

Real Men Are Stoics: An interpretation of Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full*

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Charlie Croker, a self-made real estate tycoon, ex-Georgia Tech football star, horseback rider, quail-hunter, snake-catcher, and good old boy from Baker county Georgia, is the protagonist in Tom Wolfe's latest novel, the deliciously provocative *A Man in Full* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998). In this paper I examine the evolving conception of manhood in Wolfe's novel. Two different models of manliness will be delineated and compared. The first model—represented by Charlie Croker—gradually weakens and is replaced by the second model—represented by Conrad Hensley. My aim is to show how Stoicism serves to critique the first model and articulate the second. Stoicism, I argue, provides the deliverance of both Hensley and his convert Croker, while at the same time transforming the conception of manliness explored in *A Man in Full*.

Croker, at age sixty, is a great physical specimen, 6'2" tall, 225 lbs., muscular, and imposing, that is, when he is not limping from the football injury and subsequent arthritis that ruined his knee. Tech football fans everywhere know Croker as the Sixty-Minute Man, because in addition to his various gridiron heroics, he would play all sixty minutes of every game—as running back on offense and linebacker on defense. Croker has also distinguished himself as a bold, ambitious, and richly successful businessman. His athletic fame and business daring have earned him enormous assets: a multinational corporation worth millions of dollars and a fabulously huge and opulently furnished mansion in Buckhead—the most prestigious neighborhood in suburban Atlanta. He also owns a twenty-nine thousand-acre plantation of prime forest, fields, and swamp in southwest Georgia. Turpentine, as it is called, is complete with thirty-six separate buildings, dozens of mules, horses and horse-breeders, dogs and dog-trainers, and many other servants, as well as a mile-long landing strip and hangar for Croker's two jet airplanes, which are staffed by his own private pilot, navigator, and stewardess. Croker is also

well connected with the elite of Atlanta society. Finally, his virility has won him a young trophy wife—the stunningly gorgeous, twenty-eight year old Serena. Six features of Charlie Croker can be identified as the constituent elements of the initial model of manliness: (1) physical prowess, (2) athletic fame, (3) business success, (4) material wealth, (5) social prominence, and (6) sexual prowess. I take this model to be a fairly conventional one. Yet Croker’s great wealth is in grave jeopardy as the plot unfolds.

The antithesis of manliness is represented by Wolfe’s character Raymond Peepgass. Peepgass is a senior loan officer of Plannersbanc—the bank that Croker owes half a billion dollars to as the result of the risky real estate venture he pursued. Peepgass has this impression of Croker at their first meeting: “Christ, he was a brute, for a man sixty years old! He was an absolute bull. His neck was wider than his head and solid as an oak. . . . Croker was almost bald, but his baldness was the kind that proclaims *masculinity to burn*—as if there was so much testosterone surging up through his hide it had popped the hair right off the top of his head” (35). But while Croker’s masculinity strongly impresses Peepgass, Peepgass fails to similarly impress Croker.

After Croker is humiliated by one of Peepgass’ colleagues at the bank and then quietly insulted by Peepgass himself, Croker considers sharing the following opinion with his financial officer Wismer Stroock—also known as ‘the Wiz’:

Peepgass wasn’t a bad-looking guy, and he was probably bright, but he was soft. His head of thick, thatchy, sandy hair made him look ten years younger than he was, but in a weak, boyish way. His neck and his chin and his cheeks and his hands were soft. To see that soft, weak face grinning at his expense—it had been infuriating. Peepgass was not strong, not fit, not manly. But the point would be lost on the Wiz. The Wiz was young and fit, but he was neither manly nor unmanly. He was a financial officer and a technogeek. He ran six miles before dawn every morning solely to keep the Wismer Stroock cardiovascular system lubricated and tuned up for the

long-term project, which was to live forever. As to whether Ray Peepgass was or was not a sad specimen of contemporary Georgia manhood, the Wiz would be completely uninterested. (p. 67)

Wolfe thus provides his reader with three reference points for triangulating on the conception of manliness at work early in the novel: Croker, the paradigm of manliness; Peepgass, the weak, unmanly male; and the Wiz, the neither-manly-nor-unmanly male.

Croker's insight on how the Wiz sees him further elucidates this initial conception of manliness. The Wiz

...was in awe, in unconscious awe, of something the old boy had and he didn't: namely, the power to charm men and the manic drive to bend their wills into saying yes to projects they didn't want, didn't need, and never thought about before. The common word for this was *salesmanship*, a term the Wiz probably looked down his nose at. Yet the Wiz was in awe of something that was at the heart of salesmanship when the game got up into the hundreds of millions of dollars and it was time to make a decision and act, *make your move*, even though you could run the numbers all day and they added up only to imponderables and the decision tree was so full of branches, twigs, sapsuckers, and leaves, a mere Wiz couldn't find the paradigm no matter how hard he looked ... And that thing was manhood. It was as simple as that. (74-75)

Here Wolfe characterizes the decisiveness at the heart of salesmanship as the essence of manhood. Notice that Croker's business success is to be attributed neither to financial genius nor to general intellectual brilliance. Rather, it is decisiveness that endows Croker with salesmanship, and it is his salesmanship that wins him success in business. Business success is merely the outward result of salesmanship. Therefore, the third element of the initial model of manliness is salesmanship. The revised constituents of Croker's manliness are (1) physical prowess, (2)

athletic fame, (3) salesmanship, (4) material wealth, (5) social prominence, and (6) sexual prowess.

Earlier we saw that the unmanly male, Ray Peepgass, is impressed by Croker's manliness. Even Charlie's first wife Martha, whom he divorced in order to marry the young beauty Serena, does not deny Charlie's manliness (440). In conversation with Ray Peepgass, a minor character named Herb Richman comments that Croker is "'a certain type of Southerner you hear about but you can't really appreciate unless you see him up close, on native ground, as they say. He has this'—he shook his head—'*thing* about Southern manhood. He hasn't got the first clue that this happens to be the beginning of a new century'" (523). With these remarks from a stylish CEO, Wolfe may be suggesting that manliness is something temporally contingent. Richman's view is that models of manliness change over time and Croker is a dinosaur clinging to an outdated conception of manhood. Croker, of course, rejects this notion: the manliness of men doesn't change over time. On Croker's view, his conception of manhood is in no danger of growing obsolete. Cultural fashions change, but the nature of a real man does not.

Wolfe adds another stroke to his portrait of Croker's manliness. At the opening of an art exhibit of homoerotica at Atlanta's High Museum a woman presumes to ask Charlie how he became interested in art. "He felt almost as if somehow his manhood had been called into question. 'I'm not interested in art, and I'm sure as hell not interested in this show or this museum. But if you want to do business in Atlanta, you come to these things'" (433), Charlie retorts. That homoerotic art had become fashionable among Atlanta's elite was a clear sign that cultural mores had changed and for the worse, to Croker's mind. Manliness, in contrast, is not so plastic as to embrace interest in homoerotica. But Croker is not a philistine who rejects all art. One of his most cherished possessions is a painting by N. C. Wyeth of Jim Bowie rising up from his deathbed to fight the Mexicans at the Alamo (61). Such gritty heroism properly inspires manliness, and so is proper art.

With the help of a Stoic disciple later in the novel, Charlie will discover the Stoic bull of manliness inside him. But Ray Peepgass can do no better than to unleash his 'red dog,' as Wolfe calls it. Peepgass does this by hatching a scheme to form a syndicate to buy Croker's latest real estate development cheap, watch it jump in value over a few years, and sell it to make a financial killing. Peepgass approaches Charlie's ex-wife Martha with the idea.

Martha's first reaction had nothing to do with the content of what he had just said. Rather, it was that she ... liked him more this way. He now seemed ... more of a man. He was no Charlie, but he had Charlie's passion for *the deal*, which was perhaps where the contemporary male's passion for battle went these days. She studied his face as his lips moved. He was actually a good-looking man, and his passion for the deal put an edge on the softness that you initially detected in a man like this. (569)

Martha sees in Peepgass' passion for the deal the salesmanship identified as the third element of the initial model of manliness. So by this point in the story, the unmanly male appears to Martha to have become manlier.

Peepgass, however, is no master of his own destiny. His scheme fails as his salesmanship evaporates. Even worse, Plannersbanc fires him for his sneaky dealing. So Ray marries Martha in order to attach himself to her superior socio-economic status and live in her mansion in Buckhead. But Ray and Martha have no love for each other. Martha needs a husband in order to shed her condition as what Wolfe calls 'a superfluous woman,' a divorcee unnoticed by Atlanta's upper-class society. Peepgass needs Martha's money to survive alimony payments, child support, and a most recently a paternity suit resulting from very imprudently indulging in a brief extra-marital affair with a Finnish woman. Martha and Peepgass' marriage of mutual advantage is unenviable. Though Peepgass gains material wealth through this marriage, he still lacks the other elements of manliness and so remains the unmanly male.

The Stoic critique of Peepgass is that he is enslaved to his desires for things beyond his control. His lust got the better of him in his liaison with the Finnish temptress, and he must scramble to protect his finances. But even more than lacking sexual self-control, Peepgass covets social status, power, wealth, and material comfort. He must wed Martha to acquire these things. Dreams of upward mobility are what motivate Peepgass. He has no interest in improving his moral character. Since Peepgass' success depends on factors subject to luck, he cannot attain lasting mental freedom, and so he cannot hope to enjoy genuine Stoic happiness. His dependence on externals makes him a slavish character.

The paradigm of manliness manifest early in the novel begins to change with the introduction of the character Conrad Hensley. Wolfe describes Conrad in this way: "At a glance he might have passed for an athlete. He was tall enough and young enough, and he looked strong enough, despite his slight build. The sleeves of his shirt were rolled up, and his forearms bulged beneath the long johns, tapering down to hands with long fingers that had been delicate just six months ago but were now so muscular, his wedding ring bit into the flesh like a cinch" (109).

Conrad exhibits the physical prowess identified as the first element of manliness. It is significant, however, that his mighty fingers and forearms are the result of hard labor, not sport. Conrad played no football, and so did not win the athletic fame identified as the second element of the initial model of manliness. Instead of enjoying gridiron glory like Croker, Conrad got his girl friend Jill pregnant when they were both eighteen. Conrad insisted on marrying Jill, and they soon had a second child. His sudden financial responsibilities forced Conrad to abandon his hopes for a good education at San Francisco State or perhaps even Berkeley, so he settled instead for two years at Mount Diablo Community College. Thus Conrad's sexual potency ruined his future rather than enhancing his stature, as it did for Charlie Croker. Conrad's one remaining dream is to move his family into a little condo they could own themselves in a lovely leafy little town called Danville, an oasis with pretty houses and pretty shops not far from the dump they

currently rent. After twelve more months of work, Conrad could earn enough for a down payment on a condo in Danville.

But he is filled with trepidation minutes before his next shift as a ‘Picker’ in the Suicidal Freezer Unit of the Croker Global Foods warehouse where he works. Conrad has a terrible premonition that he might have a crippling accident like several of his co-workers had suffered recently. “A steady pain seized Conrad’s lower back, and his sinuses became so congested they began to ache. He had never felt this bad at the start of the shift ... Something was definitely wrong ... Why didn’t he just drive to a pay phone and call in sick ... and blow it off ... Pickers did it all the time” (111). Conrad vanquishes his worries with the command: “Awwwwwwwww pull yourself together! Be a man” (111). Real men are not slackers, no matter how grueling or how dangerous their jobs are. Thus a new element of manliness emerges with the introduction of Conrad. Self-control and the courage to do one’s duty characterize a real man. Wolfe suggests that Conrad *could* have won athletic fame if fate had dealt him a more favorable hand. But since athletic fame is neither necessary nor sufficient for manliness, in the new model of manliness it is replaced by self-control and the dutiful—sometimes courageous—performance of one’s duty.

Another key aspect of the novel’s evolving conception of manliness relates to the significance of material wealth. Croker’s grand wealth makes him enviable as the plot begins. Yet his vanity in naming his new real estate complex ‘Croker Concourse,’ coupled with his overweening ambition in building it far beyond the edge of urban Atlanta and wildly over budget to boot, push him to the brink of financial ruin. The causal chain works like this: Charlie’s wealth makes him proud. His pride impels him to undertake enormous financial risk. This risk lands him in immense debt. His immense debt makes him vulnerable to the coercive tactics of the city’s political power brokers. So Charlie finds himself faced with the following dilemma. Either he must publicly praise a Georgia Tech football star accused of date rape whom he finds personally repugnant so as to appease the political power brokers and thereby save his assets, or he must stand by his friend—the father of the alleged rape victim—and refuse to participate in the

exculpatory press conference, and thereby lose his wealth, his social status, and, most likely, his wife.

Charlie Croker is a man of tremendous clout, and he moves in the most affluent and elite circles of Atlanta society. Conrad Hensley, in contrast, is a humble but honorable working class man. Though Conrad, Charlie Croker, and Ray Peepgass all must deal with their sexual desires, Conrad dutifully marries his girlfriend when she gets pregnant, whereas Peepgass scrambles to dodge his paternity suit and Croker simply divorces his aging wife Martha to marry the younger Serena. Conrad, in contrast, sets aside his aspiration for a good education in order to support his family. He takes a demanding, dangerous job as a manual laborer in order to earn enough money to move his family into a more comfortable living situation. Conrad has no wealth, no social standing, and no grand ambitions. From his sense of honor and responsibility, and with considerable self-discipline and courage, he does what he must do to provide for his family. So while Charlie's wealth is enviable at first, it is Conrad's moral character that earns the reader's growing admiration as the story unfolds.

Conrad's premonition that something bad would happen during his shift in the freezer becomes prophetic. He heroically saves a co-worker from what would have been a fatal accident. In doing so without a moment's hesitation, Conrad displays decisiveness which, as we saw, lies at the heart of salesmanship. At the end of his shift, however, the heroic Conrad is rewarded with a pink slip—a lay-off resulting from the corporate decision Charlie Croker makes out of financial desperation. Charlie fears that the loss of his wealth will bring him social humiliation and unbearable personal shame. He has yet to learn the Stoic lesson that events beyond our control have no power to disgrace us. Only our own decisions and the actions we freely choose to perform can bring us disgrace or honor. Conrad, on the other hand, learns his first lesson in Stoicism: courageous acts are within one's power and virtue is its own reward because it is a true good that cannot be taken from us. In contrast, one's job is a precarious external that is ultimately

not within one's power to retain indefinitely. Since losing his job was not Conrad's fault, he has thereby suffered no moral loss and no disgrace.

Conrad's bad luck continues, as does his Stoic education. He drives to downtown Oakland to take a typing test for a new job, but his fingers have grown too huge and muscular to regain the seventy words per minute form he once had. Having failed his typing test, he discovers that the car behind his has pushed his car onto the sidewalk and beside a fire hydrant. What is worse, his Hyundai is being ticketed and towed as he watches helplessly. Conrad's valiant attempts to retrieve his car from the towing impound lot are thwarted and he is locked out of the lot. But when he sees his Hyundai being mangled by an indifferent and larcenous forklift operator, Conrad can take no more. Righteous indignation carries him over the fence into the lot. He confronts the car-mangler, determined to halt the injustice and reclaim his damaged car. The brute tries to forcibly subdue Conrad, but Conrad defends himself and prevails in the ensuing scuffle. But before Conrad can escape, an off duty Oakland policeman who had been on the lot levels his revolver at the dumbfounded Conrad and arrests him. Conrad is charged with trespassing and battery.

At his trial Conrad, convinced of his innocence, refuses the offer of probation and is convicted. When his wife Jill visits him in Santa Rita prison, they have the following heart-rending exchange. Conrad softly says to Jill, "You're right. I didn't gain anything. I didn't think any jury would ever convict me, because I knew, and I still know, I was innocent. But they did, and I lost. I lost a lot. But I kept something, Jill. I kept my honor, and I didn't bargain away my soul." Incredulous, Jill replies: "Your ... *soul*? Well, hats off to your soul. We're all very proud of your soul. Did your soul by any chance stop to think about your son and your daughter and your wife?" Conrad snaps back: "That's all I was thinking about, Jill! When the time comes, I wanna be able to look Carl and Christy in the eye and say, 'I was innocent. I was falsely accused. I refused to compromise with a lie. I went into prison, but I went into prison a man, and I came out of prison a man'" (349). Conrad learns his second lesson in Stoicism. Justice was his

motivation for trying to rescue his car. His attempt resulted in arrest rather than the retrieval of his car. Yet Conrad had not acted unjustly, and so he did not deserve punishment. To admit guilt after acting blamelessly would have been to sacrifice his moral integrity. Conrad refused to ‘bargain away his soul,’ and so retained his self-respect and moral integrity. This self-respect or perseverance in sticking to his principles we can call moral fortitude.

Moral fortitude thus becomes a crucial element of the manliness exhibited by Conrad Hensley. The Stoic lesson couldn’t be more vivid. Croker’s salesmanship won him material wealth—an external that is merely a preferred indifferent and no real good at all according to Stoic ethical theory. Conrad’s moral fortitude is the only real good, since it alone cannot be lost through bad luck. Measured by the new model of manliness, for Croker to lose his wealth is not to lose any part of true manliness. Rather, it would simply be a test of his fortitude. For Conrad to be jailed having fought for a just cause is evidence of his manliness because it affirms his moral fortitude.

In prison Conrad requests a copy of the novel *The Stoics’ Game*, but receives instead a volume titled *The Stoics*, containing the extant writings of Epictetus and other Stoic philosophers. When Conrad reads that Epictetus spent time in prison as a young man,¹ and was tortured and crippled, but went on to become one of the greatest philosophers of Imperial Rome, Conrad’s disappointment turns into excitement. He slowly learns Epictetus’ Stoic teachings. Our bodies and possessions are mere trifles, things merely on loan to us. Zeus has given us a spark of his own divinity in the form of our power of free choice. We are mortal and our bodies can easily be conquered, but our will cannot be unless we permit it. Difficulties are opportunities for us to train ourselves to cope with circumstances. We can endure any hardships we face as long as we maintain our dignity, self-respect, and what we see as our character. Jubilant, Conrad becomes an enthusiastic convert to Stoicism.

What little bit Conrad had learned about philosophy at Mount Diablo had seemed to concern people who were free and whose main problem was to choose from among life's infinite possibilities. Only Epictetus began with the assumption that life is hard, brutal, punishing, narrow, and confining, a deadly business, and that fairness and unfairness are beside the point. Only Epictetus, so far as Conrad knew, was a philosopher who had been stripped of everything, imprisoned, tortured, enslaved, threatened with death.² And only Epictetus had looked his tormenters in the eye and said, 'You do what you have to do, and I will do what I have to do, which is live and die like a man.' And he had prevailed. But most important of all, only Epictetus understood. He *understood!* Only he understood why Conrad Hensley had refused to accept a plea bargain! Only Epictetus understood why he had refused to lower himself just a rung or two, demean himself just a little bit, dishonor himself just a touch, confess to a minor crime, a mere misdemeanor, in order to avoid the risk of a jail sentence. 'Each of us considers what is in keeping with his character...' His lawyer, even his own wife, wanted him to compromise and plead falsely. But he knew himself and at how much he put his worth. He did not count himself as an ordinary thread in the tunic, but as the purple, that touch of brilliance that gives distinction to the rest. (410-411)

Armed with Epictetus' Stoic wisdom, Conrad feels empowered to persevere with moral fortitude and manly integrity.

His virtuous deeds continue in prison. After the inmate Rotto and his gang brutally rape a new inmate who is mockingly nicknamed 'Pocahontas' because of his mohawk, Conrad is the only inmate in the pod room who dares to help Pocahontas while he lies collapsed on the floor, bleeding from his rectum. Conrad reflects on what he has done:

Not only had he come to the aid of an untouchable, a poor, ravaged, humiliated, turned-out, freakish homosexual—a punk—he had also come close to being a snitch. Rotto and his crew had

barely departed the shower area when he was out in the middle of the pod room screaming ‘Yo! Deputy!’ and calling the hacks to the scene of the crime—yes!—and which one of these paragons of manhood, who on the black turf, who on the Latin turf, who on the white turf, with their tattoos and crosses and gorged muscles, had the courage or the simple human decency to help a poor, pathetic kid like Pocahontas? None of them! Not one! What kind of manhood was it to look the other way and not snitch when a brute decides to have his way with the hide of another human being? (453)

Despite their apparent toughness and machismo, the other inmates have no courage, no sense of justice, and no compassion to help the weak, brutalized rape victim. The model of manhood represented by the prisoners proves bankrupt. Conrad, in contrast, the disciple of Epictetus, rises to this trial sent by Zeus. Conrad acts from virtue, and so he acts as a real man. He draws strength from the pages containing the divine wisdom of Stoicism, which teach him that “The living part of him was his soul, and his soul was nothing other than the spark of Zeus” (454). It is Conrad’s commitment to Stoicism that empowers him to preserve his moral integrity, and fan the spark of Zeus growing inside him. His understanding of Stoicism enables him to reject “the pod’s code of false manliness” (454). His belief in Stoicism equips him to face each challenge with resolve, calm courage, and spiritual strength.

Conrad’s next challenge is upon him in moments. Confident from the success of his rape of Pocahontas, Rotto believes he can similarly terrorize Conrad. Yet Conrad, armed with his Stoic courage, iron determination, and the powerful hands produced by the Suicidal Freezer Unit, subdues Rotto by crushing his hand in a vice-like grip when Rotto pinches Conrad’s cheek. Just as he read in Epictetus how Hercules cleansed the world of unjust and brutal men, Conrad marshals his strength of will and bravery to defeat the physically superior but spiritually impotent Rotto (457). The bully’s brawn and swagger is no match for the inner strength of the Stoic disciple.

After the fight, the inmates are herded back to their cells. Conrad's cellmate, a Hawaiian nicknamed 'Five-O', urges him to fake insanity in order to escape from the lethal retaliation of Rotto's gang that awaits him in the pod the next day. "I wouldn't even consider it," said Conrad. 'I—' But he stopped. He wanted to say, 'I want to keep my character. Why did I fight Rotto? Because I refused to be dishonored. Outside this hole, this pigsty, no one will ever know that I lived as a man and fought like a man and refused to sell myself at any price. But in this grim little universe, the pod, the only world that is left, they will know, and Zeus will know, and I, a son of Zeus, will know'" (462). Conrad has learned another Stoic lesson. Zeus knows everything you do, so always conduct yourself respectably regardless of your circumstances. Your moral integrity never eludes scrutiny. Your commitment to Stoic principles is repeatedly tested.

As he lies sleeplessly in his bunk, Conrad tries in vain to visualize his son Carl, his daughter Christy, and his wife Jill. Epictetus teaches that mere flesh is to be discounted, but Conrad muses that it was through Jill's flesh that he had transmitted the spark of Zeus to Carl and Christy. When he fails once again in his attempt to visualize Carl, tears come to Conrad's eyes. He thinks to himself: "One day Carl would be a man, and long before that time he would need someone to tell him what a man was" (464). So Conrad gets his Five-O to promise to write down Conrad's entire prison story and send it to his wife so his son Carl will know that his father didn't lie in his cell bunk trembling and moaning and groaning and whining. Conrad insists that testimony of his moral fortitude—proof of his Stoic manliness—be passed on to his son to guide him in his journey to manhood.

That night Fate intervenes. An earthquake rocks the Bay Area, destroying much of Santa Rita prison. Conrad, seeing the quake as Zeus' providential handiwork, acts decisively and courageously to save both his own life and the life of Five-O. He escapes from the prison and the death that surely awaited him at the hands of Rotto's gang. With the help of his friend whose life he saved in the Suicidal Freezer Unit, a kind of underground airline for fugitives provides Conrad new clothes, money, a new identity, and plane tickets to Atlanta. There his connections get him a

job as a home healthcare worker. On the job his compassion and courage move Conrad to protect an elderly couple from a menacing extortionist. Eventually Conrad is sent to the Croker home to tend to Charlie as he convalesces from knee surgery. Hobbling about on crutches, Charlie has lost his physical prowess—the last remnant of his earlier manliness. The significance of the fact that Epictetus was also lame is not lost upon the reader.

As they become acquainted, Charlie is impressed by Conrad's friendly self-confidence and intrigued by his devotion to Stoic principles. Charlie explains his dilemma to Conrad and confesses that he'd rather die than become a beggar. Conrad responds by telling Charlie about Cleanthes. Cleanthes was one of the great Stoic philosophers and he hauled water to make a living. But nobody thought of him as someone who didn't have a respectable job, because Cleanthes radiated the power of the spark of Zeus. The Stoic lesson: you don't have to have some high position before you can be a great man (685). Conrad awakens the Stoic bull of manliness that had been slumbering in Charlie's soul. Charlie recognizes that he had been trying to deal with his dilemma like a fox instead of confronting it head-on with bull-like mettle and rectitude. He had declined into a weak and vulnerable condition, he realized, "Because the source of his strength had always been his money, his reputation, his success in worldly affairs. But the one true source of strength was his own might, his own will, to get or to avoid, his own divine spark of reason, which enabled him to judge which things were in his power and which were beyond it" (687). Thus Conrad, the Stoic disciple, dramatically converts Charlie to Stoicism.

At the climactic press conference, Charlie preaches the wisdom of Stoicism instead of praising the football star accused of rape. By refusing to bow to coercion, he "felt like a man free of all encumbrances" (720) because he insists that no man has ever been remembered as great because of the possessions he devoted his life to accumulating (723). In celebrating his freedom to assent to what is true and to deny what is false, Charlie becomes "a man with complete tranquillity" (721). The old model of manliness has been completely transformed by the agency of Stoic wisdom into the new model. The old paradigm of manhood, Charlie Croker, has been

remade by the new Stoic paradigm, Conrad Hensley. On the new model, manliness has nothing to do with athletic fame, salesmanship, material wealth, social prominence, sexual prowess, or even physical prowess. Rather, the Stoic, the real man, is possessed of self-control, self-discipline, responsibility, decisiveness, courage, justice, moral fortitude, compassion, and self-respect. Consequently, Wolfe's man in full turns out to be the man of virtue.

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ENDNOTES

¹ There is no evidence in any ancient sources that Epictetus was imprisoned.

² Ancient evidence indicates not that Epictetus experienced death threats, but only exile.