for the non-Black family. The probability of earning income in the highest income class is less than 1/3 for Black families as it is for non-Black families. For the Black family, the probability of falling in the lowest income category is more than ten times as great as the probability of falling in the highest income class. For the non-Black family the probability of earning in the highest income class is greater by 3 points than is its probability of falling in the lowest income class.

Many points of comparison such as these can be devised from the data provided in Table 3. The reader can improve his understanding of relative levels of economic wellbeing by working out some of his own.

Table 4. Summary Income Statistics for Savannah SMSA

Income Class	Total Families in Income Class	Black Families in Income Class	Non-Black Families in Income Class
Less than \$1,000	1,579	1,098	481
\$1,000 to \$1,999	2,592	1,662	930
\$2,000 to \$2,999	2,774	1,638	1,136
\$3,000 to \$3,999	2,975	1,584	1,391
\$4,000 to \$4,999	2,773	1,413	1,360
\$5,000 to \$5,999	3,225	1,398	1,827
\$6,000 to \$6,999	3,364	1,158	2,206
\$7,000 to \$7,999	3,411	897	2,514
\$8,000 to \$8,999	3,229	655	2,574
\$9,000 to \$9,999	3,321	651	2,670
\$10,000 to \$11,999	5,489	(575)	4,914
\$12,000 to \$14,999	5,456	(570)	4,886
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5,400	(564)	4,836
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1,101	(115)	986
\$50,000 or more	280	(29)	251
Total	46,969	14,007	32,962
Median Family Income	\$8,245	\$4,723	\$9,772

Source: *Census Tracts, Savannah SMSA* (PHC(1)-193).

Whether one compares distributions of income probabilities or computes the ratio of Black median income to non-Black median income, one finds evidence of great differences between Black and non-Black levels of economic wellbeing. The focus of this paper is on these differences themselves and not on why the differences exist. A few comments on the latter question, however, may be in order.

The income of a family is composed of earnings received from the sale of its resources. These earnings depend largely on the price which prevails in the market for these resources. Since

the resource base of most families consists of some form of labor, the determination of income is largely made by the price which an employer is willing to pay for the specific human services which the family's breadwinner(s) offers for sale. This price is itself the result of the current market conditions, economic factors which are specific to the individual transaction, and various non-economic elements. To disentangle and measure market forces and the other economic factors (not to mention the non-economic elements) is an awesome obstacle to the task of assessing the contribution made by each to the determination of a particular resource price and such assessment is by no means attempted in these short comments.

Current market conditions consist of broad demand and supply forces. These would be quite important in a period of depression, when demand is low in general, or in a boom period, when demand is higher than normal.

More important than general market conditions in the question of income differences between households are specific attributes governing the monetary value to the employer of the labor services which the household offers for sale. The person who is more productive will be more valuable to the employer and, other things the same, will receive a price for this labor which is proportionally higher. (The "other things" caveat is very important and will be covered shortly.) For instance, if a worker has a special gift for a certain type of work his productivity will generally be greater than average. Or, perhaps, even with no special aptitude, a worker may produce and earn more than his peers because of exceptionally high motivation. Good or bad health often influence productivity on the job. A person's economic productivity, however, depends more than anything else on the amount of training and educational preparation which he brings to the job. The most important single determinant of a person's value to an employer and, consequently, his earnings, seems to be the level of education attained by the person.⁵

While the above economic considerations are powerful in their influence on earnings, by no means do they provide the total determination of family income. There are many non-economic factors which create income differences. A person might be ignorant of the fact that there are, in the same area, higher paying job opportunities that are open to workers of his category. Another example would be the case in which there are unique non-economic attributes of a particular situation which are of sufficient importance to an individual to compensate for a significant earnings deficit. It is not difficult to imagine ad-

5. A similar relationship seems to hold for communities. A companion research project to the present one is going to explore the functional relationship between median family income for a census tract and the median number of years of school completed by adult residents of the tract.

ditional non-economic elements such as these and there are many of them to be found in any labor market contributing to differences in family incomes within the community. One non-economic factor, however, is more important than all the rest: racial discrimination. All other things the same, the person who is Black receives a lower pay for his work than the person who is non-Black.

It is hoped that the comparisons and interpretations made here will not be accepted by the reader as final statements on income differences in the community. Perhaps the most valuable use which the reader might make of this paper is for him to use its analyses only as interpretative guidelines for the statistical information which has been presented. Table 3 affords much material out of which the reader can construct his own interpretations and comparisons. By doing this he can acquire new understanding of the varying levels of economic wellbeing at which are found the forty-seven thousand families of the Savannah area.