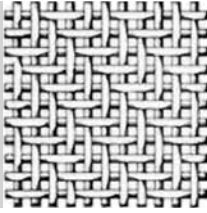




**WEBER** THE CONTEMPORARY WEST  
VOLUME 27 | NUMBER 2 | SPRING/SUMMER 2011 | \$10.00

**Spring Film Focus**



Deriving from the German *weben* – to weave – *weber* translates into the literal and figurative “weaver” of textiles and texts. *Weber* (the word is the same in singular and plural) are the artisans of textures and discourse, the artists of the beautiful fabricating the warp and weft of language into ever-changing patterns. *Weber*, the journal, understands itself as a tapestry of verbal and visual texts, a weave made from the threads of words and images.

## A Different Kind of Oscar



Until fairly recently, the name of Oscar Micheaux was virtually unknown, and studies of film had few references to what is, without doubt, the single most important pre-World War II African-American filmmaker (and an accomplished novelist and essayist as well). Last year, as part of its Black Heritage Series, the U.S. postal service decided to honor Micheaux with a stamp of his own (by noted stamp artist Gavin Kelley), thus recognizing his achievements as being on a par with those of Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, and his contemporary Paul Robeson (who made his debut in Micheaux’s film of 1924, *Body and Soul*, about an escaped convict turned minister).

Ironically, for all of his contributions to film, Micheaux may have been shy about being photographed himself. Equally likely is that he was not deemed important enough to be photographed at the time, which might explain why the postal image honoring him is based on a portrait that was included in his first novel *The Conquest* (1913), which he would later adapt into *The Homesteader* (1919), his first feature film meeting with critical and commercial success.

Micheaux’s work – which includes over forty films and numerous novels between 1919 and 1948 – was first ignored as cheap entertainment for a narrow African American niche market and did not receive serious attention until a print of *Body and Soul* was rediscovered. In 1991, the U.S. Library of Congress also acquired a 35mm print of a silent film titled *La Negra* from the Filmoteca in Madrid in exchange for a print of *Dracula* (1932). The film turned out to be Micheaux’s lost film about racial strife and the emerging New Negro in the post-Reconstruction South, *Within Our Gates* (1920). Shortly thereafter, the Museum of Modern Art acquired a partial print of Micheaux’s *Symbol of the Unconquered* (1920), on the Klu Klux Klan, from the Cinémathèque Royale in Brussels – complete with intertitles in Flemish and French. These serendipitous finds redirected the scholarly focus from Micheaux’s prolific career as a writer, producer and director of sound films to his earlier silent work that is no less meritorious and challenging (especially in view of his tight budget constraints). Given that *Within Our Gates* is often seen as Micheaux’s response to W. D. Griffith’s controversial *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), which portrays African Americans as subhuman and sexually aggressive, the film provides a much-needed corrective and complicates facile readings of Griffith’s ground-breaking (and hate-mongering) epic.

These days, Micheaux has been immortalized with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and the Directors Guild of America honored him with a Golden Jubilee Special Award in 1989. That same year, the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame also recognized him with a posthumous award. His legacy is palpable not only in his significant oeuvre, which is still in the process of being rediscovered and restored, but also in the films of Spike Lee, Eddie Murphy, Robert Townsend, and Melvin Van Peebles, who continue the controversial themes of Micheaux’s best work. For a young man who once homesteaded on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, which resonates with the eponymous sled in *Citizen Kane* (1941), how could it be otherwise?

**EDITOR**

Michael Wutz

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS**

Kathryn L. MacKay Brad Roghaar  
Russell Burrows Victoria Ramirez

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Elizabeth Dohrer

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Susan Clark, Eastern Sierra Institute  
Katharine Coles, U of Utah  
Gary Gildner, independent author  
Duncan Harris, U of Wyoming  
Diana Joseph, Minnesota State U  
Nancy Kline, independent author & translator  
James A. MacMahon, Utah State U  
Fred Marchant, Suffolk U  
Madonne Miner, Weber State U  
Felicia Mitchell, Emory & Henry College  
Julie Nichols, Utah Valley State College  
Tara Powell, U of South Carolina  
Bill Ransom, Evergreen State College  
Walter L. Reed, Emory U  
Scott P. Sanders, U of New Mexico  
Daniel R. Schwarz, Cornell U  
Andreas Ströhl, Filmfestival Munich  
James Thomas, editor and writer  
Robert Torry, U of Wyoming  
Robert Van Wagoner, independent author  
Melora Wolff, Skidmore College

**SPECIAL EDITING**

Sherri L. Vance

**EDITORIAL PLANNING BOARD**

Bradley W. Carroll John R. Sillito  
Brenda M. Kowalewski Michael B. Vaughan  
Angelika Pagel

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Meri DeCaria Barry Gomberg  
Elaine Englehardt John E. Lowe  
DeAnn Evans Aden Ross  
Shelley L. Felt Robert B. Smith  
G. Don Gale Mikel Vause

**LAYOUT CONSULTANTS**

Mark Biddle Jason Francis

**EDITORS EMERITI**

Brad L. Roghaar LaVon Carroll  
Sherwin W. Howard Nikki Hansen  
Neila Seshachari

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**

Ximen McMillan

EDITORIAL MATTER CONTINUED IN BACK

**GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT**

- 2 Margaret Rostkowski, *Wanderlust – A Conversation with Richard Grant*
- 15 Richard Grant, *Patrice and Gustave – An African Love Story*

**ART**

- 85 M. Shane Christensen, *The Ancient Battle of Fire and Clay*

**FILM FOCUS**

- 41 Delia Caparoso Konzett, *The American Century – America’s Global Vision and the Image of the WWII Combat Soldier*
- 51 Walter Metz, *A Dreary Life on a Barge – From L’Atalante to Young Adam*
- 67 Matthias Piccolruaz Konzett, *“It’s Not Every Day We’re Gonna Be The Same” – Wong Kar Wai, Auteur-Flaneur of the Camera*

**ESSAY**

- 97 Billy J. Stratton, *Alone on the Colorado – Glen Canyon, Edward Abbey, and the Birth of Radical Environmentalism*
- 130 Ian R. Mitchell, *Organized Labour and the Layering of the American Southwest*

**FICTION**

- 28 L. Annette Binder, *The Last He Knew*
- 77 Steve Himmer, *I See What You Mean*
- 114 Michael Fedo, *The Titlist*
- 121 Ryan Crawford, *Bacon and the Spear*
- 138 Ron McFarland, *Naseby*

**POETRY**

- 22 Robin Carstensen, *Pantoum: Song of a Borderland and other poems*
- 26 Tim Bellows, *Late Fall, Zhu Jiang River and Tracing Threads*
- 37 Michelle Bonczek, *A Roadside Attempt at Attraction and other poems*
- 110 Anne Wilson, *Balance and other poems*
- 117 Laura Stott, *Is this dark too much for us? and other poems*

**151 READING THE WEST**



Richard Grant.....5



M. Shane Christensen.....85



Film Focus.....41

Margaret Rostkowski

## Wanderlust

### *A Conversation with Richard Grant*



*Richard Grant is the author of American Nomads: Travels with Lost Conquistadors, Mountain Men, Cowboys, Indians, Hoboes, Truckers and Bull-Riders and God's Middle Finger, Into the Lawless Heart of the Sierra Madre. The first book is an historical and personal exploration of the wandering tradition in America, growing out of Grant's long interest in nomadic sub-cultures that live outside the bounds of society. His second book took him on a journey to northern Mexico, a place for which he says he has "an unfortunate fascination." The story of this journey is not an easy one to follow, filled as it is with a sense of a society rich in tradition, stories and danger. Jim Harrison says Grant has "far too much of the mad dog in his character, and I am surprised indeed that he survived his journey."*

*Richard Grant has been a contributor to magazines, both in the United States and Great Britain for twenty years, writing on everything from the sex industry to environmental issues. He has just published his third book, Crazy River, on his travels in a two-man dugout canoe in Central Africa.*

*He lives in Tucson, Arizona, where Margaret Rostkowski talked with him in February, 2009.*

---

*I had assumed that all skies in the world were pretty much the same size and I wasn't prepared for this one. It had risen up during the night and spread itself outwards and doubled or tripled in dimensions. I got out of the car and stood in the West for the first time, turning a slow circle and following the unchanging horizon with my eyes. Gazing up at the sky, dizzied and awestruck by this stark new world of space and light and wind.*

– American Nomads



*Rostkowski: You were in Texas, weren't you, when you experienced that sky?*

**Grant:** Yes, up on the *Llano Estacado*. The Staked Plains. If you've written about a moment, your memory of it is there. You also remember how you describe the moment, better than you remember the actual moment. So you better hope you wrote it down right.

*You got it right. That's the big sky and a description I love.*

Some people get freaked out by it. People in the 19th century got seasick out here. But this felt right to me. It was always my plan to get out of England.

*What moved you then to write American Nomads? Wasn't your first book originally called Ghost Riders?*

Yes, in the British version. The American version is *American Nomads*, which is what I wanted to call it. My British publisher said it sounded too academic. They wanted something a little snappier. I wanted my second

book to be *God's Middle Finger* and the British publisher said, "We can't have *god* in the title," and I said "Why not?," and he said, "God died a long time ago. He doesn't have much of a reputation. If you've got *god* in the title it's absolutely a sales death."

*Ah, that's great. That's wonderful.*

So this one's called *Bandit Roads* in Britain.

*You rely a lot on magazines. That's where you publish your work.*

That's how I made a living for twenty years. And it's never been harder. Budgets are being cut across the board. It's really hard for me to commit an act of journalism these days. They're not willing to pay expenses like they used to. If you write for *The New Yorker* or *GQ* or *Esquire*, they still pay. I write for these British newspaper magazines; they've been my staple and they've just had their budgets destroyed.

*You mean like the small magazines you find in the Sunday paper?*



Yes, like the *New York Times Magazine*, *LA Times Magazine*, those weekly news magazines.

*What moved you to move from magazines to books?*

I just wanted to try my hand at writing books. Magazines do get constricting. I had a lot of freedom in how I could write magazine stories, but still there's a word limit. You get all the stuff in your notebooks that you can't fit in and it kind of eats away at you.

The way I was living, I was kind of trying to work out my own wanderlust. I'd done magazine stories about these rodeo cowboys and I'd met a lot of these wandering types and I was struck by the whole thing. I thought, "That would be a good book, but somebody must have done it." I looked around. "There must be some sort of history of nomadism and wandering in America since it was such a big thing that everyone had commented on from the get-go." There wasn't. And so I thought "Well, okay, I'll do it." I was going to keep myself out of it, and it was just going to be about history and these different nomadic sub-cultures, but I just couldn't make the book roll along.

So, I ended up weaving myself into it. I think it makes a book much more readable if you've got a character to follow through. It's not a book that's got a strong story line. It's got a historical line. So I used myself for the lack of someone else.

*Did you always intend to put in the historical element?*

Yes, the original idea was historical and reportage. That's how I wrote the proposal. I'm not in the proposal. It's just history and reportage.

*Did you do a lot of research?*

I spent a lot of time hunting through bibliographies and looking for books that I thought had the answers I was looking for—where this came from, this sort of wandering tradition. And there wasn't one. There's a bibliography in the back there with the main books. I read a lot, spent a lot of time in libraries. I

find the history of the American West just so readable compared to the history of Britain or the Habsburg Empire.

Those Bernard de Voto books were influential on me. I read them when I was getting going on the nomad book. I love *Across the Wide Missouri*. Fantastic book. Just as a way of writing history, full of character. That's such

a readable book. It's sound history, but with a bit of a novelistic flair. That's not a bad way to write history.

*You say, there's not a strong story line in American Nomads, but it is so much about story. Cabeza's story, Joe Walker's story, your story and all the other little stories. I wondered if there's a link between story and travel. Do the two feed off each other?*

Yes, I think so. I think one reason people travel is to collect stories. One thing you notice with these nomadic groups is that their recreation is the old-campfire tradition. Getting around the fire and telling a story.

---

*The way I was living, I was kind of trying to work out my own wanderlust. I'd done magazine stories about these rodeo cowboys and I'd met a lot of these wandering types and I was struck by the whole thing.*

---

---

Rodeo guys and freight riders are all good story tellers. There is a link between living on the road and the story as a kind of currency. That's why I find it so easy to get along with these people. They're not that easy to get along with, but we would swap stories.

*You have a remarkable ability of sitting down with them and drinking with them, and soon you're hearing their stories.*

Like I say, it's a story-telling culture, so it's not hard to get them to tell stories. You're sitting in a car with

someone for eight hours, you're stuck with somebody in a freight yard for two days, or you're sitting in a bar, drinking with somebody—it's what people do, especially from that culture.

Another thing that links all the people in the book is that they are exposed to less media. Media is the culture to most people and story-telling is what you lose, the more TV you watch.

*Even the old stories, the ones that revolved around Cabeza and the stories the mountain men told are wonderful stories.*

They used to have those lying contests. I would have loved to have been around for one of those.

*As I was reading American Nomads, I realized I knew all these stories. I had heard about Cabeza de Vaca and I knew about Joe Walker, but you put them all together in a way I had not seen before.*

I do think it's odd that no one had written the book before I did. I don't mean in exactly

the same way I did, but there was nothing.

*Historians here tend to focus on just the mountain men or just the Native Americans.*

There were books you could find a reference to, but there wasn't just one about wanderlust.

*It takes a certain mind-set to link the RV people with Joe Walker. That's something that I think is very fresh.*

I got some criticism about putting the RVs in the book, from book-reviewers especially in Britain, because they said, "Where's the romance of the road in these guys?"

To me they were one of the most clearly nomadic groups around. I didn't really care if they fit into someone's idea of romantic. It was all from Britain, the criticism I had. They've got this idea: "It's supposed to

be like this. Because I've read Jack Kerouac and seen *Thelma and Louise*. How come these guys are in here, just because they live on the road year-round?"

*You said, "The pure nomad is the poor nomad." And the true nomad lives within tightly knit groups and clearly the RV people meet that. And the rodeo riders and freight riders all have a structure of behavior and codes and symbols. The one huge exception is Everett Ruess. You know he's a treasured figure in Utah. He seems to be an anomaly to the other groups. He was so solitary and so driven by this ecstatic response to wilderness.*

I got interested in him because I love that back country in Utah and there's a good story attached to him. I had that same sort of ecstatic feeling toward the back country that he did, so I thought I'd stick him in there. He seems like part of the story.

*You talked about how you got started writing. What was your academic preparation to be a writer?*

I studied history at University College London, ended up studying quite a bit of American history, modern history, and Vietnam War type history. I wasn't a particularly enthusiastic scholar in the beginning, but it seemed like a good way to put off working for a while. Back then the government paid for it. Yeah, I wouldn't have gone if the government hadn't paid for it. Then I betrayed them by leaving the country. I got to liking history in the end, once I got the drug-taking and the dee-jaying out of my system, once I got through the Tudors and the Stuarts.

I think it's good training to be a journalist, the study of history, because it's the weighing of evidence, it's working out why things happened, and who's talking bullshit. Basically, that's what history is.

*It is story over and over again, history is story. You also talked about loving American culture when you were growing up. Did you love movies and literature?*

I was less into movies than most people I knew. I obviously picked up on movies, but I was mostly into music and books. I think reading teaches you. I just interviewed T.C. Boyle yesterday and he's a great believer that the canon should be taught. I expect it can, but I think it promotes orthodoxy.

He went to Iowa and he's been teaching his whole life. The way he learned to write is in creative writing class. You criticize each other's story and then the teacher weighs in and then you go off and write another story. I'm glad I never went to journalism school. That definitely teaches you a more formulaic way of approaching things.

*So you've never had a creative writing class?*

No. Journalism is not that complicated. If you read magazine stories that are good and

you pay attention to why they're good and what makes them work, it's not heavy lifting. Writing is hard to do, but that's just in the nature of the discipline. But it's quite clear what you're trying to do.

*You said pay attention to good stories, but also paying attention to what's happening on around you. Is that a key part of the writing that you do? Because the contemporary part of American Nomads and the whole of God's Middle Finger is you just taking in what you're seeing.*



Richard Grant on the road



---

That works for me and I have always been very observant while traveling. I was writing a lot of letters home. I'd be in these situations and these places and really be taking things in and writing long letters about them. A friend of mine says he has saved all of my letters, 15-20 letters.

*Do you have any desire to go back to Mexico?*

My friend, Ruben Ruiz, who I'm with in chapters two and three [of the Mexico book], is starting up *God's Middle Finger* tours, and I'll be along to tell stories at the campfire. We'll sort of camp and hike, maybe do some writing on his ranch, and we'll tell people about the history and the biology and the latest drug gossip. We'll hit them up for a little money and have a good time.

*That was one of the safer places you described.*

Yes, we saw guys coming across with bales of pot on their mules, but it's his property and everyone knows who he is and he doesn't create any problems for anybody.

*I had trouble reading this book. I had nightmares a couple of times. What a hard story.*

It's a hard country. What I should be doing right now is finishing the story of violence in Mexico, but it is crazy. More people were murdered there than in Iraq last year.

*We're just beginning to pay attention to it. It's right here in Tucson on the border and in Texas.*

Yes, this Sierra Madre book, when I first conceived it, had a kind of nostalgic aspect to it. I'd read all these books about the American West, back when it was wild, and it seemed like this was another Wild West right across the border, and part of my justification was, what if I was just some journalist in Boston

in 1832 and I was hearing all these stories about the West. Would I just stay in Boston, or would I take my chances and go out west to see what it was all about? So that was one reason I went.

I thought it was a way of seeing something that was over, but now I'm thinking I got a glimpse of the future too. There's a pathological aspect to the violence and the vengeance. It's all over northern Mexico. No surprise or coincidence that people in charge of all these drug mafias are all from Sinaloa, and if you go back a generation, they're all from the Sierra Madre of Sinaloa. The heads of every one of the drug cartels can trace their lineage back to the mountains of the Sierra Madre.

*What's your theory on why that is?*

It's an outlaw clan culture. They came downhill first of all into Culiacán and from there they spread into Tijuana, into Juarez, into Guadalajara. They're all Sinaloans. I was just in Tijuana, and there's a feud going on there between two different factions of what was the Tijuana cartel. There's so much killing going on that they're running out of killers. So when I was there, one guy went down to Sinaloa and came back with 70 gun men from Sinaloa, to replenish his ranks. There's an endless supply of *pistoleros* down there.

*You say you think you're seeing the future. What do you see as the future?*

I don't know Mexico well enough and Mexico has a way of confounding expectations for it. The president [of Mexico] says this hyper-violence is evidence that he is winning his war against the cartels.

Or there's the theory that Mexico is unraveling into chaos, becoming a failed state. Or there's this theory, especially in Juarez, that this killing is just normal life now. It's a violent culture and that's just how it is.

*And we just live with it.*

Yes. I was thinking about this failed state idea. The U.S. Army joint report at the end of last year said that Mexico and Pakistan were both in imminent danger of becoming failed states, but when I was down in Tijuana, I thought, how would you even tell? At what point do you call it a failed state? It seemed completely failed to me.

They did lie detector, urinalyses and personal wealth tests on the Tijuana police force and 90% of them failed. Four percent were found fit for duty. You've got nearly 6,000 drug-related murders last year in Mexico and almost no arrests. Or prosecutions. They've been assassinating the police chiefs that don't take the bribes and even the ones that claim to fight them often turn out to be in the pay of the rival cartel.

As far as I'm concerned it is a failed state. It may fail further, but if you've got a state that is basically corrupt from top to bottom, is failing so manifestly to keep law and order, is totally dependent so completely on drug money, 60 billion a year. . . .

*You touch on that in the book, the part of the United States in that, since we're the market for the drugs. If we were to legalize drugs, would that help?*

**Mexicans in particular love to point out that this is all the fault of America, that if there wasn't a demand for drugs here, then. . . . But on the other hand, America has tried pretty hard to stop its citizens from taking drugs and it hasn't worked. How would you reduce demand for drugs, how would you do**

**that? I can't think of a way. Americans like to get high. I think it's just part of this culture, getting high. What you've basically got is an impossible situation. It's not going to get solved.**

*Are the people that are coming to the United States fleeing from that violence, that lack of order, trying to find a stable place for their families?*

---

*Mexicans in particular love to point out that this is all the fault of America, that if there wasn't a demand for drugs here, then. . . . But on the other hand, America has tried pretty hard to stop its citizens from taking drugs and it hasn't worked. . . . Americans like to get high.*

---

I think they're more fleeing poverty. You find in the cities and towns and the flatlands around the Sierra a lot of people that have fled the Sierra because of the violence. That's the first stage. They come downhill to get away from the violence. You can spot them in town. They say, "He's a Serrano." They look a little wilder, not in the deranged way, but they've got an intense

look to them. And then if they can't make it there, they come north.

*While reading your books, I thought about the old theory, the frontier as the escape valve for the country. But there's no place to go, so people go underground, like the Rainbow people, the freight train riders. You said even the RV people are underground. They aren't paying taxes. Some of them are traveling with children and they're not in school. It seems that's true in Mexico, movement as a way to escape a bad situation.*

**Yes. Much as they like to blame us for their problems in Mexico, they'd be in a way worse situation without us. This is the other point I wanted to make about the drug business.**

---

Conservatively estimated, it's 60 billion a year. If we were to legalize it, their economy would collapse. And the second biggest part of their economy, although that may be changed now, is money coming back from here. So rather than making a serious attempt to tackle the problems of Mexico, blame us, but also use the valve.

*As you told the stories of the Rainbow People and the rodeo riders and all those people, they all follow the same path of spiraling out of regular jobs and houses. They see houses as a trap.*

I've always been afraid of mortgages. I came close once but I was too scared.

*But you're settled now, you have a place, you have a dog, you're living with someone This brings me to the question about women. I noticed in both books the absence of women. But then you addressed that idea that women are not part of most nomadic cultures.*

The present day ones, yes. But if you're in a tribe [in the past], the women were the moving hearth of the tribe.

*You think of the great odyssey stories in American literature, Moby Dick and Huckleberry Finn, there are no women. They are what you leave behind when you go. But you write about them always being a pull, for you and for the others. Joe Walker found his woman.*

Yes, the mountain men solved that problem neatly. They said, "We're living as nomads. Women from our culture don't want to live as nomads, so we'll find nomadic women from these tribes," and it worked out pretty well for them.

*Joe Walker's story was so sad. He had a wife and children and then all of a sudden they're gone, and he turned erratic and*

*did some weird things. You think they died of smallpox.*

Yes, I defer to Bill Gilbert on this. In his biography of Joe Walker, that's his theory. Makes sense to me.

*I guess Jedediah Smith was the only one who refused to have anything to do with native women.*

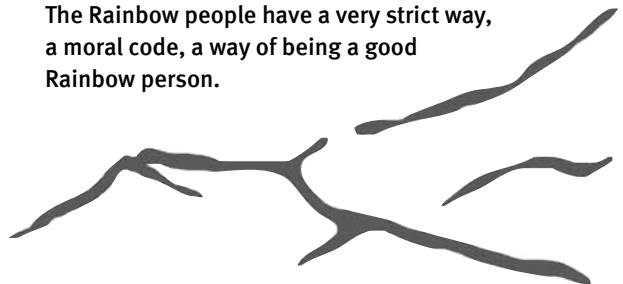
Yes, he was a good Christian. For the others, religion got a little sloppy. It was interesting. I read a lot of those trail cowboy memoirs and that Teddy Blue. He said it was really common among the original cowboys to be anti-Christian. It's not what we associate with the American cowboy. You wouldn't know it from a Republican rally.

*It represents all those things, the home and civilization.*

Yes, but it's more a lot of moral strictures. They just find it useless. "It's not going to find me water. Prayer doesn't work. God, what have you done for me lately? Nothing." They were dealing with practical problems.

*What about in the Rainbow People and the freight riders? They have the moral code on the road. I loved the story about Camp A. They had the terrible fight and then the other Rainbow People came up and brought them food. They didn't bring any meat because they were vegetarians, so the Camp A people put in deer meat from road kill. Such a wonderful example of how to get along in a culture that seems to have no moral code.*

The Rainbow people have a very strict way, a moral code, a way of being a good Rainbow person.



*Clean up after yourself when you leave.*

Good on them; not really my scene, but I've got respect for them. I'm glad they're out there. And it basically works.

*They have a way to deal with people who obviously are on the fringe. We throw them in jail and they bring them a pot of food. These people that have drunk all night.*

You're always going to have to deal with people like that in this society. Everybody's not going to turn out good. Especially not if you send them off to war.

I mean these people coming back from Iraq, some of them are in terrible shape. I did a story for *Details* magazine about a person that died in Iraq, and I got quite close to his friend who is going through PTSD, and he's absolutely through the roof.

I think we're particularly ill-equipped as a society to send people off to war. We have a fairly belligerent popular culture. But basically these are soft kids trying to be tough. The only cultures that can go to war and not suffer PTSD are warrior cultures. The Comanches went to Vietnam and didn't get PTSD, they got welcomed back and were like "Aaaarg."

To send your young people off to war and to expect them not to come back screwed up, your culture has got to be all about war. You've got to raise them in a warrior society. Here, we raise them up on Disney and then we send them off to war.

*Are you in touch with many of the people you have talked to?*

The rodeo cowboy, Mike Mason, got gored to death at a rodeo some years ago now. I was in touch with him but that put a stop to that. He was a bull rider. And I was in touch with a buck skinner for a while, then that sort of fell away.

Tucson Stacy, I bump into her now and then. She's not off the rails. I got invited to her wedding, but I was in Africa. I was sorry to miss that. I'd like to go to a hobo wedding.

*You read a lot before you go. Did you read a lot before you went to Mexico?*

I took a library of books with me. I was traveling with probably forty books. I had a crate of them in the back of my truck. I would read at night if I wasn't out galivanting or drinking.

*I think of writing as sedentary, but you are on the move so much and you talk about your notebooks and your tape recorder.*

I don't use a tape recorder for journalism, because I hate transcribing tapes. I fill my notebooks with what I've seen at every opportunity. I usually get up in the morning and I write in the notebook for an hour. I write at night. I basically take as many notes as possible. There's notes to describe, there's notes of conversation, but also just the thoughts that pop into your head. Write it down because the memory won't necessarily hold onto them for another year and a half.

*So it's that discipline again that's so much a part of writing.*

I actually like writing notes. They don't have to be good. That's the only part of writing I

---

*I think we're particularly ill-equipped as a society to send people off to war. We have a fairly belligerent popular culture. But basically these are soft kids trying to be tough. The only cultures that can go to war and not suffer PTSD are warrior cultures.*

---

---

really like. The rest of it is a struggle. I probably have one good day every eight days, if that.

*I remember what Hemingway said, "If you write all day and you get one good sentence, it's a good day."*

**What's the difference between writer's heaven and writer's hell? In writer's heaven, you get published.**

*How do you work with an editor? This is a question writers are always interested in about each other.*

The first book basically got no editing. I wanted some, but it's hard to find an editor that will give you an edit, since basically what they do now is cut deals. I turned in my manuscript and got back about eight lines, you know, "I don't think we need this. Perhaps you can do something about this." And that was it.

On the second book I worked more closely with this editor, Wiley O'Sullivan, at Free Press, Simon Schuster, and got two to three pages of good suggestions, mostly on tone. She said that at certain moments in the Mexico book my tone was sounding a little too wild and angry and I was better off not going that far with it. And a bit of trimming. She wanted a bit more on why I was getting into the whole thing. So I sort of fleshed that out.

They were all good suggestions. I don't know what it's like for other writers, but if you find an editor who's got time for you and has good judgment, it makes a big difference. It's so hard. You've been staring at the damn thing.

*What about magazine editors? Is it more "just get it in this box that we need in terms of length?"*

It depends on the individual, really. At *The Telegraph*, they pretty much leave my stuff alone; maybe I'll get a little "bring this up a

bit." They like that second paragraph to say what it's all about and why we should care, why we need to read this story, because more and more they like you to frame it. "We're reading about this person because they've got their new movie coming out and they're a new something." Which gets a little dreary but pays the bills.

*You seem to be finding a way through this tough time for writers and magazines. Have you ever thought about moving to fiction, taking some of these characters and making a story?*

Yes, I've thought about doing fiction. I've gotten quite a long way in getting my book editors to be interested in a novel, sort of based on my father's story. My father told me that his mother told him that his only hope in life was to marry a rich woman. And he ended up taking her at her word and he went to Canada, then San Francisco, then Montréal and Vancouver in an attempt to marry an heiress.

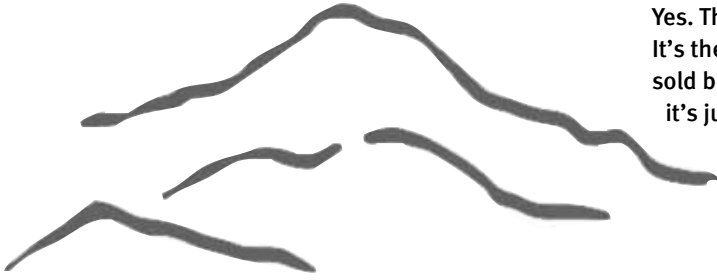
But I had a lukewarm response from the editors. One of them offered me five thousand pounds to write the book, which is not really practical. And my American publisher said, "No, you're a travel-adventure guy. That's your brand and so we're not going to give you any money for a novel, no matter what it's about. But if you've got another travel-adventure book you want to write, we can get you money."

So the long and the short of it is, I'm going to Africa this summer for about three months to research another book.

*You've gotten an advance? That's probably rare these days.*

I got it in the nick of time. I'm going to be in Tanzania, Zambia, Burundi and Rwanda. I can't give you the whole lowdown, because I don't want someone else to do it. It involves a lot of time in a two-man kayak on an





African river that's never been properly mapped. I'm going to be in the middle of the bush with a lot of hippos and crocodiles.

*This is moving away from where your focus has been before, this part of the world.*

What happened is that I went on two amazing trips to Africa for magazine stories. The first one was a recreation of Livingston's journey down the Zambezi River to Victoria Falls on the 150th anniversary. We had Sir Ranulph Fiennes as a figurehead. He's a slightly eccentric, very stiff upper-lipped Englishman who is in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's greatest explorer. Mainly polar exploration, Arctic and Antarctic. He dragged his sled over 1,800 miles in Antarctica.

*So you're going with him?*

This was the first trip to Africa, the 150th anniversary of Livingston's trip. We went down the Zambezi River for this article in dugout canoes and saw hippos and crocs and elephants. The whole thing was just fantastic, camping on the river bank. I stayed in touch with the people that I went with.

*And it will be another travel book.*

Yes, and it will have a lot of history in it and a lot of out-doorsy stuff and whatever happens along the way.

*Both of your books are still in print.*

Yes. The Mexico book sold a lot better here. It's the other way in Britain, the nomad book sold better than the Mexico book, although it's just come out in paperback in Britain under the title *Bandit Roads*. It's coming out in Holland in May. It's just come out in Germany and will be out in Italy.

*Movie deal?*

*(Laughs)* I did write a screen play I didn't sell, set in the 1960s, on the border, a father-and-son sort of deal. It involves a boy, 15, and his mean raunchy father and a hunt for a bull that's said to be worth a fortune, a wild bull. He tracks it down into the Sierra.

*You've shopped it around and not found anybody?*

Not that much. I wrote it with a guy that wrote this *Gangster #1* they've got made into a film, with Malcolm MacDowell. It's an English gangster movie, but all his contacts are in Britain and they didn't know what to do with a script about the Mexican border. It needed somebody like Tommy Lee Jones, but I don't know how to get Tommy Lee Jones.

*I'd love to talk to you when you get back from Africa. Do you have a deadline for the book?*

November of 2010. I get back in October of '09 if all goes to plan, so that gives me a year.

*How long did each of these take?*

The nomad book took three years. The Mexico book, with all the research and the to-and-fro-ing, probably took two and a half. I came home two times when I ran out of money, so I'd come home and do journalism to make money. Both of them have been a scramble financially. For the Africa book, I have enough money to get to Africa and

---

back, but not enough to live on while I write. But if I sell the British rights, then I probably can. But it's not a good time to try now. It will be easier once I've done the thing. I think things will have eased up in a year.

*When you made those trips to Africa, were you paid by magazines to go?*

Yes, but the magazines I work for can no longer pay expenses. So what happens is that PR companies pay the expenses. I'm flying up to Seattle on Wednesday to interview David Byrne. Last year the magazine would have paid my expenses. This year it's David Byrne's PR firm that's paying my expenses.

*Does that then affect what you write?*

Yeah! I've been doing quite a bit of environmental, wildlife kind of stories. I went to Siberia to write about tigers, I went to Sumatra to write about the rain forest. The first one was paid for by the World Wildlife Fund. It's not really journalism like it used to be. Because they're paying for it, that determines who you talk to. It's an unspoken thing. "We're paying for you, so you're not going to be mean about us, are you?"

So you've got a press officer in London who's trying to pitch stories to magazines, and magazines are so broke that they're desperate and the press officer tends to over-pitch the story and make it more dramatic than it really is.

I did a story on a lynx breeding program in Spain. They're the world's most endangered feline, under EU protection. So they have these twelve inbred lynxes that would rather kill each other than fuck and they're pouring millions of dollars into this program, with 24-hour monitors and so forth. And when the litter came, it was banner headlines all over Europe, "First captive litter of lynxes born." So they got a litter of cubs and the cubs tore each other apart. They killed each other. This isn't news. And this is what

lynx cubs do. And everyone says, "Oh, my god!"

What WWF didn't know is that on private estates in the mountains in Spain owned by wealthy aristocrats, the lynxes are doing fine because they're in the wild. Meanwhile WWF is pouring money into trying to save them in this national park that's got roads all over it. It's just a bad system.

*How do you hear about these articles?*

On those two, the magazines called me up. They know I'm interested in ecology and wildlife. And I'm fairly game. I don't mind sleeping in tents.

*Are you constantly contacting magazines?*

Sometimes they call me, sometimes I call them. I did an outrageous piece of hustle on *The Guardian* to get this T.C. Boyle interview. I played two editors off against each other. It was like trying to swing a drug deal.

*You're going to go to Africa this summer. You talk about Mexico. Are there other things that haunt you, other things you want to write about or to explore, or does it depend on what the magazines want?*

I want to do this novel about my father.

*How did he find your mother?*

Well, he found three heiresses to marry. With one of them, he couldn't face the idea of waking up to her the rest of his life, and the final one he was head over heels in love with, but by then his reputation had caught up with him, so then he went off to Singapore and basically drank and womanized there for about ten years, then met my mother back in England.

So I'd like to do something about him, my dad, get back to Africa, and that's all I've got so far. I also want to know about copper wire that people are stealing. How does that

whole economy work? Is there a fat Russian copper-wire magnate in Lancaster, California, that's the kind of middle man? Is he the guy that you need to know if you're ripping off people's houses?

*Don't you think there will be lots of new stories with things changing so much? There are going to be so many new ways of living in this world. Some of these people will be more adept at it than we are. People that can steal copper wire.*

Edward Abbey wrote a book about it, but these suburbs in places like Vegas and Phoenix are probably never going to get lived in by commuters with mortgages.

*Who's going to live there?*

I don't know. Artists, musicians. I think there's going to be weird new subcultures in these decaying suburbs way out of town.

*Do you think people are going to move back into the cities?*

Yup, I think they are. Gas is going to go up again. They're going to have these houses out there, they're going to be giving them away. Or people will just go squat in them and stick some vegetables in the backyard.

I think communes will be forming out there, bands of artists. Bikers will be cooking up meth inside the gates of gated communities.

*I think a lot of things will be reshaped, and things that aren't strong enough will fall away: organizations, magazines, journals, and only the strong will survive.*

Weber — The Contemporary West is dedicated to helping keep print and literary culture alive and concern for the future of the book. Does the book have a place in this brave new world, the book and story?

Story has a place. I think the book will find its shrunken niche in society. There are always going to be people that enjoy books because books can do something for you that nothing else can do. It's a particular form of entertainment that you can't get from a purely passive form of entertainment like watching or listening. A book can really do something for your head that other things can't. So there's always going to be a place for good books.

*Of course when the grid goes down, all these people living in the suburbs, off the electric grid, can still read a book.*

The book is a great technology.

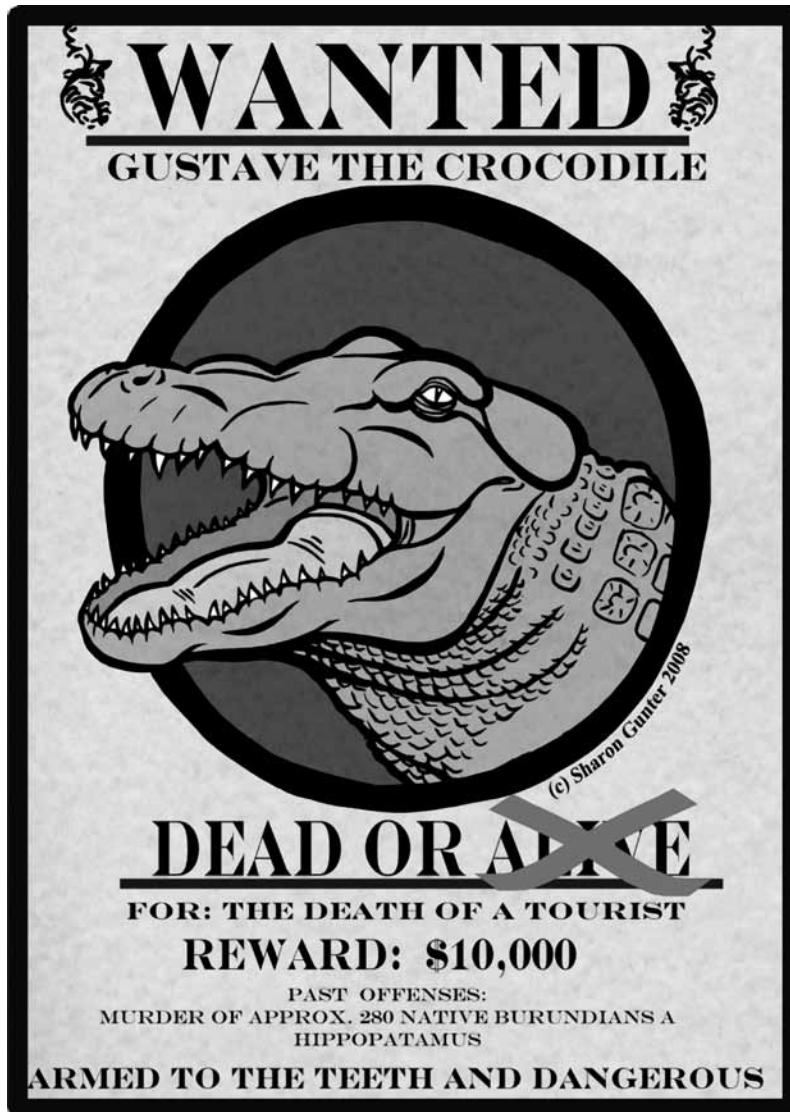


Margaret Rostkowski taught writing and literature at the secondary level for 39 years. She is the author of three young adult books: *Moon Dancer*, *The Best of Friends*, and *After the Dancing Days*, which won a Children's Book Award in 1987. She lives in Ogden, Utah, with her two dogs Jamie and Annie and serves as Co-Director of the Wasatch Range Writing Project.

Richard Grant

## Patrice and Gustave

*An African Love Story*



© Sharon Uluh, used with permission

Patrice Faye explodes with Gallic indignation when I ask if Gustave ate the Russian ambassador's wife, "No, no, no, *NON!* This is what they write but it's not true, unh!" We are sitting in his Landcruiser by the shore of Lake Tanganyika in Burundi, the small, impoverished, war-torn African republic where Faye has lived for the last thirty years, and where Gustave, a twenty foot Nile crocodile weighing nearly a ton, has killed and eaten more people than any other living crocodile on earth. It was Faye, a self-taught reptile expert and semi-professional crocodile hunter, who named Gustave eleven years ago and began keeping records of his depredations. He developed a profound sense of respect, awe and fascination for the gigantic man-eater, believed to be the biggest crocodile in Africa, and a feeling of comradeship as their lives became entwined. At this point in their relationship, Faye calls Gustave "an old friend, a soul mate," and estimates that he has devoured sixty victims, well short of the three hundred usually cited and emphatically NOT including the Russian ambassador's wife.

"This is a lie they keep repeating," he fumes. "Yes there was *un accident* with a lady from the Russian Embassy, and yes Gustave he eat her, but she was not married to the *ambassadeur!* She was just a diplomat, not

even high ranking. She was walking along the beach here and she start wading in the water—it's a beautiful spot, no?—and Gustave he take her."

Faye shrugs, smiles, turns up his palms, as if to say, what does anyone expect? How can anyone blame Gustave for being Gustave? Then he lights another cigarette, guns the engine and fishtails back on to the road—an impatient, red-faced Frenchman with unruly hair, a gruff voice and a magnificent humpbacked nose. Further along the lakeshore, on the edge of the capital city Bujumbura, we see local people wading and swimming, children laughing and splashing in the shallows where Gustave has taken a dozen victims or more.

"I don't like this but what can I do?" says Faye. "This is Africa. When there is *un accident* with Gustave, no-one goes in the water for three weeks, then they start swimming again. Why? Because they forget. Because the weather is hot and it is very nice to swim here. Because they think it will not happen to them."

It is not a question of ignorance. Gustave is nearly as well-known in Burundi as Patrice Faye, who cannot drive down a road anywhere in the country without hearing his name called out by pedestrians and bystanders. Gustave has been the subject of a television documentary and a Hollywood horror film (*Primeval*, 2007) and here in Burundi the former

*Faye calls Gustave "an old friend, a soul mate," and estimates that he has devoured sixty victims, well short of the three hundred usually cited and emphatically NOT including the Russian ambassador's wife.*



---

president Pierre Buyoya was nicknamed Gustave because of his alleged ruthlessness towards his enemies.

On the lakeshore we pass Le Gustave snack bar, signs warning of crocodiles and more people swimming with their children. A few miles further west by the border with Congo, the muddy brown Rusizi river empties into clear blue Lake Tanganyika, and this area, the Rusizi delta, is where Gustave has taken most of his victims. Nearly all of them were fishermen wading through the shallows, just as Innocent Ruzulimina is doing when we first see him.

Once he's got both feet on dry land and well away from the water's edge, I ask him if he worries about Gustave or the other crocodiles in the water. "The risk is small," he says. "People are in the water every day but only seldom do they get taken. We have not seen Gustave in nearly two months and the last fisherman he ate was nearly a year ago."

Faye confirms this information and says it fits in with Gustave's usual pattern. He has an unusually large territory for a bull crocodile, extending from the lake some twenty miles up the Rusizi river. At present Faye thinks he is upriver in a remote, roadless area accessible only by helicopter, hence the lack of recent attacks. Sometimes he will stay up there for a year or more, and people will wonder if a poacher or a soldier has finally

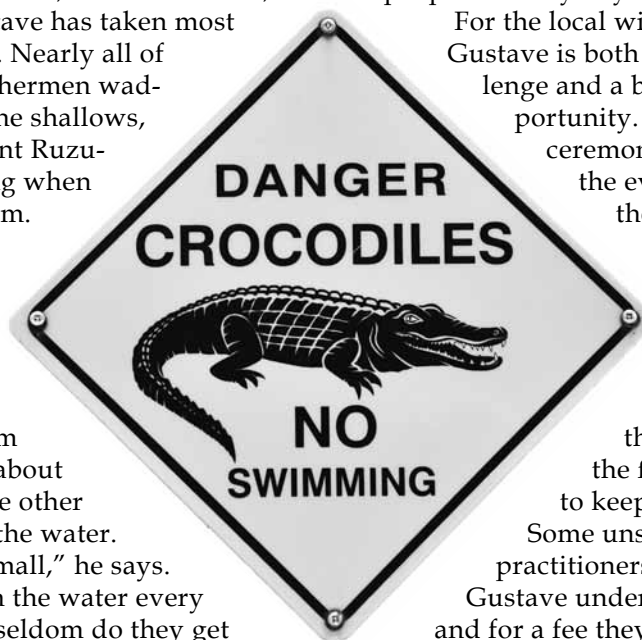
managed to kill him. Then he comes downriver to the delta and the lake, driven not by hunger but the desire to mate with as many females as possible. But once he encounters easy meat in the form of swimmers and fishermen, there is usually a rash of attacks, or "accidents" as Faye prefers to call them. The worst to date was in 2004, when Gustave killed seventeen people in thirty days.

For the local witch doctors, Gustave is both a grave challenge and a business opportunity. They perform ceremonies to banish the evil spirits from the giant crocodile. They sell protective amulets, potions and bundles of roots that tie around the foot and ankle to keep him away.

Some unscrupulous practitioners claim to have Gustave under their power and for a fee they will send him to attack your enemy or rival. A male witch in Bujumbura, according to Faye, claims that he can actually shift form and change into Gustave.

"Oh, there are so many myths.

Some people say he has grass on his back or growing out of his head, because they see clumps of marsh grass floating in the lake and they feel afraid. A few years ago a group of soldiers fired their Kalashnikovs at him and they say he swallowed the bullets. Probably Gustave was opening his mouth from the pain. Now we have people who see him wearing



jewellery around his neck — this is wonderful, no? And there are many who say he doesn't exist, that Gustave himself is a myth, even though all the fishermen know him by sight, even though he has been filmed and photographed. He is so much bigger than all the other crocodiles. The head is enormous, like a hippopotamus, and he has many scars from bullets."

It is possible that one of those bullets was fired by Patrice Faye. The first few times he saw the huge crocodile, Faye had a rifle in his hand

and was intending to kill him. Not only was it his job — Faye was the man you called in Burundi to dispatch a troublesome crocodile — but this time it was personal, because it had killed and eaten one of his field assistants. "I shot at him, I didn't kill him and then one day I get a really good

look at him," remembers Faye. "I see this magnificent prehistoric creature, the last of the really big crocodiles in Africa. I cannot kill him. I put the rifle down. I decide I must put him in jail and make him a sex slave."

Before he can explain what this means, we reach his house in a quiet neighbourhood in Bujumbura and pull into a backyard compound full of people and activity. Some of the people are less than five feet tall and holding boxes of live frogs and rodents. "These are Batwa pygmies," says Faye. "I build schools for them, they collect animals for me and honey from the forest." He takes a box of frogs and dumps it over the side of

a concrete enclosure containing his four pet crocodiles, which jerk into motion and gobble them up with loud snapping sounds. The rodents are for the cobras, boomslangs, bushmasters, Gabon vipers and other deadly snakes scattered around the property in homemade cages of wire mesh and warping wood.

Other assistants are loading up a vehicle with theatrical supplies — a rolled cloth backdrop, posters, costumes and sound system. Faye has written more than fifty plays and his

theatre company, La Troupe Pili-Pili, performs them at schools and other venues around Burundi, often braving bandit highways and roadblocks manned by drunken corrupt soldiers to get there. His latest, *Kamenge '94*, is a comedy about the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic civil

war in Burundi. Less well known and organized than the genocide of a million Tutsis in neighbouring Rwanda, the Burundian conflict, which appears to have finally subsided after fifteen years, left some 300,000 dead on both sides of the ethnic divide. In Faye's comedy, currently playing to packed, enthusiastic audiences, the whole thing began as a misunderstanding on the part of a Congolese woman whose husband was cheating on her.

Faye also runs a school for orphans in Bujumbura and has built an orphan's home with battlements and towers called *Castel Croc*. He works as an environmental consultant and puts on natural history exhibitions.

---

*"I see this magnificent prehistoric creature, the last of the really big crocodiles in Africa. I cannot kill him. I put the rifle down. I decide I must put him in jail and make him a sex slave."*

---

---

He exports live reptiles, insects and plants. He has a construction business. He has a small tourism enterprise with the pygmies and a scheme to market their honey. He's making a television series about Burundi and establishing the country's first drama school. Arriving on a bicycle in 1978 as a young, bearded, long-haired wanderer, he invented a life for himself here and it keeps him fully satisfied and furiously busy. Days off are unknown. Even when he's sick with malaria, sleeping sickness, typhoid, dengue fever, to name a few of the nasty diseases he's caught here, he always tries to get some work done every day. He is driven, headstrong, reckless in the extreme, eccentric beyond doubt but highly functioning and not crazy in the clinical sense.

The inside of the house is a crammed shambles of hippo, buffalo and crocodile skulls, tribal masks and pots, piles of bedding, paintings of snakes and birds, natural history books on slumping bookshelves, aquariums, statues, a coffee table heaped up with papers and overflowing ashtrays. His marriage, to a Rwandan refugee, ended in divorce twenty years ago and their two children are living in France. His beautiful young Burundian girlfriend pads across the floor sleepily on her way to the bathroom, and from the

kitchen appears a silent manservant with coffee in a plastic thermos.

Faye pours two cups and points to the photograph of Gustave on the wall, taken from behind at such close range that every scale is visible on the back and tail. "This was the closest I ever get to him, perhaps two metres," says Faye wistfully. "Every day for two years I was following Gustave,

watching Gustave. It was a wonderful time in my life, just me and him together in the bush."

After his field assistant was killed in 1998, Faye took out a license to hunt the culprit and began investigating the reports and stories about crocodile attacks on the lakeshore and the Rusizi river. The witnesses all talked of an enormous crocodile, bigger than a hippo, but the death toll was so high and widespread that Faye and local officials

assumed that several large crocodiles must be responsible. In the spring of 1999, following six months of attacks on the lakeshore, he discovered that the biggest bull crocodile at Rusizi National Park had just returned there after a six-month absence. Faye already knew this animal and had named him Gustave. "I don't know why I give him that name," he says. "Gustave just seemed to suit him." Looking back through the park's records, he found that each of Gustave's

---

*Faye pours two cups and points to the photograph of Gustave on the wall, taken from behind at such close range that every scale is visible on the back and tail. "This was the closest I ever get to him, perhaps two metres," says Faye wistfully. "Every day for two years I was following Gustave, watching Gustave. It was a wonderful time in my life, just me and him together in the bush."*

---

absences from the park coincided with a spate of killings on the lakeshore.

"He also eats fish and cows but he really eats a lot of people, sometimes the whole body, sometimes just the arms and legs," says Faye. "To understand him, you must understand that there was war in Congo and war in Burundi and many, many dead bodies were thrown into the Rusizi river and the lake. Every day when I was following him I would see dead bodies in the water— four, five, sometimes ten. I think this is how he get the taste for eating people."

Having identified Gustave as the killer and spent two years bonding with him, Faye then launched his audacious scheme to "put him in jail." He built a large concrete enclosure in Rusizi National Park and envisioned a future there for Gustave as a stud bull. Having thrived for 200 million years, the Nile crocodile as a species is now in severe decline all over Africa, because of hunting and habitat pressure, and bulls the size of Gustave, once commonplace, are now almost unknown. Faye's plan was to reinvigorate the flagging, dwindling gene pool of *crocodylus niloticus* by breeding Gustave to the fittest females he could find, and releasing the hatchlings into wild areas. Simultaneously he would revive the bankrupt fortunes of Rusizi National Park by charging the public admission fees to see the notorious man-eater in the flesh.



He fashioned a series of nooses and traps, ever larger and more elaborate. The *pièce de résistance* was a welded steel trap so mighty that it required thirty people to lift it. They placed it on the muddy, silty bank of the Rusizi river and baited it with a cow's head, then a live chicken, then a live goat. A fixed infrared camera installed by a documentary team showed the shining eye of a huge crocodile inspecting the trap at night, but neither Gustave nor any of the other crocodiles in the river were tempted inside. One morning after a violent rainstorm, they found the goat missing and the trap tilted and half-sunk into the river. It might have been Gustave's doing, but the rain got inside the camera and destroyed the evidence.

The enclosure is now gathering weeds and the giant trap has sunk out of sight. Faye tried again in 2004, arranging a circle of traps near the village of Gatumba in the delta and baiting them with chickens and goats.

Gustave came to investigate and swam away. Later he seized a fisherman, brought him back into the circle of traps and started eating him there. "He's tricky," says Faye. "It's not cleverness but instinct, perhaps sharpened a little by experience. It is part of his personality."

---

The idea that reptiles might have individual personalities sits uneasily in our mammalian brains, but Gustave is definitely not a typical Nile crocodile. For one thing, he is greedy. The main reason he is so big is his genes, but he is also fat from eating so much. A crocodile can easily go six months without eating, yet Gustave ate seventeen people in thirty days. Even more unusually, he will sometimes kill both cows and people without eating them. "We have seen this several times now," says Faye. "We can say he has a very strong instinct to kill."

His hide is scarred and battered-looking and at first glance, says Faye, he looks about a hundred years old, close to the maximum life expectancy of a Nile crocodile. But when he opens his mouth, it becomes apparent that he still has all his teeth, suggesting that his real age is about sixty. Being so fat and heavy, he is starting to slow down, and Faye thinks he is probably too slow now to catch fish, although swimmers and fishermen should present him with no problems. And how does he feel when Gustave kills people? Faye shrugs, turns up his palms: "It's the law of nature. People say Gustave is evil but this is absurd. He has no moral choices to make. He can only follow

---

*And how does he feel when Gustave kills people? Faye shrugs, turns up his palms: "It's the law of nature. People say Gustave is evil but this is absurd. He has no moral choices to make. He can only follow his instincts. He eat, he fuck, he sleep. It's a good life."*

---

his instincts. He eat, he fuck, he sleep. It's a good life."

Faye has now abandoned the idea of capturing his old friend and admits that the giant trap was a sizeable folly. But he cannot let the law of nature take its course, especially when it comes to the children at his school and orphanage.

"Many times I tell them about Gustave and still they go to the lake to swim. It is a big problem. I worry that Gustave will come but I don't want to kill him and he is too old to put in jail."

Faye's solution, currently awaiting some funding and equipment, is to dart Gustave with a tranquilizer

and put a radio-collar on him. "Then he can have his freedom and I can warn people that Gustave is coming, Gustave is here, don't go in the water until he's gone." Given the extraordinary reluctance of the locals to stay out of crocodile-infested waters, the scheme is hardly foolproof, but it's not clear what else can be done except the unthinkable.

"Even if there is *un accident* with one of my children, I cannot kill him," says Faye. "He is the last of the Mohicans. There will never be another like him and I am proud to call him my friend, even though he would eat me if he got the chance."

---

This essay has been reprinted with permission of the author. It originally appeared in *Telegraph Magazine*, under a different title, on February 2, 2010.



Robin Carstensen

## Pantoum: Song of a Borderland

Xochitl works in Juarez making wall art  
for a chain of eateries all across Texas.  
On weekends, she cleans houses of middle-income  
America, when the BP isn't cracking down

with their new chain-link fencing all across Texas  
and the Rio Grande, where houses are wide  
and far apart. When the BP is cracking down,  
she packs her life in water-sealed containers,

braves the Rio Grande to houses wide and far apart.  
I've slept between their walls, on my family goose-downs,  
while she packs her life in water-sealed containers,  
and wades across the river to the other side of town.

She bundles up her son, waves to her comadres.  
When factories in Juarez cut her wages, she walks  
to The Pass, El Paso, bridge to el otro lado del rio,  
past Sacred Hearts, abandoned Sabbath afternoons.

When the factories in Juarez cut wages, she walks  
to find work and livelihood while conjunto's violins  
sing the sacred hearts of the abandoned afternoon,  
and Mariachis thrum accordions like cicada wings

in search of work and food; the bows on their violins  
quiver in the autumn breeze, in the Juarez noon.  
Mariachis thrum accordions like cicada wings,  
while old mestizos strum rancheros de los Sueños,

quivering in the autumn breeze, in the Juarez noon,  
rumors waver thick and tall of vigilantes and more fences.  
Old mestizos strum rancheros de los Sueños;  
their cantos rise like mango moons above the river.

---

Rumors waver thick and tall of vigilantes building fences.  
The truth is I met Xochitl years ago. I bear her song  
like a ghost caught by driftwood gliding over the river.  
Neither one of us or anyone we love would have this fence

or shape of human blood and fire fanning into song  
clambering wire mesh, metal barb and spire.  
Either one of us or anyone we love given half a chance  
would pull it down, push the weight of pang and bone

over rolling wire mesh, metal barb and spire,  
over pipe and brick, beneath the ground; singed organ  
in the human chest would pull it down, push the weight  
of pang and bone, dig a border up by root and scar.



## The Fountains Whence All This River of Time and Its Creatures Floweth

*For we are not pans and barrows, nor even porters of the fire and torch-bearers,  
but children of the fire, made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted...*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sunrise bathes me in molecules of light; I sing and fill myself with magnolia, fresh fruit.  
I insist my thoughts manifest these things, no matter what my republic is thinking.

Let's sit on my balcony ledge, claiming *beauty is its own excuse for being*, then watch it  
spread over the trellis of this mid-western garden, over the stadium lights bearing down

like Armageddon. What need of beauty for an acropolis — a football stadium monolith,  
claiming acres of clay and sky? The crane hefting cement blocks to the VIP-glass top,

straining to set a new record in town. This steel vise-grip swinging above the crowd —  
evangelistic praise for thrust and smash, waving through concrete slabs, palm-coiled

shell-like fists. If a fact is a state of grace, then grace claims even this terrain, speed,  
collision — a game on finely cut grass; a keg of six-point beer; cyber-space pixels

of smooth-shaven girls; a crane that could drop any second, crushing cars, PVC,  
trichloroethylene-filled heads into dust, stealing the show. This is the universe

obeying the law of attraction. But there is another frequency, a wider path  
unraveling: the Apollo visual-motor rehearsal measured in Olympic athletes

*shows the race run in the mind uses the same muscles fired in the same sequence  
as the physical race.* If we go there in the mind, we will go there in the body.

To climb another rung of beauty, vibrate on another wave, see this other dimension  
of truth and bring it on, we begin with fearlessness, ask, expand the breath in our lungs.

---

## Blue Sombra

It is early September, and the redbud is beginning to signal change. But these slender young bodies shimmering up and down the long wooden table at Jalisco's still feel

Spring. One Kappa Beta wears a voluptuous midnight-blue sombrero. Her friends clap and sing *Feliz Cumpleaños*. They can't know Chelsea will break her best friend's heart

when she falls from their sky for Adam, how Ashley will ditch her father's veterinarian dreams in sophomore year, slip into the Air Force and work on an AWACS in Elmendorf.

Kayla will drop out to bartend at Best Western, and work the karaoke circuit at Creek Nation, feigning attraction to men, sleeping with plenty before she brings Eva, a Black

Jack dealer from Tecumseh, to meet her Fox-news-no-spin-zone-parents for Christmas. She'll finally get it: nothing's pleasing mama. Sarah will find herself hitched after an all-

night bedlam. A glowing braid of kids will follow, seven layered bean dips and worn dollar bills for the brass plate at the Presbyterian magnate swallowing Main and Sixth.

Birthday girl's heading somewhere big, listening to corn, saving the planet. I'm betting on it, sister. I'd like to tell her from where I sit, it's going to burn out there. Remember

tonight and September, cool shade beneath a blue sombrero, well-meaning friends, virgin margaritas, hats off for you, second chance in every breath, and comadre, happy birthday.



Robin Carstensen's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Ascent*, *Big Muddy*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Natural Bridge*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Sinister Wisdom*, and *So to Speak: A Feminist Journal of Language & Art*. She is a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University and a managing editor for the *Cimarron Review*.

Tim Bellows

## Late Fall, Zhu Jiang River

Bonfire smoke sits close to cold waters.  
The revelers' moon, from its half basket,  
ignites river sands. Moored far off,  
I lean on the gunwale,  
roll the bottle between my palms,  
mutter a short ode to wine,  
"the happy drunkenness of violets."

I guard the far shoreline by this watching.  
There's the house, that one  
with the implacable face in lunar white.  
Surely the owner's daughter  
can never know I've perished, a nation full  
of regrets and bitter news.

Watching the turning glass of night-river waters,  
I am all men's contemplations of distance  
while she, wearing dresses that rustle and sway,  
sings melodies of grasses crowded with flowers,  
flowers like the whiter suns,  
celebrating. Somewhere.

I would secure for us all a life beyond despair;  
I'm a metal statue still declaring silent glories —  
while dark waters and the frosted panes of the moon  
burn in their relentless task.



---

## Tracing Threads

Writing the story,  
I track into forest, walk along  
with the central character

who stands in the center of my voice.  
I can never explain. What she imagines,  
I come to own. Seedling conifers,

high trees decked out with air plants;  
fawn lilies assuming wonders – stamens  
that move inward when disturbed,

dusting insects with pollen  
so cross-fertilization can  
fill the world with honest plants.

And I don't know what she is;  
I do not – well, not exactly –  
even look at her eyes as we walk on.

Later, half terrified, cresting the final hill,  
I make wishes, reach for her hand, become  
the nascent center of my own voice.



Tim Bellows is a college writing teacher, poet, essayist, and photographer devoted to wilderness, contemplative travels, and the quirky ways of words. A graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop, he's published work in over 200 literary journals. His work can be found in *A Racing Up the Sky* (Eclectic Press); *Desert Wood, an Anthology of Nevada Poets*; and in *Wild Stars* (Starry Puddle Press). His book *Sunlight from Another Day – Poems In & Out of the Body* is available at Amazon.com.

L. Annette Binder

## The Last He Knew



They called him  
dungeon master.  
They called him  
Blowman sometimes  
instead of Bowman, but  
he didn't pay them any  
mind. He rattled the ring  
when he saw them and  
chased them out. *This is  
no place for students,* he'd  
say. He'd rap his flash-  
light against the pipes.  
*The steam inside could cut  
you into pieces. It's worse  
than a bomb when it goes,*  
but they didn't listen.  
They roamed the tunnels  
like raccoons, throw-  
ing down beer cans and  
writing strange messages  
along the walls, and once  
he'd found some work

boots below the chemistry building. A new pair with the socks still warm inside. He waited three days for somebody to claim them, but they didn't belong to any of the boys from the shop and on the fourth day he threw them out.

He turned on the lights, and they flickered and hummed and threw shadows along the cement walls. He'd come so early today that all the coffee places were closed and Gina hadn't made his thermos because she was mad again. He could be a business person instead of a tunnel rat, that's what she'd said. He could be an entrepreneur and she could keep the books, but instead he worked for pennies and they were living in a shack and she couldn't see the mountains from any room in the house. Might as well live in a cave. Might as well live in those tunnels he worked. He was never home anyway and that's why she hadn't gotten pregnant yet, not even with all the money she'd spent on those blue sticks.

---

It was a relief to step inside where the air was dry and still. Even in winter it was warm down there, and the only sound was the pipes knocking and the hiss of the steam inside. He set the ring back on his belt. He was the only one at the insulation company to have the master key. They gave it to him back in '93, and he carried it on a brass ring with the keys from all his other jobs. Every week or so he came to the university to check the steam traps and the valves, and he knew those tunnels better than the roads in town. He knew every bend and dip in the concrete, where the light switches were and the cracks along the floor, and those days when his head was hurting he worked without the overhead lights. He cleaned the garbage and checked the pipes and waited for Mary to come. He waited for those eyes she had.

At eleven exactly he ate lunch in his favorite spot. He squatted like an Indian and opened up his bag. Thirty feet above him the students were reading at those long library tables. The librarians walked the marble floors. They wore shoes with rubber soles, and the clock over the stone mantle was chiming and all the old mining millionaires who'd founded the school a hundred years before were watching from their frames.

He'd studied up there once. He'd read his books until late every night, and Mary sat beside him and kicked his feet when she was bored. Her face was wide like her mother's, and he loved the lines of it and how her eyes were pale and turned upwards like a Slav's. He left his junior year. He boxed up all his books and left his room behind because it wasn't right to stay. She couldn't graduate anymore, and so he didn't either. He didn't graduate, and he didn't visit her where she was buried.

Her family didn't speak to him at the service. Her father's face was coiled tight as a spring, and her mother cried the whole time and if someone tried to touch her she cried even harder and pulled away. She'd have thrown herself down in that hole if they hadn't held her back, she'd said more than once. She'd have jumped from the bank into the water where her baby drowned. Six daughters and only Mary had gone to college. Only Mary was smart enough to read those books, and still she was more trouble than all her other sisters combined. *She's a firecracker*, her mother had always said. *I knew it from how she kicked.* And now she couldn't see the mountains because her family skimped on the plot, and they skimped on the stone, too. They bought only a flat one, and those city boys mowed over her in summertime and chipped away the edges.

He finished his sandwich and folded up the tin foil, and he heard laughter farther along the walls. He heard a woman and her voice sounded like a bell, and for a moment he thought he knew that voice and that laugh and how it started and stopped and fluttered in the air. He stood up. It wasn't right how they laughed. They were always coming down in the tunnels, even in daytime. Stealing keys and finding the doorways inside storage rooms or behind the library stacks.

They lifted up manhole covers, too, and set them down crooked, and somebody was going to get hurt from their foolishness, he knew this for certain.

He left his lunch bag on the floor and followed the sound until it stopped. He was at a branch in the tunnel, and one part led to the science quad and the other went across the courtyard to the freshman dorms. He set his hand against the wall and waited. He closed his eyes, and when he opened them he saw writing that hadn't been there before. He reached out to touch the letters. *I miss you*, somebody had written. They hadn't used paint or markers like the students he'd caught before. They'd carved the letters deep into the cement. He traced them with his fingers.

THE BEERS HE DRANK DIDN'T KILL HER. It wasn't the beers or the argument they'd been having, and it wasn't the roads and how slick they were. The county never salted them enough. They put the salt away in March, and sometimes it snowed into May. They were cheap that way. No, it wasn't the skid that killed her or how he reached for the dashboard lighter. It was timing and nothing more. She shouldn't have taken so long to put on her coat. She shouldn't have gone back for a menu. *I need it for our file*, she'd said. *We'll be coming here again*, and he waited for her and then he dropped the keys when they got to the car. He had to crawl down and reach for them, and she laughed at how he looked with his butt high in the air. *Graceful as a ballerina*, she said. She gave him a little kick, and he was mad when he came back up. He didn't talk to her. When she touched his hand, he reached for the radio instead and turned the volume up.

He should have slowed down and grabbed her hand. He should have stopped to gas up on the way home. He always waited until the tank was empty and the car was running on fumes. He should have hurried and he should have slowed down, and he shouldn't have dropped his keys. Change these things, change any one of them, and he might not have swerved into the other lane. And even if he had, nobody would have been there because usually it was quiet on the frontage road. Even on Fridays there weren't any cars. Old Berenson might not have passed that spot in his Dodge truck just then, and she might not have looked up and seen his lights and screamed. He wouldn't have turned the wheel too hard, and the car wouldn't have gone across the shoulder and into the river right where it was deepest.

Things hinged on moments strung together. A few inches one way or another, a few seconds, and she'd be alive today and he'd have a son with eyes like hers. He'd have a little girl with curly red hair, and she'd make trouble in the house.

MARKIWITZ CAME DOWN AT THREE. He was fatter than he'd ever been, and he had to turn sideways to pass where the pipes hung low. They walked together from Steinman Hall toward the science center. The

---

tunnel narrowed for part of the way, and the concrete was powdery from the road salt they threw up in the courtyard. Another few years and they'd need to rebuild this section. It was crumbling from inside.

Markiwitz stopped to wipe his forehead. "I don't know, Bowman," he said. "Every week it gets harder. Sometimes I can't even drag my fat ass down to check on the valves." He hoisted up his pants to just below his belly. "Not that you'd know what it's like. Skinny as a zipper and you've got a pretty wife at home."

Bowman shrugged at that. "I've got it all," he said. "No doubt." He waited for Markiwitz to catch up. No wonder he was fat. He had nobody to cook for him, not since the divorce, and he ate only Arby's, and all those greasy bags were piled up high in his car. They filled the passenger side, and they'd spread to the baby seat now, too. Poor Markiwitz, who didn't know how good he had it. He could come home late and eat in front of the television. Even with the child support and the weekends he had his baby, he was freer now than anybody else Bowman knew. It was almost as good as being eighteen again. He could race cars if he wanted. He could lift weights or take up rock climbing, and all he did instead was eat and miss his wife, who didn't miss him back.

"The system needs work," Bowman said. "Some of the traps are blowing through."

Markiwitz was huffing. He stopped to catch his breath. "I dunno," he said. "They could probably wait another winter."

"It's time." Bowman pointed to the long pipe wall. "We need to blow it down." Every year the school spent seventy or eighty thousand dollars on repairs. They replaced a few traps and patched the insulation, and they didn't do the important things. All the expansion joints that were starting to go crooked and the overstretched receivers and those radiators that made the rooms too hot. The pretty girls in the classrooms sweated the whole winter long and peeled off their sweaters. Their hair was damp and clung in ringlets against their necks, and once Mary had cracked open all the windows in chemistry lab and let the cold air in.

"What's the rush," Markiwitz said. He was struggling to keep up, Bowman could tell.

"That's probably what they said in New York, too." Bowman shook his head. They were careless there. They used too much sealant in those tunnels, and it came loose and clogged up the traps. The steam cloud was higher than a building when it blew. It cratered the street and cars fell inside and those workers choked on the air down in the tunnels. Their skin came off in strips. "Everywhere I look I see another problem," he said.

Markiwitz stopped at the spot where the walls narrowed again. He wiped his brow. "I'll wait here," he said. "I think I caught that fat virus." He patted his belly. "Just last night I saw it on the news. It doesn't matter what you eat once you got the bug."



GINA WAS ANGRY WHEN HE GOT TO THE HOUSE. She didn't meet him at the door. The table wasn't set, and when he came into the kitchen she was standing at the sink and staring out to the driveway and the empty garbage cans. *You're late* was all she said. *I had to go out there and shovel the walk myself.*

She ladled out soup into two chipped bowls. It was Lipton's, and she added extra noodles to make it taste homemade. A bag of chips lay at the center of the table and an empty jar of salsa. She sat across from him, but she didn't reach for her bowl. She worried the placemat with her fingertips, rolling and unrolling its edge. For the first time he noticed how thin her face was and how her eyes had begun to crease at the corners. She looked like her mother, who'd been pretty once but her face had gone pinched before she was even forty. They were narrow in the cheeks, the both of them, and their eyes turned down and not upwards, and the older Gina got the less she looked like Mary.

"I'll go out later," he said. "I'll finish up the walk."

She examined her own hands like a doctor or a pianist. She was looking at her chipped pink polish.

"It's those headaches I get," he said. "Sometimes they keep me from sleeping."

She watched him eat his soup for a while. She began to crack her knuckles, which she never did anymore, not since her old boss had come down sick and a nicer one took his place. She cracked them hard, one after the next, and then she took a breath. "I'm pregnant," she said. "This time I'm sure."

He picked up his spoon and set it back down. He tried to remember the last time he'd touched her. He tried to remember the last time he'd wanted to. Back through Christmas and into fall and then it was July and they'd gone to the park together to watch the fireworks. She'd laughed on the ride home. She was happy for once and her hair was down the way he liked it and she sang with the radio, tapping her fingers against the window glass. She set her bare feet up on the dash, and he didn't pester her this time. She'd be mangled if they crashed. The air bag would crack her hips, that's what he always told her. But he looked at her and she was beautiful and the night was balmy the way Hawaii might be or the Maldives. He turned the key and reached for her. He pulled her into the house. Could it really have been that long? Five months, almost six, and she wasn't showing yet. Her jeans still fit, and she wore the same belt with the turquoise buckle.

He looked away from her and to the window. The bare maple trees were black against the sky. They were growing too close to the house. Their roots would break the foundation in time. They'd lift it right up and crack it.

She was waiting for him to say something. She was probably expecting him to shout. He should have felt betrayed, he knew this. But he couldn't summon the energy. He wasn't angry, and he wasn't curious either. He felt only tired. His bones all ached, and those sparks were

---

drifting again across his vision. They were like fireflies when they came. First the sparks and then the headaches, and he'd learned to brace himself.

"Best get to a doctor then," he said. He reached for the bag of chips.

HE WAS LAGGING PIPES THE NEXT TIME MARY CAME. He saw her from the back, and she was fast as she'd ever been. Always ten steps ahead even when he hurried to catch her. Early to class and early to leave, and she laughed when she saw him struggle. *You're slow as my grandpa*, she'd say. *Just look how you shuffle along.*

"Wait," he said. He said it quietly at first and then louder. He dropped his canvas and his glue gun. She turned around for a moment. He tried to see her face, but she was running already and her hair was loose and blew against her cheeks. She looked young from where he was, young as the day she drowned.

All that weight pushing against the window and he couldn't break it, not even with his boot. They weren't wearing seatbelts. They never did, and when the car tilted into that black river, when the water found its way inside, they were weightless as astronauts. They floated over the seats. He reached around for the window handle, but he couldn't get his bearings. Twenty seconds, thirty, and she was drifting against the window and pounding it with her fists. The dashboard lights still glowed by some strange grace. They were shining in the water, and he saw them all at once and reached around and found the latch.

He tried to take her with him. He grabbed her by the wrist, and she pulled back with a strength he didn't know she had. Her mouth was open, and bubbles were coming from her nose, streaming upwards toward the lights. He reached for her again, but she was wild as a cat. She clawed against the seat. She tugged at him and pushed him away and set her hands around her throat as if to choke herself. He felt a pressure in his chest. He wanted to inhale. He found her wrist and lost it, and his chest was full to bursting. Her panic was stronger than he was. He couldn't catch her and he couldn't reach her, and he turned toward the door. He pushed his way through the opening with his arms, and then he kicked himself free.

"Wait," he said again. He tapped his light against a bare expanse of pipe. He wanted to see her face. He tried to slow her down. He followed her past the quad and the pavilion and up toward the steam plant. There was a staircase there and the door was always locked, and she wouldn't have the key. He was coughing when he reached the plant. The stairs were empty, and the door at the top was closed. He sat down on the bottom step. He was breathing hard like Markiwitz. He felt a tightness in his chest. The pipes were knocking again. They were hammering louder than usual, and the sound worked its way inside his ribs. It thumped just like his heart.

He found Markiwitz that afternoon down by the vending machines. Eating two bags of chips at once. "Are you sick?" Markiwitz wanted to

know. "You look like you ate something bad."

"Did you see a girl today?" Bowman leaned against the wall. He tried to sound nonchalant, but his voice was loud and it shook a little. One of the nurses eating a yogurt looked up at him and frowned. "Down by the plant."

Markiwitz licked the salt from his fingers. "I saw a couple of 'em," he said. "Walking around with cameras. Looking for something artistic." He snorted a little and shook the crumbs from one of the bags straight into his mouth.

"Was one of them skinny? Did she have long red hair?"

"Dirty blondes the both of them." Markiwitz shook his head. "Thirty grand a year and they're taking blurry pictures of pipes." He crumpled up both the bags and tossed them into the bin. "Their parents must be proud."

"The girl I saw didn't have any camera," Bowman said. "She went to the plant like she knew where she was going."

Markiwitz shrugged. "Students. What do you expect?" He was eyeing the vending machines again, looking at the chocolate bars and cookies.

Bowman rubbed his eyes. The lights in the staff lounge were too bright. "I don't know where she went."

Markiwitz slid a bill into the slot and looked up at him. "You might be right about the system. Much as it pains me to say." He punched the buttons and waited for his candy bar to drop. "I was down by the quad and it sounded like a hailstorm the way those pipes were knocking."

"Spring break is the time," Bowman said. "It'll be tight, but we can do it in a week."

Markiwitz shook his head again. "The plant folks are telling me December at the soonest. Maybe Thanksgiving if they can swing it." He bit into his Snickers bar.

MONDAY WAS HIS DAY OFF, BUT HE CAME ANYWAY BECAUSE EVEN THE SMELL of his shaving cream made Gina feel sick. She was standing by the window again when he left. She watched the rain come down, pooling in the driveway and turning her beds to mud. It was almost spring, and the trees were starting to bud. The chokecherries would bloom soon and the dogwood and the crabapples the Murphys grew across the highway, and nothing moved her or made her smile, not the coming blossoms or bulbs poking through, not the softening in the air. She held her belly as if it were a burden, an anchor pulling her down. All she'd wanted for years, all she talked about was a baby in the house, and now she looked at him and she was angrier than before. Just yesterday she told him he never made any decisions. That was his problem. He drifted from one thing to the next and he was forty now, almost forty-one, and starting to lose his hair.

He slept in the living room most nights and awoke at three or four to infomercials. Helicopter repair schools and technical colleges and

---

fitness machines that would turn his abs to steel. He watched them and thought of Markiwitz and all the options he had. His feet hung over the armrest, and sometimes he slept funny and his neck went stiff. He cursed her then. He cursed that baby she was growing. It was floating inside her like a seahorse. She deserved to be sick, to run for the toilet with her cheeks bulging, and still her misery was no comfort and he was lonely in his house. He was lonely when he sat with her at the table.

By the time he got to the school the rain was coming down hard as it did in summertime. The air smelled of blood and worms, and he couldn't see the mountains anymore or the treetops. The water rolled off his jacket and soaked the hems of his jeans. He should have brought his cap today. He'd remembered when he started the car, but he didn't want to go back into the house. She was still standing by the window. He stomped his feet and shook his jacket before going inside. Markiwitz was already there, holding his plastic thermos.

"We've got some leaks down by the plant," Markiwitz was saying. "It's probably just the flashing." He tilted his head. "You look like crap today, Bowman. You surely do."

"I can't sleep," Bowman said. "All night I watch TV."

Markiwitz shook his head. "Better sleep now. In another few months it's all over."

"It's already over," Bowman said. He bent down to tighten his laces, and he smiled at Markiwitz and how sad he looked. He wanted to take him by the shoulder and tell him things would be fine. His baby would grow up, and his wife would see what a mistake she'd made. She'd come back with all her suitcases.

He went down to the library and checked the first traps. He checked the valves along the long pipe wall, and when lunch time came he sat below the library and closed his eyes. He'd come down here once with Mary, just weeks before the crash. They'd run together in the dark, and he pushed her against the wall. She ran from him the way she always did. She bit his lip and ran, and he chased her along the tunnels and back up through the grate. Twenty years and he was chasing her still.

He should feel sorrow for all the things that had gone away. He wasn't young anymore and his gut was soft and Gina was right about his hair. His books were in boxes and his parents were dead, and Mary was watching him. Her hair was coiling in the water. It took them days to pull her out. All the people he'd lost and the plans he'd set aside, he remembered them now and mourned them, and still things were somehow beautiful. The bare trees were beautiful and their first leaves and the moon shining in the puddles and the rain clouds when they came. All these things pressed down on him. They seeped like water through his skin. Last night he'd watched the waxing moon from his window. He lay back against the cushions, and Gina was beautiful, too. She was crying while she slept. She was talking in her

dream voice, and he should have treated her better. He should have shoveled the walk.

He held his lunch bag, but he didn't open it. He leaned back against the wall and listened. He could hear it today, that intake of breath and the gentle release. It was coming from the old brick buildings and the students and the janitors pushing their buckets. He could hear raindrops and the pounding in the pipes and librarians walking over the stones. The hum of the plant and men running by. They were shouting, some of them. They were dropping things and not stopping to pick them back up. *Jesus* somebody was saying. *Jesus Mary and Joseph*, and there was a terrible wrenching sound. It sounded elemental. It sounded like thunder and vast gears grinding, and he stood up.

Men were coming down from the plant. They were streaming into the passage. Running past the library and toward the freshman dorms. Markiwitz came by. He was pumping his arms. He was fast for once, and his mouth was open, and he kept up with the others. Bowman stood there, and they ran around him without stopping. They were yelling and pointing and one of them grabbed his arm and tried to pull him along, but he shook himself free. He watched them go. They rounded the corner, and he stood there for a while and waited. Bells were ringing in the plant. He heard them behind the knocking. He bent down and took his lunch bag. He went the way the others had come. He retraced their steps, and the wrenching sound was growing louder. It pulsed through the soles of his boots. He went toward the plant. He went toward his Mary. The pipes groaned like a living thing. They shuddered, and then they broke.



L. Annette Binder was born in Germany and grew up in Colorado Springs. Her fiction has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *One Story*, *The Southern Review*, *Third Coast*, *Bellingham Review*, *Avery Anthology* and others. Her work was a finalist for the 2010 Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. She is a student in Programs in Writing at the University of California, Irvine.



Michelle Bonczek

## A Roadside Attempt at Attraction

Do you remember  
your hands the first time they touched water?  
The fingers unable to stop trying to take hold

of that which cannot be held?  
This is how we touch the world, each other, the river  
between what we are and what we cannot have.  
We wed ourselves to desire,

to dancing, flexible atoms that leap  
from our grasp like water or magnets and we awe  
at their strip tease, at their beauty. We fold  
words over and over into ourselves:

But, Want, Need, Please, still  
the planet keeps turning under the endless  
spin of heels and lights. The so called music goes on  
in our heads long after. Pretend, for a moment,

that you understand. Lift your face  
from your hands before you disintegrate.  
Look out this window and count the snowflakes  
cottoning what's left to be covered.

From the warm glass pane, on this side,  
count on them, on the other,  
to explain it as good as anyone.

## Yaquina Bay, and Darkness

We have never been down this road: the ocean  
 a womb, if you can imagine that, and if you can't, just the ocean  
 pounding a March night black and blue, the lighthouse

at the end of the bay's arm beaming, ready,  
 metaphorically speaking, for delivery of  
 what we call the body

from what we call  
 the body — what we'll call here *our bodies*  
 from *our life together* — white glare, loose stone,  
     the ocean — we fall into it all  
 blindly, everything — each word

that breaks free from our mouths, each word, that is, that breaks  
 our mouths, whether right or wrong, for richer or for poorer, each word  
 forming and forming and forming.

I fear this Pacific rising toward our feet and cringe at the sound  
 of the horn breaking night  
 with its wail, this night breaking us.

Every two minutes the horn calls the lost ashore, which feels like me,

which is surely us, out here  
 lost among tufts of beach grass like wild hair  
 over the world in which we've lost

the piece of driftwood we used to mark our path  
 back. Once, I halted, stilled my lungs  
 for the whisper I heard over my heart. I followed  
 the sound sleeplessly for days. So now

you know it's not good when I say let's stop  
 walking, let's sit on this log  
 in this fog, I could say, for as long as it takes to lift,

---

until the waves stop throwing themselves  
against what we cannot see, that which we refuse

to see. I don't want to go any further.

Even Niagara Falls sounds like a sigh  
from far enough away.

I don't want to go any further, I yell.

You, close your mouth – no, you close your mouth, catch  
whatever is left of us

not yet lost to this language.



## Plotting Distance

There is blue, there is you, wildflower,  
bloom on a hill.

There is the sun, crazy, gone under  
a spell, a crabapple mangled.

I call and there is no answer.  
Where have you gone? Where  
would you like to go?

In the bushes, chattering birds  
tower stems, and the leaves full  
of dismay, bargain with them.  
I am coming closer.

May I come closer?  
Close enough to show you  
my scars. I'm broke.

The moon is broke.  
Your heart is, or

is it mine? O Moon  
over Montana, you are over.  
Nothing may well remain.



Michelle Bonczek is Assistant Professor of English at Lebanon Valley College where she teaches literature and creative writing. She holds a PhD from Western Michigan University, an MFA from Eastern Washington University, and an MA from SUNY Brockport. She is the recipient of the 2009 Jane Kenyon Poetry Prize through *Water~Stone Review*. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Cream City Review*, *DMQ*, *The Fertile Source*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Mad Poets Review*, *Margie*, and *Orion*.

Delia Caparoso Konzett

## The American Century

*America's Global Vision and the Image of the  
WWII Combat Soldier*

*Weapons are tools not just of destruction but also of perception*  
– Paul Virilio

*O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light*  
– Francis Scott Key



Title still for Edward Dmytryk's *Back to Bataan* (1945), starring John Wayne and Anthony Quinn. Quinn's character is depicted as a Filipino national hero who helps liberate his country. © RKO. Distributed by Warner Bros.



Friedrich Kittler and Paul Virilio have notably discussed the intimate relationship between war and media. From the Civil War Gatling gun, Marey's chronophotographic rifle camera, and nitrocellulose that made both early film stock and explosives to aerial surveillance and Cinemascope, the technologies of war and cinema have intimately informed one another in their parallel and at times overlapping histories. Virilio's discussion of how WWII brought about a "strategy of global vision thanks to spy-satellites, drones, and other video-missiles" is of particular importance, stressing the supreme importance of sight as a military tool and its role in U.S. postwar global dominance (1).

This global vision of America, growing out of WWII and the nation's departure from isolationism, is clearly articulated in Henry Luce's famous 1941 *Life* editorial, heralding "The American Century" and its new superpower status as defender of the free world (63). Articulating an updated, popular version of Manifest Destiny, this American vision of the world is also explicitly expressed in Hollywood WWII combat film. This essay is concerned with WWII combat film and will trace its birth in the war period to its transformation in the postwar era. It will discuss in particular the complex and contradic-

tory visual image (and vision) of the American combat soldier — perspectives associated with conservative ideals of nation and imperialism but which paradoxically carry within themselves a powerful critique of these ideals.

Born in the crisis of WWII as a subgenre of the war film, the combat film begins and closes with war. The traditional war film typically opens with our hero in a domestic scene from which he is removed when called to war. In war film, one of the oldest genres of the silver screen, the activity of war is a violent interruption that disrupts the family drama of home, throwing it into disorder. This view of war as that which endangers and damages family life is especially found in classic early war films such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and particularly WWI films such as *The Big Parade* (1925) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), with their critical outlook on national conflict. However, this perspective changes dramatically in WWII with the birth of the combat film. The combat film begins, if not on the actual battlefield, in training camp. In this sense, the combat film is always in *medias res* with the activity of war forming the only narrative to which everything else (home, family, love, career) is subordinate.

Classic combat films produced during the war such as *Bataan* (1943),

*From the Civil War Gatling gun, Marey's chronophotographic rifle camera, and nitrocellulose that made both early film stock and explosives to aerial surveillance and Cinemascope, the technologies of war and cinema have intimately informed one another in their parallel and at times overlapping histories.*

*Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), and *Thirty Seconds over Tokyo* (1944) are mainly concerned with supporting the war effort and boosting public morale, and thus also belong to or are closely associated with the genre of the propaganda film. In these early combat films, the trope of war is concentrated into its vital essence of national life, one singularly concerned with Benedict Anderson's question, "What makes people die for their country?" In this distilled image of war, all else is repressed, particularly concerns of politics and power as well as any doubt or criticism about the national agenda (7). Similarly, differences such as religion, class, race, or gender are pushed aside or made subordinate to the fundamental display of a unified democracy in action.

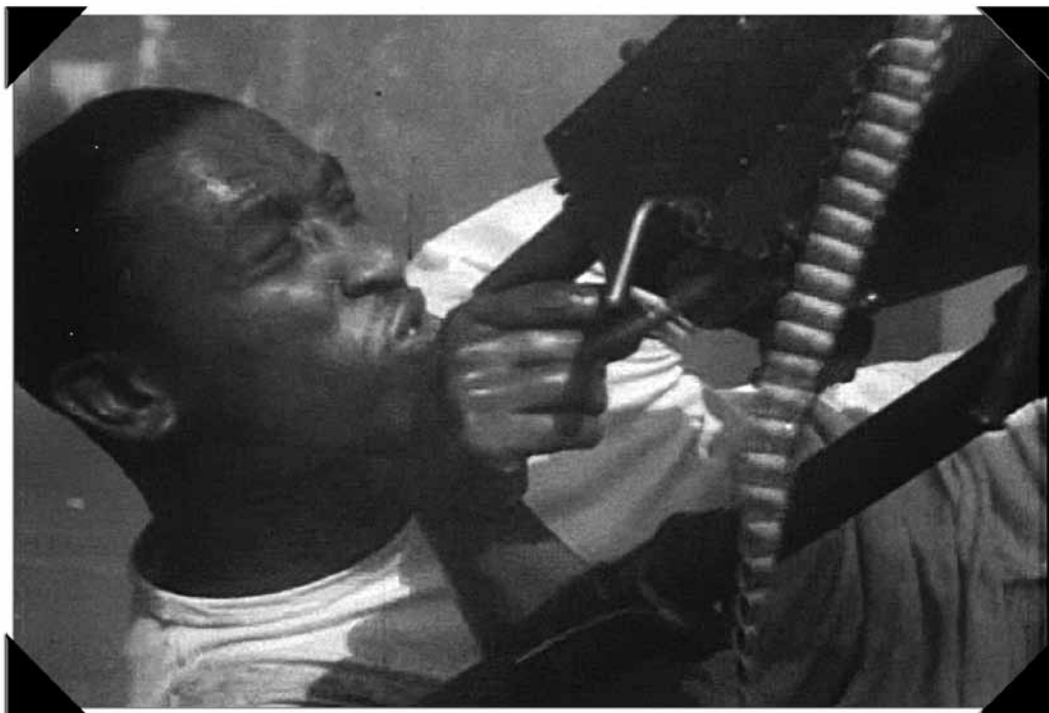
Consider the important convention of Hollywood's WWII multicultural combat team, a fictional construct in a pre-Civil Rights and Jim Crow America, composed of a variety of racial, ethnic, regional, and social backgrounds to represent mainstream America. One of the earliest screen examples (if not the first) of the multicultural combat team is depicted in *Bataan* (1943) and its celebrated roll call, which introduces the nation and the world to a motley team of U.S. soldiers that depicts a national melting pot. The 13-man unit includes various American ethnicities and races, consisting of Black, Jewish, Polish, Latino, Irish, and Filipino members. Also represented are the white criminal, the naïve and young white middle-class kid from the Midwest, the white southerner, and the white urban lower-class New Yorker complete with Brooklyn accent. Representing the essence of



MGM's *Bataan* featured one of the earliest examples, if not the first, of the multicultural combat team, depicting various ethnic and racial representatives (African American, Irish American, Jewish American, Polish American, Mexican American, Filipino American) as well as troops representing America's various regions and social classes. The combat team personified democracy in action and the ideals of the American melting pot. Still from *Bataan* (1943), © Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).

the fighting American soldier in the early uncertain days of WWII, each member of the combat team dies fighting bravely, and the final shot is that of the lone survivor, the all-American hero Sergeant Bill Danes, in a trench that will soon be his grave, firing his machine gun as he is overwhelmed by an anonymous mass of Japanese soldiers. This fictional, multicultural combat unit would become synonymous around the globe with American democracy in action, becoming an important convention of the combat film. Later well-known examples of this convention include *The Dirty Dozen* (1967) and the popular television sitcom *Hogan's Heroes*.

Moreover, WWII combat films, due mainly to censorship by the Office of War Information, would be among the first mainstream Hollywood films to uphold positive images of minorities, especially African Americans,



John Ford and Gregg Toland's *December 7th* featured an early and unusual close-up of an African American soldier heroically manning a machine gun and dying. Still from *December 7th* (1943), © U.S. War Department.

becoming an important convention of the combat genre. Examples include John Ford and Gregg Toland's controversial *December 7th* (1943), in which we are treated to a prominent close-up of a black soldier manning a machine gun and heroically dying, as well as photographic close-ups of an actual Mexican American soldier who died in battle and his proud but mourning parents; *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), in which the dark physique of Anthony Quinn as Private Jesus Alvarez, a Mexican American soldier, is contrasted against a white blonde soldier as he lays his head on his buddy's chest and recounts his many señoritas waiting for him on the home front; *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1944), in which Chinese children sing the

Star Spangled Banner in Chinese for American soldiers; and *Back to Bataan* (1945) in which Anthony Quinn as Captain Andrés Bonifácio is depicted as a Filipino hero and liberator, the counterpart to John Wayne's Colonel Madden. Furthermore, all of these films starred actual Asians and Asian Americans at a time when yellowfacing in Hollywood was acceptable.

In its emphasis on the nation's racial and ethnic minorities as well as its foreign nonwhite allies, the combat film can indeed be seen as providing a nascent depiction of America's postwar multicultural society. While the image of a multicultural combat team is nothing more than false advertising of American democracy especially at this point in history, it

nevertheless provided the nation and the world with a vision, however utopian, of cultural, racial, and ethnic pluralism as the foundation of democracy. And while it is beyond the scope of this essay, it would be interesting to consider if the multicultural combat team of the silver screen had an impact on civil rights, especially the desegregation

of American armed services in the 1950s and statehood issues. Concerning the latter, for example, the celebrated 442<sup>nd</sup> combat unit—the most decorated regiment in military history and consisting of Japanese Americans mainly from Hawaii—played an instrumental

role in the 50<sup>th</sup> state receiving statehood in 1959 after being denied 20 times. MGM's celebrated 1951 combat film *Go for Broke!* would not only recount the real-life story of the regiment but would also star actual members of the combat unit as well as feature actual newsreel footage of its battles.

A paradigmatic example of what Gilles Deleuze calls the action-oriented movement-image, wartime combat films depict war and nationalism as indivisible. According to Deleuze, the movement-image dominates cinema during the first half of the twentieth century and is marked by the unity of situation and action. Pre-WWII cinema was dominated by the movement-image as set forth by the popular classical Hollywood narrative with its emphasis on logical continuity. The narrative presents a coherent

---

*Wartime combat films depict war and nationalism as indivisible. This movement-image of war is centered particularly on the action of the combat soldier whose every move reenacts his patriotism.*

---

chronological structure with past, present, and future clearly demarcated by precise movement in a defined space. Time is measured according to movement, namely by a traversal through space. In early WWII combat film, Deleuze's movement-image can be seen particularly in the action of the combat soldier whose every move

reenacts his patriotism. Sight and movement function in perfect harmony to depict love of nation. Whether he is fighting, sleeping, reading a letter from home, gambling, drinking, or carousing, the soldier's movements are inseparable from combat and a clear sense of national

duty. Indeed, even a visit to the brothel in early combat film is transformed into patriotic duty. Wartime prostitutes and the visual images of pinup girls pasted in soldiers' lockers are similarly altered into quasi-objects of patriotism, serving their country.

However, this action-image of the fighting soldier changes in post-WWII films. According to Deleuze, WWII marks a paradigm shift in the cinema caused by a crisis in the action-image (*The Movement-Image* 206), resulting in the time-image coming to the fore (*The Time-Image* 5-6). In postwar cinema, particularly in a war-ravaged Europe, movement and action become disconnected, resulting in the time-image. Protagonists no longer act but become dumb spectators to a world independent of them as seen in the characters of Italian neo-realist films

who sleepwalk through the narrative unable to make sense of war and the destroyed world they now inhabit. As an action genre situated in the milieu of war, postwar combat films would appear to remain within the boundaries of the movement-image. Indeed, how could an action film do otherwise? Similarly, it would also appear that the combat soldier must remain within the confines of an action hero.

Nevertheless, a significant change occurs in the movement-image of the combat genre and its hero. Whereas the wartime image of the soldier represents an indivisible unity of action and movement, the postwar movement-image becomes discernible in its separate components of action, affection, and perception. This breakdown of movement is usually coupled with postwar films' concerns with that which is necessarily repressed during the war, namely analyzing, refining, and questioning the underlying politics of war. In Vietnam combat films such as *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and *Platoon* (1986), these separate components dissolve into radical fragmentation, reflecting the utter hopelessness of war articulated in the anti-war sentiment of the Vietnam era. In this sense, the time-image becomes an aesthetic tool that also represents a critique of war and nation. Action becomes decidedly more complex and diffused, transforming the image of war from the present activity of combat at a moment of extreme national crisis into an extended activity of and reflection on nation building that impacts upon the extended time of the nation.

In its depiction of the so-called Good War or the Last Great War, WWII film and its often conservative

conventions do not easily allow for such radical fragmentation and critique as given in Vietnam films; however, WWII films made in the postwar era nevertheless succumb to the time-image with movement and sight becoming ambivalent and unclear. Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) is an excellent contemporary example of the inherent contradictions of the WWII combat film and its contamination by the time-image, expressing a critical image of war at odds with the film's own narrative and its sentimental representation of WWII patriotism, not to mention the director and writer's intent. According to scriptwriter Robert Rodat, *Saving Private Ryan* was inspired in part by the 50th anniversary of D-Day (1994) and meant to commemorate the values of those termed by Tom Brokaw as "the greatest generation." "The film," says Rodat, "is about decency, and how patriotism ultimately has to do with one's responsibility to family, to neighbors and to those one fights alongside in the military." Indeed, *Saving Private Ryan* returns to Benedict Anderson's haunting question, "What makes men die for their country?," exploring questions of patriotism and self-sacrifice in a war-wary post-Vietnam era. However, in the film's infamous opening, namely the protracted and exceedingly violent Omaha Beach sequence, the time-image creates an unintended aesthetic negation of war, in which the activity of combat is transformed into a surreal national nightmare.

Combat film, like most action genres, typically renders human activity in medium-long to long framing shots that capture the body in movement. Human perception closely



resembles the framing of the medium-long shot, which depicts the body in its environment, and it is the most common shot employed in Hollywood feature films. However, *Saving Private Ryan* unexpectedly also foregrounds the close-up in the Omaha Beach sequence. Associated with stasis and the spectacle of human physiognomy (the ideal and beauty of the face), the close-up is an affection image, eliciting a purely emotional and subjective response. As such, it is the polar opposite of the medium-long/long shot associated with objectivity, realism, and movement, and would thus seem an odd choice to capture an important battle scene.

The use of the close-up appears all the more odd when one considers Spielberg's careful attention to realism in the rendering of this scene. To recreate the heightened realism

of war, he refused to storyboard the scene and shot much of it using handheld cameras with drills attached to create shakiness and thereby give the spontaneous feel of wartime newsreels and documentaries. Real amputees were used; actors had to undergo combat training; and to ensure accuracy in the historical details of costume, setting, acting, military detail, etc., Spielberg employed dozens of consultants, including controversial WWII historian and biographer Stephen Ambrose. Similarly, the film's cinematographer Janusz Kaminski has discussed at length the various techniques used to approximate the realism of the newsreel image, including desaturating the negative through bleaching and stripping the protective coating from camera lenses. Cameras were also outfitted with 45- and 90-degree shutters rather



In the Omaha Beach scene, *Saving Private Ryan* prominently features close-ups of death and agony, obscuring the battlefield and foregrounding the inability of soldiers to act. *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), © DreamWorks.





Liquid and gaseous perception-images give us only a clear vision of U.S. troops under fire as seen by the German enemy. Still from *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), © DreamWorks.

than the contemporary standard of 180-degree shutters, which resulted in chopping up the movement. "In this way," Kaminski explains, "we attained a certain staccato in the actors' movements and a certain crispness in the explosions, which makes them slightly more realistic."

However, while the intentions of Spielberg and Kaminski may have been to reconstruct the realism of war, the Omaha scene instead functions to prohibit sight and movement. The movement-image in which action and image are indivisible has given way to the directionless and dispersive movement of the postwar time-image. The use of shaky handheld cameras approximating the point of view of soldiers under fire, agonistic close-ups of faces and destroyed bodies with limbs unattached, camera shutters that chop up movement, desaturation of color, etc. function to obstruct perception of the battlefield as a whole and make movement unclear. In the language of Deleuze, sensory-motor links cease to function, resulting in the breaking down of action in time. Seeing and movement become disconnected, and we are left with only

pure optical and sound images on screen to which we cannot react but only behold in dumb silence. In *Saving Private Ryan*, these pure images and sounds of war result in a simultaneous inhibition and expansion of movement. Liquid and gaseous perception-images likewise obscure the battle scene, giving us no clear vision except that of U.S. troops under fire. The result is a profound disorienta-

tion and an emphasis on the soldier's inability to see and act on the battlefield. The combat soldier, akin to an Italian neo-realist character, transforms into a somnambulist walking about dazed, unable to comprehend the destruction of war surrounding him. In other words, the crisis of the action-image in *Saving Private Ryan* reveals the profound powerlessness of the individual soldier in the battlefield, questioning the moral status of a nation that requires such a sacrifice.

This analysis of the time-image helps to explain why, in spite of Spielberg's intentions, the film is often seen as critical of war and government. Popular film critic James Berardinelli, for example, is representative of many who view *Saving Private Ryan* as an anti-war film, delivering a radical condemnation of war:

Most World War II movies fall into one of two categories: heroic tales of glory and valor or biopics (my all-time favorite film, *Patton*, falls in the latter camp). *Saving Private Ryan* is neither. Instead, it's a condemnation of war wrapped in a tale of human courage and sacrifice.

In many ways, the picture painted by this movie is more grim [sic] than the one Oliver Stone presented in *Platoon*, which has often been cited as the most daring anti-war film to come out of Hollywood. *Saving Private Ryan* quickly and brutally dispels the notion that war is anything but vicious, demoralizing violence that makes a cruel joke out of the human body and spirit.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WWII combat soldier from action hero to war victim reveals not only the weakening of the soldier's sensory-motor links but those of a weary nation fatigued by the many wars it has been engaged in since WWII and now suffering under the burden of Manifest Destiny and legitimacy as the world's so-called superpower.

The global vision of the American Century as articulated in the image of the combat soldier is clearly becoming anachronistic as evidenced in recent combat films such as Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* (2001), in

which war is primarily a prolonged and painful rescue mission, and Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008), which stresses the pain of war and recovery as reflected in its title (the locker as "the place for ultimate pain") and opens with a quote that compares war to an addictive, lethal drug. In both films, the activity of war has become meaningless with the action in the film highly aestheticized, rendered via editing and sound rather than body movement. It comes as no surprise that both films won Academy and other awards for Best Editing, Best Sound, and Best Sound Editing. As in Michael Bay's *Pearl Harbor* (2001), war has become a spectacle emptied of all action that we dumbly behold. Deleuze has rightly associated the crisis of the action-image with the crisis of the American Dream. The increasing aestheticization of war in American cinema also reflects the crisis of its global vision first articulated in WWI, or more precisely, its inability to visualize.



Delia Caparoso Konzett (Ph.D., University of Chicago) is Associate Professor of English and Cinema/Women's/American Studies at the University of New Hampshire. Her teaching and research interests include the history, theory, and aesthetics of cinema/media; modernism; and the representation of race and gender in film and literature. She is presently working on a book project titled "Imagining a Multicultural America: Orientalism and Hollywood Combat Film." Her favorite film genres include Westerns, war films, gangster films, musicals, comedies, and foreign films.

## WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
- Back to Bataan*. Dir. Edward Dmytryk. RKO, 1945. Distributed by Warner Bros.
- Bataan*. Dir. Tay Garnett. MGM, 1943.
- Berardinelli, James. "Saving Private Ryan: A Film Review." *Reelviews Movie Reviews*. n.p. 1998. Web. 20 December 2010.
- Black Hawk Down*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Columbia Pictures, 2001.
- December 7th*. Dirs. John Ford and Gregg Toland. U.S. War Department, 1943.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- . *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Guadalcanal Diary*. Dir. Lewis Seiler. 20th Century Fox, 1943.
- The Hurt Locker*. Dir. Kathryn Bigelow. Summit Entertainment, 2008.
- Kaminski, Janusz, quoted in *Saving Private Ryan Online Encyclopedia*. n.p. n.d. Web. 20 December 2010. <<http://www.sproe.com/s/spr-4.html>>.
- Luce, Henry R. "The American Century." *Life*. 17 February 1941. 61-65.
- Rodat, Robert, quoted in *Saving Private Ryan Online Encyclopedia*. n.p. n.d. Web. 20 December 2010. <<http://www.sproe.com/s/spr.html>>.
- Saving Private Ryan*. Dir. Steven Spielberg. DreamWorks, 1998.
- 30 Seconds Over Tokyo*. Dir. Mervyn LeRoy. MGM, 1944.
- Virilio, Paul. *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. Patrick Camiller. London: Verso, 1989.

Walter Metz

## A Dreary Life on a Barge

*From L'Atalante to Young Adam*



The barge amidst the Scottish landscape. Still from *Young Adam* (2003), © Recorded Picture Company.

### PRELUDE

While surfing around Netflix looking for the name of the film in which Ewan McGregor played James Joyce – *Nora* (Pat Murphy, 2000) – I stumbled across *Young Adam* (David Mackenzie, 2003), a film in which the young Obi-Wan plays a man who gets involved in a romantic triangle aboard a river barge. Immediately, I thought of *L'Atalante* (Jean Vigo, 1934), the most famous barge movie of all, and indeed, one of the most emotional experiences of this filmgoer's life. After watching *Young Adam* when it arrived in the mail (an analysis of the profound connections between the cinematic and postal joys that Netflix provides I will save for some other time), I became confused.

If there is anything further in spirit from *L'Atalante* – a romantic fairy tale about the enduring power of love – it must be *Young Adam*, a bitter tale of an astonishingly amoral drifter who kills one woman and uses all of the others he encounters to quaff his ruthless sexual appetite. And yet, Mackenzie's film – repeatedly and perhaps unavoidably – echoes scenes and situations from *L'Atalante*. Is *Young Adam* a deliberate, deconstructive remake of Vigo's masterpiece, or just a circumstantial engagement with its plot material?

I belabor my discovery of *Young Adam* because this intertextual configuration's hold over me led also to the literary artifact on which Mackenzie's

film is based, a Scottish Beat novel by Alexander Trocchi. Also entitled *Young Adam*, Trocchi's novel, first published in 1954, has an obscure history that is as fascinating as the tragedy of Vigo's life cut short by tuberculosis. In fact, Vigo directed much of *L'Atalante* from a stretcher, in a tubercular-induced fever. How does Vigo's psychic condition while directing relate to the drugged stupor in which Trocchi composed his fiction, including his masterpiece, *Cain's Book* (1960), the autobiographical depiction of a heroin addict which established his status not only in the Scottish literary canon, but in the international realm of 20th century literature? We are thus left with a triangular intertextual configuration with profound repercussions for film adaptation studies. For while Mackenzie's *Young Adam* is a fidelity-based adaptation of Trocchi's novel, both texts are of interest for film studies in their engagement with *L'Atalante*.

My discovery of Trocchi's novel points to a major difference between the kind of adaptation study that my work offers and that is engaged by most literary scholars interested in film. Typically, people trained in literary studies will write about the films that are made out of the important work they study. My approach – to let interesting films lead me back to novels upon which they happen to be based – not only produces a different form of adaptation criticism, but it also more appropriately matches the ways in which people who are not academics watch films and read books. While there are certainly non-academics who care more about novels than films, it is an indisputable fact that the size of the audience for any film – with the exception, perhaps, of *The Bible* – is orders of magnitude greater than that of

the novel on which it is based. Taking this into account in the way we write about film adaptations seems a crucial corrective to, for example, the abundance of Shakespearean film criticism written by Renaissance, and not film, scholars.

This essay, then, proposes to see Mackenzie's film from the point of view of an adaptation scholar whose method takes film history just as seriously as literary history. In effect, this means that I will analyze the film using an intertextual grid in which the influence of *L'Atalante* is taken into consideration as much as is Trocchi's source novel. As a corollary, this also means that the Scottish status of both Trocchi's novel and Mackenzie's film are internationalized with a concern for the relationship between the French cultural depiction of gritty life on the barges with its Scottish counterpart. Interestingly, the literary response to Trocchi's novel, small though it may be, addresses a similar transnational concern. In his introduction to the Canongate edition of Trocchi's novel, John Pringle argues: "Young Adam, with its self-obsessed, probably self-deluded, possibly insane narrator has a literary ancestry stretching back to Hogg's *Justified Sinner* (André Gide admired Hogg, and Trocchi admired Gide, and so the two-way traffic between Scottish and French writing continues)" (viii). This line of literary history activates interesting questions about French cinema of the 1930s. To what extent is Vigo's *Surrealism in L'Atalante* related to Gide's modernism, and how might we see these earlier forms of cultural rebellion as influences on the Existentialist and Beat post-war culture of France, Scotland, and the United States? The raising of these sorts of questions attests to the power of an intertextual, interdisciplinary method for studying textual artifacts.

FROM SCOTLAND TO FRANCE,  
AND BACK AGAIN

*L'Atalante*, one of the unquestioned canonical masterpieces of the cinema, was directed by Jean Vigo in 1934. It features a narrative study of the complex relationships among four people on a barge carrying coal between Paris and Le Havre. At the beginning of the film, Jean (Jean Dasté), the captain of the boat called *Atalante*, marries a small-town girl, Juliette (Dita Parlo), who is hoping for a life more exciting than the one offered by her village. Juliette arrives on the boat to find it already occupied by Jules (Michel Simon), the captain's mate, and a cabin boy (Louis Lefebvre). Cheated out of the opportunity to finally see

Where *L'Atalante* is about romantic love, downplaying physical intimacy, Alexander Trocchi's *Young Adam* is about sex, not believing in the possibility of love. Like *L'Atalante*, the novel concerns four people squished onto a barge, this one traveling the canals in Scotland between Glasgow and Edinburgh. A woman, Ella, owns a barge, the *Atlantic Eve*, which is captained by her husband, Leslie. Why do both films link their barges to the Atlantic Ocean? Do they, like Antoine Doinel at the end of Francois Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959), look to that ocean for a cinematic relationship with the United States?

Leslie hires on a first mate, Joe, the first-person narrator of the novel. Leslie and Ella have a young son, Jim. As the novel opens, Joe discovers a young



Joe fishes Cathie's body out of the river. Still from *Young Adam* (2003), © Recorded Picture Company.

Paris, Juliette decides one day to venture out on her own. Wounded by this betrayal of him, Jean returns to Le Havre, abandoning Juliette to the city. When Jean almost loses his job due to living life in a stupor without his beloved Juliette, Jules returns Juliette to Jean, and the film ends happily.

woman's body lying in the canal. This woman turns out to be Cathie, Joe's former lover. Joe sat passively by while Cathie drowned, with his unborn baby in her womb. When Joe learns that Leslie is impotent, he begins an affair with Ella, right under Leslie's nose. When Leslie discovers the affair, he



leaves the boat. Shortly thereafter, Joe leaves Ella. The novel ends with Cathie's lover, a plumber, being wrongly sentenced to death for her murder. Joe attends the trial, but as with Cathie's death, does nothing to stop the unjust events unfolding before him.

Most reviewers of the film version of *Young Adam* begin with the observation that it is reminiscent of *L'Atalante*. Roger Ebert begins his review, "Two men and a woman on a barge. No one who has seen Jean Vigo's famous film *L'Atalante* can watch *Young Adam* without feeling its resonance." In her reflections on Mackenzie's film, Liza Bear comments: "The handsomely mounted result bears little resemblance to Jean Vigo's classic, *L'Atalante*, in story or sensibility, yet it retains that author's fascination with the melancholy rhythms of barge life." As I indicate above, there is more to be said, theoretically, about the triangular relationship between the film version of *Young Adam*, its novelistic source, and *L'Atalante*. From an adaptation studies perspective, *L'Atalante* and Trocchi's novel compete as intertextual motivations for the visual narrative that is Mackenzie's project.

The credits to the film version of *Young Adam* are presented over a poetic shot of a white swan in a Scottish river. Mackenzie cuts between these beautiful shots above the water and underwater shots which observe a duck paddling along. A long shot of a boat with the registry of Glasgow is reminiscent of the opening shot of *L'Atalante*, which presents its boat, the *Atalante*, on a French river. However, very quickly *Young Adam* leaves behind the visual poetry of *L'Atalante*'s presentation of river life: the camera tilts upward to reveal a dead body

floating on the surface of this river. Joe (Ewan McGregor) sees the body, and tries incompetently to grab it with a boat hook. Leslie (Peter Mullan), Joe's captain on the barge, laments, "Ah, you're bloody useless, gimme that," as he drags the dead woman's body onto the dock. They stare at the dead woman's barely clothed body a little bit too long, until Joe suggests, "I suppose we should cover her." Leslie reluctantly agrees. Joe covers the woman's body with a burlap sack, gently touching her with his hand.

From an intertextual studies perspective, the presentation of the woman's body in the water at the beginning of *Young Adam* firmly establishes this film's difference from *L'Atalante*. In Vigo's film, the confrontation between the woman's body and her male lover's search for her in the water represents the climax, not the beginning, of the film. After a rocky start to their marriage, in which Juliette has strayed from Jean to find excitement on the streets of Paris, he realizes how much he loves his lost bride. At the beginning of the film, during the more playful times of the newlywed period of their marriage, Juliette has told Jean of a fairytale in which one person will see his soul mate by looking into the water. In her British Film Institute book on the film, Marina Warner analyzes the scene as crucial to the film's intensive study of romance: "As in the game of cherrystones or skipping rhymes, the beloved's identity can be magically discovered under water" (28).

Jean makes a joke of this story, first putting his head in a bucket, then into the Seine, but neither time seeing Juliette's face. Later in the film, at the depths of his despair at having lost his beloved, Jean again tries to

see Juliette's face in the bucket. He fails a second time. The boat's mate, Jules, spits into the bucket, declaring Jean "completely crazy." However, this time, when Jean jumps into the water in search of his love, he has a

working in Paris, sleeping in a bed of her own. Juliette leans forward, also unable to sleep, in a fit of erotic desire. Through the language of cinematic editing, Jean and Juliette "touch each other" in their sleepy



Jean's underwater vision of Juliette. Still from *L'Atalante* (1934), © Gaumont-Franco Film-Aubert.

completely different, transcendent, experience. We see him swimming into the camera in close-up. Suddenly, Vigo presents us with superimpositions of Juliette waving her hands while wearing her wedding dress. Juliette, who is not often shown by the film in close-up, is discovered smiling.

Shortly after this mystical experience, Jean goes below and tries to sleep. We see him unable to do so, tossing and turning in his bed. Vigo cross-cuts this with Juliette, now

reverie. In the film's next scene, Jean runs down to the ocean at Le Havre. On the beach, he runs away from the camera. Finding nothing down at the water's edge, he returns to the dock. Seamen there accuse the distraught Jean of being a drunken sailor.

This presentation of fairy tale love is the antithesis of that offered by Mackenzie's *Young Adam*. Joe is a brutally self-serving Id who has sex with women merely because there is nothing else to do. In a sense, *Young*

*Adam* deconstructs the romantic love in *L'Atalante*, producing a tale of brutally lonely sex without love. In the film's back story, Joe has briefly reunited with his lover, Cathie. They have sex under a truck, dirtying themselves on the grease which has leaked below.

Afterwards, Cathie tells Joe that she is pregnant with his child. Joe does not believe her, as she has been seeing a married man, a plumber named Daniel Gordon (renamed from Daniel Goon in the novel). Joe gets up, disgusted at what he falsely imagines as a betrayal. Cathie chases after him on the river bank. She slips, falling into the water in the dark of night. Joe stands motionless, looking down at the active current. He calls out after Cathie, but she does not respond.

Instead of jumping in to rescue Cathie, he gathers up all of her clothes and throws them into the river, wiping his fingerprints off all the surfaces he can remember touching.

Joe thus denies himself the underwater encounter with his beloved that is the emotional climax of *L'Atalante*. Whereas Jean is suspicious of Juliette's fairy tale story, he at least considers trying to find her visage in the water. The film becomes his development, as he is finally able to possess the concern for another human being to imagine seeing her in the water with him. Joe in *Young Adam* is never given such a chance. While he clearly

knows that the right thing to do is jump in the water to rescue Cathie, he maintains a commitment to hedonistic nihilism. When he is given the chance to help rescue his beloved, he instead decides to let her die.

Similarly, Joe's encounter on the beach is a kind of inversion of that

offered in *L'Atalante*.

While Jean goes to the beach to look in vain for his true love, Joe first meets Cathie there. He sits in the sand, noticing Cathie at some distance away. He smiles at her, and she smiles back. He goes over to talk with her.

They smoke cigarettes together, after which he invites her over to a rock formation inside of which they can have sex without being seen. She obliges.

Thus, whereas for Jean the beach scene

represents his desperate search for his lost true love, for Joe the beach is just one in a series of meaningless sexual conquests, this time a documentation of the meeting between himself and the girl he will eventually let die in the river. While Vigo wants us to see his flawed characters' transcendence, in the novel version of *Young Adam*, Trocchi insists upon the animalistic nature of human sexuality: "There is a point at which a man and a woman stalk one another like animals. It is normally in most human situations a very civilized kind of stalking, each move on either side being capable of

---

*For all of its deconstruction of the romanticism of L'Atalante, however, the film version of Young Adam is deeply committed to the fusion of lyricism and a gritty depiction of the working class that also characterized the poetic realism of Vigo's film. Both films give a dark, dirty presentation of what life is like for people caught in the prison of river barge life.*

---

more than one interpretation. This is a defensive measure" (31). Mackenzie's film depicts this animal stalking with the stark gaze of the camera lens.

For all of its deconstruction of the romanticism of *L'Atalante*, however, the film version of *Young Adam* is deeply committed to the fusion of lyricism and a gritty depiction of the working class that also characterized the poetic realism of Vigo's film. Both films give a dark, dirty presentation of what life is like for people caught in the prison of river barge life. For the novel's Joe, the barge reminds him of a coffin: "Often when I woke up I had the feeling that I was in a coffin and each time that happened I recognized the falseness to fact of the thought a moment later, for one could never be visually aware of being enclosed on all sides by coffin walls" (53). Regarding the opening of *L'Atalante*, Warner suggests that "the entire atmosphere evokes a funeral, not a wedding — the shadowy lighting, the coffin-like box of the barge, the expressionless guests and the drowned bouquet" (20). Simultaneously, both films offer beautiful cinematography in order to image painterly compositions of the gritty industrial life of the river and its surroundings.

In addition, both films rely on narratives celebrating the intimate contact between barge workers, a human contact missing in the bourgeois lives which these films critique. In both *L'Atalante* and *Young Adam*, the barge workers know each other intimately and go to share in male camaraderie,

drinking in pubs. *Young Adam* also features a sequence which offers quintessential male bonding in the poetic realist tradition. Early in the film, Ella brings Joe and Leslie hot water so that the men can wash the black coal dust off of themselves. While Leslie at first

complains to Ella that Joe is getting all of the hot water in his bowl, the scene quickly shows how commonplace this male intimacy is. Joe and Leslie scrub each other's backs without talking. They then discuss going to a pub that night to play darts.

This scene is reminiscent of one in Jean Renoir's *La bête humaine* (1938), a poetic realist masterpiece made shortly after *L'Atalante*. In that film, Lantier (Jean Gabin) and Pecqueux (Julien Carette) are equally sooty men who drive a train together all day as engineer and coal man. At the end of their arduous work day, they retire to the train company barracks to clean off. In a scene that Dudley Andrew reads as metaphoric of the celebration of the human need for contact, Lantier and Pecqueux share their ham and eggs to form an omelet: "When Pecqueux offers to mix his eggs with the ham Jacques Lantier contributes to their breakfast in the workers' canteen, we are beyond friendship and enter the sacramental ritual of Renoir's socialism" (304).

For all of its engagement with French poetic realism, *Young Adam* is also a quite faithful adaptation of Alexander Trocchi's eponymous novel. The plot details of the novel are rendered almost in the exact sequence from the

---

*Simultaneously, both films offer beautiful cinematography in order to image painterly compositions of the gritty industrial life of the river and its surroundings.*

---

novel: Leslie and Ella work the barge together as husband and wife, taking on Joe as their first mate. Soon, Joe seduces Ella, and sleeps with her at every opportunity, while Leslie leaves

profoundly different effect than that of Trocchi's novel. Most importantly, Trocchi's novel is a relentless existential critique of human disconnection. The film version softens this critique



Joe saves Ella's son, Jim. Still from *Young Adam* (2003), © Recorded Picture Company.

of Western civilization by rendering Joe's character more human. This softening of Joe's character occurs both through plot details and through the star intertext of Ewan McGregor.

In terms of plot, the novel's Joe has a relentless hatred of children. Forced

them alone to go drinking in the pubs along the river. When Leslie finds out about the affair, he leaves Joe and Ella alone together on the boat. At the end of the novel, Joe leaves Ella, and attends the trial of Daniel, but again passively sits by while the judge sentences the innocent man to be executed.

The faithfulness of the film raises questions as to what Mackenzie intends to accomplish with an adaptation of an obscure Beat novel from the 1950s. The film is ambiguously set in post-war Scotland, before the British economic recovery of recent years. In both novel and film, the characters speak of a time when the life of the bargemen will come to an end. Ella wants to retire from the horrific life and buy a flat in the suburbs of Edinburgh, but it is patently clear that this will never happen, neither with Leslie nor Joe.

However, despite the faithfulness to the plot, Mackenzie's film has a

to spend life cramped together on the barge with Leslie, Ella, and their child, Jim, Joe obsesses about how much he loathes the child, at one point calling Jim a "moronic child" (103). A bit later, while Joe is thinking about having sex with Ella's repulsive sister, Gwen, Joe describes Jim as "eel-like" (105). The film softens Joe's contempt for children substantially. In the most important adaptational change, the film includes a scene where Joe saves Jim's life when he falls off the barge. While reading a book on deck, Joe suddenly sees Jim fall into the river with another barge steaming towards the boy. Without hesitation, Joe jumps into the water and rescues the lad. Ella runs over and thanks Joe tearfully. This narrative event leads toward the conclusion that, while Joe is a moral reprobate, he is, at his core, salvageable. No such hedging is presented by Trocchi's novel.



The film does mention Joe's hatred of Jim, but it is presented indirectly. Whereas the novel's Joe narrates to us his hatred of Jim, Ewan McGregor's Joe speaks to Cathie about his hatred for Jim, but it is never presented when Jim and Joe are in the same physical space. Significantly, the film links Joe's feeling for Jim with his response to Cathie's announcement of her pregnancy. Cathie tells Joe that she would like to marry him and make a new family. Joe responds by observing that every time he sees Jim, he wants to kick him over the side of the boat. However, given Joe's having saved Jim's life, we know that this is disingenuous.

Furthermore, the star intertextuality related to McGregor's performance as Joe softens his character even more. Given the importance McGregor has to the Star Wars films—he channels quite exquisitely Alec Guinness as a young man to portray Obi-Wan Kenobi as he mentors the young Anakin Skywalker—it is hard to see Joe in *Young Adam* as a complete misanthrope. This sense is reiterated in *Young Adam* when, shortly after Joe's inaction during Cathie's drowning, he returns to the barge that dawn. McGregor's Joe leans his head sorrowfully against the wall, with an expression of remorse on his face. In the novel, which is addressed to us through first-person narration, we never hear any inkling that Joe regrets his inaction during Cathie's death.

Trocchi's method in creating Joe as a monster is quite clear. Like Bertolt Brecht in *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), he produces a villain as bad as he can imagine, juxtaposes him against the backdrop of ordinary capitalist Western civilization, in order to show that the latter is not much better than

the former. This is best expressed in the novel's ending, when Joe goes to attend Daniel Goon's murder trial, but once again refuses to intervene when a wrong is being done. The novel presents, through Joe's words and vision, the insanity of the Western judicial system, particularly its smug belief in capital punishment. Joe says he wants to attend the trial to witness a "legal murder" (131), presumably in contrast to his illegal murder of Cathie. Joe connects his guilt over the affair—he is, after all, a (failed) writer—with Shakespearean tragedy: "The image of Cathie's naked body floated before me, like Macbeth's dagger" (131). However, unlike Lady Macbeth going insane at her guilt for Duncan's murder, Joe is a blank emotional slate, taking little action to redeem himself. At one point, he writes a letter to the judge declaring Daniel's innocence, but without proof of his assertions it is clear this is a meaningless and hollow gesture.

Like an adolescent rebelling against his parents, Joe treats the court proceedings with contempt. He loathes the judge's "righteousness" (131), joking that if they had trials in the nude, no one would be convicted (132). Trocchi revels in Joe's scatological critique of the proceedings. At one of the trial's recesses, Joe goes into a milk bar, sits in the lavatory drinking whiskey, and then urinates (133). Upon his return, Joe rages at the judge believing himself to be a god. He declares the proceedings a mockery, "a parliament of birds" (134), presided over by an unctuous judge who is "a venomous old turtle" (136). Joe wishes that he could help Daniel escape the "social syllogism" in which he has been placed (without ever acknowledging in words his own role in placing Daniel there!). Instead,



Joe, again, takes no action, with the novel ending in apocalyptic stasis. In the last chapter, Joe thinks about screaming out the truth as the judge condemns Daniel to death, but existential stasis intervenes: “no more bets” (145), as if invoking Jean-Paul Sartre’s screenplay, *Les Jeux Sonts Faits* (written 1943, published 1947). The novel ends with the collapse of its narrative world:

“All I know is that suddenly Mr. Justice Parkington was gone and the disintegration was already taking place” (146).

The ending of Trocchi’s *Young Adam* was viciously critiqued by the literary community as juvenile tripe.

However, critic John Pringle tries to re-situate this aspect of the novel: “It’s too easy to dismiss outsider writers and their readers as infantile: alright for adolescents kicking against the pricks of authority for the first time and seeking an example to follow, but not worth serious consideration” (v). As I have tried to make clear, especially with regard to the ending, the critics Pringle attacks express very well my own reaction to reading the ending. However, Pringle’s larger point, that Trocchi’s novel is an unduly neglected aesthetic achievement, is also fully defensible. While I do not at all support Trocchi’s drug-addled critique of bourgeois civilization, the fact remains that I was profoundly moved by his depiction of a morally irredeemable character. Here, Pringle’s critical project of trying to find a new generation of readers for *Young Adam* dovetails with

---

*Mackenzie’s film strips Trocchi’s novel of its dated 1950s existential philosophy, replacing it with an intensive study of a bad young man who does not transcend his human limitations.*

---

Mackenzie’s film project. For while the Canongate edition of *Young Adam* did not achieve a large enough cultural presence for me to discover it upon publication, Mackenzie’s film project did, and this is an achievement that should not be discounted. I am forever enriched by the knowledge that the 1950s Beat critique of bourgeois hypocrisy extends

far beyond Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs (a close friend of Trocchi’s, largely, apparently, and lamentably, because of their heroin addictions) to as remote a place for me as the post-war Scottish literary scene.

David Mackenzie is rapidly becoming one of Scottish cinema’s

major directors, not so much for the conventional cinematic genius of his films, but because of his audacity as an adapter of difficult, perhaps even conventionally “unadaptable,” novels. With no small amount of critical foresight, Pringle writes in his introduction: “Detail is sparse, the prose is sparse and gritty as the monochromatic industrial landscape framing the action—cinematic prose. *Young Adam* is a movie just waiting to be made, although how to create on film the narcissistic, neurotic mess that is Joe’s consciousness is anybody’s guess” (ix).

Mackenzie eschews any attempt to match modernist stream-of-consciousness in the cinema; all such attempts have always, and unequivocally, failed. Instead, the film uses conventional classical narration (announced flashbacks, third-person observational camerawork, shot-reverse shots for dialogue scenes)

to tell Trocchi's story of Joe's moral depravity. Mackenzie's film strips Trocchi's novel of its dated 1950s existential philosophy, replacing it with an intensive study of a bad young man who does not transcend his human limitations. Mackenzie's film is an exquisite example—too little acknowledged by literary scholars writing about film adaptation—of a film which is quite simply better executed than the novel on which it is based. Ewan McGregor's considerable skills as an actor bring a humanity to Joe which Trocchi either could not, or would not, bring to his novel.

No better scene illustrates this than Joe's "custard rape" of Cathie. In the late 1940s, Trocchi got his start as a writer by penning pornographic novels for Maurice Girodias at Olympia Press in Paris. Girodias would supply Trocchi with lurid titles—*Helen and Desire* (1954), *White Thighs* (1955), *School for Sin* (1955), and *Sappho of Lesbos* (1955)—and Trocchi would write the genre potboilers from there. Ironically, *Young Adam* was also first published by Olympia Press in Paris, in 1954, but as Trocchi's first serious novel. It was only in its re-published form, by Heinemann in London in 1961, that Trocchi added the work's only truly lascivious scene, in which Joe slathers Cathie with custard and rapes her.

The scene is presented in flashback as one of Joe's memories of Cathie. Significantly, Trocchi motivates this reminiscence via Joe's anger at the denizens of a bar who are reflecting lewdly on the murder trial. Joe anticipates the trial as "a fantastic puppet-play" (120), but resents the bar patrons' comments about her for their "prurience" (121). This prompts Joe's flashback to the rape scene. Joe was living with Cathie, trying

to write a "masterpiece" of a novel (121). However, because he thinks literature is "false," he sits in her apartment for eight months not having written a single word. Having worked all day, Cathie returns to the flat, exhausted. As she changes her clothes, Cathie has a fight with Joe, who insists that she eat the custard he made for her. When she refuses, Joe throws the custard at her.

He becomes aroused at her custard-covered naked body and begins beating her with a stick from the fireplace. Inspired by the custard dripping off of her breasts and vagina, Joe douses her in blue ink. Ironically, and this is certainly the point, this is the only writing of significance that Joe is ever able to produce, through violence done to his supposed lover's body. Unable or unwilling to determine whether Cathie is crying or laughing, Joe rapes her, attacking her with what Joe describes as "prick and stick" (124). The scene is related to the reader using the standard conventions of male point-of-view pornography: at one point Joe adds Orientalism to his sins, stating that Cathie was so covered in foodstuff that she was "almost unrecognizable as a white woman" (124). Joe leaves the apartment, only to return later to discover Cathie, having cleaned up the apartment, asleep in bed. The scene ends with Cathie sleepily hugging and kissing her assailant in bed.

The custard rape scene is included in Mackenzie's film version without any significant change. Mackenzie's defense of it, however, when questioned about its anti-feminist content, reveals the film's project, which differs significantly from the existential nihilism of Trocchi's ending. In an interview for *IndieWire*, Liza Bear engages Mackenzie with significant

critical force. Bear states that a woman is abused in the film. Mackenzie feigns to not know who is abused. Mackenzie insists that Cathie is not: "It seems that your opinion is not an opinion that I would want people to have. I wanted a snapshot of a relationship in action in which people have arguments and rows and can be cruel to each other and able to make up." The interview never recovers from this argument, as Mackenzie gets more and more defensive. He finally explodes:

Let's hold off the feminist stuff. It's nonsense. I was very, very conscious in this story to make the relationships between Joe and all the women as balanced as they possibly could be. None of the women are going into their encounters with Joe with their eyes closed. Both in the novel and in the film Joe says he's not interested in relationships unless they're mutual. We're allowed to be postfeminist, aren't we?

Mackenzie refuses to let the argument go. Later in the interview, Bear tries to nuance her critique of the film's

gender politics: "There's a lot of fucking in the film. What's good is some of it is woman-sensitive sex," to which Mackenzie peevishly retorts, "Even though a female character is abused." However, Bear lets Mackenzie get the last word, which I think strikes at the heart of the matter: "One of the things that drew me to the novella was the poetic dry sensuality with which he regards the world around him. He was a writer with no inspiration and as soon as he threw the typewriter into the canal the real story started happening. By the end of the film he has a story."

By this point, I hope it is clear that my sense of, particularly the novel, but also the film, is in keeping with Bear's. Joe is a hopeless reprobate, who uses others for his own childish sexual pleasure. However, Mackenzie's sensibility of what his film means is borne out in its images. The film, for example, ends not with the destructive nihilism of Trocchi's novel, but with what Mackenzie intimates is Joe's growth as a writer. After leaving the sentencing phase of the trial, Joe returns to the scene of his crime, stopping at



The final close-up of Joe, isolated. Still from *Young Adam* (2003), © Recorded Picture Company.

the exact spot on the river bank where Cathie died. He throws a mirror she had given him as a present, with the words, "Think of me when you look at yourself," into the river. The camera cranes forward into a frontal close-up of Joe's face. He turns away from the camera, and walks out of focus, as the end credits roll.

Again, star intertextuality matters greatly in how to read this moment. Mackenzie's interpretation of Joe's moral ambiguity—rather than Bear's and my own, which emphasize his morally irredeemable nature—is bound up in the kinds of roles with which McGregor is associated. In particular, McGregor's Christian in Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (2001) fits Mackenzie's interpretation of Joe to a tee. In keeping with that film's intertextual re-working of Puccini's opera, *La Bohème*, Christian is only able to write his story once his beloved, Satine, has died of tuberculosis. In Mackenzie's view, Joe is more than a sexual predator; he is someone who can move beyond his ill-fated encounter with Cathie. While I do not at all agree with Mackenzie's defense of this very old, very tired script as "post-feminist"—it is as anti-feminist as it gets—it is certainly clear that the film, through its camerawork and its acting, presents a Joe who is very different from the sexual predator of Trocchi's novel.

---

*The argument against the misanthropy of Mackenzie's version of Young Adam at least partially addresses the perplexing question of why an obscure Scottish novel from the 1950s would be adapted into a major production of a rising national film culture. At its best, Mackenzie's Young Adam meditates on a grimy industrial past which is only one generation removed.*

---

Similarly, the casting of Tilda Swinton adds a further humanist thread to Trocchi's Ella. Famous for her roles in feminist international art film—particularly *Orlando* (Sally Potter, 1992)—Swinton brings a complexity to the character of Ella. The film's editing, as does the novel's first-person narra-

tion, makes clear that Joe is only attracted to Ella after he discovers Cathie's body. That is to say, Joe diabolically uses his relationship with Ella to hide from the police as they search for a predatory loner as Cathie's murderer. However, Swinton's Ella is no passive victim to Joe's predation. When Joe first makes advances to her, fondling her leg under the table right in front of Leslie, Ella swats Joe's hand away as it reaches her crotch, giving

him a vicious look that could melt steel.

In the film's crucial scene testing Ella's resolve, Joe and Ella make love while Leslie is at the pub having a drink. Joe watches a fly crawl across Ella's nipple; Ella meets this moment of male voyeurism (on both Joe's and the film's part) with her coldest line of the film: she taunts Joe, asking him, "Are you scared now?" She follows through on her challenge, arousing him with her hand. After having sex for the second time in a few minutes, they both fall asleep, only to wake up to discover Leslie stomping around the deck, having discovered their betrayal of him.

## CONCLUSION

This argument against the misanthropy of Mackenzie's version of *Young Adam* at least partially addresses the perplexing question of why an obscure Scottish novel from the 1950s would be adapted into a major production of a rising national film culture. At

its best, Mackenzie's *Young Adam* meditates on a grimy industrial past which is only one generation removed. This was, in fact, the primary way in which Roger Ebert was able to build his defense of the film: "Although Britain and Ireland now enjoy growing prosperity, any working-class person thirty or older was raised in a different, harder society. That's

why actors like McGregor and Colin Farrell, not to mention Tim Roth and Gary Oldman, can slip so easily into these hard-edged, dirty-handed roles."

Seen through the light of national cinema studies, the adaptation of *Young Adam* becomes a profound meditation on the recent history of Scotland: the film deconstructs a brutal literary artifact from a time when post-war capitalism ground up its working-class. The film looks back on the people victimized by that social system, not with nostalgia, but with an eye toward understanding them as people, as complex characters with many failings, but also hopes and dreams. Mackenzie's sexism notwithstanding, the film succeeds, I think, due to the powerful acting talents of Swinton and

McGregor, who breathe life into these wounded souls.

In positioning *Young Adam* in this way, I am now ready to return to *L'Atalante*, that beloved object of cinematic humanism. For, I believe *Young Adam* and Vigo's film, for all of their surface differences, are not so distinct as critics have asserted. While

Vigo's film certainly centers the possibility of romantic love in a way that *Young Adam* refuses, they are both also dark, brooding films about the grungy life aboard the barges. *L'Atalante* is certainly positioned in a historically distinct way from *Young Adam*: Vigo's film hangs on the leading edge of the Popular Front, a

time in France when the working-class was celebrated and finally rewarded politically.

Trocchi's *Young Adam* could not inhabit a more distant space, a United Kingdom ravaged socially and economically by the Second World War, barely able to recover from its effects. Trocchi's novel, like much French Existential literature, is a dour, brooding reflection on human beings' inability to recover from their own barbarity. However, Mackenzie's use of this novel emerges from a different time in Scotland's history, one in which the barge life depicted is now relegated to ancient history, replaced by the consumer life of pleasure cruises on the canals.

All of this begs the question, of course: what kind of Scottish national

---

*Seen through the light of national cinema studies, the adaptation of Young Adam becomes a profound meditation on the recent history of Scotland: the film deconstructs a brutal literary artifact from a time when post-war capitalism ground up its working-class.*

---

culture does the adaptation of *Young Adam* build? To address this question, I think we need to return to Trocchi's place in Scottish literature. As James Campbell narrates it in his essay, "Alexander Trocchi: The Biggest Fiend of All," the story goes that, in 1962, Trocchi and William Burroughs attended the Edinburgh International Writers Conference. The celebrated Scottish poet, Hugh MacDiarmid, was given keynote speech prominence so that he could argue for Scottish cultural nationalism. Trocchi stood up, unknown to anyone except as the man sitting next to Burroughs, and dismissed MacDiarmid's work out of hand. With *Young Adam* as his only publication in the United Kingdom, Trocchi boldly asserted that MacDiarmid's work was "stale, cold porridge. Bible-clasping nonsense. Of what is interesting in Scottish writing in the past twenty years or so, I myself have written it all" (1). Shortly afterward, in *The New Statesman*, MacDiarmid called Trocchi "cosmopolitan scum" (Campbell, "Biggest Fiend," 2). With the exception of *Cain's Book*, Trocchi's work has been all but ignored. Even James Campbell, who at least has taken the effort to publish academic analyses of Trocchi's work, dismisses *Young Adam* as "a flawed and badly constructed novel" (Campbell, *Dictionary*, 2).

Given Trocchi's less than stellar presence as a man of letters, Macken-

zie's decision to adapt his first novel (a project on which the filmmaker struggled for nine years) is remarkable. And yet, I believe it marks the well-being of Scottish national cinema. Mackenzie is quickly establishing himself as an adapter of literature that is hardly obviously well-suited for the cinema. His subsequent release *Asylum* (2005) is an adaptation of another difficult novel, by Patrick McGrath, the king of British neo-Gothic literature, and concerns a psychiatrist's wife who develops a relationship with one of her husband's patients in a mental institution. As Dudley Andrew argued to me long ago, the strength of any national cinema should be measured by the audacity of its middle-ground practitioners (not its geniuses and not its hacks): Mackenzie's place in Scottish cinema speaks well in this regard.

It is not clear what will happen to Mackenzie in the future. Typically, the Hollywood machine swallows up accomplished directors from small national cinemas. In 2005, Mackenzie was hired to direct a Hollywood film, *Nico*, a bio-pic of the Warhol starlet from the 1960s. Slated for a 2006 release, now five years later, the project has not yet emerged. It is possible, if not probable, that Mackenzie will find a path that negotiates his role as a Scottish artist in the global, Hollywood film economy. Here's to hoping that he succeeds.





Walter Metz is Chair of the Department of Cinema and Photography at Southern Illinois University. He is the author of two books: *Engaging Film Criticism: Film History and Contemporary American Cinema* (Peter Lang, 2004) and *Bewitched* (Wayne State University Press, 2007). He is also the author of over thirty journal articles and book chapters, many of which center on intertextuality in the cinema. In 2003-2004, he was Fulbright Guest Professor of American Studies at the John F. Kennedy Institute at the Free University in Berlin, Germany. He is currently at work on a new book manuscript about Pixar Animation Studios and American culture.

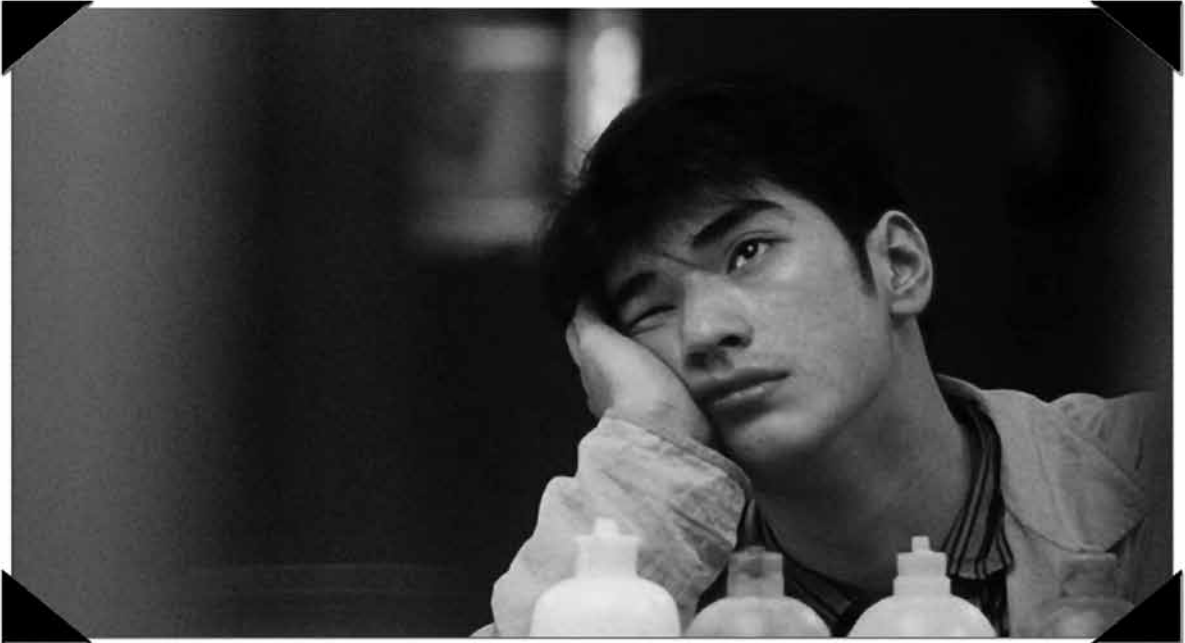
## WORKS CITED

- Andrew, Dudley. *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.
- Bear, Liza. "Tough Talk with *Young Adam* Director David Mackenzie." *IndieWire*. Web. January 3, 2006. [http://www.indiewire.com/people/people\\_040416young.html](http://www.indiewire.com/people/people_040416young.html).
- Campbell, James. "Alexander Trocchi: The Biggest Fiend of All." *Antioch Review*. 50.3 [Summer 1992].
- . "Alexander Trocchi." *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Volume 15: British Novelists, 1930-1959*. Eds. Bernard Oldsey. West Chester University of Pennsylvania. The Gale Group, 1983, 538-542.
- Ebert, Roger. "Young Adam." [film review] *The Chicago Sun-Times*. April 30, 2004.
- L'Atalante*. Dir. Jean Vigo. Gaumont-Franco Film-Aubert (G.F.F.A), 1934.
- Trocchi, Alexander. *Young Adam*. Intro. John Pringle. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996.
- Warner, Marina. *L'Atalante*. London: BFI, 1993.
- Young Adam*. Dir. David Mackenzie. Recorded Picture Company, 2003.

Matthias Piccolruaz Konzett

## “It’s Not Every Day We’re Gonna Be The Same”

*Wong Kar Wai, Auteur-Flaneur of the Camera*



Cop No. 223 (Takeshi Kaneshiro), a weak male *wenyi pian* protagonist pining away for his old girlfriend. Still from *Chungking Express* (1994), © Jet Tone Production.

At the turn of the previous century, European bourgeois norms and the expanding modern capitalist lifestyle were called into question by the emergence of such countercultural personas as the histrionically extroverted dandy and the poetically introverted *flaneur*. In his struggle with his conflicted French bourgeois legacy and his escape from bourgeois subjectivity through an immersion in modern Paris urban mass culture, the French poet Charles Baudelaire simultaneously embodied

these two personas. In breaking with cultural and social legacy, Baudelaire’s dandy adopts a cynical attitude towards society by placing his social and cultural inheritance at risk in a life of consciously cultivated irresponsibility and hedonism. This self-imposed suspension of social privilege can in part be seen as a rebellion against parental assimilation to the bourgeois norms of social respectability and economic success. Jean-Paul Sartre, however, in his assessment of Baudelaire’s artistic legacy, remains skeptical about

the political significance of the dandy: "He applies his will to the negation of established order, but at the same time preserves this order" (71). In Sartre's view, the dandy's rebellion tends to be too superficial and tacitly supports the status quo of society. After all, the dandy's outrageous appearance depends on commodities of fashion and money. The *flaneur*, conversely, while flaunting non-productivity in his city walks in a less visible and overtly provocative manner, likewise relies upon the inherited privilege of ample time granted to him by the bourgeois leisure class.

In contrast to Sartre's more skeptical view of Baudelaire's dissent, Walter Benjamin describes Baudelaire in the 1930s as a true heir of the French revolution who, in his own seemingly apolitical manner, carries on the legacy of social revolt: "He could have made Flaubert's motto 'I only understand one thing about politics, namely *revolt*' his own" (11). Baudelaire figures in Benjamin less as the bourgeois *enfant terrible* tacitly upholding the status quo but rather as a rebel committed to undo the present order through idiosyncratic acts of revolt. While critical of bourgeois culture, Benjamin also acknowledges that culture as the true heir of the French revolution: "After the defeat of the proletariat . . . , the protest against bourgeois concepts of order and honor was in better hands among the oppressors than the oppressed" (21). Dissent from

bourgeois norms, according to Benjamin, is ironically not brought about by a mass proletarian movement but rather enabled by the intellectual rebellion from within bourgeois culture. Karl Marx described this new class of the disenchanted bourgeois as the "bohemian" or *Gelegenheitsverschwörer*, the occasional conspirator (9).

At the turn of the recent millennium, it is hard even to conceive of so-called occasional conspirators within late capitalism. Commodity has claimed a global victory and thus renders the quasi-political stunts of the dandy useless where practically everyone has turned into a part-time dandy of cultivated countercultural appearance and where dissent has itself become co-opted by market forces. Unorthodox

---

*At the turn of the recent millennium, it is hard even to conceive of so-called occasional conspirators within late capitalism. Commodity has claimed a global victory and thus renders the quasi-political stunts of the dandy useless where practically everyone has turned into a part-time dandy of cultivated countercultural appearance.*

---

fashion, tattoos, ear and nose-rings, once associated with social protest and subcultural groups, mean little in a world where they simply have become fashion. The question remains whether the *flaneur* has a better chance of survival. A theorist like Michel de Certeau, for example, has tried to reinvent the *flaneur* in the concept of "la perruque" or its "equivalent of doing one's own work in one's employer's time" (1247). He defines these subversive strategies as "cultural techniques that camouflage economic reproduction with fictions of surprise ('the event'), of truth ('information') or communication ('promotion') spread through the workplace"

(1247). Such a role of a late capitalist *flaneur* would definitely fit the *auteur* filmmaker Wong Kar Wai operating in the commercial cinema environment of Hong Kong. As Stephen Teo notes, Wong Kar Wai's films frequently fail at the Hong Kong box office, yet he remains in business "with the backing and help of Jeff Lau, a fellow partner in In-Gear and a director of surefire hits in the form of quicksilver comedies and action movies" (47).

In the words of de Certeau, Wong Kar Wai—who tries the patience of his film crews and actors with his careful and beyond-the-industry norms involvement in a project (usually 2 years per film, sometimes longer)—can be seen as a "poacher" within the commercial system of Hong Kong cinema, a *flaneur* of the camera who resists commercial pressure, streamlined plots and standardized perspectives. In my essay, I will illustrate Wong Kar Wai's role as an *auteur-flaneur* filmmaker in his breakout film *Chungking Express*, following de Certeau's updated notion of the *flaneur's* subversive activity.

*CHUNGKING EXPRESS* (1994), paradoxically, was shot in the unusually short time of eight weeks and in between two film projects that engaged Wong Kar Wai, namely, Jeff Lau's *The Eagle Shooting Heroes* and his own protracted film *Ashes of Time* which he started in 1992. Unlike the other two big budget films, *Chungking Express* was in essence a low

budget film using simple equipment, and was described by Wong modestly as a return to graduate school. Yet, this film, with its against-the-grain mentality, resulted in an unexpected departure from industry norms. The film's playful deviations from commercial expectations were to characterize the ensuing films of Wong Kar Wai and clarify his earlier films as partial realizations of a new type of postmodern



Cop No. 223 at the Midnight Express. Still from *Chungking Express* (1994), © Jet Tone Production.

Asian arthouse cinema. On the surface, *Chungking Express* appears as a tacit parody of Chinese *wenyi pian* cinema, a melodramatic women's genre with weak male counterparts often given to frequent outbreaks of tears and non-heroic domestic and clerical pursuits on the part of the male protagonists (Teo, "Chinese Melodrama" 203). Yet in his unconventional manipulation of *wenyi pian*, Wong Kar Wai pits this melodramatic genre against the Hong Kong action genre that sets the commercial rhythm of the film industry. The apparent mismatch works to slow down the action genre and allows for unorthodox perambulations of the camera that defy commercial and economic interests.

## SURPRISE (THE EVENT)

The film opens in *media res* with a fast-paced handheld camera pursuit of the hit-woman heroine (Brigitte Lin) amidst the confusion of city life. The camera shifts its perspectives several times and retrieves the heroine repeatedly after losing sight of her. She eventually disappears behind closing elevator doors and resurfaces shortly thereafter walking through another door. With one quick look backwards she acknowledges the camera in a medium close-up but wishes to get away from it. Her blond wig and dark glasses indicate that she is on a delicate mission tolerating no surveillance and disclosure of identity. During this scene, the aperture speed of the camera is lengthened so as to give the image residual color traces of the hasty movement of characters. The scene is underscored by staccato chamber music, evoking thus the hustle and bustle of city life and the general rat race of commercial life. The heroine then abruptly disappears behind a pulled curtain followed by an instant match-on action cut to the title credit. The film resumes,

and against the backdrop of a time lapse image of sky, rooftops and dark noirish back alleys, the voiceover sets in: "Every day we brush past so many other people, people we never meet...or people who become close friends. I'm a Cop. No. 223." Amidst some row in the streets, the camera now follows Cop No. 223 (Takeshi Kaneshiro) running through the street as he brushes twice against the heroine. Again with open aperture the image turns into visual streaks of color movements. As the cop eventually bumps into the heroine head-on, a cut-in is made to a close-up of a clock, dating the event as Friday, April 28, 8:59 pm. The clock then shifts the dial letters to 9:00 pm. The voiceover sets in again: "This was the closest we ever got. Just 0.01 of a centimeter between us. But 57 hours later I fell in love with this woman."

From its opening, the film instantly takes us by surprise into the *flaneur* environment of Wong Kar Wai. What may look like a postmodern treatment of an action film dissolves into a melodramatic *wenyi pian* film with its male hero waxing sentimental about missed encounters and the moment of falling in love. In a follow-up sequence we see Cop No. 223 on the phone, obviously still in disbelief that his former girlfriend May has left him. Thus, what the film may have initially advanced as the promised scenario of a unique love story about to unfold, quickly turns by ironic reversal into a repetition, in which the old lover is merely to be replaced by a new lover. A scenario unfolds in which Cop No. 223 exces-



Close-up of pineapples and their expiration date as related to the shelf time of human relationships. Still from *Chungking Express* (1994), © Jet Tone Production.



sively mopes over the loss of his girlfriend, placing repeated calls to her house, waiting for her after hours at the fast food express, calling old friends from high school, and eating 30 cans of pineapples. These 30 cans mark the declining month of April as his own expiration deadline for acknowledging finally the end of his relationship with May at the beginning of May. Wong Kar Wai thus opens up within the action film a space for comic sentimentality in which time and linearity are suspended.

Cop No. 223 meanders through the night, catches one criminal by accident, but for the most part feels sorry over his impending or already happening break-up and comforts himself with food and drink. It becomes clear that Cop No. 223 is weighed down heavily with sentimentality and engaging in any number of nonproductive activities on his beat. The step photography used in many scenes also helps to undermine the notion of commercial time. As Stephen Teo points out: "The technique of slow-shutter speed photography and step-printing creates the recurrent sense of objects in mid-motion....Such a technique creates a distortion of movement, a sense of false speed" (*Wong Kar Wai* 62).

#### TRUTH (INFORMATION)

While obviously parodying genre conventions, the film also advances hard realistic facts and information about urban life in Hong Kong. The love affair with May is likened to the expiration date of a pineapple can and points comically to the total commodity status of all human relationships. As



Cop No. 663 (Tony Leung) infantilized and surrounded by stuffed animals. Still from *Chungking Express* (1994), © Jet Tone Production.

we watch the action unfold, we cannot help but notice a city saturated in commodities and our main actors existing like objects among objects. Siegfried Kracauer's definition of the screen actor as an "object among objects" appears fitting: "The cinema in this sense is not exclusively human...The film actor is not necessarily the hub of the narrative, the carrier of all its meanings" (327).

The subjectivity of the hero and heroine is fragile and in suspension, just as the *flâneur* disappears frequently into the anonymous crowd. Hence, stuffed animals appear frequently and point to the need for companionship in the anonymity of the urban space and the infantilism of consumerism. The stuffed animals also figure as a parody of what the human subject has become, namely a mere puppet on the commodity market. The unnamed lady heroine sporting a blonde wig and trench coat similarly evokes a cheap blend of hardboiled detective (Bogart) and femme fatale stereotypes (Monroe) that stress surface identity. She embodies the commercial beat of the city, pursuing her criminal activities with decisive planning and a goal-oriented mind.



When she is double-crossed in her drug business, she kidnaps a young child in order to find the stolen drugs and eventually engages in a shootout with her runaway drug mules. Wigs and costumes, while being playfully used, also serve to indicate realistically Hong Kong's social hierarchy. The recruits for drug mules are Indian immigrants who are now colonized by the Chinese as the British had once colonized them. The blonde wig is thus used to indicate the racial hierarchy that has been passed on from the colonizer to the colonized.

The harsher utilitarian background highlighted throughout the film can thus be construed as a rivaling background story challenging the comical and farcical foreground story. However, the *flâneur* with his sideways glances and lateral perception is a figure that accomplishes both tasks simultaneously, namely taking in reality as it is while suspending the rhythm of industriousness and commerce. While one may detect elements of de Certeau's poacher in Cop No. 223, the ultimate *flâneur* is the director of the film himself who casually switches between playful and realistic scenes without being too eager to advance the plot, letting us take in the city in its degraded form as well as its hidden resting spaces from within. For example, the fast food location Midnight Express becomes a site of comfort where Cop No. 223 frequently appears. The camera also explores another bar location with close-up shots of a Wurlitzer jukebox activated by a coin

drop, playing Dennis Brown's reggae classic "It's not everyday we're gonna be the same." We then see the mysterious lady in the blonde wig exchanging money, but the camera's focus shifts quickly and is apparently too swayed by the music and its own mesmerizing close-up shots of the jukebox to attend to her story. The scene once again switches abruptly to fast-paced Bollywood music with the heroine arranging the drug mule business.

---

*The ultimate flâneur is the director of the film himself who casually switches between playful and realistic scenes without being too eager to advance the plot, letting us take in the city in its degraded form as well as its hidden resting spaces from within.*

---

Wong Kar Wai's camera work has become a trademark of his style. Rather than filming characters and locations with professional shots of centered photography and motif, he prefers the meandering motion of the camera, shooting from behind objects and partially obstructed views.

At first sight, one may think that the photography is amateurish or that of a layperson. However, unconventional angles and frames add to the leisurely exploration and give the camera itself a type of lateral perception typical of the *flâneur* city walker. In addition, the odd angles also help to turn the actors into a type of setting and hence decompose their individuality. Cop No. 223 is after all only a number and the lady in the wig is a cinematic cliché devoid of any substantial subjectivity. The name May is also used for another woman and hence points to the exchangeability of individuals in a mass consumer society. Expiration dates of commodities serve likewise as an objectified stand-in for human relationships.

COMMUNICATION (PROMOTION)

The modern triumph of the individual, as Jacques LeRider notes, led to an “unmistakable desocialisation of the individual” (4). The internal split of the individual, as Georg Simmel’s notion of the blasé makes clear, is simply the cutting off of communicative and inter-subjective bonds. Ennui and boredom mark the modern self as an unstable accumulation of vague moods and failed realization. To this extent, the communicative trust of society breaks down, fragmenting its participants into isolated neurotic individuals. Interestingly enough, the ensuing “loss of identity,” LeRider suggests, “could prove exceedingly fruitful, since it made possible the salutary deconstruction of the sterile conventions and constraints that weigh on society” (4). *Chungking Express*, as noted, highlights neurotic isolated individuals but also allows them to break through traditional identity roles such as gender stereotypes. In a setting where all rules are suspended, the traditional female is allowed to take on the costume of the male hitman, whereas the cop is given ample time to express emotions in feminine style. The reversal of gender roles in the film works not only as parody but inherently points to the human reciprocity of all roles and exchanges. In meandering fashion, the film slowly builds to the restoration of communication between isolated indi-



Cop No. 223, at the Bottoms Up Bar, seeking comfort in the company of the unsuspected hitwoman (Brigitte Lin). Still from *Chungking Express* (1994), © Jet Tone Production.

viduals, hence promoting them finally from cardboard and clichéd figures to the level of humanity.

At the Bottoms Up bar, Cop No. 223 eventually meets up with the blonde woman. After numerous glasses of whiskey, he promises himself to let go of May finally and fall in love with the first woman entering the bar. He approaches the heroine with the “perfect icebreaker”: “Excuse me, Miss, do you like pineapple?” Receiving no

response to his question uttered in Cantonese, he repeats the question in English and Mandarin and eventually draws a response. After several attempts to start a con-

versation with clichéd questions and pick-up lines, he returns to the original question: “Do you like pineapple?” He is told that this is none of his business, but he comically persists: “I’m just trying to learn more about you.” In this comic exchange, the film acknowledges once again that identity has become the pure surface of commodity habits. And even this identity is tenuous as the blonde states in a voice-over with her image refracted three times in the bar’s mirrors: “People change. They like pineapple one day and something else tomorrow.” The scene abruptly switches to the other bar location with the jukebox and the lady’s white money handler. We see him making out with another Asian girl, asking her to put on a blonde wig.



Faye Wong California daydreaming at the Midnight Express. Still from *Chungking Express* (1994), © Jet Tone Production.

GEORG SIMMEL SPEAKS OF THE URBAN habit of making oneself different for the sole purpose of being noticeable: “metropolitan extravagances of self-distanciation, of caprice, of fastidiousness, the meaning of which is no longer to be found in the content of such activity itself but rather in its being a form of ‘being different’ – of making oneself noticeable” (336). Adorno would later call this feigned cultivation of personality the pseudo-individuality that is built on consumer selectivity and taste. It appears this pseudo-individuality is embodied by the heroine of the film’s second story, Faye (Faye Wong). In her stylishly short-cropped haircut and colorful T-shirts, she draws immediate attention to herself. Her leisurely work ethic at the Midnight Express, which consists mostly of listening to the Mamas and the Papas’ song “California Dreamin’” at full volume and using her

salad tongs to dance along to this tune, also sets her apart from her co-workers. In her infatuation with another anonymous cop, No. 663 (Tony Leung), she completes the story that never fully took off in the first encounter of the film. While Cop No. 223 manages to bring the blonde lady to a hotel, she simply falls asleep, as if enjoying a rest from commerce. In the meantime, he treats himself to several chef salads and then caringly removes her shoes before he leaves. He is not to meet her again but does receive a phone message from her, congratulating him on his birthday. Thus the first sequence ends on a tenuous communicative exchange, a birth to communication, as signified by the birthday greetings and the ensuing assassination of the drug handler by the blonde woman.

The second story relates a more balanced encounter between a simple

cop and a young woman. Cop No. 663 has also undergone a separation from his former flight attendant girlfriend, and this gives Faye a chance to fill in the missing spot. In this comically restorative tale, Faye eventually takes on the role of the cop's former girlfriend, abandons her carefree ways, and becomes a flight attendant herself in order to realize her own transatlantic dreams. However, before the onset of this type of professionalism, the audience is given ample time to observe her eccentricity and her secret forays into Cop No. 663's apartment, in which she re-conquers the domestic space with a difference. As she secretly tidies up the apartment, she increasingly takes on the

professional dreams of the flight attendant and thus will eventually leave the domestic space for good. The transition from service industry job at the fast food joint to the more glamorous role of the flight attendant appears as an ironic promotion, as she must now play by the rule of standardization and abandon her carefree attitude. The film ends on the promise of a potential love affair, represented by a handwritten flight voucher, but ultimately cuts short of a happy ending. In the *flaneur* universe of Wong Kar Wai, finality and results are avoided at all cost, leaving things in an even happier suspension and the realization that it is indeed not "every day day we're gonna be the same."



Matthias Piccolruaz Konzett teaches at the Department of English, University of New Hampshire. In addition to his Ph.D. in English (Emory U), he also holds a Ph.D. in German studies (U of Chicago) and taught at Yale and Tufts University. His interests center on global cinema, contemporary cultural theory and literatures of migration. Publications include *The Rhetoric of National Dissent* (2000); *Encyclopedia of German Literature* (2002), editor; and *Elfriede Jelinek: Writing Woman, Nation and Identity* (2007), co-editor.

## WORKS CITED

- Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire Ein Lyriker des Hochkapitalismus*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992.
- Chungking Express*. Dir. Kar Wai Wong. Jet Tone Production, 1994.
- DeCerteau, Michel. "The Practice of Everyday Life." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. London: Blackwell, 2004. 1247-1257.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. "Remarks on the Actor." *Theater and Film*. ed. Robert Knopf. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. 323-333.
- LeRider, Jacques. "Between Modernism and Postmodernism: The Viennese Identity Crisis." *Austrian Studies I: Vienna 1900 from Altenberg to Wittgenstein*. eds. Edward Timms and Ritchie Robertson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990. 1-11.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Baudelaire*. trans. Martin Turnell. New York: New Directions, 1950.
- Simmel, Georg. *On Individuality and Social Forms*. ed. Donald N. Levine. trans. Edward Shils. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Teo, Stephen. "Chinese Melodrama." *Traditions in World Cinema*. eds. Linda Badley, R. Barton Palmer and Steven Jay Schneider. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006. 203-213.
- . *Wong Kar Wai*. London: British Film Institute, 2005.

Steve Himmer

## I See What You Mean

**M**e and Freddy were refacing a fireplace at one of the houses in Caribou Court, that gated development going up where Delmore Bros sawmill was torn down last year. My father worked there for years, and Freddy's did, too. I've never seen a caribou around here, but the one on the billboard by the entrance is pretty impressive. Bigger than the runty deer in my yard. The fireplace was big, too, big and brand new, and we were covering its bricks with smooth, round stones before the owners moved in.

We were almost done for the day. Beyond the big windows, still glazed with the factory's cling film, the mountains had that afternoon glow folks move here for and travel guides call our "golden hour." As I climbed down the ladder to fetch what would be the last stone at the top of the hearth, my skinny legs shook and my head spun so I stopped on the middle rungs to catch up with myself. Climbing all day without eating had wiped me right out.

Through the window, I saw a bear moving among the thin pines on the ridge above town. Nothing strange about that: there are so many bears around here that the rangers have to dope some and truck them away a few times every summer, since we can't shoot them now even when they come too close to town. But it seemed early in the season for this one to be out of his den, and he didn't look scrawny and starved like he'd been hibernating at all. Plus he was blue, which I'd never seen before on a bear, so I thought maybe it was only the afternoon light. I scratched at my xylophone ribs beneath a flannel shirt that seemed to have grown since the last time I'd worn it, and watched the bear rub his blue rump against the bark of a tree.





"You see that?" I asked Freddy, pointing at the window with my trowel, a big glob of mud hanging off like an avalanche waiting to happen. I didn't say what "that" was.

"Uh huh," Freddy answered without looking up from the cigarette he was trying to light off the gas heater for drying the plaster and keeping us warm in those houses where heat isn't on until the owners arrive. His belly hung to both sides and his back humped with fat, so when he leaned over the heater it looked like he'd curled in a ball. It was easy to imagine Freddy living off himself right through the winter. The light through the windows threw my shadow across his gray sweatshirt like a racing stripe.

I waited for him to look out the window, but he didn't, so I let it go. I've gotten good at pretending not to notice what no one else does. I've had to, even things I'd like to tell someone about and things they might even believe. But my probation officer and the counselor he sent me to both say I need to learn what to keep to myself, and how what I say sounds to other people.

"You'll burn the house down," I said, "or do your eyebrows like I did." But the cigarette caught, no problem, and Freddy puffed away in front of the heater instead of getting back to the fireplace so we could go home. With my breath more or less back, I climbed down the rest of the ladder and on the floor my legs felt like they'd come back from sea. My body hurt more than it should've from just a day's work. But I finished the bare patches in Freddy's part of the hearth without saying so, like he probably knew that I would. Like I owed him, which I did.

In the morning I'd been clever and slung a bag full of stones on my shoulder so I could hang a whole bunch before climbing down, because the chimney was two stories high. But the contractor who's paying Freddy came by around lunchtime and bitched me out.

"You crack any stones in that bag, you'll pay for 'em," he hollered from the foot of my ladder. "That's imported river rock you're slinging around, not local shit."

I turned to see who was yelling, and shook a shower of white dust onto the shoulder of his clean denim jacket. He cursed me and brushed at his clothes with a handkerchief like they'd been hit by a bird, then he stormed away and didn't come back. But for the rest of the day I hauled only one rock at a time, just in case. It's hard enough getting hired around here, and I only got that job because Freddy did me a favor. Work doesn't come the way of a guy with my reputation, not anymore. The same stories that used to get me hired and kept me from paying for drinks have me on a blacklist these days. Last time I tried to get on a real crew, health insurance and vacation days and payment by check and the works, the foreman said there was no room on his team for a guy who'd waste a whole afternoon racing belt sanders on a new hardwood floor.

"We all used to do things like that," I said.

He told me, "We don't do it like that anymore."

I said he was just pissed off he'd lost a week's wages and broken his sander in the same race, but he still didn't give me a job.

---

Even Freddy's got a big, shiny truck with his name on the side, and carries a calculator in his toolbox. He picked it up when I was in jail. I got out and he was talking about profit and loss, and I told him something was lost, all right, but he didn't say anything back. He throws me work when he can, mostly when a contractor needs something done in a hurry and hires as many guys as turn up. Usually it's on developments for folks moving in from the coast, decking out big houses in foreign woods I couldn't afford sawdust from. Freddy goes on about Italian marble like everyone else, but he still says it "eye-talian." There's more money piled up in Caribou Court on its own than there used to be in the whole town, and I guess it's spilling out through the gates into pockets like his, but none of it's coming my way. My cabin's too far out of town to catch the runoff.

The finished fireplace looked nice enough. Like one I saw in a ski lodge a long time ago. I don't know if it looked any better than the bricks we'd covered up or better than rocks pulled from the river through town would have looked, but no one asked me what I thought.

Up on the ridge, the bear was further back in the trees but not hidden by them because his coat was so bright. He really was blue after all, but I didn't risk telling Freddy to look. I couldn't tell how tall he was exactly — it's tough to measure something far off against trees, because they look bigger or smaller depending on where you're standing and whether you're cutting them down or climbing up — but he was much taller than average bear size and taller than most of the trees when he stood. His front paws were cupped over his eyes like he was shading them against the low sun to look in my direction. I doubt he saw much through the windows, maybe the glow of the heater, but I felt like I was being watched. Like those wide windows were a screen with me on it.

"You done yet?" Freddy asked, halfway out the door with his tools already packed. "I'm thirsty."

By the time his truck passed between the brick pillars where the gate to the development will hang, past the billboard with the caribou on it, the hillside and trees had slipped into shadow and the bear was either gone or his blue was too dark to be seen.

FREDDY PULLED OVER AT THE SPLIT WHERE HE GOES EAST AND I GO WEST TO GET home. I climbed out, and lifted my bike from the bed of his truck. The cab had been warmed by Freddy's body, so when the wind that always hangs over that long, straight stretch whistled through I shivered as the chain rattled on my bike.

"How long now?" he asked.

"Few months," I said. "I'll be driving again end of summer, when riding a bike might be nice. Not too hot, not too cold."

He dropped his empty beer can out the window and it bounced toward the side of the road where I stood. "Sure you won't come to the Rat? I'm only staying for a couple."

"Not tonight." Another can popped inside the cab. "Gotta get home."

"Pick you up Monday?"

"Tuesday," I told him. "I've got something downtown Monday morning. I'll be along after that."

Freddy was already rolling away when he waved the back of his hand without looking. I climbed onto the bike — Frankensteined together from parts picked up all over — and I pedaled into the maze of new houses between the old edge of town and my cabin. When I bought the place it was pretty much by itself, my nearest neighbor around the other side of the peak and out of sight. The last quarter mile of road wasn't even paved until those houses went up with so many sidestreets between them. It was cheap when I bought it, especially with two of us making the payments, but I couldn't touch it these days and I figure it's only a matter of time before eminent domain flattens my shack for more houses.

Construction was finished on most of the homes in the new neighborhood, and the landscaping looked nearly done. Lots of them were still empty, but lights were on in enough windows and enough cars were parked in driveways to make the streets feel alive. There were kids wheeling bikes into garages at the end of the day and games of street hockey just breaking up. A couple of mothers stood on the curb with crossed arms and scowls as they watched me ride past. I still wish I'd picked up some of the work on those houses so close to my place that I could've gone home for lunch. I asked around when the project got going, but somebody remembered the time with the Bobcat and how it set the whole crew back a week.

All of a sudden I'd ridden down some cul-de-sac with a bunch of windows staring like eyes in the forest and I couldn't tell which way to go. It was too bright to spot my usual landmark, the cut between Mounts Lewis and Clark I've always aimed at on my way home. With those houses sprung up, all those porch lights and streetlights, you can't make out the mountains after sunset these days until you get well out of town. A guy can circle for hours in the same neighborhood trying to find his way out. Even when he hasn't been drinking. All I found was a perfect green park with paved walking paths and signs keeping dogs out and me off the grass, and a playground with cute plastic sculptures of buffalo and wolves for kids to climb on. In one of the houses, somebody was practicing their violin and it was about the saddest thing I've ever heard.

I rolled past a boulder that looked familiar from when I shot birds in the hills where those houses were built. I bagged a big turkey one Saturday and was having a sandwich at the foot of the rock, when a long yellow cougar slid around one side and there we were, face to face. Me with my peanut butter and jelly and him with his teeth and his claws. We stared at each other for the longest moment of my whole life until the first night in jail, then he walked away into the trees that aren't there anymore. It looked like the same boulder to me, left alone through all

---

that construction, but maybe it was a new one hauled in from wherever those river rocks started.

All those mothers in all those houses were cooking dinner at the same time, and the neighborhood smelled like a restaurant kitchen. My stomach growled and swore at me with each drifting scent, each of them better than whatever cheese crackers or cereal I might scavenge to eat later on. Those streets and those smells got me all turned around and I ended up headed toward town. The damn ring roads and spokes take you that way whether you like it or not. So I took it as a sign to stop at the Rat Cellar before trying again to get home. It was the Rathskellar once, I've been told, but no one could say the name right so the owner gave in and painted himself a new sign.

Freddy was already there, like a mushroom on top of his stool. "Thought you weren't coming," he said.

"I wasn't."

He ordered me a beer before I'd sat down and he said, "You always do."

A FEW HOURS LATER, I WOBBLER HOME ON MY BIKE BECAUSE IT SEEMED SAFER than the ride Freddy offered. I tried to count houses as I passed them, to know how many new neighbors I had, and when I spotted the blue bear standing behind one of them I almost crashed into a mailbox. His claws hung over its roof like Kilroy — he was taller than he'd looked far away on the ridge. I think he turned his head as I passed and followed me with his eyes, but I didn't look up to find out in case he wasn't actually there. My probation officer says it's about self-control for guys like me, even when no one is watching. So I stared straight ahead and pedaled steady — steadyish, best I could — and rode home without stopping and without getting lost. I ride a bit clearer when I've been drinking. I get so lost in my thoughts that I follow the map in my memory instead of the one on the ground, with all its new houses and roads. It's instinct, I guess.

Outside my cabin I leaned the bike against my rusty old truck with its four flat tires and missing tailgate. If I looked west I could still see the mountains, a purple line across the blue night, but the eastern sky was bright all the way into town and even the stars were swallowed. My front door was unlocked like it always is, because I don't need my car keys but if I carried just one key I'd lose it. I'm no good at hanging on to things. I was always leaving my keys at the Rat or at Freddy's or somewhere and had to wake my wife up to get into the house, so now that there's no one to let me in I don't bother with locks. And with all those new houses, who'd come out here to go robbing, where even the fire department won't come? Only the bears, and there's no food in the house to lure them.

I SPENT MOST OF THE WEEKEND ON THE COUCH, THINKING ABOUT THE BEAR AND wondering if I was the only person in town who could see him, and how that could be. Maybe the bear wasn't real, or I was the only one looking.

Monday morning while the grass was still frozen I was pedaling

toward town to see my probation officer. I don't suppose things get much clearer than a bright Monday morning when the world is as real as it gets, and there the bear was on the corner of Euclid and Twain, lying on top of the parking garage that went up a few years ago but so far as I know hasn't ever been filled. I've heard it doesn't make enough money to pay an attendant and the city takes a loss every year because, says the mayor, we're a city on the rise and we need to plan for it. The bear's blue head hung over the top level four stories up, brown eyes big as planets staring down at the street. I saw his shadow first as it spread across the building's own and kept coming. It got my attention because I swear his shadow was blue.

If I'd been with anyone I might have said, "Hey, look at that giant blue bear," but I was alone. The folks in the street — men in ties swinging briefcases cut from exotic hides and women in shoes sharp as skinning knives — all stepped through his shadow without looking up. If they could ignore a giant blue bear on a building they sure wouldn't take any notice if I tried to tell them about it. I'd only wind up in jail for the day drunk or not, and why miss my appointment for that? I'd be risking more time, the way things are around here. Freddy's cousin shotgunned a stop sign last month and they sent him to the state prison. Used to be if the cops caught you peppering signs, they'd bet you a beer and take a turn with the gun, but now they arrest you no matter how well you shoot. Or even if you don't shoot but offer them a beer, bet or no bet, by the side of the road. Guys I've known for years, cops I've driven home from the Rat when they couldn't drive their own cruisers, have cuffed me and thrown me into the backseat, then told me all the way to the station how much the town has changed as if I couldn't already tell.

Fighting the urge to look up, I jumped out of the bear's shadow and into the street where I was almost run over by an open-topped sightseeing jeep taking some tourists up to the ridge to spot birds or cougars or maybe the caribou I've never seen. The driver was wearing a safari jacket and hat with the brim pinned up on side, and he scowled at me from behind his microphone. Some of the passengers snapped my picture as I tripped back onto the sidewalk, but none of their cameras aimed upwards at the blue bear.

After that close call my nerves were shot and I had to stop in the Gold Dust for breakfast, where I knew I could get whiskey poured in my coffee. It's one of the last places you can around here. The counter was filled up with folks wearing plastic nametags on strings round their necks like those ugly bolo ties in the souvenir shops. They were talking about all the animals they'd spotted from their bus the evening before — I guess everyone's out seeing something. I was worried they'd talk all morning before I got a seat, but they ate fast like they had places to be. I was a few minutes late, but I made my appointment.

I couldn't swear to it, but I might've seen a blue shadow pass behind a few buildings while I made my way from the Gold Dust to the square where the courthouse stands across from the new natural history museum

---

with the dinosaur statue out front, and the convention center beside it. After calming my nerves with breakfast, I felt more relaxed about seeing the bear and about being the only person who could. I thought I'd seen all I'd see in my life, and I thought I knew all this town's secrets, so the surprise had thrown me but now I thought, hey, if there are giant blue bears in the mountains I never knew of after living here my whole life, maybe there are other things, too.

WHEN I LEFT THE COURTHOUSE A WHILE LATER, HE WAS ACROSS THE STREET AND big as daylight with his face pressed against the glass wall of the convention center and paws around his eyes like blinders. I don't know what was going on inside the building because the acronym on the marquee didn't spell anything, but the bear had disrupted it with his head in the window and a whole crowd of folks wearing those nametags I'd seen at breakfast were hurrying out the front doors.

At least everyone else could see him now, too. At least I wasn't crazy for spotting giant blue bears. I thought it would be like an old monster movie, the bear stomping all over the city, and I thought that would be something to see—not because I wanted anyone to get hurt, it just seemed like it would shake things up around here. It might remind us of how things used to be. And if the city got flattened, someone would have to rebuild it. Folks were pointing and screaming and aiming their phones, those ones with cameras built in. Police pushed everyone back from the bear and stopped traffic, and a crowd gathered on the square. He looked heavy, that bear, and I don't know what kept him from pushing right through that glass, hard as he seemed to be leaning.

With all that racket around him, the bear didn't move. He stood with his eyes to the wall even after everyone inside had come out. He didn't smash the building or stuff people into his mouth or even growl. He didn't act much like a monster, or even that much like a bear. And the longer he stood doing nothing the more people made their way downtown and pushed up against the barricades the police had set up. The mayor gave a speech on the courthouse steps and said he would ask for the National Guard to get rid of the bear, but some lady from the tourism board whispered in his ear and the mayor said never mind.

Freddy showed up along with most of the city, and I found him standing on top of his cooler because he was pretty far back in the crowd. He was drinking a beer, and so were a couple of teenagers beside him. He stepped off the cooler so I could get a drink and the white plastic lid popped like a cap on a bottle.

"Bear's not doing much," Freddy said.

"He doesn't have to," I said. "He's a giant blue bear. Seems like that's something already."

No one seemed to be leaving and more folks arrived all the time, and the crowd nudged the barriers right up to the edge of the road. Still the bear didn't move. People started posing for pictures that made it look like they were up near his feet—forced perspective, somebody called it.



Then the cops started posing right next to the bear, and I saw the one who pulled me in the last time and cost me my license. Must've been the whole force with their guns out and aimed at him like they were protecting the city or something. The mayor was lifted onto the blue toes and wagged his finger in the bear's face while cameras flashed and the whole city cheered. And the bear kept his eyes to the window. Finally the police took the barriers down altogether and kids climbed on the bear, and their parents posed as if they were afraid, and the convention got back to business.

By dinnertime, vendors were selling pizza and hot dogs and T-shirts of the blue bear they'd printed up quick. Within a few days, word of the bear had gotten out pretty far and folks started to come from all over. The city put his picture on everything from brochures to shot glasses for sale in all the bars that changed their names to something about a blue bear. Even the Piney View campground out past my cabin started calling itself The Bear View, which wasn't so bad since there had always been lots of bears around the campsites and warnings hung up on the trees about how to keep safe. But after a few weeks folks stopped camping there because the bears in the woods weren't blue, and they stayed downtown in hotels instead. Which is alright with me, since someone has to renovate those hotel rooms with their new blue bear styles instead of the wagon wheels, saddles, and saloon doors they've had all my life. With all that work on short notice, that someone is me often enough to keep the bills paid, and I might be able to buy a new truck by the time I'm able to drive it.

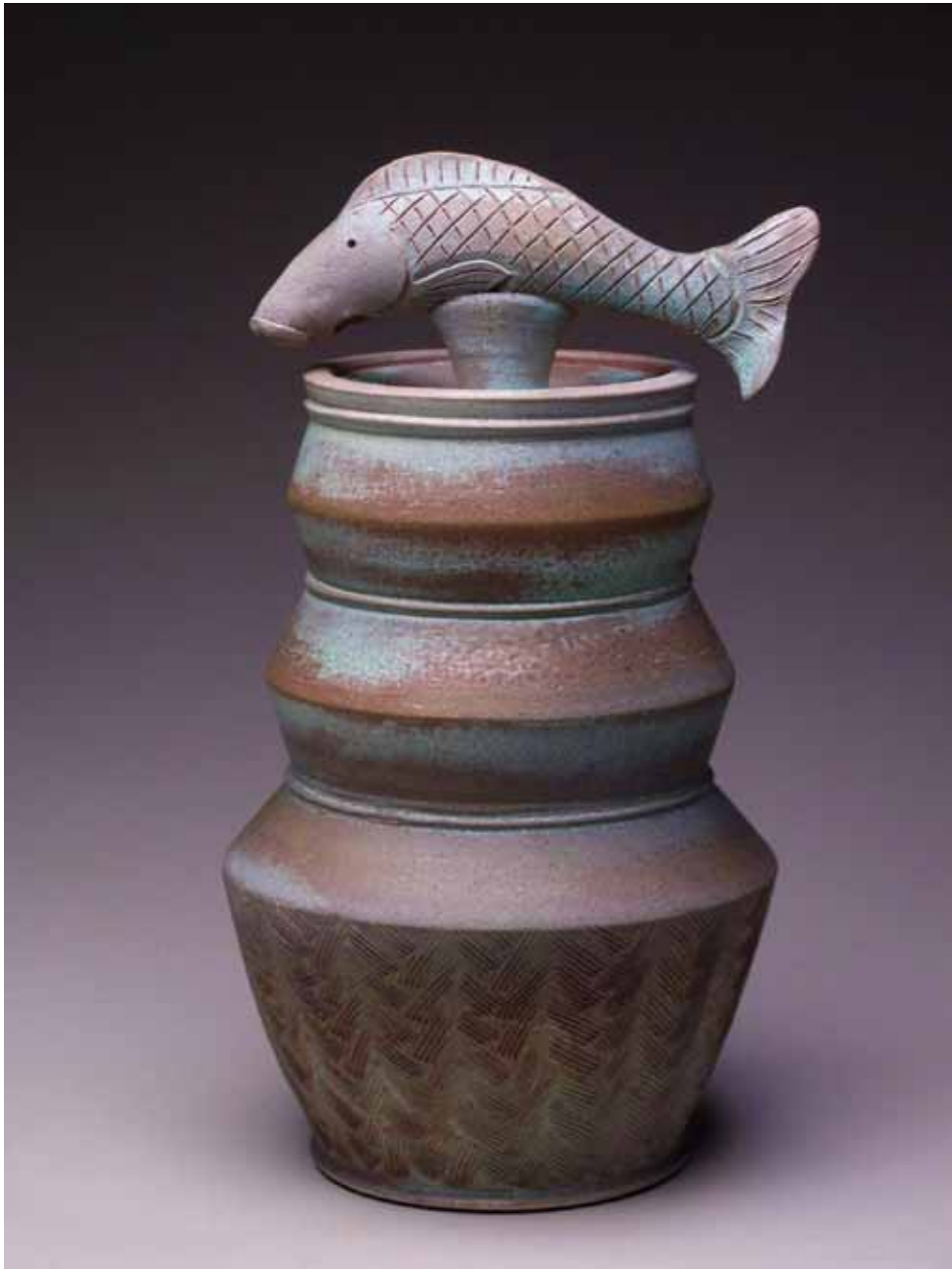
And if I manage to save enough money and sell my cabin, I might build a smaller one farther from the edges of town and stock it with plenty of food so I won't have to leave it so often. Where the lights aren't so bright and the houses so close, there's a better chance of my spotting some other blue bears and seeing what I haven't seen yet. I won't put a lock on it, or even a door, and if bears walk right in, then so what.



Steve Himmer is the author of the novel *The Bee-Loud Glade*, and his stories have appeared in journals including *Hobart*, *Hawk & Handsaw*, and *Los Angeles Review*. He edits the webjournal *Necessary Fiction* and teaches at Emerson College in Boston. His website is <http://www.stevhimmer.com>.

M. Shane Christensen

## The Ancient Battle of Fire and Clay



Fish Jar, cone 04 oxidation



Bottles, soda-fired stoneware

I find great pleasure in creating pottery that is functional. Consequently, I am always searching for new and exciting qualities of my ceramic work that I can share with the user. To me, a pot is successful when it fulfills its intended use, yet still has pleasing form and complementary surface treatment. I experience great satisfaction from knowing that people use and appreciate the work that I have created.

My work has been influenced by an extended stay in Korea, where I was exposed to various Asian styles and forms. Two types of pottery, in particular, have had (and continue to have) a strong influence on me: Korean porcelain celadon pottery from the Koryo dynasty, and some Onggi pottery – storage vessels made of earthenware. Because of my longstanding interest in these forms, I have been invited to participate as a master potter at the international Onggi festival in Ulsan, South Korea, where I demonstrated my techniques and exhibited my work.

I am driven to create vessels that are aesthetically pleasing to eye and touch, yet still retain their function and balance.



Detail, Accordion Vase, wood-fired stoneware

I fire my work in a soda kiln, which involves a high-temperature process at about 2,350 degrees. Toward the peak temperature, I introduce soda ash (in liquid form) into the kiln, the resultant vapor of which glazes the raw clay and creates flashes and other dramatic visual elements that individualize each piece of pottery. Due to the soda process, glazes and slips have a variety of visual characteristics, with carbon trapping on the edges. They also have breaks in the glaze and flashing on slips and clay. Every time I open the kiln and witness the effect of the fire on the pots, I am kindled with excitement and awe, or sometimes frustration. The naturally unpredictable results allow me to appreciate the uniqueness of each piece, even as they remind me that the creation of art is subject to uncontrollable processes and requires my artistic sensibility to be open to artistic serendipity.

I make all glazes and materials from scratch. Many of them are unique to what I do in my personal kiln and are original to my studio. However, I also use some local clays and glazes, which I dig from the Parowan and Enterprise area of Southern Utah. Most of my work is porcelain or semi-porcelain stoneware, but recently I have been working with earthenwares and pursuing lower temperature clays as well.

The ancient battle of manipulating clay and controlling fire entralls my imagination and helps my work and vision evolve. I believe that when you love what you do and are challenged by it, your mind is awakened to new forms and creative play, and the potential for artistic/conceptual progression becomes endless.

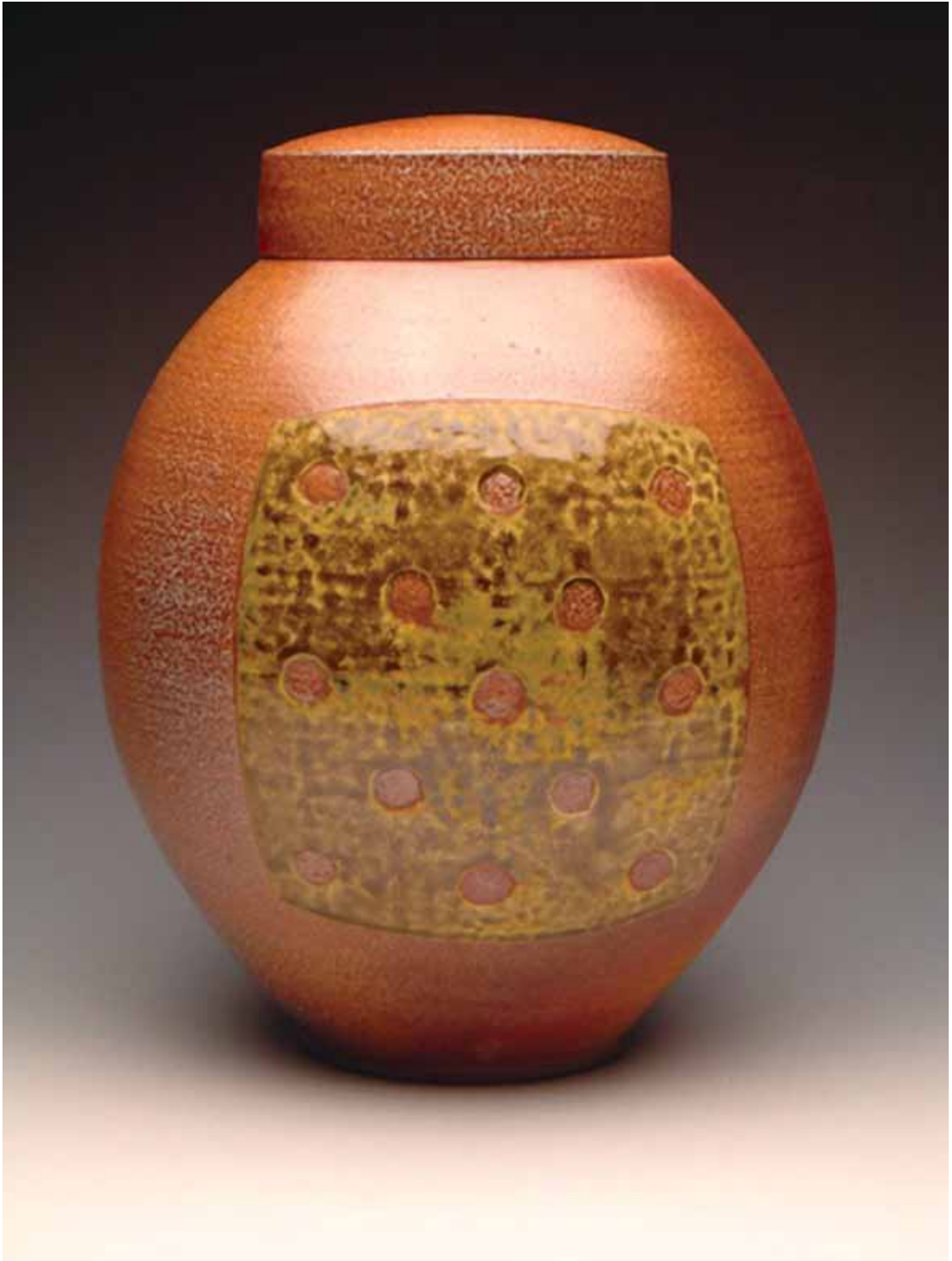




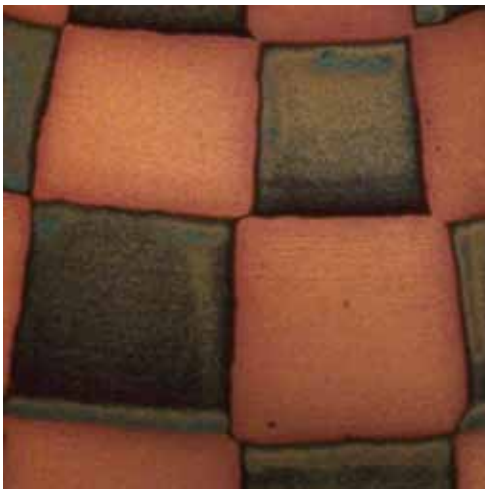


Banded Bottles, wax resist, cone 6 oxidation





Lidded Jar, wax resist, soda-fired stoneware



Various surface treatments



Spraying soda ash, soda kiln 2009



Detail, Fish Basket, shino glaze, reduction



Shino Soy Ewe, reduction fired stoneware





Three Bottles, wax resist and washes, soda-fired stoneware







Shane Christensen has been a practicing potter since 1993. He attended Dixie State College and Southern Utah University and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Ceramics and Sculpture. In 1999, he earned his Master of Fine Arts in Ceramics from Edinboro University in Pennsylvania and began working full-time as a Professor of Art at Wester Texas College in Snyder, Texas, where he remained until 2004. He currently teaches full-time at Snow Canyon High School and as an adjunct professor at Dixie State College and Southern Utah University.

Christensen's work is primarily folk-based

utilitarian pottery. Although originating in the American folk tradition, many of his pieces carry the imprint of Asian influences as well. His pots range from simple, functional objects to large-scale vases and platters. Using the subtle qualities of soda vapor, Christensen creates depth and color variation in one-of-a-kind pieces of pottery.

Christensen's pottery has been shown both nationally and internationally and has been featured at the Functional Ceramics exhibition in Wooster, Ohio. His work has also been displayed at The Real Mother Goose in Portland, Oregon, numerous NCECA conferences, and galleries around the country. His pots were also featured in the January 2007 issue of *Ceramics Monthly*. Most recently, he exhibited his work at the Onggi Expo in Ulsan, Korea, where he received a select prize for creativity and artistic excellence.

Billy J. Stratton

## Alone on the Colorado

### *Glen Canyon, Edward Abbey, and the Birth of Radical Environmentalism*

*Shall we gather at the river? The beautiful, the beautiful river?  
Gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of the Lord?*

– Robert Lowry

*Gradually the village murmur subsided, and we seemed to be embarked on the placid  
current of our dreams, floating from past to future as silently as one awakes to fresh  
morning or evening thoughts.*

– Henry David Thoreau



Rivers have had a long and enduring place as a source of inspiration in the Western literary tradition. In the work of nineteenth-century British poets, rivers took on a powerful and inspirational presence. In Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem “Kubla Kahn,” “Alph, the sacred river” represents a primordial and esoteric creative force from whence inspiration flows “measureless to man” (4, 5). For William Wordsworth the image of the river was transformed into a metaphor representing the contemplative aspect of the poet, a mirror through which the sublimity of his experiences in the natural world were reflected, as in his work, “The Prelude.” In a break with previous literary conventions, in the work of the Romantic poets the wilderness was transformed from a dark and menacing place to be feared and avoided to a mysterious and enchanting refuge from the maddening crowd and effluence of the burgeoning industrial centers.

Following in the footsteps of these poets, American writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Joseph Wood Krutch, Terry Tempest Williams, and Edward Abbey further elaborated on this conception of the environment and its natural aesthetic beauty. Throughout the twentieth century, the significance of nature and wilderness underwent continual transformation in the work of these writers, and whether expressed through poetry, prose, or fiction, the image of the river was employed as a potent symbol of individual freedom and the essential purity of the untamed natural world. Drawing on ideas expounded by Thoreau and Muir, Edward Abbey insisted that concepts of individual and collective freedom were contingent upon the enduring presence of wilderness: “we can have wilderness without freedom; we can have wilderness without human life at all; but we cannot have freedom without wilderness” (*Journey* 235).

On March 21, 1981, Abbey read a public statement of protest at Glen Canyon Dam — named in honor of John Wesley Powell, the one-armed Civil War veteran who first explored the canyon over 100 years before. He delivered his speech as members of Earth First! unfurled a 300-foot banner meant to simulate the opening of a crack down the center of the dam. In his stirring denouncement of this monolithic structure and the systems of domination it represented, Abbey encouraged

---

*Abbey encouraged his audience to fight the good fight, and win or lose, “Oppose, resist, subvert, delay until the empire itself begins to fall apart, and until that happens, enjoy, enjoy the Great American West — what’s left of it.”*

---

his audience to fight the good fight, and win or lose, “Oppose, resist, subvert, delay until the empire itself begins to fall apart, and until that happens, enjoy, enjoy the Great American West — what’s left of it. Climb those mountains, run those rivers, hike those canyons,

explore those forests, and share in the beauty of wilderness, friendship, love, and the common effort to save what we love” (*Voice*).

Although this fiery statement is demonstrative of Abbey’s most developed philosophical vision, to fully appreciate his influence on the advent of radical environmentalism one must first trace

the genealogy of Abbey’s oeuvre. The fertile seeds of Abbey’s mature literary vision had been planted more than two decades before on a formative ten-day, 150-mile trip down the Colorado River through Glen Canyon in 1959. In an essay, “The Damnation of a Canyon,” Abbey confessed, “there was a time, in my search for essences, I concluded that the canyonland country had no heart. I was wrong. The canyonlands did have a heart, a living heart, and that heart was Glen Canyon and the golden, flowing Colorado River” (*Beyond* 95). A few short years later, Glen Canyon would be submerged under the waters of Lake Powell, bringing about a transformation that Abbey characterized as “the difference between death and life. Glen Canyon was alive. Lake Powell is a graveyard” (98). James Calahan, in his biography, *Edward Abbey: A Life*,

---

identifies this trip and the subsequent interment of Glen Canyon as seminal events in Abbey's life, stating that he "would spend the rest of his life raging against this 'damn' and 'lake foul'" (Cahalan 73). The recurring presence of this experience of loss pervades Abbey's fiction and prose, offering readers insight into the central position the Colorado River held in his holistic philosophical perspective.

The paradigm shift brought on by the Industrial Revolution has had an inestimable impact on the collective ways human beings have come to view their environments. One effect of the social and cultural transformation brought on by modernity and consumer culture has been the growing influence of reductionistic epistemologies, in which the intrinsic and aesthetic value of mountains, rivers, forests, and prairies have tended to be quantified in inverse relation to the instrumental values assigned to them as natural resources to be exploited. As a consequence, the inherent aesthetic and spiritual significance that Abbey recognizes in his holistic conception of the Colorado stands in marked contrast to the instrumental view assigned the Army Corps of Engineers, in which the Colorado is regarded primarily in terms of acre-feet, discharge, and cusecs.

In the continental United States, nowhere are rivers more central to these competing values than in the arid landscape of the Southwest, which includes Southern California and Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, and it is in the writings of Edward Abbey that the preservation and protection of the rivers of this region had one of their most iconoclastic and influential defenders. Groundwater notwithstanding, the Colorado, Gila, Green, San Juan, Salt,

and Rio Grande river systems provide the primary source of water essential to the support of the population inhabiting this arid region. It is primarily through the massive damming and diversion projects on these rivers that the available river water has been most easily exploited. Marc Reisner, in his widely influential work, *Cadillac Desert*, noted that 85-90 percent of the diverted surface water is utilized for everything from extensive agricultural operations and industrial uses in manufacturing and mining to supplying water for countless public projects, such as the irrigation of golf courses and suburban lawns, while also being the major source of potable water for millions of people (9-12). The overuse of these river resources dates back to at least the 1930s when the federal government earmarked 400 million dollars for damming projects on the Colorado alone, transforming a "wild river" into what Charles Bowdon describes sardonically as "a piece of plumbing" (94). Based upon an analysis of water use in the Southwest, Reisner and Bowden conclude that cities such as Tucson, Phoenix, and Las Vegas could hardly sustain their populations if not for the massive exploitation of the rivers of the Southwest, and the Colorado in particular.



Edward Abbey

What is rarely considered, however, when appraising the value of the water that is diverted from these rivers is the myriad of ecological and social costs associated with dam building projects, such as the vast amount of habitat reduction, the radical transformation of riparian ecosystems, and the displacement of both wildlife and human inhabitants, particularly Native American peoples such as the Navajo and Hopi. As has also been the case for the Anishinaabeg of the Great Lakes region, the James Bay Cree, and the Innu of Nitassinan in Quebec and Newfoundland, massive damming projects not only disrupt ecosystems, but also destroy important archeological and historic sites, including burial grounds and sacred places, which are indispensable to Native American religious practice. While some may take pride in the engineering feats personified by the Hoover and Glen Canyon Dams, or enjoy the recreational opportunities made possible by these artificial lakes, few consider the hidden costs associated with these benefits. As Abbey observes in "Lake Powell by Houseboat," despite the fact that the lake has over eighteen hundred miles of shoreline, only about five percent of this is suitable for human activities such as hiking, camping, and fishing since the vast majority of it consists of steep cliff or vertical stone (*One Life* 90). In many ways, Glen Canyon and the Colorado River can be viewed as Abbey's tragic muse, haunting and inspiring his most compelling work, resurfacing time and time again to remind his readers of the ecological

---

*It is not just the physical presence of the Glen Canyon Dam that provoked Abbey's ire, but all that such creations represented.*

---

caesura the Glen Canyon Dam represents.

It is not just the physical presence of Glen Canyon Dam that provoked Abbey's ire, but all that such creations represent. For some, dams such as the Glen Canyon epitomize the triumph of human ingenuity and the power to tame and subdue the desert in spite of its harsh and inhospitable conditions, but for Abbey and a growing number of people disillusioned with the direction of current environmental policy, these monolithic concrete structures represent nothing less than the spiritual desolation and wanton destruction often characterized as universal symbols of the techno-industrial milieu. Wary of the increasingly serious threat to the fragile desert ecosystem brought about by population growth and accelerated resource use and development in the Southwest, Abbey declares, "the Glen Canyon Dam makes a handy symbol of what is most evil and destructive in modern man's attack on the natural world. But it is only one small example among thousands" (*Postcards* 159). Far from serving the public good, according to Abbey, Glen Canyon Dam was constructed primarily to benefit land speculators and developers in Phoenix and Tucson, as well as mining companies such as Peabody Coal Company, which had secured a contract to strip-mine the Hopi sacred site, Black Mesa (102-104).

The June 1959 trip marked Abbey's first and only trip down the free flowing Colorado. Recounting it in breathtaking detail in his most enduring and



---

popular work, *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey distinguished himself as one of the most passionate and outspoken critics of river damming in the American Southwest. In this work, the age-old conflict pitting industrial civilization against the wilderness, as well as that between society and the individual, finds its most cogent and moving expression, luring, as Ann Ronald suggests, readers “into a more meaningful confrontation with the Southwest landscape” (69). Abbey imparts the sense of mystery and wonder Glen Canyon inspired in him to his readers by transforming his recollections into a near mystical experience, describing a time and place that survives now only in memory: “once it was different there. I know, for I was one of the lucky few. . . who saw Glen Canyon before it was drowned. In fact I saw only a part of it but enough to realize that here was an Eden, a portion of the earth’s original paradise” (Ronald 152). For Abbey, this experience consummated “a very intimate relation with the river,” one that he would synthesize as a powerful transformative experience, “something dreamlike and remembered,” to sustain and console, while becoming the evocative source of literary inspiration to appear time and time again in subsequent works (154).

It wasn’t, however, until the publication of his comic masterpiece *The Monkey Wrench Gang* in 1975—centered on the exploits of a motley group of eco-saboteurs whose ultimate goal was the destruction of Glen Canyon Dam—that Abbey’s dissenting views realized their most trenchant and subversive expression. As a testament to the social impact and subversive influence of the novel, Dave Foreman, one of the founders of the environmental organization Earth First!, paid homage to Abbey’s influ-

ence, stating that one of the original purposes of this group was “to inspire others to carry out activities straight from the pages of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*” (18).

In his assessment of what was lost as a result of the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, Seldom Seen Smith, one of the protagonists in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, offers a poignant lament for the Colorado River of his youth:

You remember the river, how fat and golden it was in June, when the big runoff comes down from the Rockies? Remember the deer on the sand bars and the blue herons in the willows and the catfish so big and tasty. . . Remember the crick that come down through Bridge Canyon and Forbidden Canyon, how green and cool and clear it was? God, it’s enough to make a man sick. Say, you recall old Woody Edgell up at Hite and the old ferry he used to run across the river? That crazy contraption of his hangin’ on cables; remember that damned thing? Remember the cataracts in Forty-Mile Canyon? Well, they flooded out about half of them too. And part of Escalante’s gone now—Davis Gulch, Willow Canyon, Gregory Natural Bridge, Ten-Mile. Listen, are you listenin’ to me? (34)

The expression of loss that Smith testifies to illustrates that many of the issues at the center of debates between conservationists and preservationists, and the consideration of instrumental versus aesthetic and intrinsic value, are infinitely more complex than may be apparent at first glance. Buried beneath the tranquil waters, or “blue death,” as Smith refers to the lake,<sup>1</sup> and the ever-growing buildup of silt that is continually being trapped behind the dam as it



is carried downstream from high in the Rockies, lies the flooded remnants of a once thriving desert ecosystem that for centuries supported a rich diversity of flora and fauna along the ever shifting banks of the Colorado (*Monkey Wrench Gang* 32). The human cost of the dam is not lost to Smith either, who points out that in addition to the destruction of the river ecosystem, the dam also resulted in the displacement of ferry operators, outfitters, and river guides that once put down their roots and made their living from the river (32). Given such facts, Abbey asks how a quantifiable assessment can be made to account for the inestimable qualities of natural beauty, recreation, and ecological diversity which would allow for an adequate comparison of value.

Abbey, like Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold before him, championed an ecological vision that was predicated on the subjective appreciation of the inherent aesthetic, spiritual, and life-sustaining qualities of the natural environment, which were to be considered on their own terms. Speaking out against the proposed damming of Hetch Hetchy in 1912, Muir condemned those who measured only the economic benefits of such development projects and appealed for the equal consideration of the intangible qualities of wilderness: "these temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and instead of lifting

their eyes to the God of the Mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar" (qtd. in *Nash* 161). Muir viewed the preservation of undeveloped wilderness as an essential element in the protection of natural diversity, but also for its intrinsic aesthetic and spiritual significance as well. From this holistic foundation, Muir countered that the inherent, although incalculable, value of the natural environment deserved equal consideration to those derived from monetary value of the natural resources. Perhaps, due to the already imperiled condition of America's remaining wilderness at the turn of the nineteenth cen-

tury, which had been subjected to over two centuries of increasingly intensive deforestation and destruction by settlers, loggers, miners, as well as oil and railroad companies, Muir viewed the battle for Hetch Hetchy as emblematic of the broader struggle for preservation. Lobbying for the long-term protection of these dwindling national treasures, Muir sought to broaden public awareness of the physical and spiritual significance of the natural world. In an article published in *Outlook* magazine in 1907, he expressed his ideas clearly and concisely: "for everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike" (qtd. in *Nash* 165).

Aldo Leopold, the so-called father of deep ecology, echoed Muir's senti-

---

*Edward Abbey, like Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold before him, championed an ecological vision that was predicated on the subjective appreciation of the inherent aesthetic, spiritual, and life-sustaining qualities of the natural environment, which were to be considered on their own terms.*

---

---

ments in an early essay, appropriately entitled, "The River of the Mother of God," in which he makes a case for the preservation of America's last wild places as essential to the "spiritual and physical welfare of future Americans" (127). This fundamental premise would later become the foundation of the compelling philosophical vision of wilderness preservation articulated in his seminal work, *A Sand County Almanac*. In this essential work of environmental literature, Leopold formulates his now famous "land ethic," based on the notion that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (224-225). Decades later, Abbey would embark on his own writing career, in many ways following and expanding upon the same principles found in the work of Muir and Leopold.

Although Abbey has been labeled as everything from a Eurocentric elitist and misogynist to a bourgeois man of leisure and anarchist misanthrope by his detractors,<sup>2</sup> a thorough review of his work reveals a creative vision grounded in an egalitarian ethos not all that different from that espoused by Thoreau, Whitman, and Muir. In *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey's simple yet affecting prose belies these facile pronouncements, for although he cites the misanthropic reflections of writers such as Robinson Jeffers, for instance, he did so in order to establish a point of departure from which he could offer an alternative literary vision: "In these hours and days of dual solitude on the river we hope to discover something quite different, to renew our affection for ourselves and the human kind in general by a temporary, legal separation from the mass"

(155). In an interview with Jack Loeffler, a close personal friend and founder of the Black Mesa Defense Fund, Abbey reveals the philosophical underpinnings of his intense passion and reverence for the natural world:

I consider myself an absolute egalitarian . . . Furthermore, that respect for the value of each human being should be extended to each living thing on the planet, to our fellow creatures . . . We can and must learn to love the wild animals, the mountain lions and the rattlesnakes and the coyotes, the buffalo and the elephants . . . And developing that way, extend our ability to love to include plant life. A tree, a shrub, a blade of grass, deserves respect and sympathy as fellow living things. I think you can even go beyond that to respect the rocks, the air and the water. Because each is part of a whole—each part dependent on the other parts. (6-7)

The vision of the world that Abbey articulates here situates him firmly within the philosophical context of the deep ecology movement, which is reminiscent of Leopold's land ethic, Arne Naess' "Eight Points,"<sup>3</sup> and Holmes Rolston's environmental thought. Like the philosophies advanced by these thinkers, Abbey's holistic vision finds its center not in utopianism, but in an ecocentric view of the world, which, as Naess observed, "makes us realize the necessity of questioning everything" (194).

As Abbey makes apparent in the opening essay in *Down the River*, adherence to the Socratic method applies not only to the ideas of one's antagonists and critics, but, more vitally, to one's own beliefs as well:

Questions. Every statement raises more and newer questions. We shall never be done questioning, so long as men and women remain human. QUESTION AUTHORITY reads a bumper sticker I saw the other day in Moab, Utah. Thoreau would doubtless have amended that to read "Always Question Authority." I would add only the word "All" before the word "Authority." Including, of course, the authority of Henry David himself. (14)

Abbey's willingness to interrogate his own beliefs and values, as well as those of his literary heroes, demonstrates a fundamental commitment to the belief that no idea, however sacred or revered, should be uncritically accepted, least of all his own. Similarly, in returning to the tenets of deep ecology articulated by Naess, we can see that this manner of self-reflexive inquiry necessarily entails the rigorous appraisal and reevaluation of one's personal relationship with the environment. Abbey did not waver in this respect and made it clear in his writings that he eschewed conventional definitions of environmentalism and advocated a faithfulness to an ecological perspective that went beyond passive philosophizing and demanded an implicit obligation to take direct action to effect the realization of a biocentric mode of life.

Answering the call for personal responsibility and active participation implicit in deep ecology, Abbey developed a radicalism that was influenced greatly by the historical legacy of the environmental movement, the victories of which, although significant, were ultimately far more modest than what many activists had hoped for. Although one can cite important victories, such as

the passage of the Endangered Species, Clean Air, and Water Acts, and the further expansion by millions of acres of the National Parks system, losses such as those suffered at Hetch Hetchy, Glen Canyon, Black Mesa, and the Little Tennessee River, not to mention the lack of federal enforcement of the above cited regulations, had a profound affect on Abbey's already cynical outlook, ultimately leading him to offer the extreme measures celebrated in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*.

In *Radical Ecology*, Carolyn Merchant observes that a direct result of the anti-environmental policies of the Reagan/Watt era was the dramatic increase in popular support for radical environmental advocacy groups such as Earth First! and Greenpeace. This surge in ecological awareness was felt among mainstream groups, such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and Defenders of Wildlife as well, which were nonetheless frequent targets of Abbey's sardonic wit. Consequently, to fully understand the implicit goals of environmental activists during this period and the tactics that have come to be generally defined within the purview of ecotage, or eco-defense, as it has also been characterized, it is important to consider the social, historical and political contexts out of which this radical turn developed.

Likewise, in order to appreciate what William Pilkington has referred to as Abbey's "impassioned and outraged defense of solitude and wilderness," it is vital that we recognize the primacy and metaphorical significance the Colorado held in Abbey's life and writings (102). The recurring images of the Colorado and Glen Canyon that appear throughout his work orientate his love of the

---

American desert Southwest in direct relation to its totality as a biotic community, including the rivers, wildlife, canyons, mesas, plant life, right down to the bedrock itself. In his analysis of Abbey's work, *Epitaph for a Desert Anarchist*, James Bishop notes the centrality of the Colorado and Glen Canyon to Abbey's formation as a radical advocate for the preservation of the environment:

If there was one transforming event in Abbey's life in the Southwest, rivaling the decimation of the Big Woods of his youth, it was the construction of Glen Canyon Dam. In the name of progress, the colossal cement hydroelectric dam built by the federal government on the Colorado River, sixty miles north of the Grand Canyon, destroyed one of the most remarkable wonders of the world. (122)

Like his literary predecessor, John Muir, Abbey's intense desire to contribute to the preservation of the natural world was born out of deep personal passion and attachment to a particular place. Glen Canyon could well be considered Abbey's Hetch Hetchy; it was the place where he first encountered the stark grandeur of the Colorado plateau in all of its inhospitable, yet sublime beauty, while also becoming the flash-point of his most bitter disillusionment.

As the trajectory of Abbey's literary production suggests, it is apparent that he struggled to transform the loss of Glen Canyon into a powerful symbol representing the self-perpetuating abuse and excess of techno-industrial society. Similarly, Abbey's strident advocacy of monkey-wrenching can be viewed as his way of coming to terms with the strong emotions that the loss of Glen Canyon evoked, representing what I diagnose as an act of eco-catharsis that

functioned to purge him of his own bitter feelings, while offering an optimistic, philosophical model founded upon a life-affirming, regenerative teleology.

Despite the inordinate amount of critical attention focused on *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, much of which is unfavorable because of its seemingly overt celebration of direct action and sabotage, the central message of the novel concerning the development of a holistic subjectivity is often overlooked. Abbey consistently directs his reader's attention to the unique beauty and intrinsic value of those seemingly insignificant aspects of our natural environments, which are often taken for granted and go unnoticed. This contemplation of the environment from a holistic perspective is most apparent in Abbey's lyrical descriptive essays, in which he celebrates the significance of the animal inhabitants of the desert regions, such as the much-hunted and endangered javelina, wild mustangs, mountain lions, horned owls, and coyote, as well as the plants and trees common to the Southwest, including thickets of tamarisk and willow, and the great saguaro cacti, which provides many of these animals with food and shelter. His attention does not simply end with a concern for what is most readily observable, as he also frequently celebrates the regenerating power of flash floods, the transformative power of the sun, wind, and rain, and the awe-inspiring feeling of presence elicited by a mountain lion as it watches him from the darkened shadows of desert canyons. Nonetheless, one may ask, for what human purpose do these things exist? Abbey offers a trenchant response to such questions in *Beyond The Wall*, asserting, "only the weary and the foolish insist on a

purpose. Let being be" (43). The natural world exists first and foremost for its own sake, and that is enough.

The inherent contradictions found in Abbey's work — between his often sensitive descriptions of the natural landscape, wildlife, and personal experiences, contrasted with the harsh condemnations of developers, miners, ranchers, and bureaucrats that he viewed as intent on destroying his beloved Southwest — reveal the paradoxical and complex nature of his personality as a writer. Whatever one's opinion of Abbey, he was much more than the caricature he has been portrayed as by critics. He is neither the postmodern anti-cowboy, nor the freewheeling eco-hooligan cast in the mold of the lone, anachronistic hero futilely beating his chest in the face of the seemingly overwhelming might of the techno-industrial complex. A more accurate assessment, perhaps, is provided by the Laguna writer, Leslie Marmon Silko: "Ed's always going around poking hornets' nests, and then he likes to see if he can still run fast enough to get away before he gets stung" (Barnes 55.) Challenging authority and skewering sacred cows were ubiquitous features of Abbey's literary *modus operandi*, and his notorious stubbornness and cantankerous personality were certainly part of the mystique that grew up around him as a result. This image, however, is largely the product of a carefully constructed literary persona cultivated in part to compensate for the insecurities of the shy, sensitive, Easterner he kept hidden beneath the rough, grizzled exterior that many knew as Cactus Ed. In Abbey's writings and actions the duality of his nature is often apparent. Abbey described his purpose as an artist in precisely these terms in an essay titled, "A Writer's Credo":

I write to entertain my friends and to exasperate our enemies. I write to record the truth of our time as best as I can see it. To investigate the comedy and tragedy of human relationships. To oppose, resist, and sabotage the contemporary drift toward a global technocratic police state, whatever its ideological coloration. I write to oppose injustice, to defy power, and to speak for the voiceless . . . I write to make a difference. I write to give pleasure and promote aesthetic bliss. To honor life and to praise the divine beauty of the natural world. I write for the joy and exultation of writing itself. To tell my story. (*One Life* 177-178)

In the end, whatever one's conclusion, it is clear that Abbey's story and the fate of the Colorado are inseparable, interconnected elements of the same whole, and as he neared the end of his life he seemed to have come to terms with the loss of Glen Canyon. Instead of setting it free with a spectacular act of sabotage, he envisioned a hopeful future, dreaming of a time when the buildup of silt and the development of alternative sources of power will render the dam obsolete and finally allow the reservoir to be drained, releasing Glen Canyon and the Colorado from its long confinement.

This will no doubt expose a dreary and hideous scene: immense mud flats and whole plateaus of sodden garbage strewn with dead trees, sunken boats, the skeletons of long-forgotten, decomposing water skiers. But to those who find the prospect too appalling, I say give nature a little time. In five years, at most in ten, the sun and wind and storms will cleanse and sterilize the repellent mess . . . Fresh green willow, box elder and redbud will reappear; and the ancient drowned



---

cottonwoods will be replaced by young of their own kind. With the renewal of plant life will come the insects, the birds, the lizards and snakes, the mammals. . . Within the lifetime of our children Glen Canyon and the living river, heart of the canyonlands, will be restored to us. The wilderness will again belong to God, the people and the wild things that call it home. (*Beyond* 103)

In regard to the high desert country of the four corners region, which is so dependent on the natural process of cyclical renewal, this essay seems to indicate that his radical ideas and “ironic anarchism,” as he called it in *The Brave Cowboy*, had come full circle.

Throughout his fiction and prose, it was frequently the small, seemingly insignificant things that Abbey celebrated to give voice to his hope for ecological regeneration and rebirth. In a description of one of his many hikes into the canyons overlooking Lake Powell found in *One Life at a Time, Please*, Abbey describes looking out towards Navajo Mountain, the Henrys, and the Kaiparowits Plateau, then focusing his vision on a comforting image:

A lone juniper tree lifting shaggy arms toward the blue sky. After twenty-five years of war and terror, elections and assassinations, triumph and calamity, my juniper stood firmly in place, a trifle older but otherwise unchanged, still alive, rooted in stone. This, too, was good to know. Though much has been lost, much remains. (93)

In the face of the bitter disappointment represented by the flooding of Glen Canyon, that lone juniper still stands as an emblem of perseverance and hope—a manifestation of the enduring quality and timelessness of the natural world. Whether our children, or our children’s children, are ever able to see Glen Canyon in its former glory, as Abbey hoped and dreamed, matters little in the end. “In a mournful time of extinction and loss,” Rebecca Raglon eloquently writes, “Abbey’s work is humorous. In a time of despair over seemingly inevitable ‘development,’ Abbey’s satire deflates powerful social forces and offers hope” (169). One day,



perhaps in the not too distant future, the Colorado River and Glen Canyon may again be free, but in the meantime, Abbey’s humor, wit, and anger will continue to console, inspire, entertain, and encourage all who dream of that hoped-for day of Glen Canyon’s glorious and, perhaps inevitable, resurrection.





Billy J. Stratton holds a Ph.D. in American Indian Studies from the University of Arizona and currently teaches courses on contemporary American and Native American literature in the Department of English at the University of Denver. His scholarship has appeared in *Red Ink*, *Wíčazo Ša Review*, and *Arizona Quarterly*.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Colorado River is backed up approximately 180 miles behind the dam that forms Lake Powell, although the recent droughts in the Southwest have had a noticeable effect on its current size.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Garth McCann's *Edward Abbey* (Boise, ID.: Boise State University, 1977); Lucinda Franks' "Natural Involvement." Rev. of *Abbey's Road*, by Edward Abbey. *New York Times Book Review*, 5 August 1979: BR2, 8; Dennis Drabelle's "Down the River." Rev. of *Down the River*, by Edward Abbey. *The Nation*, 1 May 1982: 533-536; and Joni Adamson's *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Arne Naess' Eight Points of deep ecology are:

- 1) The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
- 2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
- 3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
- 4) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life *requires* a smaller human population.
- 5) Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
- 6) Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
- 7) The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
- 8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

---

WORKS CITED

- Abbey, Edward. *Beyond the Wall: Essays From the Outside*. New York: Henry Holt, 1984.
- . *The Brave Cowboy*. 1956. New York: Avon Books, 1992.
  - . *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. 1968. New York: Touchstone, 1990.
  - . *Down the River*. 1981. New York: Plume, 1991.
  - . *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. 1975. New York: Perennial, 2000.
  - . *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West*. New York: Dutton, 1977.
  - . *One Life at a Time, Please*. New York: Henry Holt, 1988.
  - . *Postcards From Ed: Dispatches and Salvoes From an American Iconoclast*. Ed. David Petersen. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2006.
- Barnes, Kim. "A Leslie Marmon Silko Interview," "Yellow Woman." Ed. Melody Graulich. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993, 47-65.
- Bishop, James, Jr., *Epitaph for a Desert Anarchist: The Life and Legacy of Edward Abbey*. New York: Touchstone, 1994.
- Bowden, Charles. *Killing the Hidden Waters: The Slow Destruction of Water Resources in the American Southwest*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977.
- Cahalan, James M. *Edward Abbey: A Life*. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2001.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Kubla Kahn." 1816. *Romanticism: An Anthology*. Ed. Duncan Wu. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- Edward Abbey: A Voice in the Wilderness*. Dir. Eric Temple. Perf. Edward Abbey, Clarke Abbey, John DePuy, Jack Loeffler, Charles Bowden, Dave Peterson, Terry Tempest Williams, and Dave Peacock. Eric Temple Productions, 1993.
- Foreman, Dave. *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*. New York, Crown, 1991.
- Loeffler, Jack. *Adventures with Ed: A Portrait of Abbey*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002.
- . *Headed Upstream: Interviews with Iconoclasts*. Tucson: Harbinger, 1989.
- Leopold, Aldo. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.
- . *A Sand County Almanac*. 1949. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Radical Ecology*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Naess, Arne. "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. Ed. Michael Zimmerman, et al. Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993, 193-212.
- Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Pilkington, William T. *My Blood's Country: Studies in Southwestern Literature*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1973.
- Raglon, Rebecca. "Surviving Gloom and Doom; Edward Abbey's Desert Comedies," *Coyote in the Maze: Tracking Edward Abbey in a World of Words*. Ed. Peter Quigley. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998, 168-183.
- Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Desert*. New York: Penguin, 1986.
- Ronald, Ann. *The New West of Edward Abbey*. 1982. Reno and Las Vegas: The University of Nevada Press, 1988.

Anne Wilson

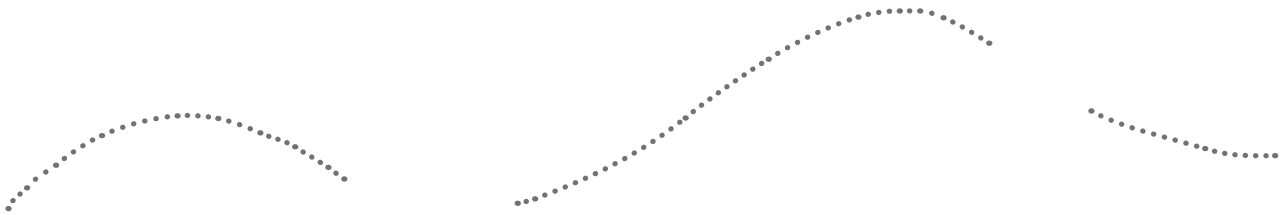
## Balance

The sharp Mojave yucca  
with leaves like swords  
is cousin to garlic and aloes  
which comfort and heal;  
The sumac numbers among its relatives  
both the sweet flesh of mango  
and poison sumac's sting;  
Coyote bushes and artichokes  
claim chamomile and sunflowers  
in their bloodlines,  
Roses and almonds are kin  
to the weedy chamiso.

Can I share with others the blue dragonflies'  
metallic dance? The wild mustard whose yellow  
blossoms are brighter than snow?  
Will being centered and prayerful  
amid clashing struggles  
raise the flag of truce in the killing fields?

Look at the clear pond. See how the ripples  
spread on the surface until they touch the edges.

We cannot help to balance the world,  
unless we first make an attempt  
to balance ourselves.



---

## Morning on Guadalupe Mesa

Morning breaks over ridges,  
spills into canyons,  
clothes wild mesquite and chaparral  
in irradiating gold,  
boldly communicates  
brushstrokes of artistry and love  
upon the landscape.

Spanning an iridescent canyon in its flight,  
the mountain wren solos, song tumbled  
from expanse of blue, poignant  
waterfall of notes, warbled hymn  
of haunting and celestial beauty.  
Afternoon deepens – indigo sky,  
striated lightning; hailstones  
pummel the mesa; clouds  
drop heavy cargoes of rain.

But evening caresses love-colored cliffs  
with light, returns my spirit  
to its source in wild and rarified perfumes.

This present moment – *this* is prayer.

Today I saw a yellow rabbit  
in the desert.  
Amen.



## What O'Keefe Saw

I watch the morning  
spill over blue-fingered mountains,  
sun touching winter snow's Braille.

My dog at Jemez Pueblo  
escaped into light  
in the screech of a neighbor's brakes  
on New Year's Day.

"I'm sorry," the Pueblo vet informs,  
"I can only put her to sleep. . ."

Incense of piñon, cedar,  
halo of wild iris,  
I'm in the car crying,  
my little dog stiff in my arms,  
the fur almost an afterthought  
laid over her bones.

Buried under an O'Keefe sky,  
planes and sockets  
of smooth sun-drenched bone,

a candle burns on the garden wall.

Our cat keeps vigil,  
waiting for light to birth itself from darkness.



---

## Blood Relative

My mother seized the axe  
from behind the wood pile,  
lit out in a rage  
after the rooster  
that had scratched my smallest sister  
who'd been warned not to hug chickens  
but never listened.

I gaped as the startled chicken  
ran squawking across the field  
leaving pinfeathers  
in a whirlwind of dust.  
My mother pursued until winded,  
spittle dried on her lips.

For weeks after that,  
my nightmares centered on feathers,  
an axe, and my mother grinning  
like a maniac. Years later,  
she denied it happened,  
saying, "You always twist the obvious!"

I let it drop but can't explain  
why sometimes I still wake up in terror  
dreaming I am a small white chicken  
fleeing the nest, as if my life depended  
on chicken-speed.

Anne Wilson has had her work published in *Weber*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *South Dakota Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Rattle*, *Runes* and others. Her two chapbooks published by Finishing Line Press include a San Diego Book Award. Anne was also a finalist in the Frances Locke Memorial Award and is a previous winner of the Dr. Sherwin Howard Award. She teaches at the University of San Diego.





Michael Fedo

## The Titlist

After selling his chain of dented furniture outlets three years ago, Irving Hawkes founded Shazam Books, and paid \$25,000 for the backlist of the Antarctica University Press, which had declared insolvency. "I knew academic and scholarly books sell notoriously few copies," Hawkes said. "And most college publishers report negative balances."

But editors at Antarctica University Press had never heard of Alan Franchot, a freelance consulting titlist, who by simply re-titling



Elizabeth Dohrer

Shazam's acquisitions has turned heretofore stodgy academic tomes to profitable mid-list status. And he's done it while many nonprofit publishers are either closing down, or have institutional mandates to eliminate red ink.

Shazam president Hawkes says, "Most of Antarc-

tica's releases had absurdly turgid or extraordinarily prosaic titles. But Alan has generated buzz throughout our industry."

The first appellation the 29-year-old Franchot revised was *Exsufflation of Muccopurulent*, by Stanford University Medical School Professor Emeritus, R. Judson Felton. It had sold only 571 copies in its first incarnation. Franchot re-titled it *Boogers*, and has sold nearly 40,000 copies to date. "Teenagers are bonkers over it for book reports," Hawkes said.

WHEN ALAN FRANCHOT WAS ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOL IN SISSETON, SOUTH Dakota, his 12th grade English teacher mentioned that a number of famous literary works had other titles before publication. "I remember he told us that Tennessee Williams wanted to call *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Blanche's Chair in the Moon*," Franchot said. "And Margaret

---

Mitchell tried *Ba-Ba Black Sheep* for her book that became *Gone With The Wind*. That change helped make the book a best seller, because her original title would have led readers to assume it was a book of children's verse, and a very lengthy one at that. Also, you may recall that the musical *Hello Dolly* once carried *A Damned Exasperating Woman* as its title.

"Anyway, my fascination with titles was born in that class, and it continues to this day."

Franchot's father, however, initially discouraged his son's interest in pursuing a literary career, expecting Alan to join in the family enterprise, which the young man named while still in high school. The business provided intestinal baths to patients suffering constipation resulting from medications or other treatments. "One day I overheard Dad talking to a friend and telling him that while his operation was profitable, he rarely saw walk-in trade," Franchot said. "He couldn't figure out how to lure passersby into the building. Dad's place was called the Colonic Irrigation Center, which identified its purpose, but lacked that certain *je ne c'est quoi*. Almost as a joke I suggested he rename it 'Ye Olde Enema Shoppe' with a neon sign alternating between a before and after scenario—a strained, grimaced face contrasted with a smiling, contented one. Dad liked it, and reported a nearly 20 percent increase the first month. He was eager to teach me tricks of the trade and take me on when I finished college.

"But I determined to find a place in publishing, over Dad's objections. 'You'll starve trying to write books,' he said. I told him I understood that, but I knew I had a knack for giving good titles to books, just as I'd conjured the name for his shop. I decided after graduating with a B. A. in American Studies that I'd approach publishers and pitch them the notion that killer titles will sell books, and I could affix those titles. The alternative was to enter Dad's employ and administer enemas—a sorry end for an American Studies graduate."

Franchot unwrapped and lit a \$10 H. Upmann Magnum 46 cigar before continuing. "Many, if not most authors seem incapable of articulating good titles," he said. "F. Scott Fitzgerald thought *Trimalchio in West Egg* was right on. I bet he was grateful it was published as *The Great Gatsby*. Robert Louis Stevenson had a manuscript called *The Sea Cook*. It sounds like a bunch of recipes from some old salt. But the book appeared as *Treasure Island*, and you know the rest of the story.

"Then Leo Tolstoy probably thought he was being clever when he submitted *All's Well That Ends Well*, playing off Shakespeare. But wiser heads prevailed and *War and Peace* was the result.

"But the goofiest working title of all time is from Charles Dickens. Can you guess what *Tom All Alone's Factory That Got Into Chancery and Never Got Out* became? *Bleak House*. You have to wonder what Charlie was thinking when he came up with that factory-chancery nonsense.

"Back in the day it was assumed all authors could title their own works. But history is replete with editors and even junior assistant

editors assigning titles with pizzazz when the authors' own suggestions were *tres ordinaire*."

Another of Franchot's captivating titles came from *The Everyday Practical Guide to Wildlife Diseases*, by veterinarian Claude L. Chalmers. Franchot re-named it *What to do When Your Puma Sneezes*, and Disney is reportedly interested in a film option.

*From Ovary to Uterus: The Infundibulum, Ampulla, Isthmus, and Intra-mural Oviduct*, assembled by a consortium of gynecologists, required three years to sell 477 copies. With Franchot's title, *A Fallopian Tube Adventure*, the Shazam Books edition sold 26,000 copies and has gone into a third printing.

A proctologist, Sterling Bellwethers, published three books with the Antarctica University Press, but not one of them sold a thousand copies. "Sterling's books are about — shall I say — his extraordinarily intimate occupation," said Hawkes. "Alan thought one of them had potential. I can't recall the title off-hand, but trust me, it was dreary. In no time Alan came up with *Let My Fingers Do The Walking*, and right out of the chute we ordered a 35,000-copy print run."

While Franchot is publishing's most celebrated titlist, selections don't always come easily. He's been struggling for several weeks with *The Roman Half Uncial and its Cursive Version*.

"You'd be surprised at how few people know that this dates back to St. Jerome in the fifth century. The bishop was a student of scribing. Still, he was a saint, and I thought maybe this connection would tickle readers' fancy. I noodled with *A Bishop's Writing on the Wall* because of its sort-of Biblical allusion, but realized it had this who-cares quality. So for the moment I'm back to square one.

"At the same time I've been wrestling with *A Colloquium on Comparative Celtic Philology*." Franchot looked across his desk at a visitor. "Hey," he said, "got any suggestions? Give me a good one and we'll split my fee."



This is Michael Fedo's third appearance in *Weber*. His work has also appeared in *North America Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *American Way*, and *American West Airlines Magazine*. Fedo has published seven books, most notably *The Lynchings in Duluth*, *The Man From Lake Wobegon*, and the short novel, *Indians in the Arborvitae*. His next book *A Sawdust Heart, My Vaudeville Life in Medicine and Tent Shows*, by Henry Wood as told to Michael Fedo, will be published in May 2011 by the University of Minnesota Press.

Laura Stott

## Is this dark too much for us?

1  
A river has a soul looking up.

Two great eyes,  
like two moons.  
One from this world  
and another.  
My heart  
reaches out of the water  
in the form of a small wing  
  
painted blue.

2  
A man and woman stand there in the beautiful night.

Her face is to the sky, his face is to her eyes.  
Here are some sea birds,  
ready to dive, and not far,  
is ocean  
where the tide and the river  
run against each other.

3  
Here are some red flowers.

Night gathers them in,  
takes up stars in its arms.



## Alaska evenings are kind

1

The boats are gone.  
 Wednesday nights are bluegrass nights.  
 After one week of good weather, it rains.  
 At my friends' trailer we cook meat  
 and eat ice cream with rhubarb sauce.  
 Banjos and fiddles make up for sorrow.

2

I drive on the Dyea road alone. Low tide.  
 An otter runs across the flats  
 and an eagle lights in a tree. There are things  
 we always remember about the places we have lived.  
 I have never liked goodbyes.

Ravens fly away with letters. I promise  
 forgetfulness to black birds...

3

My neighbor, Jack, drives nine miles  
 to his dogs' graves every day.  
 He smokes his pipe, eats mushrooms  
 from the woods.  
 Bears watch from hidden places.  
 They walk circles around him, around all  
 of us in our night.

One hundred years ago  
 thousands of miners and liars spoke  
 of their dreams. Crystal and steam ships.  
 Hot apple pie.

4

Wild irises. This is where we used to sleep.  
 A eagle feasts on the beach,  
 and the seagulls are like old angels...  
 circle and speak.

---

5

I smile if it rains for days. I am happy.

In the woods, there are forgotten  
cabins full of ocean views, old checks, gloves,  
book of the apocalypse, cans

of pineapple, and on a turquoise  
wall, in a careful hand, are the words *unremembered wings*,

and *pure foolishness*.

## Taiya Houses

Rain falls.  
Trees express joy, crying, *stones!*

Summer light  
that never dies – take my heart and let geese

circle this land with it.  
Fish that never sleep – their *yes* like yellow moons.

What shade of violet do you come from?  
Sky asks earth.

A tern flies over the ocean, all miles  
and work behind him, less like grace

than mussels basking  
in low tide – early morning,

praising God, the way small-shelled-ones praise –



## Winter and Away

He is hundreds of miles away,  
falling into the sea.

He is driving north. He sneaks by  
an avalanche. He rides his bicycle

where landscape darkens and lightens  
at the same time.

This winter, wolves follow angels home.

Bears still sleep and keep  
out of sight. The winter wren

sings winter songs,  
bursts into flame. In this northern land . . .

I've never seen it filled to the brim

with ashes.  
Blue eyes watch

beasts cover the earth—north to south.  
I hand the wind a letter.

Say, Take this to my love.  
Thinking of you. Thinking about the way snow

reflects this wing of the moon.



Laura Stott received her MFA from the Inland Northwest Center for Writers. Her poems have appeared in various publications, including *Redactions*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *Sonora Review*. Laura teaches Freshman English, occasionally delivers flowers, and takes tourists for hikes in Alaska. She loves lichens, bicycles, and the High Uinta Wilderness.

Ryan Crawford

## Bacon and the Spear



Bacon's wife, Theresa, received an email from an ex of eight years on the Friday before Easter. She forwarded it to Bacon because (as she noted in the uncapitalized sentences of explanation preceding the email) she found it equally humorous and disturbing, and followed by reassuring him that she had never cared much for the man and so had no intention of sleeping with him. "Otherwise," she wrote, "I would have kept it to myself."

Bacon read on, his eyes jerking unevenly over the words. He began thinking of how Theresa and Franklin would expect him to react. But did he have to react? What had he to worry about? Already he was building a riposte, feeling obligated to prove to his wife that he wasn't hiding some bundle of choler, or worse, fear.

Bacon studied the email from this man, this ex, this Franklin, with more critical attention than he'd ever given one of his students' essays or short stories. The salutation was enough to worry over for weeks. Hypocorism. Overtones of psychosis. Bacon had long believed the use of baby names hid disturbing affinities, his wife's "little puppy" (she'd called Bacon that since college) withstanding. And then there was

the opening paragraph—reproduced here along with further trifles, without permission of the author—which was, no doubt, a direct cut at Bacon’s success:

>> Dearest Reese Reese,  
 >>  
 >> In spirit at the very least, you’ve always had the presence  
 >> of my attention. The unbridled anticipation into which this  
 >> correspondence might one day rear it’s lovely bust cannot  
 >> be expressed by a little seemingly inadequate finger play on  
 >> the proverbial PowerBook. It may be that distance, when  
 >> combined with the whips and scorns of elapsed time will  
 >> strengthen the occasional bond or heal that ever present  
 >> wound; though I feel our time away from one another is  
 >> painfully not without regret. Oh! Thy officious and insuffer-  
 >> able fate! You truly are and always will be the the Calpurnia  
 >> to my Ceasar! The Sally Hemmings to my Jefferson! Though  
 >> you lest often appear troubled by the troubled lives you so  
 >> selflessly attempt to convalesce, I leave you only with the  
 >> humble ramblings of Cato: *Interpone tuis interdum gaudia*  
 >> *curis*. As for me, I am left only the pangs of unkempt love.  
 >> How was that?  
 >>  
 >> I heard your husband was a writer, so from here on I’ll keep  
 >> my incorrigible prose to a minimum. So Italy? I can see that.  
 >> I’m sure whatever you’re doing you’re doing it well. Perhaps  
 >> working with unwed Italian teenage mothers? Probably.  
 >> I’m still doing catering with my own company. I don’t know  
 >> maybe you didn’t know that.

The typos pleased Bacon. They were his first assurance that this man was somewhat beneath him. He imagined Franklin carefully preparing every phrase, with the resulting horrors of: “Always had the presence of my attention”? “Proverbial PowerBook”? Then there were the clumsy cuts at his wife (*Calpurnia to my Ceasar(sic)! Sally Hemmings to my Thomas Jefferson!*). But later Franklin had tried to explain it away with “my incorrigible prose.” Another sign of his weakness.

He was going for parody in the first paragraph. But surely no one would attempt such an attack without a dictionary and thesaurus nearby (perhaps that was the point?). Bacon thought, if this was parody, how much was overlaid ostentation and how much Franklin’s own wish to write well once the candy was boiling in the pot? In his experience he found that an unskilled writer, especially in the exertion of parody, went to great lengths to outmatch his target while violently poking him in the ribs. Bacon decided Franklin—as an embarrassingly unskilled writer—had been unable to do either, burning the candy *and* the pot. This, along with his clear admission of how jealous he had

---

become of Bacon's career and his wife, left Bacon in good spirits. The email continued:

>> Everyone I know is getting married and a buddy of mine,  
>> Rudy, just had a baby girl six days ago. Weird. I cooked a  
>> casserole and brought it over the other day when the baby  
>> was only four days old and they wanted me to hold it. Can  
>> you believe that?! I can't even go a week without dropping  
>> my cell phone! But holding an infant, that's a pretty big li-  
>> ability. So I'm in their room at their house and the mother is  
>> still in bed. It smelled like birth. Like a combination of peat  
>> moss, vaseline and cream of wheat. I get so nervous around  
>> babies and I didn't know what to say so I told the mother  
>> that in Ghana the parents ceremoniously eat the umbilical  
>> cord. Apparently after a long couple of days, that offended  
>> her and I was quickly but politely ushered back downstairs.  
>> People take child birth pretty serious, but I couldn't be hap-  
>> pier for them. Any kids for you yet? I remember you always  
>> saying you didn't want any of those little bastards running  
>> around, but people change their minds right?  
>>  
>> I guess this is the point I should type something naughty so  
>> on the off chance your husband reads your email I can get  
>> you in trouble from another country. I've never been part of  
>> an international incident, and with Italy no less! But since  
>> we haven't spoken in years I'll reserve my naughtiness for  
>> a later date. Wait, was that inappropriate? I don't know,  
>> either way. Well, let me know more about what your up to, I  
>> gotta say I'm kinda curious. Are you on Myspace? Not that it  
>> matters. I never use my Myspace account except for finding  
>> people so just email me. I hope all is well. Have a Happy  
>> Easter.....  
>>  
>> Cause I know where my little bunny likes to hide her eggs....  
>> Oh, wait, there's the naughtiness.  
>>  
>> Franklin

Despite his fighting it, as much as he wanted to disagree with the shaping of sensation, Bacon couldn't keep his eyes from jumping back to that description of Franklin walking into his friend's room, the mother still in bed smelling of birth. Before, thick and steady, a pure, delicious enmity had been rising. But this description, this scene, allowed him to feel Franklin outside the boundaries of old relationships and marriage, beyond the potential noise and flash of the violent three-sided crash of their memories. Franklin holding a four-day-old baby girl. Smelling peat moss, vaseline, and cream of wheat.

So he's human, Bacon thought, but he's still an ass.

For example, a grown man on Myspace? Theresa had told him that Franklin was over 40. What song would he have chosen, what soundtrack had he given his pitiful statistics? Bacon fought the urge to look up his profile. Succeeded. Besides, it was the last sentence—the part before the ellipses—that bothered Bacon more than all the rest of the email. He actually said out loud, “What the hell is *that* supposed to mean?” drawing attention and a throat clearing from Giuseppe, the bearded, balding, stinking (emanating a smell Bacon had yet to discern) Western philosophy professor who insisted on silence in their shared office. Bacon gave him an apologetic wave and went back to the sentence. It was a reference to Easter, of course, but how exactly could the correct innuendo be extracted? Was he talking about her *own* eggs, the ones in her ovaries? If so, the only benignity Bacon had been able to gift this Franklin had disintegrated. Then there was that Latin phrase in the first paragraph, that quote of Cato the Elder: *Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis*. The English translation: *Intersperse now and again your cares with joy* (continued: *That you may be able to bear in your mind any kind of travail*), but this was too straightforward, too innocuous. Bacon found an online literal translation: *To sometimes place between your joy a spear*. There, he thought, yes. He was positive this was how Franklin had wanted it. He would know, perhaps, that Theresa had never studied Latin, that to unravel the message she would need to go online, to a similar translation site, and there would be the phrase pulsing in digital black-and-white. The same message but far more violent. Instead of calling for the comfort of light in darkness, it was the necessity of darkness to intrude upon an unbroken light. A spear placed between this joy.

During lunch, Bacon wrote with pencil on a yellow legal pad three rough drafts of his response, then a final draft on university stationary with a red pen. Before typing the email he carefully examined each sentence. Through each draft he searched for over-ambitious modifiers (adjectives and adverbs that might imply insecurity or fear), run-on sentences (open to schizophrenia?), or the dragging anchor of a semicolon. Then he looked for the possible meaning hidden behind each word, each sentence. He imagined the various interpretations (depending on who would be reading it). In the final draft he had cut away a good three-quarters of the first draft, deciding to concentrate on the Latin phrase, while avoiding altogether the egg and baby innuendos. The next to last draft read as follows:

- >> Perhaps Franklin, in his struggle to create overt nonsense
- >> while still trying to seem clever in this parody of his, was going for a *double entendre*. But really, if it's true what you've
- >> told me about him, I'm giving the asshole too much credit.
- >> He has friends? Right? Perhaps he's taken on a pseudo-
- >> intellectual that worked on this opening paragraph for a few

---

>> days before handing it over for a bag of cocaine. Anyway,  
>> here's what the friend would have told him about this particular Latin phrase:  
>>  
>> 1. The surface meaning—that I or our marriage or the distance or the years (or their combination) is the spear between two separate periods of joy; the one you've had and the one his badly-wired brain imagines coming in the future. 2. The second meaning, the flesh, exposed, as it were, because I believe it's certainly the one he wanted to be most powerfully felt (or so his friend would have told him)—that between your legs lies a joy into which he would like to occasionally introduce his spear. (If this is the case, imagine how pleased they must have been with themselves before hitting that send button; so many rereads, so many smiles; poor, poor boy).

The last sentence (the one in parentheses) was removed—a blatant mirror. Bacon scratched the remaining semicolon from the second paragraph, then considered whether the mention of the friend—the pseudo-intellectual—was too obviously his trying to demean Franklin's intelligence. He decided to leave him in. Bacon admired the double meaning, if it indeed existed, and couldn't allow it to be attributed directly to Franklin, however absurd its intended purpose. He added a third paragraph:

>> In the absence of this pseudo-intellectual, Franklin probably knew none of this and chose some random Latin quote that he thought would add unnecessary ostentation to an already poorly crafted parody. But there you have it.  
>> Another addition to his intentionally thin, lewd innuendos meant for me (because obviously he knew I would read it) and you. Should he ever ask in the future what I thought about it, tell him I didn't think about it at all. Let him know—in great literary style since it seems to please him so—that I consider his email a stifled fart in a hurricane.

There, Bacon thought, that takes on both fronts. He found the double article in the first sentence and corrected it. He went back to the second paragraph, changed "badly-wired" to "deficient" then back again for the imagery then back to avoid alliteration (too Nabokovian?). Then he spent a few minutes reading over the phrase: *tell him I didn't think about it at all*. Cliché, certainly—an intellectual's disregard. The literary figure with his nose in the air, taking off his gloves to read a telegram at the mahogany and brass desk of a fashionable hotel. "He wants to know what I think of his book," the literary figure says after finishing the telegram. "What shall I tell him, sir?" says the clerk. "Tell him I didn't think about it at all," and away



he goes up the carpeted stairs to enjoy a few Manhattans before typing out a page of his masterpiece.

Of course, the irony there was damning. To give a response at all implied thought, and what Bacon had written so far had required at least a half hour and could be imagined by the person reading it to have required much more. Bacon had somehow tumbled into the same dilemma he imagined this Franklin had most likely muddled through while, out of whatever desperation, he clacked out this piece of work. Where do I draw the line? With no response, Bacon thought, apathy, or even worse *cowardice*, could be guessed at. With too long a response, a show of fangs and claws. A marking of territory. A scent of musk. Wild desperation.

Bacon wanted to believe he was being ridiculous, but he knew great shifts—in the universe, in the Earth's temperature, and so certainly in fragile human relationships—began with the smallest of impetus. Dust collects, winds increase, an argument breaks out over word choice, is strengthened by the confused order of a previous argument's words, growing, spinning, igniting, and then—How ridiculous was he being? Wasn't he being careful? Wasn't it obvious with this preparation that he cared deeply about his marriage, that he wanted to prevent it, at the very least, from falling into the flattened and rusty debris of divorce's scrapyards?

My God, he thought, have I allowed myself to go that far? Do I really believe that I or Theresa would allow something so insignificant to burgeon into divorce?

He read over the final draft once more, then set it aside to finish some work. From a scattering of dog-eared icons on his computer screen, he clicked open a student's short story called, "In God's Name." But as he was reading over a sentence concerning the legendary Svend Fyon, describing the blinding névé of glaciers and the dark bulk that lay beneath, he began thinking of what his wife might be doing at home.

Theresa was unemployed. In the mornings she wrote poetry. In the afternoons she shopped or read or gardened. Her evenings were spent going through recipes and the cellar, trying, and usually succeeding, to find a good match before Bacon got home. An enviable life. Why was Bacon now imagining her supine on the sofa, this Franklin fresh off a plane getting her drunk on *double entendres* while taking out his spear to place between her joy?

I'm not a jealous man, Bacon thought, and I certainly don't think she's capable of such a thing. Where then? Where is it coming from?

Bacon knew well enough where it was coming from, but he, like all human beings, had things he wanted—felt he actually needed—to hide from himself. Things he would rather not ruminate. But there it was, out in the open. Oh, why, why can't these bastards move on with their lives, he thought. He palmed his forehead and sighed as

---

he drifted, half-willing, into all his wife had told him about her and Franklin's love life.

Theresa was a candid woman. She believed in disclosing every detail about past relationships early on to avoid the inevitable grave digging. At first, Bacon was pleased with this initiative. It made perfect sense to him. Enthusiastically, he had gone first, answering a question of Theresa's:

"The most satisfying, by far, was with my first girlfriend. We were young, teenagers, so the need was still new enough to seem holy and separate. It was cold and getting dark. We had just finished riding out to the pond and back. I remember dew was on the grass and how it seemed to mirror the stars that were out. In the barn we unsaddled the horses, brushed them down, put them in their stalls. Then we went to get hay from the loft and I, or a stronger, more primal "I" from my I, suddenly pushed her down on a bale. Neither of us was there. It was pure and animal."

Theresa had enjoyed that, Bacon remembered uncomfortably. Uncomfortably because she had jumped in right after with several stories heavy and moist with graphic detail of position, sensation, emotion. She played with her hair and giggled and blushed. Her eyes sparkled. Bacon sweated throughout. Eventually he lifted her from her chair — excited by the stories — and carried her into the bedroom with the clear intention of reestablishing something.

A few of these stories had involved Franklin. For weeks Bacon had struggled to forget the imagery. It came most often when he was writing. Some of his own stories took on their details. He left them there, hoping they would wash away. And they did. He published the stories. He received his graduate degree. He began teaching. He and Theresa were married. His books were well received. They traveled. They were happy.

How I hate dredging, Bacon thought. I much prefer ghosts. Give me ghosts and more ghosts, but these fucking flesh and blood dredgers are a pain in the ass. Nothing will come of it, surely. Nothing. But how many more emails will come? What will it take for this Franklin to give up? Why can't he go out to that brimming sea of billions upon billions of women *not* my wife? Because he has these sugar-coated memories, Bacon thought, sweeter now than they've ever been, dulcified with the challenge of a husband. Bacon imagined men like Franklin could receive no greater pleasure than the spearing of another man's wife. The ultimate conquest. The "proverbial" white whale. Eh, Franklin?

He was thoroughly disgusted with himself as the phone pressed against his ear, the ring bubbling through his labyrinth. He swallowed hard three times, tried to get his saliva moving. What will she hear in my voice? he thought as the phone clattered up:

"Hello?" Theresa said.

"Hi, it's me."

"Hey, what's up?"

"Looking over some of the students' work. You?"

"Nothing. Just finished lunch."

"It's 2:00 pm."

"I know, I know. I've been going over this email. I just can't get over it. It's so unexpected. So strange."

Bacon fought the curling of his lips, "He was probably drunk when he wrote it."

"No. When he's drunk he's completely incoherent. Like I told you, this was rather well written for him."

Bacon was silent.

"Bacon?"

"Yeah I'm here. Get any good writing done this morning?"

"A few lines, but I'm pretty sure they're shit. I was just about to look them over."

"Then I'll let you get back to it. I need to finish up here as well. Just wanted to say hi."

"I'm glad you did." Bacon thought he could hear her muffle the phone. Then she said, "While I've got you on, any suggestions for dinner?"

"I'm in your hands, as always. Haven't been disappointed yet."

"Okay. Well—have a nice afternoon."

"You too, honey. I love you."

"Love you, too."

Bacon was the kind of man who would examine the difference between a connecting ring and a dial tone while in a particular mood. He listened to the dial tone now and realized how much colder it was. The connecting ring had a coiling warmth, reminded him somehow of wool still on the sheep. But the dial tone was grating, like the badly set blade of a table saw showering sparks on a cold day.

What would Franklin think if I wrote that down? Bacon thought.

"God damn Franklin," Bacon said aloud in response to his own mind, which he realized was crazy. Giuseppe stood and walked over to Bacon's desk.

"Professor Bacon, if you please, I am trying to concentrate on my lecture," Giuseppe said in Italian.

Without looking up, Bacon said, "Forgive me. It's one of my students. Very bad work."

"You must not get so angry. Relax. Enjoy what life has given you. Bad students are the most common breed."

"That's so," Bacon said, "Thank you. I assure you it won't happen again."

Giuseppe walked away but his odor hung like drapes before Bacon's desk. Bacon sniffed at the folds as something began surfacing memory's soup. *Kimchi*, Bacon thought, *that's it*. He smells like

---

old kimchi. Must be all the garlic he eats. How strange. And with that thought—as if Giuseppe’s olfactive drapes were slowly opened—images from that long-ago research trip to South Korea passed before Bacon’s eyes: the sky reflected in rice paddies stretching to the horizon, mountains purple in the distance, the sun slipping through the twisted pines so that the memoried light took on the quality of an old projector. He remembered his girlfriend there. Jinyoung. He wondered what she was up to. He leaned back in his chair, fingers laced over his stomach, and gave himself fully to her. He thought of her shiny hair, the way her eye color changed with each season, her laugh like a hiccup. Cold mornings in a tent by the East Sea. An unblemished body, smooth and warm and sweet as rice custard. By the time he resurfaced, he had already mentally constructed the first paragraph of an email he considered, seriously, writing her. Just to say hi.



Ryan Crawford has work appearing or forthcoming in *Torpedo*, *Existere*, *New York Quarterly*, *Borderlands*, *Anon*, and others. He lives on an island in the Sea of Japan.

Ian R. Mitchell

## Organized Labour and the Layering of the American Southwest



The Kennecott Utah Bingham Copper Mine, south of the Great Salt Lake, claims to be the largest open-cast mine in the world.

I first visited the American Southwest in 1999 when I gave a paper about Scotland to a Wilderness Conference at Utah's Weber State University. I fell in love with the region, for reasons which – as a lifelong mountaineer – totally surprised me. The Wasatch Range are a fine set of mountains, but having seen other and grander areas of the Rocky Mountains – especially the Canadian Rockies – this was not the aspect of the landscape that made the most impact.

Once I had seen the landforms of southern Utah, the word desert acquired a new meaning to someone who had previously identified it with endless sandhills. I returned to the Southwest five times over the next decade, each time revisiting the deserts of the Colorado Plateau, expanding my explorations from Utah to New Mexico, from Arizona to southern Colorado, each time visiting new wonders and never losing my sense of wonder.

---

I began to read the writers of the Southwest hitherto unknown to me: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, and others, and I started to appreciate the artists of the region, such as Georgia O'Keefe. These trips also initiated an appreciation of the historical layers of the Southwest gradually exposing themselves like the geologically layered and exposed landscape itself. I found myself reading about the Anasazi, the Pueblo Indians, the Spaniards, the Native Americans, the Mormon settlers, the cowboys, and I began searching out their built heritages as well as discovering their histories. It was only on my sixth visit to the Southwest that I became aware of a whole strata of history that appeared to have been strip-mined out of the regional collective consciousness: that of the labour movement.

One of the delights—for a European—of travelling the Southwest is that one moves from town to town in an out-of-that-deep dichotomy which lies at the heart of the American body politic. One settlement seems to contain a collection of conservative “rednecks” stuck in an almost 1950s time warp, whilst the next town is full of liberal, hippy, counter-cultural dropouts. I often feel that—unsuspected by both sets of people—as much unites them as divides them, since both are wedded to a fundamental belief in American individualism, which is not a dominant part of the European consciousness.

I saw the remains of the old copper mine as I entered Bisbee, Arizona, the redundant open-cast workings look-

ing like a man-made miniature Grand Canyon. But I thought nothing of it until the next day when I was browsing through the local bookshop and came across David R. Berman's *Radicalism in the Mountain West 1890-1920* (University of Colorado Press, 2007). After a brief flick through, I purchased it in the realisation that I had hit a rich mine of information on an aspect of the history of the Southwest that I had seen no reference to previously in any of the books I had read or at any of the historical sites I had visited.

To the Anasazi, the Pueblo Indian, the Apache, the Cowboy and the Mormon as archetypes of the American West was now added that of the Miner. Though the militant, class-conscious miner I read about in Berman's work had disappeared from the Southwest almost as completely as had the Anasazi beforehand, his book became a gazetteer to the historical landscape of my most recent travels and was something I wished I had possessed on my previous ones. The book covers the whole of the Mountain West from Arizona in the south to Montana in the north, but the limitations of my travels thus far meant that Berman illuminated the Southwest for me.

Let's start with Bisbee, where I spent a couple of nights in the Copper Queen Hotel, built, as I later discovered, just as everything else was in this company town, by the Phelps Dodge Copper Company. The previous night I had stayed in the Gadsden Hotel in Douglas, where the Phelps Dodge copper smelter

*It was only on my sixth visit to the Southwest that I became aware of a whole strata of history that appeared to have been strip-mined out of the regional collective consciousness: that of the labour movement.*



had been. Douglas was a sad place, the smelter long gone, and largely inhabited by poor Hispanics. The barmen in the Gadsden Hotel, drying glasses in front of a painting of a naked Lily Langtree who had visited here, called it “a place where dreams come to die.”

Bisbee, on the other hand, was clearly a place where people came to live their dreams—those counter-cultural dreams which are still strong in the United States but, since the 1960s, have almost totally vanished

from Europe. By the second morning, I didn't see the picturesque, alternative town of food co-ops and book collectives surviving largely on craft and cultural tourism, which I had entered the day before, but saw Bisbee as it formerly was—a grim, polluted copper town, a company town of 25,000 people in 1910, deeply divided

among the miners housed in the shacks sliding downhill, the mansions of the company bosses, and their client middle class. The remaining love and peace cabins on the hillsides, adorned with paintings and flowers, had formerly been the overcrowded, insanitary hovels of the copper miners.

In 1906, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) led a strike at the Copper Queen Mine, which was defeated by firing the strikers and employing black-leg labour. Though unionisation was crushed then, a decade later another attempt to organise the mine and improve working conditions was made by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW banned alcohol during the strike and disarmed all its members to

demonstrate its peaceable intentions, but this was of no avail. The local sheriff deputised hundreds of armed men—including strike-breakers—and in a series of raids arrested between 1,000 and 2,000 strikers (estimates vary), escorting them under armed guard to the railway station and deporting them to the New Mexico desert, where the strikers were left without food and water. No one was held to account for this act of mass kidnapping which broke the strike.

Was anything left of this era in people's minds? I went to the Copper Queen Mine, a part of which, the pre-1920 deep mine, is today open as a heritage centre, and was shown round by a couple of the retired miners who had stayed on to establish the centre. Interestingly, they were of Mexican descent, and their ancestors had

been brought here after the 1917 strike to replace the sacked Wobblies. Despite this, they were strong union men and told me that, when the mine closed in the 1970s, the unionised segment of the mine workers were laid off and the non-union workers offered work elsewhere. Refusing to give up the union, they took redundancy and stayed in Bisbee. Their attitude to the incomers was interesting. “This town's gone to the dogs,” one stated, “nothing but hippies.”

One thing that weakened trade unionism in the United States was that employers might keep wages low but often provided social benefits, like health provisions, that in Europe were generally provided by the state. Bisbee had had its company hospital (paid

---

*I saw Bisbee as it formerly was, a grim, polluted copper town, a company town of 25,000 people in 1910, deeply divided among the miners housed in the shacks sliding downhill, the mansions of the company bosses, and their client middle class.*

---



Jerome was established as a mining camp atop "Cleopatra Hill" in 1883. It quickly became a typical "wild west" town.

for partly by deductions from miners' wages), but it struck me further that the miners at the Copper Queen also had showers from the 1920s on. British coal miners had to wait till 1945 and the nationalisation of the mines before they had pithead washing facilities.

Travelling north, I decided to add a few places from Berman's book to my intended itinerary of historical and tourist sites, such as Tombstone and Canon de Chinle. One of these places was Clifton, where the "company men" from Bisbee got jobs at the new open-cast copper mine. I could not help feeling that those left behind at Bisbee had been lucky and could only agree with my Lonely Planet Guide that Clifton "is one of the most decrepit towns in Arizona," since much of it is boarded up. The massive Phelps-Dodge mine, over two miles long, swallowed up the original town of Morenci, where in 1915 the Western Federation of Miners called out 5,000 mainly Hispanic miners for union recognition and equal wages with white miners.

That this strike was entirely peaceful and a partial success was due to the unique intervention of Governor Hunt of Arizona, a leftward-leaning Democrat who had the backing of many socialist and union members during his campaigns for office. Hunt ordered in

the National Guard to Clifton to protect the strikers from strike-breakers and vigilantes whom he suspected of being much more liable to initiate violence. Hunt was determined to avoid a repeat of the 1914 Ludlow Massacre in Colorado, when state troopers killed thirteen women and children by torching, and then firing into, the striking miners' camp. In the dozens of armed interventions cited by Berman, by state and federal troops, by local militia, deputised vigilantes and from outright mob action, this is the only occasion where force was used in favour of, and not against, strikers. And it was virtually the only one free of violence.

I did not linger long in Clifton, and heading for Jerome, a further location of one of my labour history sites, I wondered whether it would be another Clifton or another Bisbee. Situated in what must be one of the most beautiful belvederes in the world, looking northward across Arizona towards Humphrey's Peak, it was neither. Clarkdale (it didn't even have an entry in my guide book and didn't look like it merited one) was where the United Verde Copper Company smelter lay. Above it in the hills was Jerome, where the mine itself was located. At its height the town of Jerome had a population of 20,000, but the mine closed long before that in Bisbee – back

in the 1950s—and the population fell to about 500, effectively making the place a ghost town.

Of what is left of the town (the company destroyed or moved away many of the houses) about one-third is virtually ruined, one-third boarded up and one-third restored. It is a fabulous place, less gentrified than Bisbee and more authentically countercultural. I stayed in the Doctor's House, a San

Mine Ghost Town consisted of a collection of detritus and memorabilia, standing as when they were abandoned half a century ago. It exuded that decayed western charm, but without any real attempt at instruction. I thought to myself, if this were an Anasazi site. . . .

The context of these labour disputes in Arizona is interesting. As well as being a period of growing union organisation, it was also the peak success time

for the American Socialist Party led by Eugene Debs. When he had stood for President in 1912, Debs polled over 900,000 votes—about 6% of the national total. But in the Mountain West this percentage was much higher. In Arizona it was over 13%, and even in supposedly ultra-conservative Utah, it was 8% (every twelfth voter). In the mining areas, support for socialism was much higher. Utah did not have the level of labour conflict that other mountain states such as Arizona, Montana and Colorado experienced,

but it produced in “Big Bill” Haywood one of the leaders of union-socialist militancy, and through the execution in 1915 of Joe Hill one of American labour's most famous martyrs.

My way northward led, as usual, through southeastern Utah, one of the most staggering places on earth. This time, however, I had a couple of stops to make between Moab and Salt Lake City, in country I had driven through before without stopping. No one would claim that Carbon County is the most scenic part of Utah, and a century ago, when it was a wide-open coal mining frontier, it would probably have been even grittier



Both Verde Grande and United Verde shared “Smelter Hill.”

Francisco-Spanish villa that was a world away from the tiny miners' shacks formerly composing the town. United Verde boasted that, at one point, it was making a million dollars a day from this mine. But in 1917 when the miners—organised again by the IWW—demanded a share in this wealth, the response was the predictable one: sackings, deportations (though on a lesser scale than in Bisbee), the importation of strike-breakers and the crushing of the movement. The local museum, a rather amateurish affair, made no mention of labour disputes in its account of mining history. Half a mile outside town, the Gold King

---

than it remains today. In 1896, the Utah legislature had enacted the 8-hour day in the mines, though safety conditions remained bad. In 1900, an explosion at Scofield in Carbon County killed 200 coal miners and led to the beginnings of attempts to unionise the miners, mainly Italians and Southern Slavs.

In 1903 and '04, several thousand coal miners in Carbon County struck for recognition of the United Mine Workers (UMW), better wages and improved safety measures. One of the union organisers in this strike was the redoubtable Mother Jones, a septuagenarian who had been a union and socialist militant most of her life. The local health authorities claimed she had been in contact with a smallpox victim and quarantined her for the strike's duration. The workers were evicted from

their company homes and then some leaders jailed for vagrancy. Finally, deputised armed guards employed by the Utah Fuel Company, and under the protective eye of the state troopers sent in by the governor, destroyed the miners' camp and arrested many of the strikers, breaking the struggle. In a footnote to this conflict, 100 armed strikers held off a posse sent to arrest Mother Jones and allowed her to escape.

But long before that the state of Utah saw one of the earliest labour conflicts in the entire region in the mining town of Eureka in 1893. On that occasion Mormon and non-Mormon conflict was

evident. The mine owners, who were prominent LDS members, cut wages and provoked a strike, which was led by the Knights of Labour. The strikers were mainly immigrants such as Finns, Italians, Serbs and Greeks, and the strike was broken by bringing in non-union labour, many of whom were Mormons. Eureka is now an atmospheric near-ghost town whose Mining Museum was closed on the day I visited, so I drove



Eureka's City Hall (right), where the S.P.A. (Socialist Party of America) held office before WWI, and the Eureka Mining Museum (left)

Ian Mitchell

northward to look at something I knew would not be closed, something that is indeed one of the most open places on earth.

Today the Kennecott Utah Bingham Copper Mine to the south of the Great Salt Lake claims to be the largest open-cast mine in the world. Whether one regards it as a technological wonder or as a devastating eyesore, its place in labour history is assured by the events of 1912. In September of that year, up to 6,000 workers from twenty-four different nationalities struck to get recognition for their WFM local, improve conditions, and end labour agents (who took a cut



of workers' wages to recruit miners). The familiar scenario of U.S. — especially mountain U.S. — labour disputes ensued. The company employed scab Japanese and Mexican labour and hired and armed company vigilantes, who were supported by 300 deputised sheriffs to protect mine company property and ensure the scabs got to work.

State Governor Spry warned that if clashes occurred the National Guard would be called out to protect strike breakers, and they were. Clashes resulted in deaths, and eventually the workers' demands for union recognition were defeated, though some concessions were made on the labour agents' role in hiring. Though the IWW had little role in this strike, the workers at Bingham were tarred with the Wobbly brush. This possibly influenced Governor Spry to refuse, despite President Wilson's intervention, a pardon to Joe Hill, who was executed by firing squad in November 1915.

Berman's book is very interesting on the interrelationship between Mormonism and Socialism in Utah. Contrary to what might be imagined, what socialist support there was in Utah was as widespread in Mormon as in "Gentile" circles. Several Mormon elders and a bishop were prominent in the Utah Socialist Party. The majority of Mormons rejected socialism, however, partly because of its supposed atheism and partly because, as one Mormon said, "Our Church gives us what you promise us," i.e., social welfare. Despite this communal safety blanket, several towns in Utah elected socialist representatives to office at that time, such as the mining town of Eureka in 1907 and 1911, where cooperation between Mormon and non-Mormon miners had replaced the conflict of 1893. And, in 1919, the Utah Federation of Labour endorsed the new

Soviet Government in Russia. It should be remembered that it was within living memory that the LDS Church had abandoned not only polygamy, but also its cultural sympathies with communism.

If the moderate Socialist Party of America largely ignored the religious issue in an attempt to win support, the same cannot be said of the IWW, which was very active in Salt Lake City at that time, leading a strike in 1913 against the Utah Construction Company and a "Free Speech" campaign in the city. Typical of Wobbly propaganda was the following, which was not likely to gain a sympathetic ear from LDS working men: "The wage slaves in the Mormon stronghold are getting pared loose from their ancient superstitions, handed down to them by the prophets of the faith. Typical of all religions, the statue of the chief prophet in Salt Lake has its back towards the Temple and its hand outstretched towards the bank."

It is true that the labour and socialist movements always had a much harder job in the United States than in Europe. The country's all-pervasive individualism, its wider social mobility and political democracy, and the deep ethnic divisions in the American working class all made for slow progress. Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that Debs's 6% of the vote in 1912 was hardly more than that gained by the British Labour Party in 1906 in its first contested election, yet the Labour Party has gone on to become almost the natural party of government in the U.K., whilst the S.P.A. has disappeared, and the trade unions have become an appendage of the Democratic Party.

Why did the American socialist movement all but disappear after 1920? The ability of mainstream American parties to coopt ideas from third groupings is clearly one factor. Reading

---

Berman's book, it is clear that there was another factor involved as far as the American Southwest goes: political repression. Once war broke out in 1914 and especially after U.S. entry in 1917—the entry of which was opposed by the Socialist Party—a wave of violent repression against socialists and trade unionists was launched in the United States that was more akin to contemporary developments in Tsarist Russia than to comparable European countries like Britain, France and even the Kaiser's Germany.

Even before 1914, the labour activists were met with beatings, deportations and kidnappings hardly to be expected in a democratic country, and during the war this violence intensified to an extent that not only a job, home and freedom were at stake, but many feared for their lives. Berman recounts a chapter in U.S. history that most Americans most likely know little about. That violence continued well into the 1920s, and it is no exaggeration to say that the McCarthy period of 30 years later was mild compared to events of that time. That this "democratic" repression was launched with the support, or at least the approval, of the majority makes it no less "undemocratic" an episode. Many Americans believed tales of trade union-

ists and socialists as being German agents as readily as they credited the reports of sightings of German planes in the mountain states.

My final thoughts on this archeologising of the history of a neglected aspect of the Southwest is that whilst the Anasazi have gone, they are remembered. The militant miners of the period between 1890 and 1920 are also gone, but almost forgotten—leaving aside some labour songs by Woody Guthrie and Joe Hill. Significant to me was that, in places like Bisbee and Jerome, I encountered people who considered themselves radicals, but did not in any way link up with this former period of western radicalism. Just as much as "redneck" individualism helped to crush it, the contemporary forms of counter-cultural individualism in the former mining towns is a far cry from the collectivist solidarity of the miners of the past. These men and women fought for reforms, many of which were later enacted by others, but they also fought for the right to organise and for the right of assembly and free speech, in pursuit of which many of them paid with their welfare and even their lives. Theirs is a part of the rich heritage of the American Southwest that should not be forgotten.



Ian R. Mitchell lectured in History at Clydebank College, Glasgow, for over 20 years. Today he teaches part-time at the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at Glasgow University. He has twice been a visiting professor at Weber State University and also at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. His most recent book is *This City Now: Glasgow and Its Working-Class Past* (2005).



Ron McFarland

## Naseby



**T**his old guy comes to the door, and it's the middle of October, so I know what it's going to be about, probably. This was a couple weeks ago. We've harvested the last of the wheat, peas, and lentils, and they've fetched a decent price for a change, so I'm in a rare good mood, like Reenie would say and like she did say that morning at breakfast. Scrambled eggs, toast with some of that raspberry jam from the garden, and no, it's not home-baked bread hot from the oven or anything, and we bought the eggs in town at Safeway just like everyone else does. Just like you do.

How is it that folks around here think just because you farm a few hundred acres you're self-sufficient, like you own a big flock of chickens and a coop, slaughter the occasional hog or cow, put up beans and corn enough to last you through Armageddon? I do put in a garden of sorts every year, but you've probably got a better one in your backyard, and the produce I turn out wouldn't last us two months at most, and Reenie hates to can anything. We have two apple trees (I've no idea what variety, but wormy), so Reenie makes applesauce and a few pies, but she's not keen on doing that either. Also, I could

---

care less about applesauce, and apple pie is my least favorite of all. I'd rather have the banana cream down at the Rosauer's. We also have a plum tree that's okay, but what we don't just pick and eat on the spot goes to waste, or to the birds, mostly those damned starlings. Every so often I'll go after them with the air rifle, but I haven't hit one in years.

"Mind your peas and carrots!" my mother used to say. Funny woman. It was years before I realized what was supposed to be so funny about that: "Mind your peas and carrots!" Then she'd laugh and laugh. A big-big woman, and very funny. I've got her size and my old man's sense of humor, which is to say not much of one. Anyways, I always have some carrots in the garden, and they do pretty good, but no peas.

It's the hippies and tree-huggers that've spread this nonsense about farmers being self-sustaining and "autonomous." They apparently suffer from this guilt about not being able to raise enough zucchini in their own backyards to see them through the winter. Personally, I hate the stuff. Wouldn't plant zucchini to save my butt. One year this hippie girl – my boy Allen used to call them "earth muffins" – come up to the door and asked could she and her alternate-lifestyle partner, a pathetic chunk of a woman about twenty years old trying to look fifty, borrow or rent a bit, "a tiny bit," she said, of our land to plant them some crops. We could keep half of what they grew, they said. Well, hell no, I was about to say, but up comes Reenie, and "Oh Wes," she's saying, and the next thing you know these two earth-muffins are at it every morning with a shovel and an old spading fork. And no, they aren't paying us a dime for the privilege.

So anyways, I'm catching a Mariners game on the TV when this old guy comes up to the door, about four o'clock, four-thirty. I say "old," but Reenie always likes to come right up on me when I grouse about some old fart, usually driving a Buick or a Cadillac, seeping around a right turn like Sunday afternoon, and she'll say, "Well, Wesley, just how much older than *you* do you reckon that old fart is?" I never seem to have the right comeback. So I'm sixty-something now, and this guy's probably my age plus a few years, or maybe minus some if he's lived hard. Okay, I'm sixty-two. It's the ACL series, in Seattle.

Ichiro's just coming to bat, and he limbers up the way he does, you know, and he extends his bat out there like he means business, and he does. He knows just what he's doing. He arches his back like that. The old guy knocks again. "Reen," I yell, "someone's at the door." Ichiro takes one low and outside for a ball. They don't want to pitch to him with a guy on base.

Make a long story short, these two gals, Genevieve and Lou, harvested a bushel or two of zucchini, predictably, some beets and carrots, two bushels at least of undersized, misshapen spuds, what else? Anyways. What I remember most from that summer is how the well nearly dried up on us, and you can't tell me their constant

watering wasn't the cause of it. Reenie loved having them around, though—Genevieve and Lou, this lesbo couple. Genevieve was at least a little bit pretty, kind of straight auburn hair that fell just past her thin shoulders, but come August she had her head shaved, or darned near it, for no reason I can fathom. All I can say about her man-girl partner Lou, which I guess was butch for Louise or Lucille, is that she was a big, solid woman, broad-shouldered, square-jawed, what my old man would of called "lantern-jawed." But here's the weird thing about Lou: terrific, even radiant, long blonde hair on which she lavished not simply her attention, but her obvious affection. You could see that by the way she'd toss her head every so often, or how she'd run her stubby fingers through it.

They worked hard, though, those two, and they didn't miss a day so far as I know. Reenie would bring them out some iced tea or lemonade pretty much every day, and she told them right off that they should feel free to come in and use the guest bathroom or come into the kitchen for water whenever they wanted. And I guess they did, but I was out in the fields most of the time when they were here. That was two summers ago, and so far as I know they planned to come back the next summer, but they didn't. Reenie waited eagerly for them to show up, and when they didn't she was disappointed. "Now you didn't say anything to those young girls, did you Wes?" she asked me pointedly.

"Like what?" I says. "Hell no."

"You know what," Reenie says.

"No I don't," I say, playing dumb.

Who knows? Maybe they went back East and got hitched in some liberal hotspot like Massachusetts or New Jersey, or maybe they just split up. Maybe Genevieve grew her hair back out and got herself a boyfriend. She had a kind of cute little nose and nice green eyes. Her eyes were her best feature by far except for that auburn hair before she had it all hacked off. I guess Lou did that for her. They left the shovel and spading fork out in the shed. The next summer I planted about half of the acre or so they "farmed"—some tomatoes, even though they don't do all that good around here except for the little cherry varieties, some bush beans, chard, no zucchini. But it was too much bother for what we got out of it, and since then I've just gone back to the small patch where we raise mostly radishes, carrots, lettuce, and cukes, things we can enjoy fresh and that aren't any trouble. I thought about putting in some strawberries for Reenie, but the varmints and birds like them too much.

SO WHERE THE HECK WAS I?

Ichiro beats out an infield grounder: pure Ichiro. Anyone else in the majors would've been nailed easy.

Oh. The old guy at the door, or I say he's an old guy. I glance up

---

from the TV just long enough to see Reenie insist that he come in and ask him if he'd like something to drink, some iced tea maybe or at least a glass of water. That's Reenie. She's all about country hospitality. Even after living out here for thirty-odd years, she still gets lonely, so she likes it when people just show up like this. I'm not so keen on it. Maybe that's why you hear about Southern hospitality or Texas hospitality, but you don't hear much about your Idaho hospitality. Town's just six miles away, but she says she don't know anyone there anymore since the boys graduated high school. Allen was our last, went on to the college for a couple years, and now he's in Iraq doing a second tour. We worry about him even though he says he mostly just works in an air-conditioned office (when the electricity is on, which isn't all that often, I guess) and pushes papers. He'll be okay.

How about so-and-so or what's-her-name from church, I ask Reen. "She's just a church friend," Reenie says, as if that explains anything.

Poor Reen. Reenie isn't short for anything, by the way, like Irene or something. It's her given name: Reenie Reynolds, before we got married anyway. Now it's Walker.

Let some stranger sashay up to the place, and he's going to be a friend, or else Reenie's going to know why not. I worry about her sometimes when I'm out in the fields and she's back there at the house by herself, but believe it or not, we've never even had a scare in all these years. Of course Ben was at home, and then Allen for a few years after that, but he's been gone six or seven years, I guess. Doesn't seem like it's been that long. And then we used to have us a couple of pretty intense German shepherds, Stonewall and Forrest. I named them for Confederate generals. I'm a Civil War nut, not that it ever reached out here to speak of, west of the Missouri, except as a hideout for deserters, both blue and gray. My first dog was a German shorthair, a great little hunter I named Lee, of course, and then came a golden retriever, she was a sweetheart, and I called her Beauregard, for General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, which Reenie thought was a hoot. No dogs now, though—too much bother. Maybe I am getting old.

GETTING BACK TO THE OLD GUY. Yeah. He's kind of small, maybe five-six, skinny, little wispy white mustache. He's wearing one of those rust-colored canvas hunting jackets, so that's what gives him away, blue jeans, running shoes (not boots). He holds his ball cap in his hand, which I know appeals to Reenie. She likes good manners, likes it when folks know to take off their caps when they come into the house. Ben and Allen, when they weren't little anymore, got a kick out of coming to the table with their ball caps on—they both played high school and American Legion. Allen liked to wear his backwards, which also kind of bugged her. It was their little joke to come to the table like that. We all knew there'd be no food on the table until those caps were doffed.

So this little old guy grips his cap by the bill with both hands, like he wants to make sure both hands are occupied, see, not flying around somewhere. That was one of the big things they taught us in youth choir when I was a boy, how to hold your hands in front of you, folded left over right. Presbyterian. I saw right off it was a Mariners cap, so I felt pretty well disposed.

What he wanted, just as I'd guessed, was permission to shoot some birds on our land. I don't hardly go out myself at all anymore, haven't even bought me a license since Allen left for college, though I did go out and tramp around with him when he got back from Baghdad. He wanted to do that, he said, with me. But he didn't take a shot, not one, even though we kicked up three nice rooster pheasants. We've got lots of birds here, some gray or Hungarian partridge (I still call them Huns, but I guess Fish & Game are aiming at being politically correct), quail, pheasants. Some old-timers out here still call them Chinks, for Chinese ring-necked pheasants, but that's not politically correct either. It's got to the place that you've got to think twice before you even call them cocks. You can hear them crowing and carrying on from early April until forever it seems like. I was a pretty good shot back then. Ben never cared much for hunting birds or anything else, but he does like to fish—that and golf. He and his wife live over in Seattle where he's an insurance claims adjuster. Makes good money, too. Two kids: Sammy and Janey. We don't see all that much of them.

When I hear what the old guy wants, I get up from in front of the tube, even though Ichiro has just stolen second and there's no out with the score tied at two in the bottom of the fourth. We shake hands, and I can tell how thin his fingers are even though he has a decent grip. He says his name is Ed-something, and he teaches history at the university there in town. I ask him what kind of history, hoping it's American and maybe even the Civil War, but it turns out it's British, mostly the early stuff. Ed says he isn't really up all that much on the U.S. Civil War, but he's very interested in the English Civil War, which happened back in the 1640s, and which I've never even heard of. He tells me a few things about it, the Roundheads under Cromwell and the Cavaliers under the king, Charles I, who was beheaded after the war ended. He says he'd like to shoot some upland game birds on our place.

"Pheasants?" I ask.

"Yes."

"Well, we've got a mess of 'em this year," I say. "You can hear them roosters crowing about every morning." Does he have a dog?

"No."

Good, I think. Dogs you aren't familiar with can be a bother. I tell him I can't let him take any of the quail, though. Reenie would have a fit. We have scads of quail on up the hill and even right here around the house, but she thinks of them as pets. We used to have us a couple cats—Sherman and Grant, of course—but one day Reen found them

---

feasting on a couple of the quail chicks, and that was it for the Grand Army of the Republic on this farm.

Ed says he doesn't mind about the quail, says they're too quick for him anyways. He seems very quiet, kind of subdued, unlike most of the college profs I've seen over the years down at Bill's Barber Shop and wherever, not that I've run into that many of them. I spent a year and a half down at State trying to be a walk-on at linebacker before my dad died and I had to come back up here to run the place. I didn't miss college that much, truth to tell, but I did meet Reenie down there, so I guess it worked out pretty good. Anyways, the profs I've met tend to be on the talky side. I mean half the time I feel like they want to lecture me on something: what insecticides I should apply, why I shouldn't plant garbanzos, why I should consider putting in at least two hundred acres of canola.

But Ed's not like that. He seems sad in a way. I mean he's obviously grateful that I've given him permission to shoot on our property, but he doesn't appear to be what you'd call "glad," just sort of relieved, I guess. He doesn't smile. He keeps his small, dark eyes lowered as if studying some design in the rag rug my sister Ann bought us for Christmas a couple years back, mostly dark brown and some deep shades of red.

Even when he tells me some about the English Civil War, Ed seems reluctant to open up. At the Battle of Naseby, he tells me, in 1645, the Roundheads, which is what they called the Puritans, slit the noses of what they thought was prostitutes traveling with the Royalist baggage train. "Actually," Ed says, "they were officers' wives mostly. It was terrible."

He appears to have been affected by his own academic specialty, brought down by the atrocities of the ugly war. He says his dissertation and a couple of his published articles dealt with that battle, and of course I'm interested in that sort of thing. "And so on," he adds. That's how he put it: "and so on," as if Naseby led him to this tedious and disappointing career. "I know way, way more about the Battle of Naseby than anyone wants to know," Ed tells me, "or needs to know."

Well, I'm not sure just what to say, but my interest in the U.S. Civil War—I've read dozens of books about most of the important battles and have visited several of the battlefields back East—Manassas, Antietam, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Gettysburg of course—causes me to ask him about the casualties. No one knows for sure, he says, probably a thousand or more among the Royalists, though, who were led by this Prince Rupert, a cavalry officer. That's when the business about the officers' wives having their noses split comes up. I look over at Reenie, who winces and asks Ed if he wouldn't like to sit down for a few minutes and maybe have a slice of apple pie. He looks frail. His fingers still jitter with the ball cap.

I take another fond look at the ball game just in time to see Sexson slap one into right field and score Ichiro from third. I have no idea, of



course, how Ichiro got to third. I do think of inviting Ed to join me in front of the TV, but I guess it would be sort of a downer, and besides, Reenie appears to be eager for his company. He takes a step toward the kitchen.

But no. The professor abruptly changes his mind. He really needs to be getting along, he says. He's sorry. He appreciates the offer, our hospitality and all. He's very grateful for my permission to shoot on our land, and he'll be very careful. And no quail, we don't have to worry about that. I can tell Reenie is kind of let down.

"Funny," she says after the professor pulls off in his dark green GMC Jimmy. It's maybe ten or twelve years old, looks to be well cared for. "I was sure he was going to come on into the kitchen for pie and . . . I don't know . . . just talk. He seemed nice."

"Maybe he don't care for apple pie," I joke.

"He seemed sad," Reenie says, as usual ignoring my attempt at humor. "He didn't mention any family."

"I wonder how old he is," I say.

"Well," Reen says, "he doesn't seem to be retired."

I remember seeing some brown spots on the backs of Ed's hands, and I think of how, when he walked over to his Jimmy, he limped just a bit on his left leg.

"You think he'll come back?" she says.

"We'll know come opening day," I say, but I'm pretty sure he'll come back because just before Ed opened the door to his SUV, a cock pheasant sang out with his come-hither call: cawk-cut, cawk-cut!

"Shoot me, shoot me!" he seemed to crow.

But then we hear nothing from Ed, whose last name neither of us can remember, which, I guess, proves I'm not the only one getting on in years around here.

A few days after Ed's visit I have this weird dream featuring those two lesbos who thought they were going to be down-and-dirty truck farmers. It's vaguely a Civil War dream, U.S. that is, where I seem to be riding with General Nathan Bedford Forrest, "that devil Forrest," some Yankee officer called him, and so is Allen, wearing his desert camo inappropriately enough, but not Ben, which in the dream makes me feel uneasy, even guilty in a way. I keep looking over my shoulder for him. Like many of my dreams, this one has action-adventure features and it's in full color. Who knows how it's all going to turn out—life, I mean, the farm, which is where the action takes place. The farm belonged to my father and to his—my grandfather homesteaded the land around 1900. Maybe Allen will take it over after he finishes with the army, but maybe not. What if he decides to make a career of the military? Will Ben want the place? Would he leave Seattle for it? Probably not. The dream is vaguely plagued with these questions.

Anyways, in the dream Ed and Allen and I—yes, Ed shows up somewhere along the line—swoop down on this bunch of Yankees encamped right here on our northern Idaho farm, and we drive them

---

off with no trouble. I'm aware of artillery, cavalry, swords and fusillades, bugles and drums—the usual clamor of war. I should note that I never get killed in these dreams, any more than I ever actually consummate the sex act in my wet dreams, and the only time I get even slightly wounded happens during my WW2 dreams, a flesh wound sufficient to gain me a Purple Heart and the sexual favors of a nurse who invariably turns out to look just like Reenie. We leap from our horses. We whip out our sabers. Suddenly we come upon a dozen or so women dressed in period costumes, those big hoop skirts you see in movies like *Gone with the Wind*. You can imagine what happens next. It's awful. Somewhere along the line Ed is killed. I gaze at his lifeless body and know he's dead, even though I see no blood. Allen says, "We've got to do something with him." Then I wake up.

Two days before the upland game bird season opens we get a call from Ed saying he'll be coming over on Saturday real early and hopes that's still okay. He calls just before dinner, so Reenie's in the kitchen and I'm catching up on the evening news. "Yeah," I say, my voice no doubt echoing the impatience I always feel when the phone rings around dinner time, the Hour of the Telemarketer. But the truth is I'm not a phone person anyway. I don't feel at ease on the telephone. It is not my medium, or media, or whatever. I'm not a happy guy with a telephone clamped up to my ear. Needless to say, the cell phone craze leaves me cold. We do have a cell phone, though—Ben insisted—it was a Christmas gift three or four years back—but I never carry it with me. It just sits there in the house right beside the landline. "Riiing!" That's the real telephone. "Goodleee-dle-oody-oogle" or whatever—that's the cell. Let Reenie get it.

But because she's in the kitchen shaping up some meatloaf, I get the phone and figuring it's going to be Reenie's sister from up in Spokane, our number one caller other than phone solicitations, I answer, "Yeah." At first he doesn't say a thing. You can hear the emptiness on the other end. "Hello?" I say. I'm about to hang up.

"This is Ed," he mumbles, blurring his last name, which I still can't remember from when we met, nor Reenie either.

Ed wants to come out Saturday morning—early, but not first light, like six or so. "I'll have the coffee ready," I find myself saying. Despite what folks think, not all farmers are keen to get up with the sun. I never was an early riser, and it's the off-season anyways, so I'm startled to hear myself offering to have coffee with this strange old guy at six-something in the a.m.

"Anyone coming out with you?" I ask.

"No," Ed says, "I'll be all alone." Not just "by myself," see, or even just "alone," but "all alone." That gets to me.

ALL DAY FRIDAY THE PROSPECT OF THIS OLD HISTORY PROFESSOR ALL ALONE out in the fields eats at me. What if he suffers a coronary or something? And he's out there somewhere all by himself. The guy's not

exactly the picture of health. I keep thinking of his slender, brown-spotted hands, a bit of a tremor I now recall in his handshake. Ed is an old man, and he is not all that well. I wish I hadn't told him he could hunt out here. What was I thinking of? I remember his thin white hair lifting in the breeze when he left, just before he put his ball cap back on, his kind of droopy mustache, the way he gave us a slight, thin-fingered wave from his old Jimmy. A sad, lonely, old man, I'm thinking. Pathetic. I suddenly recall some words from a poem I read in a lit course when I was at State: "An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick." Yes, yes, yes — an old scarecrow, and that will be me in a few more years, I guess. A paltry thing.

"Wes," Reenie calls out from the meatloaf, "you know you could offer to go along with him." She tends to read me that good.

But I don't know. I've put on some weight the past few years, and I never had a real slight build anyway. I've let myself get sedentary. Too much Mariners baseball, and the Seahawks and all, and too much of Reenie's good cooking. I used to think as I got older I'd eat less, that my appetite would fade, but it hasn't been that way at all. It seems like I'm eating more than ever these days, snacking all day long, mostly on sweets, and yet at dinner I'm starving. Then an hour or so after supper I'll pop open a can of beer and thrash around the fridge for some cheese, or maybe I'll throw a bag of popcorn in the microwave and gobble down all of it. Reenie don't care for popcorn.

Then, too, I've got this osteoarthritis in both knees — doctor says it probably goes back to my football days. I used to run, run, run. And when the boys were around I'd jog with them down Ferris Road up at least as far as the Callaghan place just to keep in shape, and I could keep up pretty good, especially with Ben. But how long has it been since I even walked a mile, let alone run one, or two or three, like we used to? At first we'd sort of run together, all three of us, and when they were little, I could run circles around them, and sometimes I'd do that, too, just to show off. Well, that didn't last long. Then it was me jogging while the boys would charge off up the road to Callaghan's, another mile on, then turn around and sprint toward me, and we'd jog together back to the farm. Then later it was me sort of taking a country stroll on my own while they ran. They'd yell at me to get a horse, or at least a bicycle, as they sped past me on the way back home, racing each other. Allen always won.

So no, I can't really see myself hauling the old Browning 12-gauge out of the closet and limping over that hill behind the house and east along the hedgerow where I'm sure at least a couple of cock pheasant hang out. But the next thing I know, I've gone and done it. Although I'm sure I cleaned and oiled the shotgun before putting it away in its case, I notice small flecks of rust along the barrel. "The sword of Charlemagne the just / is ferrous oxide, known as rust." Who wrote that? Probably Ogden Nash, and I probably haven't recalled the lines correctly either, but they go something like that. I dig out the cleaning

---

kit, drip some oil onto a soft bit of flannel from an old shirt, and rub it in until the rust disappears and the metal glimmers blue-black the way it should. Do I have any shells around? I quickly locate a box of #8 low-brass, but they won't do, not enough punch.

"Reenie," I yell, "where's my old hunting vest?"

"Out in the garage hanging over your workbench. In the corner."

The worn canvas vest, khaki with dark brown corduroy on the pockets, is dusty, and some spiders have spun a few webs under one of the sleeve openings. I can tell from the heft that some shells remain in the pockets, and a quick check turns up nine #5 high-brass, which is just what I want for pheasant. A few soft feathers fall from the game pouch, probably grouse, maybe Huns, birds shot long ago. They've left a few rusty spots that were once bright with their warm blood. I always ate what I shot, but I can't honestly say I prefer pheasant or even the all-white meat of grouse to chicken. Why did I ever get into shooting them? Tradition, I guess. My father shot birds, as did his, and of course I taught my sons. I remember dropping a cock pheasant one afternoon, and I looked and looked for it and had nearly given up when I saw it splayed out against the bank of a small creek that runs through our place, right there in the last of the October daylight, and I thought simply "beautiful, this is beauty": his iridescent green head, the bright red mask around his eyes, the perfectly marked white ring at the base of his neck, and the mottled feathers of his plump body, brown and very nearly golden. I thought, "I have killed beauty." And I remember thinking that was maybe my primary motive, in some perverse way, for shooting birds. And I recalled just a couple of lines from an old poem I'd read in that lit class back at State: "Underneath this stone doth lie, / As much beauty as can die." Funny, how I remember so many odds and ends from that class. Professor Cushman. Good guy, really smart. Again, that's how I remember the lines; I could be misquoting, probably am. It was about the death of the poet's daughter. I remember that.

Anyways, my Browning is choked to carry just three shells, so I'll have three loads in all, which should be plenty, even though I haven't shot in years. Of course I'll give Ed the first shot on any bird. Maybe I'll just offer to bird-dog for him, beat the brush so to speak. You see hired hands doing that for Scottish lords up in the highlands in the movies. Maybe that's just for grouse. I won't even necessarily need to bring the gun along at all, but I will. If I go. I'm feeling the blood rise, see, the old enthusiasm for it, but I don't know. I try to stretch a little. How long has it been? Too long, it turns out, too damned long since I've even done any stretching exercises like I used to do before I went out jogging with the boys. Too damned long.

Saturday morning about a quarter after six Ed shows up in his GMC, and I watch him from the window as he fiddles with his hunting jacket, unzips his gun case. Reenie has the coffee all ready. I'm wondering if Ed remembers about the coffee. He looks quickly

toward the house, like maybe he's trying to decide whether to come on up and knock at the door, or whether we'll still be in bed — we've turned the light on in the kitchen. It's pretty chilly out there, a few gray clouds and cool, maybe thirty or so, but it'll warm up in a couple hours. Ed takes a step or two toward the house, he's got on his Mariners cap, but then he wheels around and starts up the slope past the barn where the combine is hunkered down for the winter. I took the cutters down to Mark yesterday to get sharpened up for next year.

"Where'd Ed go?" Reenie calls from the kitchen. "I thought I heard him drive up. Isn't he coming in for coffee? I made a pot special." I can tell she's disappointed.

"Maybe after he's done shooting," I say, feeling sorry for her and a little strange about the whole thing, like at least I could've popped open the door and asked him in, or maybe even pointed out where I thought he might be likely to jump some birds, which is along the hedgerow, thick with some old apple trees, snowberry bushes, wild roses, two or three old hawthorns, some serviceberries the old-timers like to pronounce "sarvis" like the mountain men. But I guess that area would be obvious to any hunter. At least, though, I could've wished him luck.

I look over at Reen, who's starting to stir up some scrambled eggs. After all these years she still has some of her figure. She's a small woman, small-breasted. She has her hair done once a month so it looks better and blonder now than it did when we married. She takes good care of herself, better than I've done with myself, that's for sure. She has soft blue eyes and this tiny upturned nose that I like to kiss every so often just to get a rise out of her. And then, of course, I find myself thinking of the Roundheads at the Battle of Naseby disfiguring those poor women, the officers' wives who had the bad luck to have accompanied their husbands this one time maybe. I've heard the Indians used to do that when they caught a squaw fooling around on her husband — split her nose and then sell her to another tribe as a slave. That's what I've heard anyways.

Once Ed passes the barn I lose sight of him for a good while, but I imagine him doing the same as I did a few years back, working left and right in angled sweeps up the gradual slope of the hill, through red-top, brome, and that damned yellow star thistle I've tried to weed out for years with no luck. He'll be holding his shotgun at port arms pretty much, but slanted to the left. Will he still have his safety set? Some guys click it off as soon as they get into the field, not wanting to miss a good shot while they fiddle around with their thumb trying to find the thing just as a fat cock pheasant jumps out of the grass. Professor Joseph Cushman, he loved poetry. He said a famous poet named Wallace Stevens once defined poetry as "a pheasant disappearing in the brush." I'm pretty sure about the accuracy of that quotation. It was on one of his tests, and he said we should remember it if we remembered nothing else from the class.

---

We don't usually plant anything between the barn and the hedgerow. Over the years that stretch of ground has gathered rocks and small boulders, a couple of old harrows and seeders, a '54 Ford pickup, all of it rusting away. Then there's that hulk of Dad's old combine, the type you see with the galvanized steel bins, and an old-old Massey-Ferguson tractor you can hardly tell used to be red. I should maybe have warned the old guy to keep an eye out for barbed wire, too, from that fence we strung up when one of the neighbors — Olsen, who the hell else? — used to run a few head of scrawny cows that he kept letting loose onto our land. Well, Olsen's gone now, died like a true-blue Idaho farmer, which is to say somewhere down in Arizona.

Nope, Ed's not going to find anything till he gets up to the hedgerow, I don't guess. But then as a bird hunter you always think you could kick up something just about anywhere, especially when you don't know the area and you're without a good dog, and you're always doubly alert for that first hour or two, particularly on opening day. Your senses feel keen. You can almost smell the birds. Every time your step snaps a stick, your heart jumps. Every tweetie-bird causes you to lift your gun. You follow the flight of a meadowlark and mentally pull the trigger. Yes, you can almost smell the Chinks — that's what Olsen always called them, Chinese ring-neck pheasants, like I said before — you can bet he never asked permission to shoot on our land. I listen for Ed's first shot. Nothing.

Well, he's probably not even halfway up the hill by now anyways. It might be a little steep for an old guy like him. Some heavy gray clouds begin to blow in from the northwest. No surprise there — that's where we usually get our weather, cold off the Cascades — not all that much to slow it down when it comes our way from that quarter. It'll warm up some later, after lunch. I listen closely for that first shot.

I'm thinking I should be with him, that if I was out there with Ed on this piece of land I know and have loved well all of my life, everything would be okay. I would send him out to the left so he could move very deliberately along the hedgerow on its lee side, and I would stay on the barn side and move more rapidly from way out to the right. It's a little bit like military tactics when you think of it. Once Ed reached his end of the hedgerow, I'd have him wait five or ten minutes — we'd coordinate our watches — and then we'd move slowly, deliberately, and silently toward each other, a pincer movement. And I can guaran-damn-tee you we would put us up some birds, and we'd catch them in a crossfire, an enfilade, as they tried to break this way and that. Can you visualize this? So I keep on listening for that first shot that will tell me everything's all right.

It's actually safer than you might imagine. I'd be panning my shotgun from the top of the hedgerow back left toward the barn, see? And the old history prof would be panning his gun from the opposite side and on to his left. We're marching toward each other with the hedgerow in between. If something jumps in front of us, that's when



we have it in our crossfire, just for a second or two. As I imagine it, we both of us bag a nice pair of roosters, and we pick them up there in the wheat stubble (his side) or the weeds (my side) and take them down to the house for Reenie to take care of. Not that she'll clean one of those things. "You shot it, you clean it, I cook it." That's her policy. She'll roast two of them with apples sliced up inside to cut the gamy flavor—she has a great recipe. I haven't had pheasant in years. We'll keep the other two for later—or no, I'll give the both of them to Ed.

Maybe he'll invite us over to his place in town. Maybe Ed has an old lady-friend, a neighbor, who will come over to his place and cook them up for us. He and this nice lady, and me and Reenie, sitting there at his table, books scattered all over the house—a real scholar. He'll tell me in detail about the Battle of Naseby, maybe show me some of his articles, and I'll tell him all I know about the Battle of Shiloh because I've read a lot about it and have visited the battlefield twice, once during a reenactment. Cavalry, artillery, the whole thing—they'd even set up a field hospital there under the old oaks all hung with that gray Spanish moss. Strange, I find myself thinking, to have a favorite battle, mine Shiloh, Ed's Naseby.

But who am I kidding here? Ed don't have any lady-friend in town, and I'm not out there walking the hedgerow with him, am I? Ed is a sick old man, sick and lonely. Reenie said that when he didn't come in for coffee. "I'm worried about him, Wes," she says. "I think you should go out there after him." I tell her he'll be okay, but I know what she means. "He'll be okay," I tell her again, and I really do wish I believed that. But what can you do? Guys don't do that sort of thing, you know, go chasing after each other like worried parents. If Ed wants to do something, you know, if he has something he feels like he's got to do out there, that's his business, see? That's up to him. I can't really say all this to Reenie, though, can't really explain it. I keep listening for that first shot.



Ron McFarland teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Idaho. His most recent books are a critical study of regional memoir, *The Rockies in First Person* (2008) and *The Long Life of Evangeline: A History of the Longfellow Poem in Print, in Adaptation and in Popular Culture* (2010). Ron's next collection of poems, *Subtle Thieves*, is slated for publication in late 2011 by Pecan Grove Press. He still ruffles a few upland gamebird feathers from time to time.

# EDUCATION § READING THE WEST

ed•u•ca•tion. *noun* \e-jə-'kā-shən\

1. The act or process of educating or being educated; 2. The knowledge or skill obtained or developed by a learning process; 3. A program of instruction of a specified kind or level: *driver education*; a *college education*; 4. The field of study that is concerned with the pedagogy of teaching and learning.



*If higher education is key to America's prosperity, civic participation and social well-being, as argued by the Lumina Foundation (which funds initiatives to improve higher education), then how are we doing in Utah and the West?*

## EDUCATION AND THE AMERICAN WEST

*According to the U.S. Census, the American West has a wide range of high school and college graduation rates.*

Only seven U.S. states have high school graduation rates above 90%: Minnesota, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, New Hampshire, Utah, and Vermont. The percentage of United States residents who have earned a high school diploma is 84.5%.

There are fifteen states with above-average high school and college graduation rates: Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. The percentage of United States residents who have earned a Bachelor's degree is 27.4%.

Another fifteen states have below average high school and college graduation rates: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia. . . .

The border states of California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona join Kentucky and Mississippi for holding the dubious distinction of having the largest percentage of residents who have failed to complete the ninth grade. More than ten percent of California residents have less than a ninth grade education.

---

Source: J.C. Grant, "State Education Rankings: Graduation Rates for High School, College, and Grad/Professional School," *Yahoo! Contributor Network*, July 21, 2010; <http://www.associatedcontent.com>

### BUT DO GRADUATION RATES = LEARNING?

*In a recent study, Eric A. Hanushek (senior fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University), Paul E. Peterson (director of Harvard's Program on Education Policy and Governance) and Ludger Woessmann (professor of economics at the University of Munich) compared the percentage of U.S. students in the high school graduating class of 2009 with advanced skills in mathematics to percentages of similarly high achievers in other countries. Their conclusions do not bode well for maintaining American productivity, which depends on developing a highly qualified cadre of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and other professionals.*

The percentage of students in the U.S. Class of 2009 who were highly accomplished is well below that of most countries with which the United States generally compares itself. While just 6 percent of U.S. students earned at least 617.1 points on the PISA 2006 exam, 28 percent of Taiwanese students did. . . .

It is not only Taiwan that did much, much better than the United States. At least 20 percent of students in Hong Kong, Korea, and Finland were similarly highly accomplished. Twelve other countries had more than twice the percentage of advanced students as the United States. In order of math excellence, they are: Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, the Czech Republic, Japan, Canada, Macao-China, Australia, Germany, and Austria.

The remaining countries that educate a greater proportion of their students to a high level are Slovenia, Denmark, Iceland, France, Estonia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Slovak Republic, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Norway, Ireland and Lithuania. . . .

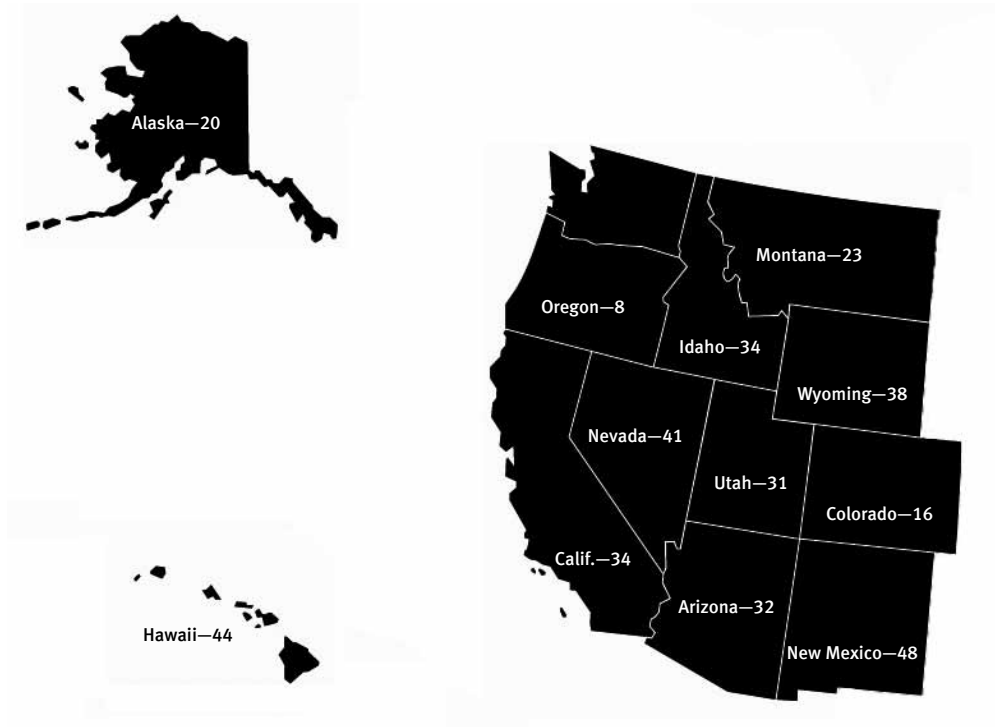
The percentage of students scoring at the advanced level varies among the 50 states. Massachusetts, with over 11 percent of its students at the advanced level, does better than any other state, but its performance trails that of 14 countries. Its students' achievement level is similar to that of Germany and France. Minnesota, with more than 10 percent of its students at the advanced level, ranks second among the 50 states, but it trails 16 countries and performs at the level attained by Slovenia and Denmark. New York and Texas each have a percentage of students scoring at the advanced level that is roughly comparable to the United States as a whole, Lithuania, and the Russian Federation.

In short, the percentages of high-achieving students in the United States—and in most of its individual states—are shockingly below those of many of the world's leading industrialized nations. Results for many states are at a level equal to those of third-world countries.

---

Source: Eric A. Hanushek, Paul E. Peterson and Ludger Woessmann, "Teaching Math to the Talented," *Education Next*, Vol 11 (Winter 2011); <http://educationnext.org/teaching-math-to-the-talented/>

According to the study, the ranking of western states in “Percentage of Students at the Advanced Level in Math” is:



### MOST COMMON COLLEGE MAJORS IN THE U.S.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports the most common fields of study in 2006-2007, the most recent academic year for which statistics are available.

<i>Major</i>	<i>Degrees Conferred in U.S.</i>
<i>Business</i>	327,531
<i>Social sciences &amp; history</i>	164,183
<i>Education</i>	105,641
<i>Health &amp; clinical sciences</i>	101,810
<i>Psychology</i>	90,039

Source: <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=37>

**MOST COMMON COLLEGE MAJORS IN UTAH**

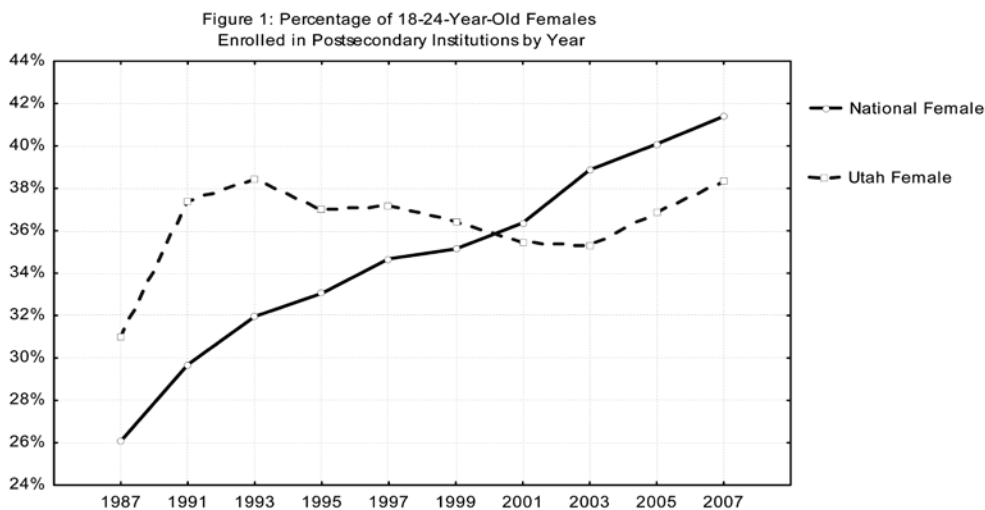
*Utah's Commissioner of Higher Education, William A. Sederburg, reports the most common fields of study in 2008-09 in the 2010 Utah Higher Education Data Book as:*

<i>Major</i>	<i>Degrees Conferred in Utah</i>
<i>Business</i>	2,205
<i>Social sciences &amp; public admin</i>	1,359
<i>Education</i>	1,314
<i>Health professions</i>	1,068
<i>Communications</i>	685

<http://higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Tab-B-Degrees-Awards-2008-2009.pdf>

**WOMEN AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN UTAH**

*Recently the Utah Women and Education Project reported that, while Utah once boasted a higher-than-average rate of attendance for women aged 18-24, Utah is now well below the national average. Moreover, only 49% of Utah's higher education population is women compared to 57% nationally.*



<http://www.uvu.edu/wep/pdf/UWEB%20Two%205-25-10.pdf>

---

## STEM IN THE WEST

*The acronym STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. A few years ago, Judith A. Ramaley, the former director of the National Science Foundation's education and human resources division, promoted a renewed emphasis in public education on problem-solving, discovery, and exploratory learning. Programs abound in Utah to promote interest in science education. In 2008-09, of the some 12,000 bachelor's degrees awarded on Utah public campuses, 1,757 were awarded in STEM fields, compared with 1,755 in the Humanities. However, Republican Howard Stephenson of the Utah State Senate is concerned that more Utah students do not study science and technology. In his view,*

The state is wasting billions of dollars conferring "degrees to nowhere" on college students because higher education is badly "misaligned" with the work force. . . .

Some college presidents say inadequate facilities are operating at capacity to meet robust undergraduate interest in chemistry and biology. It was only last year that lawmakers agreed to fund Utah Valley University's long-needed science building, while university chemistry students toil in 50-year-old labs from morning until midnight, six days a week.

"We are keeping test tubes together with duct tape," the University of Utah's President Young told the subcommittee.

Senator Stuart Reid of Ogden responded that the university's priorities might be askew if it has to run labs Saturdays, suggesting that more labs could be offered if less was spent on social-science programs.

But a university needs to offer a well-rounded study menu, Young countered.

"It's people taking psychology and history courses," he said, citing two popular university majors, "that provide the resources to support STEM degrees."

John Allen, Utah State University's Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, pointed to a 2010 national survey of employers that indicated they want job applicants with excellent communications skills.

In addition to graduates trained in the sciences, employers are looking for people with knowledge of human cultures, global issues, cultural diversity and civic engagement.



---

Source: Brian Maffly, "Lawmaker laments 'degrees to nowhere'," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 3, 2011; <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/home/51183443-76/education-utah-science-degrees.html.csp?page=1>



**TEACHING SCIENCE IN NEW MEXICO**

*In February, Republican Thomas A. Anderson, introduced House Bill 302 to the New Mexico House of Representatives. It states that public school teachers who want to teach “scientific weaknesses” about “controversial scientific topics” including evolution, climate change, human cloning and – ambiguously – “other scientific topics” may do so without fear of reprimand. More than 30 such bills have been introduced in state legislatures since 2004; only Louisiana adopted one as law in 2008.*

“These bills say, ‘Oh we’re just protecting the rights of teachers,’ which on the face of it isn’t wrong. But they draw big red circles around topics like evolution and climate change as topics to be wary about,” said Joshua Rosenau, a Policy and Projects Director at the National Center for Science Education. “Supporters of anti-science education are trying to give cover to what’s already happening out there,” Rosenau continued. “It suggests this kind of science is controversial, and would protect teachers who want to teach anti-evolution and climate-change-denying lessons in classrooms.”

...The bill’s introduction comes at a time when, according to a recent study in *Science*, only 28 percent of U.S. teachers overtly teach scientific concepts of evolution and 13 percent advocate creationism. Some 60 percent water down teaching evolution to avoid confrontation by students and parents.

---

Source: Dave Moser, “New Mexico Bill Seeks to Protect Anti-Science Education,” *Wired Science*, February 3, 2011; <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2011/02/new-mexico-science-education/>

**EDITORIAL MATTER**

ISSN 0891-8899 – Weber is published biannually by The College of Arts & Humanities at Weber State University, Ogden, Utah 84408-1405. Full text of this issue and historical archives are available in electronic edition at <https://www.weber.edu/weberjournal>

Indexed in: Abstracts of English Studies, Humanities International Complete, Index of American Periodical Verse, MLA International Bibliography, and Sociological Abstracts. Member, Council of Learned Journals.

Subscription Costs: Individuals \$20 (outside U.S., \$30), institutions \$30 (outside U.S., \$40). Back issues \$10 subject to availability. Multi-year and group subscriptions also available.

Submissions and Correspondence: Editor, **WEBER THE CONTEMPORARY WEST** | Weber State University  
1405 University Circle, Ogden, UT 84408-1405.  
801-626-6473 | [weberjournal@weber.edu](mailto:weberjournal@weber.edu)

Copyright © 2011 by Weber State University. All rights reserved. Copyright reverts to authors and artists after publication. Statements of fact or opinion are those of contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the sponsoring institution.

**ANNOUNCING  
the 2011  
Dr. Neila C. Seshachari Fiction Award**



©Jon Williams

to  
Kate Kimball  
for  
“Simple, Ugly Things”  
in the 2010 Fall issue

The Dr. Neila C. Seshachari Award of \$500 is presented annually to the author of the best fiction published in *Weber* during the previous year.

Funding for this award is generously provided by the Seshachari family.

Dr. Neila C. Seshachari (1934-2002) was a much respected advocate for the arts and humanities. Professor of English at Weber State University for 29 years, committed teacher, accomplished scholar, critic, and fiction writer, Neila was editor of *Weber Studies* for 12 years.

**Weber State University**  
1405 University Circle  
Ogden UT 84408-1405  
[www.weber.edu/weberjournal](http://www.weber.edu/weberjournal)

Nonprofit Org  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT No. 151  
OGDEN, UTAH

Return Service Requested

## Film Focus

- **Global Spotlight with Richard Grant and Margaret Rostkowski**
- **The pottery of M. Shane Christensen**
- **Film essays by Delia Caparoso Konzett, Walter Metz, and Matthias Piccolruaz Konzett**
- **Essays by Billy J. Stratton and Ian R. Mitchell**
- **Fiction by L. Annette Binder, Steve Himmer, Michael Fedo, Ryan Crawford, and Ron McFarland**
- **Poetry by Tim Bellows, Anne Wilson, Michelle Bonczek, Robin Carstensen, and Laura Stott**

