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Finding Young Hamlet

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When Horatio affirms the uncertain eyes of Bernardo and Marcellus, he resolves to share this "sensible and true avouch" of his own eyes by finding out "young Hamlet." Thus from the opening moments of this play, the weight of the eldest primal curse falls on the youngest minds. But how young *is* "young Hamlet"? The gravedigger's math puts him at thirty. But that's surely not right. Everything in this play points to a youthful adolescent, on the cusp of adulthood, sent before his time scarce half made up into the grotesque adult world of revenge tragedy. Moreover, the role imposes similar contradictions on both actor and audience. It requires the resources and the experiences of a tested actor, yet asks us to believe in, connect to, a "youth of primy nature" (1.3.7). But if the theatrical history of this play is a record of men, and some women, in their thirties and forties attempting to re-cast themselves into youthful Hamlets, even the discomfits of such miscasting may fall within the modesty of this play's nature. Such unlikely Hamlets may come closer than we think to the mystery at the heart of Hamlet, himself woefully miscast in a heroic role more proper to Hercules. As Hamlet himself puts it, in a metaphor whose aptness he has not yet fully understood, these are actions that a man might play.

In the past year I have seen three remarkable, and surprisingly youthful, *Hamlet*s, Steven Pimlott's Royal Shakespeare Company production with Samuel West, John Caird's Royal National Theatre production with Simon Russell Beale, and Jim Warren's Shenandoah Shakespeare production with James Ricks. These three *Hamlet*s were quite different in their interpretative designs, their length, even the printed text from which they began. And yet they were alike in one important way. They each discovered the young and volatile energies within both Hamlet and *Hamlet* through deliberate and inspired miscastings. Samuel West, Simon Russell Beale, and James Ricks all spent much of their performances in restless discomfort as they attempted to inhabit both the roles and even the bodies of the Hamlets they were assigned to play. Moreover, there was, for each of these Hamlets, a similar alienation from the physical space of their theatres—the distracted globes in which they must act and play: the expansive, impersonal landscape of the re-designed Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the closed ecclesiastical and

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dramaturgical circle of Caird's Olivier stage, and the new energies and restraints awaiting in Ralph Alan Cohen's new Blackfriars Playhouse. For these actors, the formidable task before them was to find their way into the resisting bodies of their Hamlets while at the same time learning to discover and exploit the theatrical resources of an alienating and often inhospitable space. But that is also, as Hamlet tells Horatio, what it means "to be one."

Much of Pimlott's staging re-affirmed Hamlet's vision of a time out of joint. As if caught between two worlds, the symmetry of a revenge play ethic and the postmodern efficiencies of corporate re-structuring, this was a world that knew how to flourish a sword, a dagger, a bare bodkin. But when the job had to be done right, nothing worked like a revolver. In a production praised for its emphasis on political power, Pimlott used the materials of performance, space, lighting, and blocking as political tools. The stage, a pale, grey box, was huge, exploiting the new dimensions of the refurbished RST: wide and endlessly deep, receding into a kind of vanishing point. The set had the effect of dwarfing and isolating the actors. In the nunnery scene, we saw an alien Ophelia, ignored by Claudius and Polonius as they emerged from hiding, pick up pieces of Hamlet's letters and wander unnoticed, forever it seemed, until she vanished. The immense stage also required a formal blocking with characters interacting with one another over great quantities of space. Such a dehumanizing, diminishing presence was made more effective by the omnipresence of surveillance video cameras and screens. The stage resembled a vast television studio, a world created of lights and paint: the forms, moods, and shapes of seeming.

Samuel West had been waiting to play Hamlet for most of his acting career. His plan was to perform the role "once when I was 20 and once when I was 30" (Cross 15). While he waited for the role, West saw 25 different productions of *Hamlet*. The readiness is all. Finally, in 2001, his celebrated performance of Richard II behind him, the 34 year-old actor assumed the role with some anxiety. He was, after all, "already pushing the upper age limit" for this part. "Hamlet's a young man," West admitted in an interview with Helen Cross. "He's been away at University and he's an anarchist, and he's anti everything. It's very important that he's young and set against the ruling generation" (15). But whatever fears West might have had about his capacity to embody that youthfulness metamorphosed into an extraordinary energy on stage. In his first soliloquy he pointed a gun at his head with such sudden intensity that we almost forgot we knew what happens next. He responded to the sudden embrace by the ghost in 1.5 by returning the gesture, comforting and cradling his father. The two exclaimed together, "O Horrible!" Moments later, when the ghost commanded Hamlet to "taint not thy mind," Hamlet laughed ruefully, already moving toward an antic disposition. His treatment of Ophelia, alternately tender and abusive, was intensively physical, which,

given Kerry Condon's young and frail Ophelia, had an additional force. We saw him thoughtfully re-reading one of Ophelia's letters, only to be struck anew with the pain of despised love: "I DID love you once." Then he would pull Ophelia toward him in a brutal embrace, moving his hands from her waist to her breasts as if to examine this "breeder of sinners."

Hamlet's vitality most effectively came across in the confident way he took possession of Pimlott's enormous stage. Unlike other characters, who were swallowed up in this vast and hollow space, Hamlet was often in motion, using the catwalk to confront the audience with "Who calls me coward?" His own frenzied blocking became a feature of his antic disposition.

Moreover, that energy, both Hamlet's and *Hamlet*'s, was forcefully, unrelentingly directed at us. From the opening moments of the play we were wooed, cajoled, interrogated, assaulted. This was a play after our souls. As the play opened, a searchlight raked through the audience. Bernardo's "Who's there?" was directed as much to the audience as to Francisco. Were we the threat? The council scene in 2.1 was presented as a contest for the hearts and minds of the audience. When Claudius, ever the cool, postmodern politician, announced his appreciation for the court's willing support of coronation and wedding, he turned away from the on-stage court, faced the audience, and applauded *us*. Hamlet too directed his opening aside, "A little more than kin and less than kind," our way. Should we take that as a gesture of confidence, even intimacy? Or as a test? When Polonius conspired with Reynaldo to find out Laertes with indirections, then lost his own way, he turned to us, as if he knew we were there all along and shouted, "What was I about to say?" Were we sent for? There was, indeed, in this production, with cameras panning on- and off-stage targets, and with the characters'—especially Hamlet's—continual interpretative and inquisitional attention to the audience as well as to the very theatrical space in which they moved, an eerie sense that we were, like Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, trapped in a double play, ambivalently focused on both Hamlet and all those guilty creatures sitting about him.

Like Sam West, Simon Russell Beale was keenly aware of his burden to make this play, and his Hamlet, speak. As well he might. Jonathan Croall recalls Beale's apprehension as he prepared for a student matinee at the Theatre Royal in Glasgow for 1200 children. "The last thing they want,'" Beale remembered thinking, "is an overweight, middle-aged Englishman talking to them about life and death" (Croall 77). Simon Russell Beale is, of course, a magnificent actor. But my experience of watching *that* actor, with *that* body, at *that* age become Hamlet, forcing his soul so to his own conceit that he embodied the truth of the character, will be one I will never forget.

The forty-year-old Simon Russell Beale finally succeeded in finding young Hamlet simply by *not* finding him. Beale foregrounded the very

difficulties his age and size presented. He played an actor faced with the impossible task, not only of taking on Hamlet's heroic role, but also of inhabiting his body. The sense of the absurdity of such a burden never left Beale as, of course, it never leaves Hamlet. Throughout the play Beale remained ruefully conscious of and alienated from his fleshiness. When Hamlet "confided" to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that he had "forgone all custom of exercise," he glanced at us and gently tapped his stomach, as if to acknowledge what we both knew. Why was *he* ever born to set it right? Virginia Mason Vaughan has said that she always encourages her students to connect to Hamlet by defining him as an actor hopelessly miscast in the role of "Hamlet."[1] Throughout his performance, Simon Russell Beale made us believe that his body didn't quite fit his soul. He would in moments of great intensity, as in the closet scene with his mother, self-consciously pull or scratch at his clothing, or hide his hands.

If Steven Pimlott realized the political medium of Hamlet's world, John Caird's production found an even wider reach into the dark hallowed mysteries that encircle this play's distracted globe like stars with trains of fire. Beale's Hamlet, caught in a decadent world of ceremonial polish, simultaneously needed and feared the sacramental efficacy of religious ritual. In this production such metaphysical engagement was made evident by a fusion of religious and meta-theatrical stage design and imagery. "How do you physicalize the metaphysical?" John Caird asked. "The production needs a set that allows all the imagery about heaven and earth to be liberated, one that reflects the extraordinary beauty of the form, line and imagery of the play. The solution is to have one that doesn't require conventional scenery" (Croall 15). Caird created an open, "mythical" space mapped out by a minimum of moveable properties, like sea trunks and chandeliers that could be raised or lowered, and dark, moveable panels upstage that, when opened slightly, would allow thin bars of light forming a cross to stream into what was often a dark acting space. All of these physical objects were both sparsely naturalistic and mysteriously suggestive. The chandeliers, for example, when lowered could be the bright interior lights of Claudius's re-fashioned world, only to recede into the high firmament of the Olivier theatre, fretted with golden fire.

These physical properties embodied both theatrical and sacramental promise. Much of the action took place in a tight circle, circumscribed by a series of dark panels, each containing a kind of niche where actors would wait when not on stage. The figures in those niches were simultaneously inanimate actors and carved saints enclosing and giving meaning to a global space that was somehow stage, chapel, and middle earth. Theatrical and sacramental efficacy were one and the same in this production. For much of this play the wooden sea chests were merely sea chests awaiting shipment to France or England or Norway. But at the graveyard scene they became

sepulchers that Hamlet and Horatio were required to work their way through as they prepared to meet the gravedigger. For Gertrude one of them became the resting place for her wedding mementos from her first marriage. These were icons that both allowed and tested belief. Early in the play, when Claudius reproached him for his "unmanly grief," Hamlet turned away from his uncle and knelt before a chest, which had previously served as Hamlet's father's coffin, but now had become a kind of altar, and grieved in silent prayer. Gertrude, sensing the iconic moment, knelt beside her son. But Claudius, impatient to make his point to Hamlet and the court, saw only an object. He moved to the chest at which Hamlet knelt, sat on its convenient surface, and continued his speech. For Beale's Hamlet, this fusion of theatrical and sacred ritual found its most powerful moment in the play within the play, which would, at last, give voice to his father's otherworldly testimony. Do this in remembrance of me.

In restoring this strong religious context to the play, both John Caird and Simon Russell Beale made us all realize something essential, not only about Hamlet's need, but about the need of any young person—especially one so intelligent and so deeply soiled in the working of a world so unexpectedly and perfectly compromised—to believe in *something* after all. Beale's Hamlet had a disillusionment fueled not by confirmed skepticism but by unrequited faith.

Shenandoah Shakespeare has an almost evangelical commitment to making all of Shakespeare intrinsically and immediately connected to young audiences. So in many ways their *Hamlet* succeeded in resonating with student audiences for the same reasons all their performances do: the astonishing clarity with which they speak Shakespeare's language; their strategies of engaging the audience, making us a part of the performance; their energy and speed. But their *Hamlet* was a special case. As with Simon Russell Beale and, to a lesser extent, Sam West, James Ricks was cast against the "type" of a traditional Hamlet. Especially in the performance I most recently saw at the re-constructed Blackfriars Playhouse, the company gave an even fresher vitality to their performance by confronting the potentially hostile requirements of an unfamiliar space.

Standing about a half foot shorter than most of his fellow actors and of stocky build, James Ricks has always relished acting against expectations. He has a way of beguiling our own visions and through the energy and deftness of his own performance recreating himself before our very eyes. In 2000 he played Benedick with delightful wit and self-parody. Half way through his outraged response to Claudio's and Don Pedro's suggestion that he might one day fall in love, Benedick suddenly sensed a rhetorical disadvantage as he was quite literally outflanked by two taller actors. Without missing an iamb, Benedick mounted an empty audience seat and continued his

assurances. Ricks's Hamlet was even more skillfully created, arising from the passion, the energy and the integrity of the actor's speech.

But it was through their strategic response to the constraints of the Blackfriars acting space that Shenandoah, and James Ricks, re-invented their own Hamlet. The Blackfriars stage, with its two upstage doors as the actors' only means of entrance and exit, required the company to re-block a number of scenes. The necessity inspired them to experiment with the possibility of blocking two scenes in particular, the nunnery scene and the closet scene, identically. In each scene, Hamlet would enter from the same door and encounter either Ophelia or Gertrude from the same angle. Meanwhile, Polonius and Claudius in the first scene and Polonius in the second, hid in the same location, behind the curtain closing off the tiring room. In both scenes, Hamlet started to exit through the same upstage door (SR), only to hesitate for a moment before returning to confront his female antagonist.[2]

The implications of such parallel blocking are stunning. It had the effect of "doubling" the two scenes, and fusing the two characters of Ophelia and Gertrude into one conflated antagonist. The strategy brilliantly realized and physicalized Hamlet's interior sexual obsession. Moreover, the audience found itself momentarily trapped in Hamlet's disturbed subjectivity. Finally, as Hamlet thrust his sword through the arras, he seemed to complete, in a kind of second rehearsal, an action he could not perform in the earlier scene through the same arras. "Is it the king?" When Hamlet realized that his second chance to act had not only failed but had involved him in the guilt of Polonius's death, his self-reproach was doubly felt.

What is it that makes these productions so powerful for all audiences but particularly so for younger audiences who may feel estranged from Shakespeare's language or the cultural heft of this "classical" play? None of these productions tried to "translate" *Hamlet* into a language or a setting that young audiences might recognize, a high school gymnasium or a Florida beach. There's no need to create such marketing equations between the surface of Hamlet's world and the surface of any other. Hamlet knew as much. What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba that he should weep for her? While all three productions made some textual emendations and cuts that addressed some of the more archaic features of a four-hundred-year-old language and cultural practice, they also did something else. They made their audiences *listen* and then *rewarded* that attentiveness with such clarity and intelligence of speech and stagecraft, the cunning of the scene, that young, intelligent audiences who might not define themselves as "Shakespeareans" could be "struck so to the soul" that they became not just an audience but *active participants* in the political, religious, and psychological contentions that tear at the soul of young Hamlet.

Notes

1. In a conversation at the Blackfriars Playhouse Inaugural Conference in Staunton, VA, October 11-14, 2001.

2. I am grateful to Stephen Booth for a delightful conversation at the Blackfriars Playhouse Inaugural Conference, where some of these ideas came into sharper focus.

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Proto-Feminism and Ethnography in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*

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With her femininity and wit acting as guides, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu unveils the mystery and misconceptions of Eastern Turkish women to Western audiences. Lady Mary acts as a type of proto-feminist ethnographer in her *Turkish Embassy Letters* by marrying the concepts of femininity and culture to one another. Montagu delves into new and uncharted territory, operating in the eighteenth century, well before either feminism or ethnography existed as regular topics of discourse. By providing a comparative ethnography of women's positions in the East with that of the West, Montagu leaps into ethnographic fieldwork and addresses fundamental issues in the future field of feminism.

Anthropologists Bohannon and Van der Elst explain in their work *Asking and Listening* that ethnography provides "an orderly description of people with exotic lifeways—exotic, that is to the reader" (4). During the eighteenth century, Turkey and especially Turkish women qualified as "exotic." Lady Mary, unlike her male counterparts, finds the familiar in the previously labeled exotic. She strives to make the seemingly incomprehensible understandable. In Montagu's time, men largely produced travelogs or journals. Having men produce these accounts proved troubling, as Lady Mary clarifies in one of her letters: "I am sure I have now entertain'd you with an Account of such a sight as you ever saw in your Life and what no book of travells could inform you of. 'Tis no less than Death for a Man to be found in one of these places" (Halsband 315). Male exclusion from areas attended by women hindered male explorers' abilities to present an accurate picture of Turkish life as a whole. Whatever her intentions, Montagu produces a cultural bridge between Turkey and England by showing a female world undocumented by men. In *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, Lisa Lowe notes, "In redressing many of what she insists are the misconceptions and inaccurate representations of Turkish women propagated by these male travel writers, Montagu reports how, as a woman, she is permitted greater access to Turkish female society, and claims that her difference from these earlier writers may be due to her being a woman" (31). Titillating her Western audience with peeks of the East, Montagu portrays intrigue in the female world of Turkey and demystifies larger misconceptions regarding freedom among Turkish women.

In her work *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics*, Elizabeth Bohls further adds that Montagu "did not fit the traveler's image as

heroic explorer, scientist, or authoritative cultural interpreter" (17). Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with her progressive proto-feminist ideologies regarding the East and freedom in hand, becomes the eyes and ears for her audience in an environment where few Western women and even fewer, if any, men had ventured. In "The New Path: English Women Travelers in the Middle East," M. D. Allen explains, "Englishwomen may sometimes have found themselves denied access to political leaders or meetings because of their sex"; however, Allen adds, "they could visit the harems of the countries in which they traveled, and talk to local woman, in- or outside harems, in a way impossible to males" (2). As a woman, Lady Mary seeks to shed new light on the female world of Turkey.

Montagu helps to relate the East to the West in order to dispel, as she believes, earlier inaccuracies. Montagu observes in her letter of June 17, 1717, "To Lady -----" regarding the accuracy of French historian Jean Dumont's accounts, "Your whole Letter is full of mistakes from one end to 'tother. I see you have taken your Ideas of Turkey from that worthy author Dumont, who has writ with equal ignorance and confidence. Tis a particular pleasure to me here to read the voyages to the Levant, which are generally so far remov'd from Truth and so full of Absurditys I am very well diverted with 'em. They never fail giving you an Account of the Women, which 'tis certain they never saw . . ." (Halsband 368). Due to her experience with this area of contention, Montagu immediately recognizes the error of inaccurate accounts regarding Turkey. Lady Mary additionally points to the absence of the women in these travelogs.

In her *Turkish Embassy Letters*, Montagu embraces the notion of cultural relativism, which demands that the ethnographer examine the culture only from within the culture itself. One of the first steps that Lady Mary takes in order to become more than just the passing traveler involves learning the Turkish language. In "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the Hammam," Srinivas Aravamudan explains, "Linguistic alienation, as a matter of course, is one of the first signs of culture shock from which Montagu wishes to cushion herself" (92). Montagu immerses herself in Turkish culture and language. At one point, she writes of her fears of losing a part of her native culture, "I am allmost fall'n into the misfortune so common to the Ambitious: while they are employ'd on distant, insignificant Conquests abroad, a Rebellion starts up at home. I am in great danger of loseing my English" (Halsband 390). Like modern ethnographers, Lady Mary blends into Turkish life to the best of her abilities while sometimes sacrificing elements of her own English culture.

Lowe explains that Montagu "explicitly challenges the received representations of Turkish society by the travel writers who preceded her" (31). Previous accounts of Turkey fall victim to the temptation of imposing

their homeland principles upon a foreign land. Differing, Lady Mary places herself as a participant in Turkish culture without placing judgments imposed by British standards. Lowe further notes that Montagu "distinctively sets herself apart from that tradition by criticizing the representations of women, marriage, sexuality and custom" (31). Montagu seeks to bring a new awareness to Turkish culture by examining it from within.

Traveling in Turkey, Montagu first notes the differences of the Turkish coaches. While Englishwomen and Turkish women normally traveled by coach separately from men, Turkish women's coaches were veiled. In these modes of transport, Montagu vividly describes the "wooden Lattices," "scarlet cloth" covering, and silk linings (Halsband 312). Montagu notices the manner in which these coaches provide a type of disguise for the women even as they travel. Montagu explains, "This covering entirely hides the persons in them, but may be thrown back at pleasure and the Ladies peep through the Lattices" (Halsband 312). In this manner, the Ottoman ladies become the voyeurs as opposed to the objects of voyeurism. Montagu sees this ability to become a watcher or onlooker as one of the many examples she finds where Turkish women assume behavior usually deemed masculine.

From the coach, Lady Mary takes her audience into what she deems "the female space." Here, she acts as an ethnographer in her descriptions of the cultural activities conducted within the female bathhouses or *hammams* of Turkey. "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun," anthropologist Clifford Geertz finds "culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning" (Geertz 5). Montagu, acting ahead of her time, recognizes this concept of meaning within culture and attempts to interpret this space. Kevin Dwyer explains, "Montagu does not Other the women by making them stand for generalized Oriental humanity or for the disjunction between eastern and western cultures" (143). To the best of her ability, Montagu relates the baths to her own culture.

Illustrated by her keen and descriptive observations while attending the Turkish bathhouses of the Ottoman ladies, Montagu's letters allow for a better understanding as well as interpretation of Turkish women and life in Turkey. As Grace and Philip Wharton note in their work *The Queens of Society*, "When she goes to the bath, she not only uses her eyes but her mind" (194). Montagu challenges previous notions of Turkish women and proclaims them to be more socially free than their British counterparts, "Tis also very pleasant to observe how tenderly he [that is, travel writer Aaron Hill] and all his Brethren Voyage-writers lament the miserable confinement of the Turkish Ladys, who are (perhaps) freer than any Ladys in the universe,

and are the only Women in the world that lead a life of unintterupted pleasure . . ." (Halsband 406).

In her letters recounting her visits to the Turkish baths, Lady Mary describes the *harram* as "the Women's coffée house, where all the news of the Town is told, Scandal invented, etc." (Halsband 314). Having not experienced such a female space in her own country, Montagu immediately correlates the baths to the nearest counterpart of her own culture: the male coffeehouse. In the baths, Lady Mary discovers a type of liberation away from men that she is able to describe only through similar male-oriented institutions. The presence of a female space, or, as Virginia Woolf would later call it, a *room of one's own*, parallels the male coffeehouses of England where only men were allowed. Despite previous male explorers missing this equivalence completely, Lady Mary realizes the subtlety of translating "the Women's coffée house" into a female space free of the masculine presence. Signaling pre-feminist ideals, Montagu embraces the idea of a female space free of men. She recognizes a freedom present in Turkish female society that is unmatched in her own.

As Bohannon and Van der Elst suggest, ethnography "aims to make people from different cultures comprehensible to one another" (4). Within the bathhouse, Montagu portrays a scene of interaction among the ladies: "The first sofas were cover'd with Cushions and rich Carpets on which sat the Ladys, and on the 2nd their slaves behind 'em, but without any distinction of rank by their dress, all being in the state of nature, that is, in plain English, stark naked, without any Beauty or deffect conceal'd, yet there was not the least wanton smile or immodest gesture amongst 'em" (Halsband 313). In spite of her initial culture shock in reaction to the nude figures, Montagu looks beneath the visible flesh. Mary Jo Kietzman remarks, "The first and most important thing to notice is that Montagu represents both herself and the women she meets as dynamic—moving and changing in response to one another throughout the interaction" (539). Montagu focuses on the interaction between the ladies with one another, as well as between the Turkish women and herself. While not completely eliminating the sexual element involved in this nude display, Montagu refuses to revolve the scene around only sexuality. Montagu interprets a deeper meaning of female space with the *hammam*.

Montagu sees the ladies in the bathhouse as being in a natural, beautiful state: "They Walk'd and mov'd with the same majestic Grace which Milton describes of our General Mother" (313-14). She conceptualizes the female space as a leveling mechanism. The freedom and laxity that the women display in their mannerisms with one another dissolve the line between the ladies and their slaves. As the ladies braid one another's hair, sip coffee, and socialize, Montagu remarks in response, "I know no European

court where the Ladys would have behav'd themselves in so polite a manner . . ." (313). Montagu sees the lack of clothing as a means of liberating the bathhouse of class distinction. In essence, stripping the women of clothes levels by stripping them of rank.

Srinivas Aravamudan remarks that "Montagu went literally where 'no Man' had gone before. She entered women's space as an honorary Turkish woman, even as she maintained her Englishness" (88). Montagu's attempting to hold on to her "Englishness," however, presents a slight hindrance to her fully experiencing the *hammams*. While remaining in her own clothes, Montagu becomes shackled by her culture. Kietzman adds, "In contrast to themselves, the women construct Montagu as an Other who is limited, passive (in her refusal to join them), pitifully singular, and oppressed by her husband" (540). After much encouragement on the part of the other ladies, Montague "excus'd" herself "with some difficulty" and but lifted her skirt revealing to them her tightly laced corseted stays (Halsband 314). Like a modern ethnographer, Montagu attempts partly to amalgamate and embrace the Turkish women's culture while in the bathhouse. While in the *hammam*, she hesitates to go completely "native" but does trade a bit of her normal cultural behavior by revealing her undergarment to the women. This willingness to give and take on Montagu's behalf displays a key element in the discipline of ethnography.

Despite the initial setback of Montagu trying to remain a proper English woman, her compromise to reveal of bit of herself opens a new door for examination. Upon Montagu's revealing her stays, the Turkish women, as she notes, "believ'd I was so lock'd up in that machine that it was not in my own power to open it, which contrivance attributed to my Husband" (Halsband 314). The Turkish women view Lady Mary's undergarments as the tools of a jealous husband attempting to keep his wife under wraps. Jill Campbell explains, "Abruptly, Lady Mary's female and English body returns to her, and returns to her as most rigidly constructed by English fashion" (80-81). The reaction of the Turkish women to Montagu's stays takes her by surprise. Something so simple as her undergarments, which Montagu had taken as a norm in her own culture, becomes an oddity or, as the Ottoman ladies see it, a punishment.

This discrepancy between British and Turkish women's undergarments causes Lady Mary to take a look at what was missing in the baths: clothing. Outside of the bath, Montagu continues to see this trend of liberation in relation to Turkish women. Montagu observes that this theme of leveling in the baths continues in the public sphere. The Ottoman ladies' garments and attire take this leveling of ranks to the streets. Dressed in loose veils and cloaks that completely cover themselves, women create a scene suggesting both masquerade and disguise. Veiling themselves while in public

allows Turkish women to move through the streets without ever being recognized. Lady Mary notes, "Tis very easy to see they have more Liberty than we have, no Woman of what rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without 2 muslins, one that covers her face all but her Eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head . . ." (Halsband 328). Montagu finds this element of concealment liberating. Campbell adds, "Montagu speaks with great admiration of female dress that she encountered in Turkey" (81). With this, Montagu proclaims Turkish ladies to be more socially free than their British counterparts.

By masquerading in a disguise of sorts, Turkish women assume many of the freedoms of men. Montagu explains, "there is no distinguishing the great Lady from her Slave, and it is impossible for the most jealous Husband to know his Wife when he meets her, and no Man dare either touch or follow a Woman in the Street" (Halsband 328). Women become enabled to meet lovers without the burden of being caught. As Gerard de Nerval clarifies in his work *The Women of Cairo*, "In reality, the mask and uniformity of dress would give them much greater freedom than Europeans, if they were inclined to go for intrigues. . . . There is, then, nothing in the Mussulman law which, as people have chose to believe, reduces women to a condition of slavery or abjection" (148). The Turkish ladies' perpetual disguise allows them to follow their "Inclinations without danger of Discovery" (Halsband 328). Like Turkish men, Turkish women are enabled to do as they please due to this freedom from recognition. This freedom from the social laws that British women endure results from the very veil that many of Montagu's peers viewed as an opponent to liberation.

In forming her own opinion regarding the freedom or constraint of Turkish women, Lady Mary begins by examining the garments in question. There appears to be a real difference between the clothing of the British and Turkish women. At first glance, Turkish attire obviously seems more demure than British wardrobe. Montagu explains in one of her letters as she adorns herself in Turkish garb, "The first peice of my dresse is a pair of drawers, very full, that reach to my shoes and conceal the legs more modestly than your Petticoats" (Halsband 326). In addition, Montagu notes that Turkish women's clothing by nature appears less constrictive than that of British ladies. While British attire alters the body to form an artificial shape through its whalebone-constructed stays, Turkish clothing hangs loose and flowing on the body without impinging on the woman's shape.

The relatively shapeless and unrestrained nature of the Turkish women's attire allows for ambiguity regarding each woman's body. Isobel Grundy notes, "While the female body was the standard of beauty in her own British culture, for the Turkish women grace and charm were" (138). Due to the looseness of their garments, Turkish women's bodies were put on far less

display than British women's were. Similarly ahead of her time, Montagu's contemporary Mary Astell in her *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* shares these concerns with Lady Mary as she remarks, "Let us learn to pride our selves in something more excellent than the invention of a Fashion; And not entertain such a degrading thought of our own *worth*, as to imagine that our Souls were given us only for the service of our Bodies, and that the best improvement we can make of these, is to attract the Eyes of Men" (Astell 197). Echoing Astell's concerns, Montagu sees the artificiality with which European women construct themselves through altering fashion.

Cynthia Lowenthal notes, "Perceiving Turkish women through this veil of romance, Lady Mary rejects the prejudices and anti-Turkish biases of some earlier travelers by finding European equivalents for the differences she sees" (67). Stepping away from previous male-authored writings and impressions of Turkey, Lady Montagu puts earlier ethnocentric viewpoints of Western superiority aside and finds similarities between Turkish and European cultures. "In evaluating Turkish customs and manners," Lowenthal continues, "Lady Mary rejects some earlier travelers' judgements of the Turks as simple barbarians by drawing parallels, equating and leveling the differences between the Turkish culture and her own, with results that are sometimes less than flattering to the English" (69). Montagu bravely challenges the norms in her own culture with her progressive views regarding the capabilities of women.

In *A World of Difference: Islam and Gender Hierarchy in Turkey*, Julie Marcus explains that Montagu's unique vision was ignored rather than discussed "because it simply did not fit in with the expectations of people about the status and lives of Muslim women" (57). Critics find one major hole in Montagu's argument regarding the elevated freedom of Turkish ladies. Robert Halsband explains: "Lady Mary's idealized view of Turkish women's status suffered from one blemish; she was embarrassed by the abominable belief that 'women are treated in Turkey as something between beasts and men,' and possess an inferior order of souls" (*Life* 84-85). Though originally put off by this discovery, Lady Mary works this theory into her argument as an element of support rather than hindrance. As Halsband points out, Montagu explains in one of her letters that "although the women's souls be inferior to men's, after death they enter a paradise of eternal bliss (apart from the men's)" (85). Cleverly, Montagu stays true to her previous notion regarding "the Women's Coffeehouse" by suggesting that this female space continues in the afterlife. Lady Mary allows for a female heaven free of men and dominated by women. By opening her mind to Turkish culture, Lady Mary offers an astute comparison of British and Turkish women and seeks improvement within her own culture.

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Israel Zangwill's New Humor Beginnings

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Although primarily known today as a Zionist novelist and polemicist for Jewish causes, Israel Zangwill started his literary career in London as a poorly paid journalist, a member of the often vilified group called the New Humorists. Doubtless the best remembered of this coterie, which consisted of Jerome K. Jerome, Barry Pain, William Pett Ridge, W.W. Jacobs, and Zangwill as its mainstays, the Jewish writer soon abandoned his comic beginnings and moved on to write such pro-Hebrew narratives as *Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People* (1892), *Ghetto Tragedies* (1893), and *Jinny the Carrier* (1919). Zangwill's apprenticeship under Jerome and W.E. Henley served its purpose, however, and he received a valuable education in the school of hard knocks journalism, honing his craft with the popular short stories and sketches that the British public of the period consumed with a seemingly inexhaustible appetite.

The New Humorists provided the type of short tale or vignette that was tailored to the needs of working-class Englishmen. Most of these consumers were unwilling to wade through the triple-decker, mammoth novels that earlier Victorian giants like Dickens and Thackeray had made standard fare. These readers preferred brief, comic snippets that could be read in a half hour or so. Zangwill and company produced these stories in mass quantity, usually publishing their work initially in inexpensive periodicals, then collecting a volume's worth later to issue as a short fiction collection. Emphasizing accurate Cockney dialect, a positive slant on slum conditions, and a refreshing sense of fun that generally excluded cruelty and debased characters, the New Humorists tapped into a readership bonanza in the late 1880s and 1890s. Critics as diverse as J.B. Priestley, G.K. Chesterton, Arthur St. John Adcock, and Alfred Noyes highly praised their work.

Approaching the East End urban ghettos from a humorous perspective, Zangwill provided a humanizing glimpse into a world that most Englishmen of the period had never encountered and tended to consider askance, if at all. While his earliest comic efforts didn't treat exclusively Jewish subjects, Zangwill soon realized that his best work sprang from the territory he knew best—English Judaism. Dickens's characterization of Fagin and other mid-Victorian portraits of villainous Jews were about as close as many Britons ever got to the everyday life of Anglo-Jewry. Zangwill, like the other New Humorists, portrayed a world of poverty and struggle where the inhabitants were forced to work hard for what they acquired. These fictional milieus, however, possessed a charm, a sense of community, a feeling of

neighborliness, and a light-hearted attitude to life's inevitable difficulties, which endeared their characters to readers.

After teaching in a Jewish school for several years, Zangwill opted to earn his living in the combative and mercenary arena of latter nineteenth-century journalism. Drawing on his experience of East End Cockney life, he began to produce comic tales and sketches for popular periodicals. These cheap journals (many hardly lasted long enough to establish solid readerships) sprang up in answer to the demand for reading matter to supply the needs of the newly lettered consumers who had benefited from the Education Act of 1870. That monumental bulwark of educational legislation provided for compulsory schooling for lower-class English children, who often went out to work at very young ages, with little or no formal instruction. Often sneered at, and certainly not university material, these students received a rudimentary education that fitted them for trades and clerical work. However, they possessed literacy at a level far above previous generations of their class and many read during their leisure. Untaxing short fiction and humorous anecdotes appealed to these readers; soon a multitude of inexpensive publications were launched to fill the need. Among these now-forgotten magazines, *The Idler*, *To-Day*, *Home Chimes*, *Answers*, and *Pick-Me-Up* were representative. Produced on cheap paper, with brief features designed to hold the limited attention of weary workers, these periodicals were phenomenally successful. The New Humorists, including Zangwill, rode this wave of pulp journalism to literary and financial success. Since Zangwill's earliest efforts appeared in extremely rare British periodicals and tended to be brief (many only half a page in length), we will examine his longer and better-known works for evidence of his skill as a comic author.

The Premier and the Painter: A Fantastic Romance (Blackett, 1888) was Zangwill's first novel. Written in collaboration with Louis Cowen, a fellow teacher at the Jews' Free School, this book owes a direct debt to the American humorist Mark Twain.[1] Drawing on the exchange-of-roles theme that Clemens used in *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881), Zangwill composed a political satire involving the swapping of identities by shy, intellectual Prime Minister Arnold Floppington and a brassy, radical sign painter, Jack Dawe. Worn out by the cares of office, Floppington proposes the switch after inadvertently hearing Dawe speak at a workingmen's club in East London. Almost immediately friends of both parties notice significant changes in the pair. The Premier is much more self-assertive and quickly foils his political rivals, firmly grasping the reins of government, which had formerly been handled by subordinates. The sign painter's business begins to suffer as Floppington rapidly demonstrates his lack of skill with tools and inability to draw. (In one memorable scene he paints a red lion on an inn signboard that is unrecognizable as any creature on earth.)

Comic characters abound in the novel; Mrs. Dawe (the sign painter's mother and owner of a cheap eating establishment) is a termagant worthy of Dickens. She badgers her now-tractable "son" unmercifully. Her patrons and friends at the restaurant constantly intrude on her private affairs, as she trumpets to anyone who will listen. Mrs. Dawe is much too strong a personality for her altered offspring and manipulates him at will, trying to force his marriage with a local beauty, Eliza Bathbrill. Since Floppington still carries a torch for a suffragette, Lady Harley, humorous episodes are legion. Eventually he refuses to marry her outright, and Eliza brings a breach of promise suit, which drives Mrs. Dawe berserk. She becomes paranoid and accuses the pair of collusion:

> Perhaps ye'll go into Court and tell a bushel of lies to ruin me. Yes, that's it. Ye're in a plot with her to rob me, that's what ye're after, ye good-for-nothing vagabond, and then ye'll fly to America and enjoy the damages together. But I'll stop yer little game. I'll let the jury know the truth. 'E never was engaged to 'er at all, yer 'ighness. 'E never was a-courtin' 'er at all, yer ludship. It was 'er as was a-courtin' him the 'ole time, yer wusship, and ye ought to make her pay the damages for desertin' 'im, yer honours. 'E never injured 'er at all, yer 'ighness, and even if 'e did, 'e didn't do more than twopennorth of damages. Why even if 'e broke 'er 'art, is any woman's 'art, yer ludship, worth 2000 pound? Is it a 'art of gold, my luds and gentlemen; is it a 'art that can't be replaced under 2000 pounds? The Salvation Army'll give 'er a new 'art for nothin'; and, besides, she never had none to break. And if ye mend 'ers, yer wusships, ye breaks mine, so where's the justice, my luds, where's the justice? (380)

Eventually Dawe (as Floppington) is mistakenly assassinated, and the sadder but wiser Premier resumes his duties with a new determination to serve his constituency with all his abilities. The novel suffers from excessive length but is nonetheless extremely amusing and offers a light, endearing view of East End living conditions, along with accurate Cockney dialect.[2]

In 1891 the Jewish humorist brought out *The Bachelors' Club* (Henry), the story of an all-male institution devoted to the preservation of masculine celibacy.[3] The book narrates the fates of the club's membership, who one by one succumb to feminine stratagems and end at the altar. The organization's major maxim, "Thou Shalt Not Marry," is ineffectual as a talisman to preserve its proponents from the wedded state. Zangwill employs an understated, tongue-in-cheek wit that early informs the reader that he is no real misogynist. Like the women characters of his colleague W.W. Jacobs (accused in his day of woman-hating), who often used the battle of the sexes

as an arena for comic sparring, Zangwill's women usually emerge with the upper hand in these struggles. Eventually, even the club's president, M'Gullicuddy, an irascible Scot with a rabid hatred for the softer sex, gives up the fight and marries, bringing the narrative to an amusing denouement. In one of the episodes, "A New Matrimonial Relation," Oliver Green, a confirmed bachelor, is mistakenly perceived as married by the narrator, Paul Pry. Paul soon discovers that the child Green is tending at the seaside is not his son, but his recently deceased father's child by an imprudent late liaison in India, thus Green's uncle. Green is being driven slowly to distraction by the little hellion, for whom he is now guardian:

> Oliver thanked me with a look, then ran to disengage his uncle from the irate clutches of a little girl whom he had playfully prodded in the nose with his spade. He carried his struggling and kicking relative back to where I stood. Then he shook his uncle from India, and slapped his hands, and said, "Naughty, naughty."
>
> His uncle from India yelled like a Cherokee on the war-path.
>
> "And is he so rich?" I asked.
>
> "Beastly rich," he said.
>
> He seated his wealthy uncle from India on his shoulder, and tried to pacify him, but in vain. The avuncular yoke sat by no means lightly upon his shoulders. Aunt Julia had to get up and entreat the demon to leave off.
>
> "Tan't leave off till you give me a penny," said the poor young uncle, sobbing hysterically. (221-22)

Very soon Green weds Henrietta Blossom, the boy's aunt, thereby acquiring aid and companionship in his child-rearing efforts. The narrator seems more and more bewildered as each bachelor falls victim to matrimony.

Embracing a utilitarian philosophy of humor, Zangwill firmly believed that a spirit of fun was necessary for survival in an essentially difficult world.[4] His characters embody this attitude, since they show a marked aptitude for endurance under adverse conditions. The writer demonstrates his penchant for light-hearted reflection even in his darkest compositions, implying that when those afflicted with trials lose their sense of humor, they are doomed. As a Jew, Zangwill had heard firsthand accounts of the persecutions and pogroms of continental Europe. He knew that his people had survived prolonged and assiduous efforts to eradicate it from nearly every geographical locale at one point or another. The quiet, often sardonic humor of European Jewry was sometimes their only defense against overwhelming odds. Zangwill reflects this blend of the comic and tragic in his writings, and comments thereon in "The Realistic Novel," where he takes a

dig at Zola and the Naturalists, whom he condemns for a lack of humor[5]:

> Not only, then, may our tragedy be comedy; our comedy may be tragedy. The play of humour at least suggests these alternatives. Life is Janus-faced, and the humourist invests his characters with a double mask; they stand for comedy as well as for tragedy; Don Quixote wears the buskin as well as the sock. Humour, whose definition has always eluded analysis, may, perhaps (to attempt a definition *currente calamo*), be that subtle flashing from one aspect to another, that turning the coin so rapidly that one seems to see simultaneously the face and the reverse, the pity and the humour of life, and knows not whether to laugh or weep. Humour is, then, the simultaneous revelation of the dual aspects of life; the synthetical fusion of opposites; the gift of writing with a double pen, of saying two things in one, of showing shine and shadow together. This is why the humourist has always the gift of pathos; though the gift of pathos does not equally imply the gift of humour. The tragic writer must always produce one-sided work, so must the "funny man" who were only a "funny man" and not a humourist (though this is rarer). (84-85)

Zangwill's humor has a universal aspect that ensured its acceptance by common readers. Generally light and well-structured, his books were unlikely to afford mental strain to the weary clerk who wanted a half-hour's diversion after a long day of copying or adding up figures. Yet the comic writer's productions preserved a high enough quality to garner positive notices from most contemporary reviews. Also, like the other members of the New Humorist cenacle, his sales figures increased apace. Much of the adverse criticism and snobbish lack of acceptance manifested toward the group can be traced directly to jealousy on the part of less successful, more serious, fashionable, but poorer authors.

The Bachelors' Club having proved a financial success, the comic author followed it with *The Old Maids' Club* (Heinemann, 1892).[6] This collection pursued the celibate theme from a female point of view, told primarily by the club's president, Lillie Dulcimer. With requirements of beauty, accomplishment, and culture for its members, the archetypal spinster models were undesirable candidates for admission. The adventures of these frequently misguided young women are often hilarious; generally they have been driven into the wings of the Old Maids' Club by some bizarre mishap or misunderstanding. Miss Dulcimer is the daughter of a wealthy businessman, and therefore able to indulge her whims, with the aid of her friend and admirer, Lord Silverdale (the organization's male advisor), who hopes that

she'll soon come to her senses and abandon her latest project. She eventually goes the way of all flesh, and she and Lord Silverdale are betrothed by book's end, but not before an unusual series of humorous escapades ensues. Lillie acquires most new members through answered ads, but in one case a balloonist, Herr Nickeldorf, proposes an unusual recruit, his wife, of whom he has tired. During an interview with a journalist for *The Moon*, the aeronaut tries to convince Lord Silverdale of his spouse's suitability for candidacy:

> "Lord Silverdale," said Herr Nickeldorf, who had been listening with all his ears, "I haf to you given de hospitality of my balloon. Vill you, in return, make meine Frau into de Old Maids' Club?"
>
> "As a visitor? With pleasure, as she is a married woman."
>
> "Nein, nein. I mean as an Old Maid. Ich kann sie nicht mehr gebrauchen. I do not require her any longer."
>
> "Ah, then, I am afraid we can't. You see she isn't an Old Maid!"
>
> "But she haf been."
>
> "Ah, yes, but we do not recognise past services."
>
> "Oh, warum wasn't de Club founded before I married?" groaned the old German. "Himmel, vat a terrible mistake! It is to her I owe it dat I am de most celebrated aeronaut in der ganzen Welt. It is de only profession in vich I escape her sicherlich. She haf de Kopf too schwach to rise mit me. Ach, when I com auf here, it is Himmel."
>
> "Rather taking an unfair rise out of your partner, isn't it?" queried the *Moon* man, with a sickly smile. (83-84)

The comic author's international background (his father was Latvian, his mother Polish) helped him to portray foreign characters accurately and sympathetically. His knowledge of Yiddish allowed him in the above instance to realistically reproduce a garbled German speech, with hilarious results. Zangwill's early experiences in the London ghetto put him in contact with a varied, multinational population that gave him a rich store of characters from which to draw. His continental European creations usually have a comic old-world tinge that contrasts sharply with the progressive age he felt was upon him. Difficulties of language were useful as humorous foils to accentuate the differences between newly arrived European immigrants and the more established Jewish population in London.

Zangwill's popularity resulted, in part, from a remarkable ability to portray the tragic aspects of ghetto life with a softening humorous tinge that

humanized the suffering of Jews in England's poverty-stricken East End enclaves. For Zangwill, a sense of humor was as necessary to survival in adversity as oxygen. His characters approach life with a comic dignity that stamps them indelibly on the reader's memory. Many of his fictional creations, like Manesseh Bueno Barzillai Azevedo da Costa, better known as the eponymous hero of *The King of Schnorrers* (Heinemann, 1894), are descended from Jewish royalty, and behave accordingly, despite their poverty and unemployment. The fascinating gradations of Jewish society in England, utterly unknown to native Britons, serve as vehicles for the introduction of humorous situations. Zangwill knew that a stratified aristocracy of caste, as fixed as that of English society, existed in the Hebrew ghetto, and he exploited its outlandish qualities to the fullest. Thus his presentation of a Sephardic beggar who outfoxes wealthy businessmen and synagogue officials possessed a fascination for British readers that sent *The King of Schnorrers* through a number of editions.[7]

Set in late eighteenth-century London, the book features a shrewd, conniving Jewish mendicant who outwits everyone he encounters. An utter stranger to the groveling methods of most beggars, Manesseh displays an arrogance and control of situations that never fail to take his victims by surprise. From the lowest tradesman to the most elevated synagogue official, the schnorrer manipulates his way from one end of the ghetto to the other, leaving his patrons with a sense of relief and gratitude that they have gotten off so lightly. Zangwill introduces a subtle humor into the perceived squalor of the Jewish slums, thus endowing the area with a whimsical quality that appeals to outsiders. His characters are vibrant, emotional, and proud of their heritage, utterly unlike the cringing misers and sneaky thieves of earlier English literature. Their multinational culture is colorful and arresting, much more varied than that of their English neighbors. In one of the more amusing episodes, Manesseh has finagled his way into the house of Joseph Grobstock, a wealthy merchant, who has agreed to give the schnorrer his old clothes. Once inside the mansion, however, the upper hand in the situation changes markedly, as the receiver of charity becomes the dictator of the amount and quality of his alms:

> "It is all very well to say take them away," replied Manesseh, with a touch of resentment, "but what am I to take them in?"
>
> "Oh—ah—yes! There must be a sack somewhere—"
>
> "And do you think I would carry them away in a sack? Would you have me look like an old clo' man? I must have a box. I see several in the box-room."
>
> "Very well," said Grobstock resignedly. "If there's

an empty one you may have it."

Manesseh laid his stick on the dressing-table and carefully examined the boxes, some of which were carelessly open, while every lock had a key sticking in it. They had traveled far and wide with Grobstock, who invariably combined pleasure with business.

"There is none quite empty," announced the Schnorrer, "but in this one there are only a few trifles—a pair of galligaskins and such-like—so that if you make me a present of them the box will be empty, so far as you are concerned."

"All right," said Grobstock, and actually laughed. The nearer the departure of the Schnorrer, the higher his spirits rose. Manesseh dragged the box towards the bed, and then for the first time since his return from the under-regions, surveyed the medley of garments upon it. The light-hearted philanthropist, watching his face, saw it instantly changed to darkness, like a tropical landscape. His own face grew white. The Schnorrer uttered an inarticulate cry, and turned a strange, questioning glance upon his patron.

"What is it now?" faltered Grobstock.

"I miss a pair of pantaloons!"

Grobstock grew whiter. "Nonsense! Nonsense!" he muttered.

"I—miss—a—pair—of—pantaloons!" reiterated the Schnorrer deliberately.

"Oh, no—you have all I can spare there," said Grobstock uneasily. The Schnorrer hastily turned over the heap. Then his eye flashed fire; he banged his fist on the dressing-table to accompany each staccato syllable.

"I—miss—a—pair—of—pantaloons!" he shrieked.

The weak and ductiled donor had a bad quarter of a minute.

"Perhaps," he stammered at last, "you—m—mean—the new pair I found had got accidentally mixed up with them." (42-44)

A more aggressive, audacious character than Manesseh would be difficult to locate. Through the schnorrer's character, Zangwill subtly tapped into the popular perception of Jews as miserly and greedy. By greatly exaggerating these traits, he created an unforgettable figure that introduced British readers to a positive Jewish character, who survives on his wiles and goes a long way toward eradicating the negative literary stereotypes introduced earlier in the

century.

In 1903, Zangwill continued his comic production with *The Grey Wig: Stories and Novelettes* (Heinemann).[8] In addition to humorous material, this unusual collection contains the well-known, much-anthologized detective tale "The Big Bow Mystery." The title story, a comic-pathetic account of two decayed gentlewomen in Paris, recounts the value of a friendship. Madame Depine and Madame Valiere, who pretends to a title, are neighbors in a cheap pension. Their primary misery in life is that as they age, neither can afford a proper grey wig, and both are forced to make do with the dark hairpieces they have worn for years. Soon the resourceful pair hit on the idea of pooling their funds to purchase wigs one at a time. They draw lots and Madame Depine is the winner, so the two start the laborious process of saving for her headgear. During the wait, however, Madame Valiere's niece is to be married amid much pomp and circumstance. When the great day arrives, Madame Depine generously allows her friend to have the first wig, and lends her a prized gold brooch to wear to the wedding. The tale is bitter-sweet, with moments of genuine humor and pathos. The two women's concern over the wigs is often funny and sad; their preoccupation with minute details of propriety shows to what extent their lives have shrunk as their fortunes have dwindled. When Madame Valiere is discovered dead at the morgue after leaving for her niece's marriage, the reader feels genuine distress for poor Madame Depine, deprived of her only friend. We also pity her when she accompanies her newly bedecked companion outdoors and feels the inferiority of appearing in her tawdry dark wig, beside the resplendent Madame Valiere in her sumptuous grey finery. The "princess's" departure for the wedding is a momentous occasion: both women are obsessed with the event and expend considerable energy in its proper completion.

> The grey wig soon showed its dark side. Its possession, indeed, enabled Madame Valiere to loiter on the more lighted stairs, or dawdle in the hall with Madame la Proprietaire; but Madame Depine was not only debarred from these dignified domestic attitudes, but found a new awkwardness in bearing Madame Valiere company in walks abroad. Instead of keeping each other in countenance—duae contra mundum—they might now have served as an advertisement for the coiffeur and the convenable. Before the grey wig—after the grey wig.
>
> Wherefore Madame Depine was not so very sorry when, after a few weeks of this discomforting contrast, the hour drew near of the "Princess's" departure for the family wedding; especially as she was only losing her for two days. She had insisted, of course, that the savings for the second

> wig were not to commence till the return, so that Madame Valiere might carry with her a present worthy of her position and her port. They had anxious consultations over this present. Madame Depine was for a cheap but showy article from the Bon Marche; but Madame Valiere reminded her that the price-lists of this enterprising firm knocked at the doors of Tonnerre. Something distinguished (in silver) was her own idea. Madame Depine frequently wept during these discussions, reminded of her own wedding. Oh, the roundabouts at Robinson, and that delicious wedding-lunch up the tree! One was gay then, my dear. (34-35)

The touching relationship of these two women shows Zangwill's ability to depict the more appealing side of lower-class life. These elderly dames survive on memories of better days, but they have developed coping mechanisms that work well for them. Although their lives may not have turned out as they would have liked, the pair are an endearing and humorous example of adaptation and endurance under difficult circumstances. Rather than sinking into depressed apathy over their plight, or resorting to drink or drugs, the ladies use the tools available to them to meet their problems in a constructive manner. A marked feature of the New Humor, slum and ghetto life was not seen as degraded. Its denizens might be poor, but positive points could always be found. Friendship, generosity, courage, charity, and hope were to be had aplenty in the lower depths; often these people were shown as happier than their more affluent counterparts.

Ghetto Comedies (Heinemann) appeared in 1907; with this collection Zangwill delved deeply into Jewish culture, while still retaining a firm hold on his New Humor roots.[9] Less exotic perhaps than *The King of Schnorrers*, this book is no less amusing. Filled with colorful characters, brimming over with a life unfamiliar to most English readers, the stories in *Ghetto Comedies* once again feature a friendly, neighborly, exciting, nurturing, if sometimes beleaguered Jewish community. Not all the tales end happily: in "Samooborona," a young Jewish zealot sent to a remote Polish village to arm its inhabitants against a pogrom perishes, along with his charges, through their immobility, apathy, and indifference. His bewilderment at the number of groups and splinter-groups among his people is amusing, until the reader realizes that such diffusion of interest among a persecuted minority can prove fatal. One of the best comic tales in the volume is "The Sabbath Question in Sudminster," the account of a London Jewish merchant who won't close his shop on the Sabbath. The congregation in his synagogue try everything to prevent Simeon Samuels's breaking sacred law, even buying him out so he'll move. Nothing works. Immune to criticism from rabbi and fellow-communicant alike, Samuels maintains steadfastly that since he is

forced to close on the Christian Sabbath (Sunday), he is merely moving the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) to that day. When the Jewish Minister is approached by pious members of his congregation to speak against Samuels at the synagogue for Sabbath-breaking, he reluctantly agrees to try the stratagem, after a rather unorthodox theological discussion with the delegation:

> Simeon Samuels seemed, indeed, a formidable person to tackle. Bland and aloof, he pursued his own affairs, meeting the congregation only in synagogue, and then more bland and aloof than ever.
>
> At last the Minister received a presidential command to preach upon the subject forthwith.
>
> "But there's no text suitable just yet," he pleaded. "We are still in Genesis."
>
> "Bah!" replied the Parnass, impatiently, "any text can be twisted to point any moral. You must preach next Sabbath."
>
> "But we are reading the Sedrah (weekly portion) about Joseph. How are you going to work Sabbath-breaking into that?"
>
> "It is not my profession. I am a mere man-of-the-earth. But what's the use of a preacher if he can't make any text mean something else?"
>
> "Well, of course, every text usually does," said the preacher, defensively. "There is the hidden meaning and the plain meaning. But Joseph is merely historical narrative. The Sabbath, although mentioned in Genesis, chapter two, wasn't even formally ordained yet."
>
> "And what about Potiphar's wife?"
>
> "That's the Second Commandment, not the Fourth."
>
> "Thank you for the information. Do you mean to say you can't jump from one Commandment to another?"
>
> "Oh, well—" the minister meditated. (150)

Although Zangwill's fame will almost certainly continue on the strength of his serious fiction, particularly *Children of the Ghetto*, his comic output is by no means inconsiderable. Without a due consideration of his humorous material, a full picture of the writer is impossible. Even his bleakest works include liberal infusions of a particularly Jewish brand of humor that give them Zangwill's own stamp. His time spent as a member of the New Humorist coterie, which amounted to an apprenticeship, served him well by grounding his composition skills and his penchant for poignant characterization, characteristics that the rest of the group also developed under

Henley's and Jerome's tutelage. Zangwill's New Humor productions, though now largely unread, help to show the embryonic writer's beginnings and point the direction that the later Zionist took, who never totally abandoned his initial comic methods.

Notes

[1] Elsie Bonita Adams discusses the influence of Twain's book on *The Premier and the Painter*, maintaining that Cowen contributed little to the novel, that the plot, characterization, and the lion's share of the writing belonged to Zangwill. She also notes that Zangwill acknowledged his debt to Twain in the preface to the third edition of the novel, where he stated that "History has plagiarized from a romance conceived nearly a decade ago" (45).

[2] Joseph Leftwich notes that the novel did not sell particularly well initially and was not critically welcomed (24-27). After Zangwill's star had risen, however, and the book had been reissued, critical opinion improved markedly. Edward N. Calish, in *The Jew in English Literature, as Author, and as Subject* (175-79), commended the novel twenty years after its initial appearance. Sinclair Lewis accused novelist Mrs. Thurston of stealing from Zangwill in her *The Masquerader*, implying that plagiarism was still the sincerest form of flattery.

[3] Meri-Jane Rochelson maintains that "the stories in *The Bachelors' Club* and *The Old Maids' Club* exemplify the New Humor as they incorporate contemporary satire with romantic comedy and, especially in the first book, verbal gymnastics" (366). She points out that Bernard Winehouse, in his 1970 dissertation on Zangwill (*The Literary Career of Israel Zangwill from Its Beginnings Until 1898*), wrote that of the nearly forty contemporary reviews of the two books that he had examined, only one or two give less than enthusiastic response.

[4] Wohlgelernter notes that Zangwill applies the same comic art in *The Bachelors' Club* to Gentile settings as he employs on Jewish milieus in *Ghetto Comedies* and *The King of Schnorrers*. He implies that for Zangwill, the ability to laugh at evil and error shows that we have surmounted them.

[5] The pieces in *Without Prejudice* were collected primarily from the *Pall Mall Magazine* in 1896, having appeared there over the four or five years prior to the book's publication, according to Zangwill's preface.

[6] This novel complements *The Bachelors' Club* nicely, and the two books were later issued together by MacMillan in 1905 as *The Celibates' Club*.

[7] The book was originally serialized in Jerome K. Jerome's *The Idler*. (It appeared in monthly installments in Volume IV, 1893-94.) Bernard Winehouse provides an excellent discussion of the traditional Jewish schnorrer, as well as Zangwill's Anglicized version, aimed at satirizing

contemporary Anglo-Jewish philistines, whom the comic author viewed as undereducated assimilationists. Joseph H. Udelson sees *The King of Schnorrers* as one of the best examples of the New Humor extant (117-18). Closely related in type to the schnorrer is the Jewish schlemiel, or fool. Manasseh is a variety of schlemiel, since his methods are inane, though effective. In *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero*, Ruth R. Wisse makes a point for irrationality as one of the Jewish fool's chief characteristics: "In Yiddish fiction, antirationalism is offered up in a more specific context, as the only adequate response to an irrational onslaught of events. The Spinoza of Market Street, attic philosopher of Isaac Bashevis Singer's masterful story by that name, reacts to the punishing chaos of wartime by "coming to his senses," to unreason, which is the only reasonable thing he can do. After a lifetime of Spinozistic control, Dr. Fishelson blossoms into a fool" (13). Manasseh reasons that by demanding alms from the wealthy, he, the undeserving, will receive; and he does.

[8]This collection was not reviewed nearly as extensively as Zangwill's earlier comic fiction. The reviews I've seen, however, are generally good. Abraham Cahan and the author of the review in the *Athenaeum* ("Short Stories") join in praising the Jewish humorist's artistry exhibited in these tales.

[9]This book was well received, although some critics commented on the underlying seriousness of several of the tales. The reviewer for the *Independent* (19 Sept. 1907) calls *Ghetto Comedies* a "bitter book" ("Literature" 694-95). Mary Moss, while commending the light tone and successful dialogue of the collection, mentions the author's dealing with "the pangs of Jewish adjustment to English life" (430-31). The reviewer for *Nation* calls the humor "saturnine" and praises the stories as being each "complete in itself" ("Novels" 478-79).

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Faulkner: Life, Art, and the Poetics of Biography

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Recent studies have shown widespread interest in literary biography, especially William Faulkner's. In fact, biography, itself a "literary" form, has emerged as the most popular, widely read body of nonfiction writing (Nadel 1). Biographies of Faulkner, arguably the most important American writer of the twentieth century and creator of the magical/mythical world of Yoknapatawpha, form a complex and rich body of critical literature, almost as challenging as the primary texts themselves. Just as biography can rewrite and revise the life and art of the subject, so in each new construction of Faulkner, the story changes. Two Faulknerian biographers, Joseph Blotner and Joel Williamson, present their subject in startlingly contradictory images, offering contrasting constructions of the artist and his *oeuvre*. As Faulkner's "authorized" biographer, Blotner writes an exclusively sympathetic portrait of his subject, but Williamson focuses primarily on the artist's obsession with miscegenation. Indeed, whereas Blotner's two works, *Faulkner: A Biography* (the two-volume edition, 1974, and the one-volume edition, 1984), enshrine the artist as a monument in American literature, Williamson's *William Faulkner and Southern History* (1993) deconstructs Faulkner's inherited family romantic legends, especially the mythic image of his great-grandfather the Old Colonel, W. C. Falkner, who cast such a spell over Faulkner's imagination and served as the model for his portrait of Colonel John Sartoris in *Flags in the Dust/Sartoris*.

Since the advent of American New Criticism, which flourished from the late 1930's to the 1950's, professional literary studies have gone through a long period of regarding biography as disreputable, only a stepchild to criticism, even an enemy of criticism's activity. In two famous essays specifically about poetry by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley—"The Intentional Fallacy" (1946) and "The Affective Fallacy" (1949)—readers are warned to disengage the author from the text. The dictum of New Criticism asserts that the meaning and value of a work are independent of its author's biography. This divorce between criticism and biography culminates in the work of Roland Barthes, who proclaims in "The Death of the Author" that a disconnection occurs between the author and the text: "the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins" (142). Evidently Faulkner himself shares this view. He argues time and again that it is the book and its characters that count, not the author: "The artist is of no importance. Only what he creates is important" (Interview 238). Yet at the same time, as critic Noel Polk notes, Faulkner cooperates with the publicity

machine that advertises his popularity (*Children* 244). What are Faulkner's biographers to do with a subject who obsessively guards his privacy, declaring, "It is my ambition to be, as a private individual, abolished and voided from history, leaving it markless, no refuse save the printed books"? (Cowley 126).

However, poststructuralist contrarian Stanley Fish now argues that meaning, intention, and biography are inextricable, that we cannot free ourselves from the considerations of biography: "Biography is here to stay" (15). Though works of art exist independently of biographies, the works are illuminated by the lives. For Faulknerian biographer Richard Gray, Faulkner's works "brim with an often undisclosed biography that is at once personal and cultural" (Preface xi). Several critics see the life as the art and vice versa and illustrate the self-portraits rendered in Faulkner's works, suggesting that the masks or personae serve as vehicles for exploring constructions of the artist.

Each text as biography fits the essential definition of the genre, from the Greek *bios* (life) and *graphein* (to write), though each commits a kind of what Harold Bloom calls "misprision" or "misreading" (Preface xxiii). Bloom defines this term in relation to poetry, but it also has significance for the prose form in question: the later poet rewrites his precursor's poem, but "swerves" from the original (14). In order to understand each new biography, I argue that it will swerve from the father/biographer, Joseph Blotner, the "designated," "anointed," "official" chronicler, who is most likely seen as the first. Of comparable theoretical utility in addressing a succession of biographers—panning over the same material, with the occasional new addition or deletion—is Levi-Strauss's notion of discourse as *bricolage* (16). A *bricoleur* is a jack-of-all-trades, someone who puts things together out of bits and pieces (Levi-Strauss 17). Therefore, we can see each biographer as a *bricoleur*—putting together all the facts and fictions of the previous biographers, but giving the work a different slant, a new meaning. What we receive then is a collage. Thus layers of interpretation are the archeology of Faulkner's biography; we can never escape the inconclusiveness and uncertainties that accompany the studies of the writer's life and works. Consequently, the reader wrestles with the varying constructs of the biographers' imaginations, as well as with a multiplicity of reconstitutions of the subject's experiences.

In some ways, the biographer who works from life, as James Boswell does in his *Life of Johnson*, has an extraordinary advantage over the biographer who works from the document. But the actual presence of the narrator as a character in the biography, as in the case of Blotner's account, alters the nature of the account. At the very core of Blotner's biographical enterprise, the Urtext for all studies of Faulkner, is his own connection to his subject, a reflection of a father/son (Faulkner/Blotner) relationship. When

Faulkner became writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia in 1957, he and English Professor Blotner became close friends, sharing a love of aviation and war stories. When Faulkner died unexpectedly in 1962, family members (Estelle, Jill, her husband Paul Sumner) asked Blotner to write a "book about him as he really was" ("Writing" 1). Blotner faced the dilemma of being too close to his subject; he idealized his subject, writing with love and affection. So we must question if the emotional involvement on Blotner's part blinded him to the crucial elements of Faulkner's life and works.

Constructing Faulkner as America's literary icon of the twentieth century, Blotner spent ten years completing the two-volume biography. This became an intensive endeavor, and one major problem that confronted the biographer was how to avoid emphasis on the sheer mass of data at the expense of conveying the vital struggles that confronted his subject. One review at the time of publication criticized Blotner's biography for "academic overkill," the inclusion of far more facts than we need (Newman 98). In defense of Blotner's impressive chronological account, however, I argue that biography tends to be regarded as a rather mechanical process of arranging information so that it tells the story of a life in a sort of assembly-line fashion. The literary biographer often prefers the security of the conservative, fact-gathering approach to finding another kind of order to define a "monumental" life. With his meticulous attention to details, Blotner does the "stone-cutting," providing a mine of information and critical insight, laying the foundation for future biographers of Faulkner.

Not contesting the prevailing views about women that defined Faulkner's world, Blotner swerves from the issue of Faulkner's misogyny. For example, just as, typically, Faulkner's works focus on male protagonists, Blotner reads *Sanctuary* from a patriarchal ideology infused with masculine assumptions and relegates Temple Drake to a subordinate role. One weakness of Blotner's biographies is the gap in his analysis of Faulkner's treatment of real women and the assessments of his fictional women. Whether or not Faulkner acts as a misogynist remains a hotly debated subject, but scholars agree that Faulkner's creation of women characters, such as Caddy Compson, Lena Grove, Joanna Burden, and Addie Bundren, attests to Derrida's belief about woman as art: "It is impossible to dissociate the questions of art, style and truth from the question of the woman" (366). Clearly, for Faulkner, art is connected with the "question" of woman. For example, Blotner relates that when the novelist began *The Sound and the Fury*, he decided, "Now I can make myself a vase like that which the old Roman kept at his bedside and wore the rim slowly away with kissing it" (570). Here the female body is linked with the vessel or art. Blotner politely tries to maintain a neutral position regarding women, saying he would like to believe that Faulkner's "overall view [of women] is as he stated it, that he admired women" ("Life

and Art" 5-6).

Blotner, like many of his contemporaries, sidesteps issues about race relations in Faulkner's life and works, reflecting the view Toni Morrison charges critics hold: "American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of . . . African Americans" (4-5). Instead of emphasizing the repressive social order of the South, with its heritage tainted by slavery, Blotner stresses, for instance, sentimental background about Caroline Barr ("Mammy Callie," the Falkner family's mammy). We wonder why Blotner doesn't comment on whether or not Faulkner feels considerable guilt about the inhumane regional attitudes that made Caroline Barr first a slave, and then the poorly paid servant of a white family that demanded in death that she be laid in the segregated portion of the Oxford cemetery set aside for blacks (Wittenberg 193). But Faulkner pays his highest homage to Caroline Barr when he dedicates *Go Down, Moses* to her in 1942, through the portrayal of the tiny and indomitable Mollie Beauchamp.

One of the purposes of biography is to offer the "why" of the artist's work, and Blotner, in the opinion of some critics, neglects an explanation of Faulkner's peculiar genius. Michel Gresset complains that as we read Blotner's biography, we find ourselves in the "works and days, not in the Work, nor even, in spite of many quotations, in the texts" (5). However, I argue that Blotner's epigraphs (perhaps following the example from Richard Ellmann's biography of Joyce), point to the double bind, the rub of biography: how closely does the artist write himself into his art? In fact, Blotner begins his foreword to the two-volume work by asserting,

> This is meant to be a biography of William Faulkner's works as well as of their creator; since each element of them was in some sense a product of his total life experience, I have tried to present the life as fully as possible. Because he drew more extensively on family and regional lore than any other major American writer, I have treated these backgrounds in detail. (vii)

By prefacing each chapter of his biographies with quotations from Faulkner's writings, Blotner indicates the link between the work and the life. For example, Blotner's opening epigraph is from "Sepulture South: Gaslight": "I was not only the oldest but a boy, the third generation of oldest son from Grandfather's father" (Faulkner, *Uncollected Stories* 451). Here Blotner points to an obvious genealogical connection between the short story's boy and the novelist.

Biography and biographical criticism have commonly been treated as "conservative, if not reactionary, generic formations, as defenders of the cultural status quo and therefore unlikely agencies of change" (Epstein 2). But from a postmodernist perspective, William Epstein affirms that biography

is a vital contemporary "arena of dispute" in which important issues are being contested (2). This is so, according to Epstein, because the narratives of biography and biographical criticism are "life texts," powerful and influential discourses situated at the "intersections of objectivity and subjectivity, body and mind, self and other, the natural and cultural, fact and fiction" with which Western civilization has theorized the representations of everyday life (2).

If Blotner's biographies construct a Faulkner for an age before emphasis on the importance of feminism and race, Williamson's life story dives into the arena of dispute with his examination of the fabric of miscegenation in Southern culture. Whereas Blotner weaves a Faulknerian romance, Williamson, a distinguished historian of Southern race relations and racial ideologies, radically deconstructs the Faulkner family myth, claiming that the founder of the Faulkner patriarchy, "Colonel" W. C. Falkner, had a "shadow family" in his back yard in Ripley, Mississippi around 1864. Biographer Williamson's research makes a documented claim, plausible, yet not definitive, that Faulkner's ancestor fit a pattern in antebellum slaveholding that Williamson calls the "shadow family," described in his book on miscegenation, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (55-56). In this situation, Williamson explains, "the slaveholder had a white family in the front of the house while he had a mulatto family in the back of the house" ("A Historian" 12). It is Williamson's calculated guess that Faulkner's great grandfather fathered a daughter, Fannie Forrest Falkner, with a mulatto slave, beginning a mulatto line of Falkners that continues to the present. We do not know whether Faulkner ever questioned if he possibly had black cousins, but we do know that one of the "great moral issues of his fiction—central to *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses*—is the white man's denial of the black man or woman who is his kin" (Kartiganer xvi).

Through the lives of Faulkner's ancestors, Williamson develops a detailed historical image of the world that constructed William Faulkner. One hundred thirty-eight pages, the first section called "Ancestry," of this four hundred thirty-three page biography, survey four generations of Faulkner's forebears, with primary focus on the "Old Colonel." In fact, more space is given to Faulkner's ancestry than to his fiction. Williamson's approach suggests that the selection of material determines the focus and meaning of biography.

The blurring of fiction and history informs Williamson's text. Admitting that he never found a document in which the Colonel acknowledged that Fannie was his daughter, Williamson nevertheless insists that the implications of such a possibility would have profound effects on Faulkner's life and work ("A Historian" 18). Critics give Williamson credit for filling a gap that leaves largely unexamined in most Faulkner biographies the black culture or the culture of racial mixing and/or crossing that produced

the artist who produced the art. Williamson's "Fannie Story" might give us a reading that transcends facts. However, one review of Williamson's biography calls it the most extreme example of the "demolition of the Faulkner family romance" (King 490). Yet Williamson's interest in the historical significance of miscegenation offers help in approaching "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses*, when he draws attention to how the sensitive youth Ike McCaslin gradually learns of his grandfather Carothers McCaslin's moral culpability and the evil of the slave-based system through the reading of his family's history in the plantation ledgers. The Old Colonel's past wrongs might have served as a source for Faulkner's exploration of incest, race, and miscegenation through the tangled genealogy of the McCaslin family.

Williamson's biography is characteristic of recent experiments in the form and illustrates how the task of reconstructing while deconstructing intensifies the difficulty of biography's factual nature. To read contemporary biography is to discover new ways of structuring a life other than by time since a biography can be built by an ideological pattern. Responding to shifting epistemological, literary, and cultural changes, biography has "replaced its attachment to chronology with themes" (Nadel 183). Though Blotner's detailed account seems enslaved to chronological order, Williamson chooses to deal with a crucial event in the life of Faulkner's great-grandfather, drawing on archival records and oral history, incorporating information Blotner omits. Scholar Robert W. Hamblin supports Williamson's argument, explaining that with the introduction of miscegenation in the biographies of Thomas Sutpen and L. Q. C. McCaslin, Faulkner may have been aware of the rumors of Colonel Falkner's mulatto offspring (125).

The strength of Williamson's biography lies in the presentation of historical examples of Faulkner's obsession with violence, incest and miscegenation, and sex that become in Williamson's skilled hands a vivid portrait of Southern culture itself. With an "irreverent skepticism" concerning Faulkner's inherited romantic legends, Williamson probes into "scandals, community gossip, and family secrets" (Doyle 618). As genealogist of the Faulkner family, Williamson exposes the distortions, biases, ellipses, absences, and avoidances of the family history. Ironically, instead of the revered community leader and Civil War hero, the image Faulkner perpetuates in his fiction, Williamson contends that Colonel Falkner appears to be more a Sutpen than a Sartoris. Williamson demonstrates how the Colonel's life, like Sutpen's, is marked by ambition and violence. A feud with a leading family in Ripley leads to the Old Colonel's killing two men. His life ends in violence, for he is shot down on the square in Ripley by Richard Thurmond, his partner in business (Williamson, *Faulkner* 57). Williamson further compares Faulkner's move from Mississippi to Virginia, in 1957, to Sutpen's

move from Virginia to Mississippi, linking the moves to the ambition to be an aristocrat (*Faulkner* 343).

Though Blotner's and Williamson's biographies of Faulkner seem to come to Faulkner from different perspectives, they both reflect the problem of "design" of which Faulkner himself speaks: "But I found out . . . not only each book had to have a design but the whole output or sum of an artist's work had to have a design" (Stein 255). Even with the numerous volume-length biographies on Faulkner that we have, Polk exclaims that we still don't have a "complete fix" on the artist, that he still remains "elusive for us" ("Was Not" 19). There will be other biographies because the man who wrote the books is a subject worthy of biography. Moreover, Faulkner's withholding of information about himself clearly opens the door to further biographical studies. The canon of the novelist's biographies, in the language of modern theory, "resists closure," and we will continue looking for new representations of the Oxford, Mississippi, genius and his cosmos.

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The Visual Effect in *All the Pretty Horses*

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Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* is one of the most fascinating coming-of-age novels in contemporary American literature. The novel focuses on its protagonist, John Grady Cole, a Texan cowboy who goes to Mexico with a dream to work with wild horses and search for his real being through his acquaintance with nature. One striking characteristic of the novel is the vivid descriptions of nature that produce the visual effect. McCarthy is a word-painter. In his descriptions, nature and the protagonist's feelings complement and blend with each other and thus reveal the author's vision in the relationship between man and nature.

On the relationship of man and nature, Wang Fuzhi, a seventeenth-century Chinese scholar, remarks,

> Whatever thing there is outside, there can be a counterpart in man's inner being; whatever emotion there is in man's inner being, there must be the thing outside [to match it] . . . . If we go through the things of the world, we will see that, whatever our emotion is, it cannot be without a suitable correlative outside. (Sun 660)

The central idea of Wang's remarks is that art does not just reflect nature. There must be a "suitable correlative" in what a writer describes. In other words, what a writer perceives by eye and depicts by hand is not an activity of simple transfer. This transfer should involve the perception and emotion found in the creativity of this perception as well.

By using Wang's remarks on the relationship between man and nature as a criterion, I select some descriptions of colors in *All the Pretty Horses* and analyze them in light of my understanding of their pictorial aesthetics and visual effect. Color is an essential element in painting, and the art of painting is to use color to produce a visual effect for aesthetic appreciation. McCarthy's descriptions of nature in *All the Pretty Horses* display a prominent pictorial quality through colors, as in this passage:

> Days to come they rode through the mountains and they crossed at a barren windgap and sat the horses among the rocks and looked out over the country to the south where the last shadows were running over the land before the wind and the sun to the west lay blood red among the shelving clouds and the distant cordilleras ranged down the terminals of the sky to fade from pale to pale of blue and then to nothing at all. (59)

In this passage, colors of the last shadows, the blood-red sunset, the sky that fades "from pale to pale of blue," and the dim cordilleras blend with one another to inject life and spirit into nature and present a pictorial beauty in a mysterious and serene atmosphere. This landscape, as Octavio Paz writes in his essay "Landscape and the Novel in Mexico," is "something that is alive, something that takes a thousand different forms; it is a symbol and something more than a symbol: a voice entering into the dialogue, and in the end the principal character in the story" (qtd. in Cheuse 146). This landscape, vividly described in *All the Pretty Horses*, attracts John Grady and Rawlins to start a talk:

> Where do you reckon that paradise is at? said Rawlins.
>
> John Grady had taken off his hat to let the wind cool his head. You cant tell what's in a country like that till you're down there in it, he said.
>
> There's damn sure a bunch of it, aint there.
>
> John Grady nodded. That's what I'm here for. (59)

It is plausible to associate John Grady's statement of "That's what I'm here for" with the pictorial description of nature. McCarthy's language is effective in its visual quality through color imagery. Thus, the effect produces the talk between John Grady and Rawlins, which displays their sensibility to color through their perception of nature.

Also, McCarthy's sense of color enables him to present the pictorial beauty of nature in changing lights and colors in a simple and smooth way. In his descriptions of landscape, McCarthy has a special fondness for sunset, for nature at sunset contains a poetic vision and bewitching power:

> Crossing the plain the next morning they came upon standing water in the bajadas and they watered the horses and drank rainwater from the rocks and they climbed steadily into the deepening cool of the mountains until in the evening of that day from the crest of the cordilleras they saw below them the country of which they'd been told. The grasslands lay in a deep violet haze and to the west thin flights of waterfowl were moving north before the sunset in the deep red galleries under the cloudbanks like schoolfish in a burning sea and on the foreland plain they saw vaqueros driving cattle before them through a gauze of golden dust. (93)

Here, McCarthy is immersed in his observation of the pictorial beauty in nature at sunset, and the most striking part of his description of the pictorial beauty at sunset is colorful. This colorful description becomes a background that offers an opportunity for John Grady and his friend to admire the country. This description also shows that "perception is the whole process of

awareness resulting from the stimulation of one or more of our receptors. . . . As we are stimulated the symbolic process is set up, and we give to the sensation meaning which is based on past, remembered sensations" (Capers and Maddox 60).

Therefore, what is perceived in nature is a concrete form that contains meaning. Here is a passage that offers us a glimpse of the sunset that embodies emotion:

> When they wound back up out of the glade it was already evening and the sun lay long in the grass and across the shallow swales where the land dipped in pockets of darkness. Small birds come to feed in the evening cool of the open country flushed and flared away over the grasstops and the hawks in silhouette against the sunset waited in the upper limbs of a dead tree for them to pass. (178)

The symbolic meaning is clear in this passage. What impresses us is no longer the cheerful colors but the "pockets of darkness" and "a dead tree" at sunset because at this moment Blevins is already killed by the police, and John Grady and Rawlins have to continue their way to jail. So, in John Grady's eyes, the visual images convey a hint of desperation and sadness and thus present a contrast between freedom and death: small birds flying freely in the air in contrast with the hawks on a dead tree in silhouette against the sunset. Empathetically, we can associate birds with John Grady and his friends and hawks with the police. In short, this description reveals a tragic feeling through the depiction of landscape; it is a landscape of the mind visualized at sunset.

In *All the Pretty Horses* there is an incantatory, long sentence that presents a peaceful and colorful atmosphere of freedom:

> That night he dreamt of horses in a field on a high plain where the spring rains had brought up the grass and the wildflowers out of the ground and the flowers ran all blue and yellow far as the eye could see and in the dream he was among the horses running and in the dream he himself could run with the horses and they coursed the young mares and fillies over the plain where their rich bay and their rich chestnut colors shone in the sun and the young colts ran with their dams and trampled down the flowers in a haze of pollen that hung in the sun like powdered gold and they ran he and the horses out along the high mesas where the ground resounded under their running hooves and they flowed and changed and ran and their manes and tails blew off of them like spume and there was nothing else at all in that high world and they moved all of them in a resonance that was

> like a music among them and they were none of them afraid nor colt nor mare and they ran in that resonance which is the world itself and which cannot be spoken but only praised. (161-62)

A reader may notice that McCarthy does not use the color of blood red in this sentence; instead, he uses colors of blue, yellow, and gold to depict John Grady's dream of freedom. Here, the symbolic process is at work in this dream filled with visual sensations; the colors are both vividly descriptive of nature and emotionally expressive of John Grady's longing for freedom. Therefore, the sensory quality of these colors is closely connected to the emotion of the dreamer and creates a visual effect that is spatial not only in John Grady's dream but in the reader's mind as well.

Furthermore, though this incantatory sentence is full of visual images, McCarthy does not limit himself to simply recording them. He sees through his mind's eye the feelings lying in these images that touch and move the reader sensually and emotionally. This sentence also proves that readers can be actively responsive to the observation if a writer skillfully puts his feelings in his description.

In this passage, McCarthy also employs stream of consciousness, an appropriate technique, to depict John Grady's dream of freedom. He produces a cinematic effect for the reader to see how John Grady's emotion flows freely among the horses. Stylistically, McCarthy achieves this cinematic effect by using

> a string of independent clauses joined by conjunctions, almost always "and." . . . This incantatory sentence contains twenty-two *ands*; multiple repetitions of the words *horses*, *run*, *flowers*, *dream*, and *resonance*; parallel structures; five negatives; three rhythmic appositives; three similes; and no internal punctuation. (Spencer 59)

We can also say that the visual images in this long sentence, though objective in form, can be called dream images with an expressive theme in John Grady's dream. In other words, they are creations of the mind and emotion that convey feelings visually and pictorially to the reader. When the visual images become dream ones here, they seem to provide a better understanding of what McCarthy intends to present so that the reader can adopt an aesthetic attitude toward these dream images. As a result, the reader sees what John Grady sees in the dream: colorful flowers blooming on the vast land and the cowboy running among the horses. In John Grady's eyes, watching all this fills him with a sense of freedom, though romantic and unrealistic.

With his deep observation of the pictorial beauty of nature, McCarthy shows a keen sense of color. Additionally, as a skillful word-painter, he is also good at using strokes of lines as another element to depict nature. Consider

this passage:

> He rode all night and in the first gray light with the horse badly drawn down he walked it out upon a rise beneath which he could make out the shape of the town, the yellow windows in the old mud walls where the first lamps were lit, the narrow spires of smoke standing vertically into the windless dawn so still the village seemed to hang by threads from the darkness. (257)

McCarthy depicts the scene in vertical and horizontal lines. The simple strokes of lines present a beautiful painting. Also, the technique of aerial perspective is applied here to display the gradations at dawn. McCarthy graphically depicts the distance viewed on a rise: the shadow of the town, the yellow glows in the windows, and the narrow spires of smoke threading above the village. He not only demonstrates a vivid description of perspective but also fleshes out the gloom and hope in John Grady on his journey.

In comparison with John Grady's love of horses, his killing of a doe implies his failure in search of his freedom and of his acquaintance with nature; it also shows that the relationship between man and nature is not a smooth one: "The sky was dark and a cold wind ran through the bajada and in the dying light a cold blue cast had turned the doe's eyes to but one thing more of things she lay among in that darkening landscape" (282). The cause of his failure originates from the human world. This failure, suggested in the "cold wind," "darkening landscape," and "dying light" shining blue, makes John Grady realize that, despite his free will to run away to Mexico to work with wild horses, he is still fenced in his own isolation with a feeling of loneliness surging within him:

> he felt a loneliness he'd not known since he was a child and he felt wholly alien to the world although he loved it still. He thought that in the beauty of the world were hid a secret. He thought the world's heart beat at some terrible cost and that the world's pain and its beauty moved in a relationship of diverging equity and that in this headlong deficit the blood of multitudes might ultimately be exacted for the vision of a single flower. (282)

In this passage, McCarthy describes a cold-hearted nature that John Grady must face and experience in order to better understand his position in nature and what life really is. Though still with a strong love of nature's beauty, John Grady begins to have doubts about nature because nature seems indifferent to his quest for fulfillment. This doubt shows that he is growing mentally mature in his understanding of nature and the world and has learned to see nature in a different way. His colorful ecstasy of nature has now faded into a new feeling of colorless loneliness. A careful reading reveals that a cold-

hearted, indifferent nature in this passage *is* colorless.

At the end of the book, the description of John Grady's riding at dusk presents a picture of solitude:

> The desert he rode was red and red the dust he raised, the small dust that powdered the legs of the horse he rode, the horse he led. In the evening a wind came up and reddened all the sky before him. There were few cattle in that country because it was barren country indeed yet he came at evening upon a solitary bull rolling in the dust against the bloodred sunset like an animal in sacrificial torment. The bloodred dust blew down out of the sun. He touched the horse with his heels and rode on. He rode with the sun coppering his face and the red wind blowing out of the west across the evening land and the small desert birds flew chittering among the dry bracken and horse and rider and horse passed on and their long shadows passed in tandem like the shadow of a single being. Passed and paled into the darkening land, the world to come. (302)

The depiction of the red color produces a visual effect and suggests what the color carries behind it. This recurrent color is cinematic. At first, the red desert and the red dust fade in with John Grady riding a horse, and the evening wind has reddened all the sky before him. The reader at this moment need not react sympathetically to this solitary riding in the red space. Then, the barren country with a solitary bull appears against the blood-red sunset. The color is thus easily associated with the sacrifice; and the solitary bull, with John Grady. The depiction of the desolate scene and loneliness with the blood-red sunset as the backdrop intensifies the sad and solitary atmosphere. The visual quality of imagery is again closely bound up with feeling. The third part is a crescendo of John Grady's vanishing out of this bloodredness and into the darkening world to come. His riding with the blood-red sunset shining on his face, though beautiful, is sacrificial and tragic. The red sun does not provide warmth and comfort; instead, it becomes a symbol of blood and resurrection.

This striking depiction of the redness of sunset, sky, and desert also creates an atmosphere of tragic beauty sensed by the reader. John Grady's riding on the horse through this redness is symbolic. His dreams are cruelly shattered in the bloody reality, and he vanishes into the darkness with only his horse and his shadow accompanying him. Yet his riding into the darkness may imply that John Grady is again on his journey searching for new life. He is alone, the shadow of a single being paling out of his own innocence and out of the reader's vision, but into "the darkening land, the world to come" and into the reader's speculation. He is no longer his former self; he has grown into a young adult who has gone through hard times to learn to see the world

more clearly. This ending suggests an affirmation of life. In this world and the world to come, no matter how hard life may be, the horses are pretty, the landscape is pretty, and human beings are pretty too. There is a promise in nature and in men waiting for John Grady or any other human being to discover.

McCarthy is a skillful word-painter. He takes the reader into a landscape that is barren and beautiful, a landscape that is aesthetically visual to the eye and the mind alike, and a landscape that reflects the complicated process of John Grady's physical and psychological growth.

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A Mapmaker's Dream

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Australian James Cowan begins his 1996 novel, *A Mapmaker's Dream: The Meditations of Fra Mauro, Cartographer to the Court of Venice*, with a short, signed chapter of introduction in which he claims that, while searching through a museum in Venice hoping to find "a batch of Lord Byron's letters, or perhaps a notebook" (xii), he fortuitously found a lost journal of an obscure, "sixteenth century" Venetian mapmaker, Fra Mauro (xii-xiii). According to the introduction, the text of Cowan's book is actually a translation of Mauro's journal, which is being presented in the hope that it will help us to understand a Renaissance conception of the world (xviii). Before *A Mapmaker's Dream,* Cowan was best known as a historian, a poet, a translator, and a writer of nonfiction works on the beliefs of Western Australia's Aboriginal population, so it is perhaps not surprising that some reviewers were willing to accept the claims of the introduction at face value and categorize the novel as nonfiction, with one reviewer, Ann Skea, calling the publisher to find out if she were reviewing an actual sixteenth-century journal or if she were "being subjected to one more post-modern trick." But more perceptive readers, such as Wendy Cavenett, recognized that Cowan's fictional recreation of Mauro's journal is a most contemporary work of philosophical dimensions, a work that searches for the intrinsic reality in which we envision ourselves and the worlds we live in.

Of course, it is really not necessary to call the publisher to determine whether or not Cowan's text is a translated piece of history or a work of fiction. Fra Mauro was hardly an unknown cartographer, nor did he live in the sixteenth century. His map of the world (or mappamundi) was completed in the fifteenth century, sometime between 1457 and 1459 (Webster) so that Cowan's textual references to the voyages of Columbus (1), the discovery of the Pacific Ocean in 1513 (5), and the mention of Australia (39) would clearly be historical anomalies if the text were not a work of modern fiction. History records that the first copy of Mauro's world map (which is about two meters in diameter, profusely illustrated, and centered on Jerusalem) was sent to the King of Portugal shortly after it was drawn and a second copy (parts of which are reproduced with acknowledgment by Cowan as the end papers in the hardbound edition of the novel) is one of the treasures of the Biblioteca Nazionale at St. Mark's in Venice (Gow). A scholarly account of Fra Mauro's mappamundi was published in 1806 by Giacinto Placido Zurla, a close friend of Pope Gregory XVI (Webster); and a region of the moon, which Alan Shepard turned into the first lunar golf course when he visited the region

in 1971 with Apollo 14, is named after Fra Mauro (NASA). Thus, Cowan has laced his text with the historical evidence of its fictionality. He has moved Fra Mauro from the fifteenth century to the sixteenth so that the great geographical discoveries of the sixteenth century and the new worlds that those discoveries revealed to Renaissance Europe could form the basis for the intellectual inquiry of his protagonist, a constructor of maps who is living in a world that is somewhat analogous to our world in its need to constantly redefine itself based on new and ever-changing discoveries. But rather than choosing to fictionalize a sixteenth-century mapmaker, such as one of Mauro's successors in Venice, Ferdinando Bertelli, or the famous cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), as his protagonist, Cowan has chosen Fra Mauro, for in his map, the cultural tensions of travelers' accounts such as Marco Polo's compete with and contradict accepted myth and the science of Ptolemy so that Mauro's map straddles the line between authoritarian late medieval and early modern empirical modes of conceptualizing the world (Gow).

Mauro's map is as much an attempt at constructing a coherent philosophical description of the world in line with Christian doctrine as it is a graphical representation of the spatial distribution of rivers, mountains, deserts, and kingdoms over the surface of the known world. Like most medieval maps of the world, Mauro's map is centered on Jerusalem, the religious and philosophical center of the Western tradition. The known world radiates out from Jerusalem to the far edges of the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia, whose edges are either icy cold or impossibly hot and inhabited by horrible creatures and the strangely deformed, morally defective humans who live beyond the influence of civilization and Christianity. But competing for space with the traditional monsters, Mauro filled his map with extensive blocks of text based on the empirical evidence of travelers, blocks of text that explained the cultures and religions of distant peoples and dismissed the monsters that traditionally inhabited the terra incognita beyond the known world as the stuff of fables and ignorance (Gow). Like the native maps of New Caledonia—which are designed to explain how the geographically distributed clans of the island are associated with their mythical ancestors through the mapping of dwelling foundation mounds and the paths between them with reference to the place of man's first appearance on earth and the entrance to the subterranean country of the dead—Mauro's map was less a guide to the physical world than it was to the spiritual world (Black 1). Mauro's map, then, was more than a simple attempt to depict the layout of the world in accurate spatial terms as modern maps attempt to do; it was an attempt to understand the values of others and the relationships that exist between the various cultures and peoples distributed over the known world for the purpose of better understanding man's place in God's schema.

It is for the modern construction of such a map that Cowan has us join his fictional mapmaker in his scholarly cell in the monastery run by the Order of Camaldules at San Michele di Murano in sixteenth-century Venice (3) as he listens to travelers' tales and puzzles over distances and routes as he attempts to make sense of all the disparate knowledge he collects from his informants (7).

Very early in his interviews with the explorers and travelers who come to him to tell of their experiences in far-off lands, Mauro realizes that there is an ineffable quality to each traveler's experience that defies easy communication, something of a "life-changing encounter" with the other, an encounter which, like prayer, defies logic but represents the true significance of the experience (16-17). A merchant describes what he perceives to be a miracle in a non-Christian world: parrots feeding on honey flowing out of the tomb of an emperor in Delhi (17-18). A scholar tells of his experience communicating with the spirit of an Egyptian mummy in which he believes that the spirit of the mummified priestess entered his own consciousness, thus providing evidence of spiritual life after death that transcends dogma (21-24). A wandering Jew expelled from Rhodes by the invading Turks reveals that Nature has taught him that the same divinity that animates the birds animates his soul (26-29) while a Jesuit missionary returns from Borneo convinced that in that far-off country God spoke to man through the language of birds rather than the language of scripture (113-18). This same missionary also reports how an experience with a people called the Lochac taught him the naked body could be a kind of sacred landscape, a place of worship, when it is used as a spirit map to connect the individual with the place of his or her conception (121-24). A Greek merchant reports meeting a very moral and religious people, the Yazidis, who believed in the essential duality of being, the inseparability of good and evil, and thus worshiped the devil as the honest embodiment of true virtue (89-92) in a culture which accepts the truth that Blake described in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

While none of these travelers' reports contribute the locations of coastlines or deserts or mountains or trade routes to Fra Mauro's map, each of them must somehow, Mauro believes, find a place on his map if he is to have any success at all in rendering a true picture of the world as it is. In the manuscript of a seventh century A.D. Syrian *Illuminate*, Simon of Taibutheh, Mauro had learned that knowledge can be acquired only by uniting the senses of the body with the faculties of the soul, for

> knowledge of theory is implanted in nature . . . and is divided each according to the character of the things that it embraces. . . . A part of this knowledge is revealed by reasoning and the construction of logical sentences, and a part of it is apprehended not by words but through the

> inward silence of the mind. A part of it extends towards visible natures, and another part rises toward natures that are above natural vision. (53-54)

In other words, Mauro's map of God's schema and man's place in that schema can be realized if Mauro is able to "see in his mind spiritually all the visible things that are seen materially by others" (55), that is, his informants, and then solve the problem of how to represent his resultant understanding of God's plan on the two-dimensional surface of his map (53-58). As Mauro considers his sources, he realizes that each of his informants, "whether he wandered in the desert or tramped through the jungle, was able to change the nature of space for himself" and in telling Mauro of their experiences, these travelers taught him that "it is impossible to seal off the spirit from its place of growth. The world and the spirit are somehow conjoined. They both thrive on one another as a seed does in the earth" (133).

The process of synthesis, though, is highly subjective even though it is based on the raw material of objective observation. While we might think that an accurate map could be produced if the truth could be approached from every possible perspective, Mauro realizes that there is a sense in which "each one of us has the right to speak of his coastline, his mountains, his deserts, none of which conforms to those of another. Individually we are obligated to make a map of our own homeland, our own field or meadow. We carry engraved in our hearts the map of the world as we know it" (131). As an astronomer from a distant place called Eran-Vej feels compelled to tell Mauro, his fellow-traveller,

> some men in living in this region believe that each person views the earth in accordance with his capacity. He cannot see it otherwise. His perception is like glass, which, as we know, is made from a mixture of silica and potash. These ingredients are dense and opaque, and are transformed into clarity that we recognize as being the substance of glass only by the introduction of heat. In this way the dross is removed. Fine glass is made as a result of careful attention to the process of fusion. According to the sages living in the region, our own vision of the earth is fashioned in much the same way. It, too, can be made as transparent as fine glass, provided the right means are used. The reverse may also occur if certain impurities of thought are not eradicated. (135-36)

Thus as wise men contemplate the world, they fully realize that they are really contemplating themselves, for each person's world "has been created to reflect each person's deepest image of themselves" [sic] (135). Mauro completes his map, fully realizing that the map is a portrait of himself in which all the

diversity of the world is intimated on the parchment, even as the diversity of the world is intimated within Mauro, the cartographer, the scholar, the philosopher, the seeker after the knowledge of man's place in the cosmos (144-45).

So Ann Skea's suspicion that *A Mapmaker's Dream* was a "post-modern trick" does have a basis in fact (though some would more likely characterize the book as a New Age trick designed to proselytize the unwary). Like postmodernism itself, Cowan's text asserts that there is no such thing as a true mappamundi. At least there is no such thing as a mappamundi which details an objective world "out there" that is measurable, localizable, and bounded by definite outlines we all agree upon, such as the maps we purchase from Rand McNally or pick up at the Mississippi Visitors' Center to guide our way to conferences on the Gulf Coast. Instead, Cowan's novel, again like postmodernism itself, adopts a constructivist epistemological model which operates on the theory that all cognitive operations are theory dependent, especially our perceptions of the world (cf. McHale 1-2). Cowan's novel attempts to show how the scraps of data that Mauro collects from his informants do not exist independently of the theory that he uses to apply the data to his map. As Mauro draws his map, incorporating all of the facts he has collected from his informants, he finds, as Nelson Goodman observes, that all of his facts are as theory laden as he had originally hoped his map would be fact laden (96-97). Thus, in Cowan's novel, as in postmodernism generally, it follows that the stories told by Mauro's informants are not to be evaluated as objective truth, for that is irrelevant; rather, they are to be evaluated in terms of their explicit level of detail, their intersubjective accessibility, their applicability to the intended purpose of the discourse (that is, constructing the map), and their attempts at empirical objectivity where that objectivity is a horizon to be approached rather than an absolute method (cf. McHale 2). Curiously, Cowan does not believe that the constructivism of his narrative method, the largesse of exotic information that Mauro's informants provide, is characteristic of the modern experience. Wendy Cavenett quotes him as saying, "Y'know, that always seems to me what our age is not about, the sense that there is this largesse out there that you need to take into yourself as a subjective being, as a 'Mauro.'"

I suspect that Cowan's comment has more to say about the spirituality of our materialistic age than it does about postmodernism or the relevance of his novel's constructivist epistemology to the present day. Alan Dix, a computer science professor at England's Lancaster University argues that the world of Cowan's Fra Mauro, as "a navigator of information landscapes" mirrors our experience in the modern world of cyberspace, where our "world is shrunk and warped by the threads of information that interweave our daily lives" (2). He goes on to argue that text in messages on

mobile phones, smartcards, the internet, the entire flow of information in cyberspace does more than just connect and reconnect distant points all over the world, that it, in fact, layers our world with "whole new virtual geographies" (3). Unlike Fra Mauro's world, however, a world which, in the literal sense at least, had an undergirding of physical reality real enough that a Roman soldier in Palestine writing to his family in Gaul knew that Palestine and Gaul were actual places and that the letter would be physically transported across land and sea to reach its intended audience, Dix argues that "our modern cyberspaces do not have this undergirding" so that it is our job to take on the task of Fra Mauro, to create electronic spaces, to make the map, to "choose and shape the fundamental structures that others use and with which they construct their own virtual reality" (4).

Even without its postmodern structure or its application to the virtual realities of cyberspace, James Cowan's *A Mapmaker's Dream* is an insightful work of contemporary fiction that successfully investigates our received perceptions of the world. As the fictional Fra Mauro interviews the explorers, adventurers, missionaries, and pilgrims who bring fantastic tales to his cell in Venice, we begin to see with him that the world is made up of much more than continents, islands, seas, and kingdoms: the world's geographical features also encompass a complex landscape of beliefs, aspirations, and dreams. As Mauro's world expands, the reader's world expands with it as we realize the profound implications for our lives which are inherent in the theoretical relationship that exists between our imaginations, our attempts at representation, and the ultimate nature of reality, whatever that may be. Through the eyes of his fictional *Illuminate*, Cowan reveals the subjective nature of intrinsic reality and argues convincingly that we have a very human and formative role in constructing the world in which we will live, and in influencing the worlds in which others will live.

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Writing Nineteenth-Century Fiction in the Twentieth Century: Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*

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Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) is one of many examples of twentieth-century fiction that revisits the nineteenth century and the Victorian novel in particular. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and A. S. Byatt's *Angels and Insects*, to name a few, all raise questions about nineteenth-century fiction and postmodernism, what it means to write fiction about the nineteenth century in the twentieth century. What is it about nineteenth-century fiction—whose seemingly totalizing narratives appear ultimately to reaffirm the values of family, nation, and individual identity—that makes it congruent with twentieth-century ideas of fragmentation, difference, and absence? And is nineteenth-century fiction as stable and secure in its representations as we may be inclined to think?

Carey's novel returns to Dickens's *Great Expectations* and the nineteenth century by telling Jack Maggs's story. Transported for life because of his criminal activities, which were encouraged and supported by his adopted mother, who found him as an abandoned baby, Maggs secretly returns to England to see *his* adopted son, Henry Phipps. Maggs has raised Phipps, using his own fortune made in Australia, to the status of gentleman. Maggs becomes a footman in the household of Percy Buckle, who acquired wealth through a sudden inheritance. Working in Buckle's strangely chaotic household, Maggs meets Tobias Oates. A writer looking for popularity and success, he offers to help Maggs locate Phipps if Maggs will agree to let himself be hypnotized, for the transparent purpose of curing Maggs's tick. Using mesmerism, Oates steals memories from Maggs for his great novel, *The Death of Jack Maggs*. In addition to the main narrative of Jack Maggs (which spans about three weeks in 1837), we learn about Maggs's life through his own narrative and through a subplot concerning his involvement with Oates. This subplot also focuses on Oates's relationship with his wife's sister as well as on the process of writing itself.

The parallels among Carey's novel, *Great Expectations*, and Dickens's life are many: Maggs as Magwitch, Phipps as Pip, the themes of class, identity, and human redemption, Dickens's own troubled childhood, his relationship with his sister-in-law Mary Hogarth, to name a few. Yet by focusing on the character of Jack Maggs, writing and metafiction, and empire and colony, Carey creates a text that in postmodern terms emphasizes self-reflexivity and self-legitimization, challenging what Hilary Schor suggests are simplified assumptions about the Victorian novel's "account of individualism,

society, and representation" (325). The homogenous narrative of *Great Expectations*—in which Magwitch redeems himself through goodwill and in which Pip repents his prideful actions by embracing Magwitch and Joe and reunites with Estella, at least as a friend—is fractured in *Jack Maggs*. Here, identity and English society become less stable entities, open to interpretation and displacement. The novel's postmodern perspective uncovers what the nineteenth-century narrative would seem to write over and absorb into an integrated vision of society and individualism that reaffirms moral and ethical values as well as social order.

Jack Maggs's eventual return to Australia at the end of Carey's novel, which reproduces a happy ending characteristic of nineteenth-century narratives, raises a critique of postmodernism, namely its seeming lack of any large sense of stability, truth, or justice. Australia can be viewed as an alternative to England's rigid and alienating class and societal structure, suggesting the possibility of justice and truth. Or Jack Maggs's move to Australia and recreation of his life (in part through speaking and writing) becomes representative of, in Jean-François Lyotard's words, a language-game, characterized by the "agnostics of language," that serves individual desires for knowledge (and truth) by establishing between players its own rules and outcome (10). Because the language of empire is at odds with Maggs's identity, he reshapes "Englishman" as an idea and identity within the discourse of narrative characterized by playfulness, contradiction, and ambiguity. *Jack Maggs*'s "happy ending" ultimately underscores that ambiguity, linking it to nineteenth-century fiction, which offers a more complicated representation of the individual and society than is often assumed.

Whereas *Great Expectations* tells Pip's story, Carey's novel focuses on Magwitch's counterpart, Jack Maggs. This reversed perspective is actually signaled by Pip (and Dickens) in chapter 40 of *Great Expectations*, in the famous allusion to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: "The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me" (354). Estella, too, is pursued by the creature who creates her, Miss Havisham. The implications of these reversals of the Frankenstein myth, however, are never directly developed in the novel. Neither Magwitch's nor Miss Havisham's stories are foregrounded in *Great Expectations*, but *Jack Maggs* gives Magwitch's twentieth-century counterpart his own voice, allowing him to reveal the circumstances that shaped his life and to articulate his thoughts about his identity and place in society.

We learn about Jack Maggs's life mainly through the letters he writes to his adopted son Henry Phipps. Abandoned when three days old, Maggs is

found by scroungers and rescued by Silas Smith, his benefactor, who takes him to Mary (Ma) Britten. Known as the "Queen of England," she delivers babies and performs abortions. This is the basis of his "great expectations." Under her care, Maggs endures hardships and is indoctrinated into a criminal life. Unlike Oliver Twist, he is unable to preserve his goodness and lacks a supporting father-figure like Mr. Brownlow or a sympathetic friend such as Joe in *Great Expectations*. Silas Smith's benevolence is predicated on Maggs's usefulness to him as a criminal as he grows older, and his "lessons," Silas's reference to his education, are directed towards these ends, an ironic reversal of the scene where Pip teaches Joe to read. Often hungry when small, Maggs is rewarded for his criminal successes with hearty or substantive meals. Ma Britten believes in the virtues of meat. As throughout much of Dickens, withholding food signals a keen moral injustice.

They eventually move out of the slums to nicer quarters. Maggs meets Sophina, Silas's daughter, with whom he develops a close relationship since they become criminal partners for Silas and Ma Britten. The two compose a picture of innocence depicted in Blake's *Songs*, presented in Maggs's narrative with similar Blakean irony and satire. Unlike Pip and Estella, they care for each other and are secretly married—at least in their minds—but when Sophina becomes pregnant, Ma Britten performs an abortion so that she can continue to work with Maggs. We eventually learn through the first chapter of Oates's book that Sophina is arrested for theft and sentenced to die, and when Maggs tries to save her by admitting he actually stole the silver, he is transported to Australia.

Jack Maggs's narrative highlights an alternative life to mainstream society, one with lessons about the tenuous nature of an individual's ability to maintain or recover his goodness and identity and about a society that offers various forms of communal acceptance. Criminality has its own codes and rules, its own structured, coherent existence beyond proper society. As D. A. Miller notes in *The Novel and the Police*, "To confine the actions of the police to a delinquent milieu has inevitably the result of consolidating the milieu itself, which not only stages a normative version of crime and punishment, but contains it as well in a world radically divorced from our own" (4). Maggs's life opposes the ideal representation of life in the Victorian novel that emphasizes social and cultural values of perseverance, faith, and collective identity. As Ma Britten simply states about Maggs's success as a criminal: "It is what he was raised to be" (117). And Maggs says about Phipps, "Then I see this little boy just starting out on the journey of his life, a very kind boy, with all his God-given goodness still undamaged. And I thought, so must you have been, Jack, before you were trained to be a varmint" (287). Growing up in an enclosed world, set apart from the middle-class world of Percy Buckle and Tobias Oates, Maggs becomes trapped in a

world he cannot escape from. After transportation and acquiring wealth he returns to proper society, yet the nature of delinquency, as Miller points out, links each world to the other—here middle class and criminal, England and Australia. The values of middle class society are defined and reinforced through protest against delinquency and (self) policing against it. As long as Maggs hides his true identity and accepts social class values, proper society will accept him.

Unlike Pip, who recognizes his pride and arrogance, eventually demonstrating his gratitude and love, Maggs's adopted son Henry Phipps, spoiled by his class status, cares only for his own comfort and tries to kill Maggs at the instigation of Percy Buckle, partly because Phipps is weak and partly because he does not want to acknowledge his father. Although Maggs writes to him, Phipps, with the help of a tutor, writes back "lies" to appease his "father." There is no redemption nor any mention of what happens to Phipps after his failed attempt to kill Maggs. According to James Bradley, "Phipps, unlike Pip, meets a bad end, his opportunity for rebirth missed, while Maggs, unlike Magwitch, returns to the colonies and lives out a (relatively) happy and prosperous life with the spirited and intelligent Mercy Larkin." The reassurance of Pip's story is undercut. Redemption does not occur for Phipps, and Maggs's happiness lies outside of England, on the outskirts of the empire in a penal colony. His dreams of England and of re-entering society legitimately are as false as Pip's dreams of being a gentleman. Though Pip still has a collective identity as an Englishman, Jack Maggs will always be an outsider, albeit generally happy and prosperous. Permanently trapped by his past, Maggs must legitimize his identity elsewhere.

The relationship between Jack Maggs and writer Tobias Oates points to the novel's intertextual and metafictional interests and to the postmodern notion of narrative. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard explains that the postmodern "puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable" (81). He further states that the postmodern writer produces texts that "are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determined judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for" (81). Carey's novel strays from its "parent text" by humanizing Maggs's autobiography and by using a narrative strategy that questions the "solace" of the parent text's narrative framed as *Bildungsroman*, tragicomedy (Dickens's term), or modern fairytale.

Lyotard's notion of "unpresentability" suggests that narrative or art

is a condition rather than an outcome (Lucy 67). Both the self-narrative that Maggs tells through the letters he writes to Phipps and Oates's novel *The Death of Maggs* create different versions of Jack Maggs. These suggest the powerful force that stories play in constructing identity and culture and how narratives, as "utterances" that make up language games, to quote Lyotard again, "can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put . . ." (10). Because language serves the various purposes of people, particularly within different cultures, in addition to describing the world around them, communication often lacks a common measure. According to Lyotard, the agnostic nature of language games allows interaction in the form of a contest where each party advances his purpose. This game-playing allows flexibility and multiplicity of ideas and identities and, furthermore, preserves the integrity of players and cultures. Grand narratives that prescribe human action and meaning create mass identity that leads to stasis, boredom, and alienation. Jack Maggs's narratives (both oral and written) belong to a language game against the discourse or master narratives of proper society and English culture that have defined and relegated him to the status of criminal and outsider. Moreover, the representation of Australia serves as a competing alternative to England.

In addition to the intertextual play with *Great Expectations*, *Jack Maggs* contains a metafictional emphasis as part of Maggs's language game. Maggs writes his story because he wants his son to have a record of his life, and in doing so he rewrites Phipps's life by placing himself in it. Phipps writes back, participating in Maggs's "fiction," but only to appease him; the sentiments he expresses are lies concocted with the help of his tutor. The self-reflexive nature of his narrative reveals Maggs's conscious desire to recreate a personal fiction of his son the gentleman in which he plays a role. At one point Maggs says, "As I write this now I see what I did not see then . . ." (171). Although he is specifically referring to an impression about Tom, his adopted brother, Maggs also points to his own desire to recast himself so that Phipps will know his story.

But just as the story of his son the gentleman proves false, so does Maggs's identity as an Englishman. He cannot live vicariously through the innocence he perceives in young Phipps; he cannot recreate himself imaginatively through Phipps. The stories that shape his narrative about his family and relationship with Sophina—he claims to still "embrace" her as a man—are memories that sustain him but do not form one grand narrative that neatly incorporates his past and present. His past and present are separate narratives, each revealing different, incongruent versions of himself. To let his memories be forgotten is to lose his identity or become trapped within one created for him, but, at the same time, trying to integrate them into a whole is to create another static version of himself and participate in a fiction that

cannot be sustained in the world of the novel. Phipps acknowledges that he cannot live like a gentleman, a life created for him, and this leads to his eventual violent confrontation with Maggs.

The author Tobias Oates's desire to steal Maggs's memories in order to write his novel—*The Death of Maggs*—presents another fictionalized account of Maggs's life, this time a public one, to which Maggs clearly objects. Oates's purpose as a writer is to be commercially and publicly successful, and by using mesmerism under the guise of helping Maggs, Oates attempts to steal his thoughts to attain his ends. In Oates's fictionalized account, Maggs represents the dangerous "other"—the phantom that Maggs "sees" and associates with Phipps—who belongs on the outskirts of the empire. The novel's emphasis on storytelling again reveals how narratives, whether personal or public, shape individual and collective identity. In *Great Expectations*, Magwitch's story is controlled by Pip the adult looking back. While he accepts Magwitch as an individual, the narrative is uneasy in its view of him as an Englishman. Tobias Oates's illicit relationship with his sister-in-law, which results in her attempted abortion (ironically through the help of pills provided by Ma Britten) and death, collapses his life; creating yet another fiction, he blames it all on Maggs. In *Jack Maggs*, then, a number of narratives converge but never assemble into a unified whole because one larger narrative cannot sustain them all nor account for the individuals contained in them.

If the intertextual and metafictional emphasis in *Jack Maggs* underscores its postmodern status, the novel's conclusion seems to align it with the totalizing narrative associated with the realism of the nineteenth-century novel. After his violent and near-fatal encounter with Phipps, Maggs realizes that he can never be an Englishman, that his dream of a son and of becoming a gentleman is a fiction. He returns to Australia with Mercy Larkin, Percy Buckle's maid who loses a finger by blocking a bullet Phipps intended for Maggs. She becomes a devoted mother and wife to Maggs's existing children and to the five more the two have together. They create a stable, prosperous family structure. This ending echoes those of many nineteenth-century novels in its depiction of order and stability, of bad made good, of personal redemption.

Yet like nineteenth-century novels, its ending also contains unsettling tensions. Mercy Larkin, "who had always been impatient about 'rules,'" becomes a disciplinarian, imposing social and cultural notions of order and control. But, most notably, Maggs and Larkin live in Australia, which offers them a freedom and identity denied them in England. Mercy's imperial desire for discipline and Maggs's apparent complicity suggest the transplantation of "English" values. Seemingly, this order is needed because Maggs's children have been in trouble with the law and because Australia itself needs some type

of "civilizing" rule as a penal colony, yet the very freedom offered by its "outside" status is threatened by the imposition of colonial order. Concepts of law, justice, and truth are placed into question. According to Lyotard, justice occurs within micro-narratives or language games that avoid totalizing truths and are allowed to play out, avoiding judgments that label, restrict, and confine. The very flexibility and playfulness of Maggs's language games prevent him from being permanently categorized, of remaining labeled by English society. But what about communication among these different games, narratives, or communities? Is Australia always to remain a penal colony, a permanent "outside" that reinforces "English" values? Is it a matter of complete consensus or no consensus at all? Is there not some middle ground? What happens to truth or justice if it remains at a micro order? if no connections between language games can be made?

Carey's narrative raises such questions about the nineteenth century and its representations of individuals and empire. *Great Expectations* raises many of the issues Carey reframes, suggesting that nineteenth-century fiction, particularly the Victorian novel, is not as complicit in the depiction of a secure realism as one may think. But the Victorian view of society was infused with optimism and hope as well as confusion and doubt. Victorian writers believed in the possibility of an integrated society, in a sense of truth and justice that transcended individual concerns and desires. *Jack Maggs*, as a postmodern text, suggests this possibility may lie only in separate narratives that try, in a postcolonial effort, to preserve an indigenous culture against the desires of colonial ideology. Maggs's return to Australia reveals that this culture is potentially confining yet also liberating. The mantra of postmodernism may be "to think globally and act locally" (Klages par. 38), perhaps a neat balancing act that leaves important questions still in play. The fact that Oates's book about Jack Maggs's life is finally published after Maggs's death suggests that the "truth" of his life's story is still being told.

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POETRY

Kendall Dunkelberg
Mississippi University for Women

This is not a poem . . .

This is not a poem
this is a bird in your rear view mirror.
This is a thought rising
from a field of harvested corn
heavy from the weight of kernels
missed by the combine.
It finds a current of warm air
above the highway. Lifts
to a safe altitude, finally.

Perhaps you are on your way to your lover.
Or maybe you're just out driving.
This makes you pull over,
this half-formed thought, black
wings in the periphery of your vision.

This is a blackbird.
This is a cornfield.
This is a fine day
for a drive.

Polio

I imagine it this way:

Driving east from Des Moines
on Highway 6, which will later be I-80
in a convertible roadster, probably a Ford,

the luggage strapped to the side
seems almost to brush the corn,
and the nausea felt just outside Joliet

is blamed on the road
the loss of his land legs
or driving too fast.

Later, in the Chicago hospital
my father reflects that he's come
halfway across the continent.

Now he'll have to give up
the dog he found,
his mechanic's uniform . . .

Four Songs for Data Processing

(1)

Some days I just want to
have a nervous breakdown.
Some days I just want an
epileptic fit, to lie in the street
shaking for hours till they take me away
to a room somewhere: white
all cool, quiet, and white,
where someone will feed me,
where someone will bring in an IV,
a catheter, some oxygen, an enema,
where someone will hook up the tubes.
And I can be quiet, think for a while
Some days I want to stop living this lie.
Some days the tubes are already there.
You just don't see them.
Some days I hide them too well.

(2)

I want a Pentium Processor
for the motherboard in my brain
I want the fast chip
fastback
sidekick
superkey.
I want 640 megabytes of RAM
expansion memory.
Sit me down
with a hand
on the keyboard.

Let's consider ways
of reducing downtime.
With appropriate intravenous feeding,
teeth become unnecessary.
Perhaps an RS232 serial port

could be installed.
With direct neural access (DNA)
operator error may be
significantly reduced.

I want a Pentium Processor
for the motherboard in my brain
I want the fast chip
fastback
sidekick
superkey.
Sit me down
with a hand
on the keyboard.

(3)

Out there in the countryside
they have a talking Coke machine.
It knows the time of day.

Out there in the countryside
they have a bank machine, says,
"Please wait
while your transaction
is processing."

Out there in the countryside
people talk
and they have a machine
that dispenses live bait.
Worms and crawdads for fishing.

(4)

202023

1.69

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20202020202020202

6666669 9669 6969

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202020 (Invoice number)

1.69 (Shipping amount)

1-8-88 (Shipping date)

Any errors?

Not on the screen.

Patricia Waters
Chattanooga State Technical Community College

At the Food Lion Today

At the Food Lion today I was loading groceries
into the car when I noticed this old guy,
tall, smoker thin, bleached out blue jeans faded work shirt
not tucked in, white crew cut, white jaw stubble,
eyes bluer, paler than his jeans. He is pushing
a grocery cart, loaf of white bread,
case of beer, natural, lite. He pushes this cart
across the parking lot, doubles back, weaves
between, around cars, up one row, down another,
when I realize, he can't find his car. Ted, 70-something
sacker, comes out to gather stray carts, I almost say something,
but wait, watching the old guy steering his beer and bread
past the same cars he's been by, two three times now, looking,
he is not anxious, just focused on his search,
when at last, on the far side of the lot, a car, mud swiped,
windshield grimed, windows rolled down,
sitting by itself pulls his cart like a magnet,
his face shows nothing but the still searching look, no joy, no
relief,
he puts the beer in, throws the bread on top, leaving the cart
to its fate in the through lane, he pulls away and I wonder
if he will still be driving tonight, riding down familiar streets,
looking for something he can't quite remember
but knows he is supposed to know, like a voice, like mother's
kitchen,
like the way first light comes into the room,
and who am I to talk, who searches dreams, stars for meaning,
who looks for home, no less lost for knowing so.

At Twilight I Am Driving

At twilight I am driving out of Harlan County, Highway 221,
snake of a road taking up good bottom in a valley so narrow,
not a hundred yards across, bramble, slag, trash, trailers now
with a cover of blackberry blossom so white, so thick,
overrunning, impossible to contain this brief wild beauty.

At twilight a woman walks her garden's dark tilth, closely,
closely she regards soft green shoots,
corn, tomatoes, and bean of August, summer of this coming
winter.

At twilight a man shoots a basketball through a netless hoop,
that thumping, ringing thud on metal, on backboard sounds so
lonely,
so right, his arms still out there in their longing reach,
lost to me when I round the bend.

At twilight two blond whitepale children play in a trailer, doorless,
open to whatever wants to come in.

At twilight a man crosses the road to feed what is in the pen.

At twilight the little baby Jesus churches lie still, parking lots full;
along this road crosses say Jesus is coming soon,
how soon I come upon the woman dressed in white, walking,
her silver-white hair so neatly up, she carries a white plastic bag,
her feet delicate as deer on the narrow shoulder.

At twilight coal trucks take their Sabbath rest,
hydraulic beds point toward heaven, tomorrow
the Bledsoe Coal Corporation will fill its chutes, same iron gray
as sorrow, as coal pulver lying along the road, covering
all who pass, who bear it away, a life digging, black diamonds
falling,
tumbling downward of their weight to lightless heaps.

At twilight a woman watches from her porch,
in her lone lifting hand the knowledge I have passed.

Mike Spikes
Arkansas State University

Holes

Driving the night
down 55
somewhere south of Jackson,
I tune in Art Bell
who's talking about holes,
holes that appear
on people's land
out of nowhere,
fathomless holes,
abysmal holes,
mysterious
unavoidable chasms
they can't account for.

A farmer,
Art says,
found one in his field
that sank
several rows of corn,
so profound
he couldn't find
the bottom,
tried for days
to fill it up
but failed.

Daybreak.
The station fades.
I begin to wonder:
Is it worth it?
Will she be at home?
Will she answer
when I knock?
Does she live there
anymore?

Focus

I see too well. Everything's so focused
it gives me a headache. I can't
not recognize you at a distance. The page I'm reading
won't smear. Signs are clear
as bottled water.
Sharp edges of things hurt my eyes.
Unless I wear thick glasses,
nothing's ever dull.
There should be an operation for this,
a lasar surgery
to uncorrect my vision. Please,
will someone cut my cornea
so I don't have to see so straight?
I long to wake to the world as a blur,
without any help
make my furniture fuzz, soft and comfortable,
like evening rain or an old flannel shirt.
And when I rise
and look in the dresser mirror,
may I, like normal men my age,
misunderstand what my face has become.

Robert Collins
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Overpass

Some teenage boy from town must have gone
to almost any length to publicize his longing,
hanging upside down in darkness to scrawl
Jennifer Loves Jason Forever, probably getting
it backwards, trying to assure her love would last
as long as he was certain his would by sealing it
in words on the concrete abutment of the freeway
overpass I've just driven under, his best friend
Bubba cursing and grasping him desperately
by the feet until the county magistrate arrived.
They all reside in the small town several miles
beyond the beltway stenciled on the exit sign,
which might as well be the dark side of the moon
as far as contact with the larger world's concerned.
There football reigns on Friday nights in autumn,
and veterans of foreign occupations promenade
their Purple Hearts in the Independence Day Parade.
His pimpled face cratered like a dropped pizza,
the boy teeters on the brink of flunking out
of high school and races his rusty red Camaro
down forlorn county roads, crazed by boredom
and hormones, biding his time till a mechanic's
job opens up at the local garage. The girl itches
to get pregnant *asap* with the first of many children
whose given names will all begin with the letter "J"
as though they're hamsters or gerbils, barely seventeen
and her figure gone to fat already. I can't recall
the last time I hung suspended in the dark, giddy
with adrenaline and danger, head over heels to declare,
however foolishly, my love. As I leave the overpass
behind, I'm sure the fate of Jennifer and Jason
is sealed already too. They're divorced or living
with her parents, trailing an expanding brood
of whimpering dependents through the aisles
of the local Wal-Mart or Target every weekend,
love lost somewhere during many sleepless nights
in endless quarrels about formula and diapers.

Over half my life ago, a terrified pubescent boy,
like Jason I believed such feats of ingenuity
and daring as scrawling my name or any words
I'd written in hard-to-reach places might guarantee
that love would last forever. I had to win the girl,
who wore my high school ring wrapped in red angora,
the fattest panda at the Firemen's Fair by knocking
over bottles, tossing rings, or sinking free throws.
It wasn't long, however, before we both discovered
just how fragile love can be, how bitter words
uttered in the heat of anger can banish love forever
though no word we can say will make it last.

Elegy for a School Boy
for Billy Pierce

Not the toiling White Sox southpaw
who'd almost pitched a perfect game,
but the most loyal knight of the altar
and best all-around athlete in the parish,
president-elect of the Boys' Sodality
and straight "A" student who rose at six
each morning to assist with daily mass.
The last time we younger kids saw him,
he was ringing the final bell after school
let out on Friday, signaling the last bus
was about to leave for the weekend,
wanting no sobbing fourth grader left
behind alone. Monday morning he was
absent, spoiling his sterling record
of perfect attendance, gone for good,
kicked in the temple playing tackle
football with his friends after church
on Sunday. At first, it had seemed like
a practical joke, the kind they were used
to him playing—sprawled at the goal line,
having broken into the open, holding
his breath, his parted lips turning blue,
at the slightest sign of genuine concern
sure to jump up quickly and score,
spoofing all of his buddies once again—
but neither the boys who loved him
nor the ambulance one of them sprinted
to summon was able to revive him.
The battery of tests the coroner performed
during the autopsy disclosed a tiny,
inoperable tumor, green and bitter
as an unripe walnut, embedded deep
in his brain. Had he somehow survived
his injury that Sunday, he would've died
young anyhow, not much consolation,
but just like Billy, who came as close
to being perfect as any boy we ever knew,

to find a way in the end to spare those
of us he'd left behind the greater grief
of watching him die slowly when we'd
come in time to love him that much more,
that final bell still ringing in our ears.

The Blue Flames

Like the name emblazoned across the back
of our indigo jerseys, we burned cool
and faintly gaseous—greenest ball club
in town clad in dungarees and sneakers,
and no serious threat to our primary rivals
and cocky cross-town nemesis the Fireballs,
who stormed the field as if they owned it,
dazzling in crimson pinstripes and red caps
embroidered with streaks of yellow lightning,
bleached and creased as any barnstorming
nine of the old Negro circuit.
We came from
the other side of the tracks, losers who lived
in fear of not making the first cut every time
we tried out for the more successful squads
because we couldn't hit or throw or catch
under the critical glare of a manager's gaze.
Warming up together and after every put-out,
they whipped the ball around the infield,
earning an advantage before a single pitch
was thrown. We muffed lazy pop-ups,
pegged relays into the dirt, and booted easy
grounders even in practice, while the Fireballs
bided their time, eager to feast on our pitching
and fatten their stats—homers, steals, and RBI's—
a breather on their schedule better than even a bye.
With their side up, they always selected coaches
to stand at first and third and wave toward home
the lengthy queue of rapidly circling runners
they anticipated having while we rode the bench
and laughed about blowing signs and going
0 for August. Between innings, Harry Barry,
our catcher and spiritual leader on and off
the field, removed his cracked glass eye
(where he'd just lost another suicide squeeze)
and smoked unfiltered Luckies out of sight
beneath the bleachers.
They took the field always
aiming to win while we strolled to our positions

on the diamond, pinching unfinished Winstons,
accustomed to falling behind and being routed early.
Hence, it really came as no surprise when summer
ignored the paltry back fires we'd purposely set,
hoping to cool off our opponents and ease the pain
of losing by acting like we couldn't've cared less,
leapt the fire wall we'd hastily erected between
July and August, dreaming of the long vacations
we'd take when the season ended, and burned on.

Steven P. Deaton
Holmes Community College

Drunk at Four in the Afternoon, Trying to Understand Jesus

New rain on hot pavement, and I rise
opening my arms and eyes skyward.
Something about standing in a crucifix
leaves you wide open to heaven;
your feet slice earth towards hell.
These are not wings—your arms—
you know full well you won't fly.
This is a waiting stance—a silence
to conjure those who do take flight
up to the One who makes rain of grace
fall and steam of surrender rise.
And ten thousand angels flutter wings
between—in this canyon we call life.
This is why I fling my drunken arms
like the Son, my Brother, who waited
and died, spread like butcher's meat,
not knowing, but hoping, He would rise.

The Old Poet Teacher, at a Loss, Trying to Justify The Ways of Buck Owens to the Skeptical Freshmen of a Small Liberal Arts College Somewhere up in Connecticut

I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
. . .
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
. . .
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.
—Milton, *Paradise Lost, Book I*

I know, I know
What can I say?
Yep, there's a cliché
of the worst kind,
the images are predictable
and sometimes downright silly,
the rhyming is telegraphed
and so many generalities . . .

And if you post-pubescent
post-post-modernist poet wanna-bes
dare to try it, I'll fry your asses in hog fat
and send you screaming down
into the abysmal hellfire darkness
of the academic f-word!

You think I'm kidding.

But something about Buck smells like coffee,
feels like late night truck stops
where the band has downed so much antacid,
so many Pall Malls, so much vegetable soup.

It burns like a good, cheap Bourbon
and has the texture of duct taped microphones.

I don't know how else to say it.

But "Tiger by the Tail" moves me

more than Ezra Pound
who could never spin and pop
at 45 revolutions per minute
whirling out the Bakersfield swing
of liquid steel and shuffle . . .

Oh you great American poets
I like you best when I
don't know why I like you.

So why Buck Owens?
His iniquities weigh heavy
against him and he is cursed.

I haven't the foggiest.

Maybe it's the polyester
draped over the warmth
of a tube mic two inches
from the centrifugal force
of a fluttering Celestion cone
hanging on for dear life
under the silver glittering grill
of a Fender Twin.

So much hum. So much crackle.

Oh you great American poets
you have moved me
but so few of your poems
are better than cigarettes.

But with his calculated, frozen silly grin
and a red, white, and blue guitar
as big as Whitman's America,
Buck Owens fills me
like naphtha from a Zippo
and the initial crackle
of tobacco and wrapping
recoiling in little orange flames

and damn it's good

Ahhh, Buck, you gap toothed silly bastard,
dammit you're good.

Theodore Haddin
University of Alabama at Birmingham

That Neighbor

That neighbor who clear-cut his trees
on land next to mine
denuded the soil of trees
has changed his mind
after cardiac surgery five bypasses
now he calls me from his new deer stand
in the bush Hey I photograph the deer
instead of hunting them
and Hey my trees are up again
sure enough whatever was left
has turned to trees
and though he shouts in fun
he still does not name a single one

Discover or Sears

Discover or Sears, she said
from the cashier's stand
discover *what*, I said
your *card*, mister, what do you have?
cash, I said I pay cash
we like the cards now, she said
and I thought how she could not make
change and could not remember when we paid
cash and when I handed over the cash
she said your name please and your address
and have you bought here before, what's your zip?
and what's your social security number
when were you born and let me have your
driver's license what kind of car do you drive
are you married do you have kids
lady I said I'm paying cash I don't
have to answer all these questions
and she said the computer won't accept your payment
without this information it has to have it
but I'm paying cash I said can't you just take
the money we're not allowed to do that she said

Since My Accident

Since my accident
I knock a lot of things
on the floor
when I open
the refrigerator door
something always falls out
from having been
too stuffed in
like a mind on a wish
not to care
filling itself like a room
full of newspapers
books unanswered letters
calling everything into itself
with a coldness it can't remember
the nerve along the blood
going into numbness
it's not the spilled milk
I remember any more so long ago
or even the sugar flying everywhere
from the cupboards of the mind's
hiding place that would put me
back in a childhood scene forever
it's the suddenness now
with which my wrist strikes
a glass and the split-second
I turn to see it go off
knowing I can't catch it
before it breaks

Jo LeCoeur
University of the Incarnate Word

Los Gatos No Duermen **(Cats Don't Sleep)**

Around the makeshift platform
at the Harvest Moon grade school fair,
the mommies and the daddies,
silent as eavesdropping on prayer
or opening a letter not addressed

to us.

Sandwiched between big square amps
(*Los Gatos No Duermen* on a homemade tape),
a breezy see-through skirt
over sequin tights catching the light,
throwing it back

at us.

Open faced, shut eyed,
small palms in sync with ragdoll torso,
gone into sacred space,
small crescent smile
for something inside herself,

not us.

Tethered to a cord of driving rhythm,
she is the dance.
Until the music stops.
Her eyes open fullmoon size
startled back to makeshift platform earth.

And us.

Ours now. Mama's and Daddy's.
We clap, cheer, curfew, groundrules,
anything to hold her.
We know how short our time is
before the cats come back.

Sanctuary

I look everywhere for you, the house, the street, the city.

I walk the desert, red rock, flat fact mesa
broken now and then by a steep ravine.

Sun low, I find a narrow oasis of green and can see you
in the stubborn streak of cottonwoods clinging to a miracle
of desert stream leading down the valley of long shadows.

I follow you to a mound shaped adobe church perched
aslant as if to flyaway home, crooked on its roof
two cockeyed steeples, one housing a slategray bell.

You hold the dark churchdoor for me, cross your chest
with holy water, and are blessed with cooing from the rafters.
Though you check for pigeon droppings before kneeling
in the circle of pilgrims praying around a hole cut in the floor.

You roll a pinch of sacred dirt fine as talc
between your fingers and taste it. Or rub it on your skin—
not letting me see where you touch for healing,
still listening by yourself to the bell that tolls for you.

Your words fold in among the soft prayer sounds round
as full-bodied grapes rolling the air as if one mumbling
tumbling tongue had found its music, found sanctuary here.

Until I hear your offbeat missing.

What I'm facing after prayer is a wall of crutches,
hand-tied crosses, one long long braid of hair.

I'd cut mine too—I'd scratch the desert—
to believe you've stepped outside to smoke
behind the church, air white with cottonwood drift
under a tilted sky, your zigzag laugh to offset
the cottonwood sighing at seeing the sun lay down.

I look everywhere for you. Find you in a line of green
out of red rock desert. Rising.

[In 1814 Catholic church officials granted permission to build *El Santuario de Chimayó* over a well of sacred earth to house a crucifix unburied there near a stream sacred to pre-Hispanic Tewa Indians who believed this area to be a place where male and female, living and dead, are not separated from each other.]

Randy Blythe
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Breeding

Down the list of Old-World Blythes
and the other names involved:
Thomas, Maples, Chandler—poor whites,
dirt farmers, immigrants who filtered through
Appalachia to the foothill named Alabama—
the blood that made me searched
out a place where a plow laid open grayblack soil,
where women who came from home and momma
were fine to look at in the sunlight
and opened themselves favorably at night,
in the houses by the tracks; and grew, in time,
to know heat and bitter hardscrabble like a lover
until they were numb enough not to care who—train
or man—rumbled through last.
The men wore big moustaches
and drank white liquor from rusty-lidded quart jars
hidden in rotten fenceposts or in the forks of trees
so their wives wouldn't find them,
and talked drunk-talk among themselves about May 1863
when the great Forrest rode through with 500 men
and buffaloed the yankee Streight and his force of 1500
into surrendering.
Sober, the same men
worked, as if work were the only command God saw fit to give
in a place where tilling ground behind a mule
felt like hell's work in heaven.
Down through the blood,
hightoned as revival preachers, coursing
through the old-countrymen and women
who left their humane British Isles
and were forced to scratch in the dirt like chickens
and whelp farmhands called children;
the former Englandmen
with their civilized quirks, freckles, half-assed red beards,
and sons too willing to fight in wars,
who came and kept the Indian names of places
while killing the Indians or running them to Oklahoma;

who came and cleared the pine hills they used to blend into
in places like Wright's Bend and Woodville, Murrycross
and Goose Pond, until there aren't so many hills or pines
left now, just parks—industrial, trailer, state,
baseball—and it comes down to me,
and at night after I wash the red dust
and diesel fuel off I turn toward the mirror
and try to read the scraggly glyph of man-hair
covering my chest, and gaze at the bags under the eyes
and the puzzled expression I must have been born with.

My Job

What's left of Coats Bend's drunk reel,
it's tearing itself from itself in the dark

to wake in a place where sunlight weighs
on the chicken house no longer here. Tornado.

Rag flap. Roof-tin cuff for a pecan trunk. Johnboat adrift
in the pasture. Breath all but torn from a battered

white hen tottering in the red road
by where the barn learned to fly.

Lower beak broken, one eye a dirty cloud,
slight *scree* left in the lungs.

The blue pickup rumbles up. My father
hands me the twenty-two.

Taciturn

In wind colder than bitter,
when you hugged yourself
and stamped your feet and called "HOOOOEE!
'mere calf!" until she came ambling
out of the slough and went to her mother,

or when the cottonsack was heavy
as much because it was wet as because it was full,
but you'd taught yourself long before
not to think about unfairness
in a world where an outhouse
and kerosene lamps were luxuries,

or even when, on the hottest July days,
given milk and biscuits or a cold sweet potato
in the field swimming in cicadas' ratcheting,
without even a minute to catch your breath
because Grandaddy could be quick with his razor strop
and the fight against weeds never ended
and there wasn't time to go back to the house
and sit at the table in the cool kitchen,

you looked up at the sky, shirtsleeve to forehead,
and breathed the fresh earth through your nose,
squinting off through haze that looked
like the downturned note of a dove
for a second before falling-to again
with the click of the hoe's steel on pebbles,
and in that second you noticed Grandaddy,
your brothers, and you all standing quiet,
not because it was decided or ordered,
but because even though you all felt
the breeze nice now on your sweat-covered faces,
none of you would say.

James Fowler
University of Central Arkansas

A Brief History

Bradford must have winced
to include young Thomas Granger
within his chronicle of trials
in the wilderness.

Sad deviance, this farmhand
who knew "a mare, a cow,
two goats, five sheep, two calves
and a turkey."

Grilled, he picked the very
beasts from the fold;
first they, then he was slain,
per Leviticus.

How could such seed
have rooted in New England
unless blown from the docks
of old England?

Later immigrants—they've always
spoiled a virgin scene.
But Bradford admits
a different lust

for cattle and private spreads
undid Plymouth prime.
The faithful splintered along
fence lines.

Their generations would follow
a manifest god of plenty
to the very ends of
the continent.

And heaven help whoever screwed
with their property.

Sitting Bull's Last Stand

He would not act the part, could only be
Himself, a lightning rod for white unease.
They booed him, paid him to sign photographs,
But must have sensed he'd never yield the wild
Romance that Cody's show made safe as blanks.
What need to play at killing Custer's troops?
He'd fought the actual battle once for all.
Then his people trekked north to Canada
To live in peace; the bison herds stayed south.
One by one the High Plains tribes were herded
Onto reservations; at last his own
Returned—to rationed life at Standing Rock.
With wives and children thin on meager land
He took the fifty dollar weekly job
And hoped to press his people's case as well.
The Great White Father gave him audience
But walking city streets his heart told him
No justice waited Natives when the whites
Refused to share their wealth among themselves.
He gave his coins to awestruck hungry boys.
At season's end, weary of crowds and talk,
The constant talk that white men ply before
They speak with guns, he left the booming show.
Hard candy, oyster stew, Annie Oakley:
These he would miss. As tokens Cody gave
A white sombrero and a gray trick horse.
Because the hand that offered had the feel
Of friendship, guileless match of word to deed,
He took these treasures back to Standing Rock.
Five years later, the morning native police
Arrived to carry out the white arrest
Of Sitting Bull, a vicious fight broke out
Between Lakota braves, killing the Chief.
Perhaps thinking itself back in the show,
The gray trick horse sat down on its haunches
And waved a hoof above the riddled corpse:
More poised than rampant, a fitting farewell.

Joe Amoako
Delaware State University

Defenders of the Defenceless

Praise is yours
Glory is yours
Adoration is yours
And indeed gratitude is yours
For you're the defenders of the defenceless

Yes I'll shout your praises on mountain tops
Your praises will be heard on the Atlas mountains
Your glory will be sung on Kilimanjaro mountains
And I'll shout my gratefulness to you on the Rocky mountains
For you're the defenders of the defenceless

The Volta River will be vibrating with my voice of adorations
And when the waters of the Nile hear your praises
They'll send the message across the Atlantic waters
And the waters of Delmarva will give you your praises
For you're the defenders of the defenceless

May the sun brighten your days
May the moon lumine your nights
May the stars twinkle your darkness
May your paths be sprinkled with petals of roses
And may your efforts be crowned with tons of success
For you're the defenders of the defenceless

Written for Dr. Nwosu, Dr. Scott King, Dawn (Secretary of English Dept.), Miss Belcher, Miss Walker, and all the people who defended me at the dean's office when I was attending a workshop at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Written at 8:00 a.m., on Nov. 23, 1998 in my restroom, 321-204C W. Broadstairs Place, Dover, Delaware, U.S.A.

Marth Minford-Meas
Xavier University

As Frogs

What good is it to be a frog if we can
Be mowed down by legendary mowers, leave
Last night's full-throated song hanging
Over a bog? Why learn to blend at all, sing
In chorus, when we could extract

The Aeschylean favor that abets stepping
Out. Though we behave as if we had been
Here forever with accommodating skins,
Inner coolness, with eyes bulging for
Osmosis of *Yahoo,* we have forgotten

Former periods, have blocked the tyranny
Of various Rexes. Untimely, without fearing
Staging consequences, blithely wearing
Blackout lessons as portal spots, we forswear
Lounging in savory begonia shade until

After we have taken to that invitatory grass
In spite of shaking, rumbling: that terrible
Noise. Vaguely recalling Aristophanean
Comedy, miscued, we try to hop back.
Ancestral frogs have chimed

Of this very thing: of clipping, tearing *flat*
Into wide leaves. In soft shadow, we mimed
Low-country variegation, tracked
A uniformity we had suspected. Scavenging,
Striking out in full sun exposes

Enfeeblement in the face of din, an inability
To escape grief's cutting edge. We repose,
Dying here in wrinkled irony of Euripides
For defying status quo, daring, uncovered,
To try to get to one place from another.

FICTION

Caller ID

Dorothy Shawhan
Delta State University

When I was growing up, we had no TV at our house and barely had a telephone, just an old black one from the sixties that still worked, but no answering machine, princess phone, call waiting, nothing like that. This was not because we couldn't afford to keep up with the times, though my father was a literature professor at Centenary College and didn't make much money. In fact, as smart as he is, my mother always felt he could have made a lot more money and should have, but she loves him and never said this to him. She never said much about our technologically-challenged household either, though she would disappear into the neighbor's house at certain times of the day that coincided with "As the World Turns" and "General Hospital." She finally did talk Dad into a washer and dryer, but a dishwasher was out of the question as Dad liked to wash dishes by hand and have the children dry. Then when other families were watching "Mary Tyler Moore" or "All in the Family," we were sitting on the porch listening to the crickets, or doing homework, or playing the flute, or he was reading to us from the classics—*The Odyssey* or *Moby Dick* or *Walden.*

In fact my brothers and I soon were old enough to understand that *Walden* was directly responsible for our family's being so embarrassingly backward. My father's specialty was American literature, Thoreau particularly; in fact he was something of an international authority on Thoreau. And always one for practicing what he preached, Dad aspired to live simply, to strip life down to the bare essentials. "The man was born out of his time," my mother would say. "He should have been a pioneer living in a log shack and growing his own beans—except he would have starved." Which is true, because as idealistic as my father is about the simple life, he can't really *do* much. He is notoriously unhandy, managing to botch up almost any task in house or garden, except the dishes. But he was determined not to botch up the children, and Mom went along with his ideas of family life, not all bad though I never would have admitted it at the time.

"What is *wrong* with you?" my brother Henry asked him tearfully when denied a hand-held calculator like the other children in his math class had. "Don't you know what century this is?"

"'Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things.' You must not be dependent on the machine, Henry, but learn to rely on your mind. 'My head is hands and feet.'"

Henry put his hands over his ears and ran from the room as fast as his feet would take him. It set him wild when Dad quoted Thoreau. He called

back over his shoulder, "I hate Thoreau. He was a . . . a . . ." I held my breath at this point, wondering what synonym he would come up with, knowing that some of the possibilities would send my father to bed. He took all our transgressions so personally.

"He was a silly *ninny*. He couldn't get a job and would of starved without Emerson."

Instead of being pleased that ten-year-old Henry had an opinion on the biography of his life's work, Dad looked stricken and repeated "ninny?" several times before retreating up the attic stairs to his study.

Given this kind of upbringing, we were predictable in the paths we chose. Henry is a junior at Georgia Tech studying computer engineering. David is a day trader making tons of money and living in a big suburban vinyl house wired with every conceivable machine including 36" televisions in every room. He even has one suspended over his Jacuzzi. "If that thing falls you'll be fried on the spot," my father warned him darkly. "It's an electrocution kit." Just driving by David's house makes Dad gloomy. The house to him is an icon of insatiable materialism, of all that is wrong with the country, and in the possession of his own son, or rather, as he would put it, his own son possessed by the house.

And I, though an English major in her junior year at the time, I fell irretrievably for Brad Cates, an unabashed techie. How I loved him. He was a computer lab assistant and helped me through any number of excruciating episodes with endnotes and bibliographies. He was a senior, hired already in a high-paying job in information systems technology. I loved the control he had over his world, the sexy way he held the computer keyboard in his lap like he was driving a car, the way he could tell in a glance what I had done to screw up the word processing program, even the way he took charge of the TV remote control to skim the channels. Here was a man perfectly in tune with his times, and I couldn't get enough of him. I was content just to sit and watch him at the computer. The speed with which his hand moved the mouse thrilled me, the intensity with which he fixed his brown handsome eyes on the screen filled me with desire.

When school was out for the summer and he had started his new job, he asked me out. Then in a few weeks he came to our house for dinner for the first time. He and Henry hit it off immediately.

"Of course, the confusion is because the terms are often used interchangeably, but the serial port and COM port are really two different things," Brad said confidently.

"Right," Henry said, "The COM port communicates with the serial port or other devices."

"Now do you use Open Database Connection or Active X Data Objects to set up a data source for Active Server Pages?"

"Well, frankly I prefer a Java Database connection."

"You boys aren't eating anything," Mom said. "Emily, pass those beans around again."

"Ah, Java," Dad said, "yes, incredible Hindu culture from tenth to fifteenth centuries, coffee, Java man, homo erectus."

After a silence during which Henry and Brad stared at Dad as if he had just stood on the table and stripped, Mom jumped up to pour more coffee, and the boys resumed their techie talk, much to my relief. Dad made a few more efforts to join in, tell a story, but soon gave up and fell silent. When Brad left, he said, "Does your Gentleman Caller speak English? He might as well have been speaking in tongues from all I could tell."

"You're just cross because you like to have the floor," I teased him, kissing him on the top of his bald head.

"Do you like him?"

"Dad," I said, "I think I'm in love."

As the summer wore on, Brad and I became an item. I was about to begin my senior year as an English major with teacher certification, and he tried hard to talk me into a different line of work. He cited low teacher pay, backed up with stats he pulled off the Internet. He said teachers no longer were respected in our society. He wanted me to switch to business. I thought he was right, but I also knew I could never make it in any field where numbers were required.

"But, Baby," he said, "I can help you with the math. I'm just thinking about your future." I was thinking about it too, but I was thinking about a future with him where love would overcome all, even low pay. Besides, I liked being an English major.

His first gift to me was a cell phone, a shiny red one with silver trim. "Now keep it charged and with you all the time," he said. "I want to be able to say I love you any time of the night or day."

I melted. I thought that was absolutely the sweetest thing. But the first time he called turned out not to be so sweet. I was in Professor Foote's History and Grammars of the English Language when the thing rang, and at first I didn't realize it was mine, so it rang again, and again. Professor Foote stopped lecturing, he paled, he glared, he looked as though fire might shoot from his nostrils any minute. By then I had realized the offending phone was mine, and I was fumbling it out of my purse and trying to turn it off.

"Do not dare answer that thing in my classroom," Professor Foote said in a controlled voice, though not controlled enough to suppress the rage simmering just below the sound waves. "Get it out of here right now. And if you ever, ever come back in my class with it, consider yourself permanently dismissed."

"Those old guys are dinosaurs," Brad said when I stumbled into the

hall, figured out how to answer the phone, and tearfully told him what happened. "You'd think anybody teaching about the English language would understand the importance of modern communication systems."

"Didn't you know I had a ten o'clock class?" I asked him when he picked me up that night at the dorm.

"Sure I knew, Angelface," he said, kissing the back of my neck. "I've got your schedule in my Palm Pilot. Wouldn't you rather talk to me than listen to some old mossback lecture on grammar?"

Of course I had, but then I had to graduate too, and I couldn't do that without Hist Eng Lang. I was vaguely troubled by the feeling that I was being asked to choose between the love of my life and Professor Foote. And enthralled as I was with the brave new world of modern technology and its handsome representative, I turned that phone off during classes from then on. Brad never commented if he knew, but I felt guilty somehow as if I were cheating on him by rendering the little red phone incommunicado, and so I telephoned him after each class and tried to be especially agreeable.

On the week-ends I had traditionally left the dorm on the Centenary campus and gone home to Mom and Dad's, and I continued to do that, except that I spent more and more time with Brad. "What could you and the Gentleman Caller possibly talk about all that time?" my father asked worriedly, picturing, I'm sure, torrid love scenes in Brad's apartment. The truth was, most of the time I watched him perform some maneuver on the computer, many more maneuvers than on me. He was either sitting at his PC, downloading images from his digital camera, programming his VCR, setting the timer on his coffee pot, recording a new message for his answering machine, and so on. He liked for me to watch him do these things. I think he had illusions of transforming his nineteenth century girlfriend into a techie too.

Brad also harbored ideas of dragging Dad into cyberspace. "Dr. Fuller, have you taught a class yet through distance learning or on-line?"

Dad looked at him as if he were an alien just landed from Mars.

"The new educational technologies are going to change the university as we know it, don't you think so?"

"The machine will never replace a live teacher in the classroom," Dad said politely but firmly as he left the room.

Instead of discouraging him, Dad's avoidance behavior just egged Brad on. He brought articles, he gave demonstrations of Thoreau on CD-ROM, he offered to help Dad design an on-line course on the Transcendentalists. He was sure, given Dad's reputation, it would be a best seller. He wanted to build Dad a web page. Besieged but unbowed, Dad held firm but not without complaint. "Honey, your Gentleman Caller may mean well, but he's a bit out of control."

"No, Dads, Brad is completely in control. It's you and me that are out of step."

"He's a technological zealot, Emily. Be careful."

But opposites attract don't they? I would humanize my techie and he would technologize me. We would be a perfect blending, our children embodying the best of past and future, Americans for the twenty-first century. Somehow when he was around, though, he seemed just about perfect to me, and I was happy for him to be in charge. By Christmas I was ready to turn body, soul, future over to the Gentleman Caller to control as he would. I fervently hoped for a ring, but instead I got another phone, this much smarter and able to do more functions than I could ever learn. The base looked like a flying saucer bristling with antennae and buttons with obscure abbreviations under them. The phone itself reared from the base and stayed there on its hind legs unless you wanted to talk and walk around the house with it. On its tummy was a small screen, a feature I did understand—caller ID. Any caller was identified immediately on this screen. "So if it's somebody you don't want to talk to, you'll know before you answer," Brad explained.

Our first big fight came that Christmas too. One night I went out in the country, away from the lights of town, with Mom, Dad, Henry, and David, to look at the stars, especially the star of Bethlehem, a family tradition from childhood. I hadn't thought to tell Brad that I'd be gone, he had tried to call, got no answer and was furious. He was even madder because when I came in, I didn't check the caller ID or the answering machine and call him back. "Shows how much you value me and my gifts," he fumed. I had to go to some lengths to coax him back into a good humor, and from then on I reported every move. How sweet to have someone care this much.

I began my student teaching after Christmas, and Brad got very involved. He taught me to give PowerPoint presentations, and often came to the school to sit in on my classes to help if I needed him. His being there made me anxious, made my stomach hurt, but my supervising teacher was impressed with him and thought me fortunate indeed. "Not many men would take that kind of interest in his girlfriend's work, Emily. You're a lucky girl."

Valentine's Day and lucky me got my heart's desire, all I wanted in life. Brad gave me a ring, a nice diamond, though there were a few tense moments when I couldn't open the program that told me where it was hidden. "I've got a surprise for you and all the clues to lead you to it are here," he said, setting me down in front of his computer. But I couldn't find the file, and Brad was increasingly testy. "Remember, we went over that last week. Now think it through!" Finally I found it, my little chunk of ice, in an ice cube in the freezer. He also gave me an engagement gift; his mother had insisted that an engagement gift was required. It was a heavy gold bracelet shaped like a coil of rope. The image of a slave shackled by the wrist surfaced oh so briefly,

but was chased back to the unconscious by the joy of pledging undying love and loyalty.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised, but I was, when a month later I mentioned to my fiancé my long-laid plans of going on a graduation cruise with my college roommate and suitemates, and he was shocked, hurt, but mostly furious. You would have thought I had told him I was entering a brothel in New Orleans. "How could you even consider it? You're an engaged woman now."

"But we've planned this since freshman year, and I've paid my deposit."

"Women just go on those cruises to hunt men."

"They do not," I said crossly, wishing I had my Mylanta. "They go to see the world, and to shop and eat."

"And drink too much and dance with men, and worse."

"We're going to go snorkeling."

"Ha!" he said, as if that confirmed his every suspicion. "I know all about those guys who take girls snorkeling."

This futile conversation continued for a couple of hours, but the upshot was he had such a fit I forfeited my deposit, gave up the trip, disappointed my best friends. "We understand," they assured me, but I could tell they didn't. And I didn't either really, but then doesn't love always call for sacrifice?

Mom said jealousy is a bad sign and that I should nip such behavior as Brad's in the bud while there was still time. But here's a woman who can't have a television and whose husband sits with a book most of the day, so what does she know? I climbed the stairs to Dad's study hoping for some sympathy, but he said, predictably, looking at me over the top of his glasses, "'Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought.'" Dad is not one for travel, at least the physical kind. "As for the Gentleman Caller, I don't like him."

"Dad! He's my fiancé."

"I know that. I am trying to reconcile myself to robot grandchildren."

No help from this family, I thought, and retreated to my room with a terrible stomach ache. But sometimes help comes when you least expect it and from the least expected source. The week my friends left on the cruise, Brad climbed out from behind his computer and turned the full force of his attention on me. We picked out china and stainless patterns at the jewelry store, we shopped for a wedding dress, we lined up a band and a caterer, we called on the preacher, we chose invitations. He made appointments for me at the dentist and the gynecologist. Usually a mother would be involved in wedding plans, but Mom was a good sport. All she said was that Brad was

an efficient young man who got things done, and that was probably good since I tend to be disorganized.

Late one afternoon I came in from helping Mom all day in the garden—weeding, picking green beans, zucchini, tomatoes. I was exhausted, longing only for a nap. Well-trained by now, though, I checked the telephone, and there it was in the caller ID window, the identity I knew so well. Time was when just the sight of his number made my pulse speed up and my heart pound, but now the pounding was in my gut and the message was not good.

Suddenly my mind was clear as a bell. I did not want to call Brad Cates back. In fact, I dreaded talking to him. What was the sense in marrying a man whose very telephone number made me sick? Disconnecting at this late date would cost me, I knew, but better now than in the divorce courts.

I unplugged that phone and had the best nap I had had in over a year.

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