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ABSTRACT

Designed as a forum for the exchange of ideas on significant issues in the humanities, this annual journal presents articles written by two-year college faculty in the humanities disciplines. The 1991 issue includes the following: (1) "Why I Write and How I Teach," by Linda Ching Sledge; (2) "The Australian Character," by Carol L. Nelson-Burns; (3) "Contemporary British Drama: Gender and the Politics of Power," by Robert Turley; (4) "Bartleby the Scrivener as Alienated Worker," by Jack Wortman; (5) "Polar and Suprapolar: Karl Heim's Interactive Model of the Relationship between Theology and Natural Science," by Daniel W. Hackmann; (6) "Scholarship in the Community College: Checklists for Administrators and Faculty," by Evelyn Edson, James R. Perkins, and Isa N. Engleberg; (7) "A Secular Humanist Teaches the Bible," by Skip Lowery; (8) "George Washington Meets General Schwartzkopf: Designing Humanities Courses to Address the Crises of the '90s," by Julie Houston; and (9) "Repackaging the Humanities: Humanities as a World Religion Course," by Paul Benson. Eight book reviews are also included in the volume. (JMC)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE
HUMANITIES REVIEW



December, 1991

Volume Twelve

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Higher Learning in Islam: the Classical Period,
Charles Michael Stanton

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The Community College Humanities Review is published annually by the Community College Humanities Association. Its purpose is to offer a forum for scholarly work which will provide readers with articles addressing issues of research, curriculum change, and developments within the humanities disciplines. By this means, the *Review* contributes to the growth and development of the community of humanities scholars nationally.

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WHY I WRITE AND HOW I TEACH

Linda Ching Sledge

What enormous changes are taking place on community college campuses in this decade! Yet it may be well to remind ourselves of those things that do not change. The first is teaching—something that we community college professors do better than our colleagues on four-year campuses. The second is writing—an urge which we as humanists share. But how do we balance the enormous demands of community college teaching with the demands of the imagination? Isn't it true that teaching and writing don't mix?

Let tell you a story by way of answer. Ten years ago, long before I felt the first stirring of an urge to write a novel, I was selected for a post-doctoral fellowship. There were ten of us, nine of whom were from four-year institutions such as Columbia, Yale, Penn State, NYU, Temple, Florida. I was the sole representative of the *species facultatus communicatus collegialis*. We were all attempting to turn our dissertations into books, and we would gather over wine and cheese once a month to discuss our work in progress, or rather, to offer excuses for not writing. The perennial refrain, "Oh, if I weren't teaching, how fast the words would flow!"

One young professor, Stephen, was the focus of these discussions because he had the most ivy-covered credentials and the most gifted writing block. His projected manuscript was on the Insufficiency of Words to Convey the Sense of the Sublime, a topic the sublimity of which was continually eluding him. And if the thought of capturing sublimity on a page paralyzed his typing fingers, the thought of dealing with students day-to-day made him catatonic.

Stephen would say, "Isn't it amazing how teaching dries up the wellsprings of creativity?" And so it would go around the circle, until conversation eventually came to me. Somehow, perhaps because of my species, my answers always seemed to elicit great sympathy.

"I'm teaching this semester", Stephen would say. "One course. And it's a such a drag. Oh, you teach, don't you, Linda?"

"Yes," I said. "I do. Four courses."

"How many hours a week?" he'd ask. "My seminar meets once."

"Each of my classes meets three hours a week, not including office hours."

"I have fifteen students! How many do you have?"

"Well, this semester we're a little tight. I'd say on an average twenty five to thirty per class, about one hundred twenty five in all."

"How many papers? I assign one— a monster— every semester."
"Eight to ten—that's not including rough drafts, which I read too..."

Stephen finally exploded with incredulity. "God! How do you community college people stand it, teaching your brains out? When do you guys do your real work? I went into group therapy over my one class last year because I was so stressed out. Do you do 'group'?"

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"Yeah. I do 'group'. On Monday nights I do Cub Scouts...."

Over the years, other answers to Stephen's last question have occurred to me. Here's one: give a job to a busy person and it gets done. Here's another: we "Community College people" don't have the luxury of elucidating the ineffable or trying to determine how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. We are involved everyday in defining the world so that our students may be empowered to enter it.

For me, teaching is the handmaiden of writing. I see myself as a particular kind of storyteller, one who gives meaning to my students' experience by enabling them to tell the stories of their own lives. And I am, in retrospect, grateful to Stephen, for out of my encounter with him long ago my novel was born.

That post-doctoral year, I wrote like a fiend. I churned out three conference papers; I turned my dissertation into a book that was published the next year; and I wrote a chapter for the book on the Sublime that Stephen decided to compile after being unable to write one on his own. Then I started around for something else to write—something which turned out to be a Rockefeller-funded documentary history of my family which eventually became a historical novel called *Empire of Heaven*.

Empire of Heaven has been described as the "Chinese *Gone With The Wind*" by the *New York Times* (The *Times* says that about every book over 600 pages long). It's a novel of war, love and exile set against the bloodiest civil conflict in history, the Taiping Rebellion, which claimed as many as thirty million lives in mid-19th century China. In this rebellion, a madman named Hung Hsiu Chuan almost topples the Manchu empire, coming as far as the outskirts of Peking before being beaten back by Mongol mercenaries.

How was it done? You and I know that there is no magic formula to writing, no secret plan. I can only tell you, upon looking back at the seven years it took to write my novel, why I decided that writing was not at all at odds with teaching. That is, why I chose to teach and write. Why I am still teaching and writing!

I found that the community college milieu was of great value to a working writer. I realized early on, in that long-ago fellowship experience, that teaching at a community college had indeed made me a different species than academics at four-year research institutions. The enormous teaching load at a community college makes us capable of prodigious work. Nor was I laboring under falsely romantic assumptions about writing. I thought of writing as I taught it: that is, in a practical, no-nonsense way. In essence, the non-elitist atmosphere of the community college set for me free to write what I chose.

Without the publish or perish ax over my head, I was free to risk all in a project as foolhardy as a commercial novel without fear of losing my job or encountering the laughter of colleagues. On the contrary, my colleagues, who were free spirits themselves, seemed to value what I chose to do. They were generous, eclectic scholars with wide reading tastes, who did not turn their noses up at my attempt at historical fiction; they encouraged me during the lonely writing years and have rejoiced with me on publication.

My students were a touchstone in my development as a writer. And herein lay the secret, for each student was a story. When they wrote about their lives, or whenever they came into my office to talk, their stories were deeply stirring in a way that academic prose was not. I showed one such paper by a drug addict named

Michael to my colleague Greta, who read it and wept. Isn't that the goal of any writer—to touch a reader's heart? For all my expertise in teaching writing and literature, I had to admit that I had never done that myself. How I longed to do what Michael had done so guilelessly!

So I never took a writing course or bought a text or went to a writer's group. My students taught me everything I needed to know. I began to write commercially by using them as the subjects for popular inspirational magazines such as *Guideposts*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest*. Dr. Johnson's motto became my own: "A man's a fool except to write for money". I became a regular contributor, paid per number of accepted stories, each of which had to come in on deadline. For this kind of writing there was usually a formula. In one anthology of self-help meditations, I had to write twenty pieces, each half a page long. In that half page, I had to create a scene, establish a conflict and so "turn" or resolve the story that the reader would be moved to action. If it didn't work, I didn't get paid.

Experience taught me one thing about writing. My students, my living textbooks, taught me another. Let me describe some of the key chapters.

I learned about plot by encountering the incredible reversals, the mounting crises, the daunting choices, the awful "tragic" falls and the occasional triumphant resolutions in my students' chaotic lives. I'm in the midst of learning a lesson on plot again this term from Danny, a construction worker from Ireland. Danny is that rare, precious creature who is smarter, deeper, more sensitive than others in his milieu. He turns in ten pages when the assignment calls for two. When I urged Danny to apply for the Honors scholarship to the University of Rochester, he turned white as a sheet. "I can't. I'm going back to Ireland."

"Why?" I demanded, appalled that he would give up this chance to soar beyond his family and his friends.

"Because I'm so lonely," he replied. "Don't you realize what coming to college has done to me? I have no friends anymore. I can't talk to anyone in my family. If I go back to Ireland it won't be better, but at least I won't be different."

Hard alternatives for Danny, but the plot is still unfolding. He hasn't left yet. He's still in school wrestling with the kind of conflict that Henry James said is the only kind that matters to a writer: the conflict within the heart.

I learned voice from Louie, a blind man who dictated his papers with the eloquence of a working class John Milton. He didn't simply "read" his papers; he performed them. "I see things nobody else can," he wrote. And then he proceeded to describe them in long, rhythmical sentences, his eyes shut, his head nodding, his hands creating scenes in the air.

I learned what protagonist meant from Paul, a quadriplegic ex-cop who came to class in a wheelchair and wrote with a pen tucked between his thumb and forefinger. He had been shot in the chest by a gunman in the Bronx. Anger, more than hope, kept Paul alive. "I won't give in to those bastards," he wrote in one memorable essay. "I have to understand why I'm still here, hurting but still breathing." What is any protagonist but a wounded soul struggling like Paul to create sense out of suffering?

Teaching, you see, was great group therapy, even better than cub scouts, not just for the lessons in writing it taught me but because it put me in touch with real life when my writer's solitude threatened to border on solipsism. More impor-

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tantly, it put me in touch with my writing themes and my audience. I was writing not for a narrow academic audience but for the real world—my students! They didn't want precious minimalist literary exercises where the climatic moment was a description of the play of light on archly raised eyebrows. Their interest was held by grand human themes of love and loss, suffering and doubt, dying and beginning anew. This meant that I had to jettison all I had learned about writing in graduate school. My writing had to be lively, active, clear, direct. I could not hide behind footnotes or academic jargon or pedantic asides. I could not talk down to my readers, for they would be only too quick to sense an author's contempt. I had to so ambush my reader's attention in the very first line that they would want to plunk down cold cash for something as discretionary as a book.

This was how teaching informed my writing. What I've left for last is the more crucial question: why was my novel written at all? For so many of my students, as for us, the impulse to write comes out of a quest to define the self through stories. That impulse, for me as an ethnic writer, was particularly powerful because I did not know who I was. This ignorance was inherited, for my family in Hawaii did not know who it was either. In writing, I was stirring up painful memories everyone had tried for three generations to forget.

Immigrant Cantonese call American-born Chinese like me jook sing, hollow bamboo, "empty" people who are never at home in their own skin. Look at me! I'm a fifth generation Chinese American from Hawaii who can't speak or write Chinese and who knows virtually nothing about her forebears in China because the stories had been erased from my family's collective memory. But the lovely thing about writing is that you can transform an unpalatable reality into exactly what you want! *Have you considered, as I did, taking all those relatives you can't stand, the family stories that cause you pain—and turning them into a book?* What you don't like you change! And what isn't there, you simply make up! *Empire of Heaven* was above all an attempt to pull the disparate parts of myself together: to discover who I am by creating family stories where there was once silence and shame.

There were three shameful parts of my family history that I wanted to rewrite. The first was the shame surrounding my great-grandfather, a foundling adopted into the clan village of On Ting in South China who emigrated to Hawaii as a cook boy for a white missionary. He was left on the side of the road during one of countless civil wars that swept the southern provinces in the mid-1800s and prompted the exodus of menfolk to the levees and railroads of California and the cane plantations of Hawaii. The fact that the Chings sprang from a taint in the clan, this bad seed with no ancestors, was a source of shame to my family. It was a stain worse than illegitimacy, since in Confucian society ancestors are like gods. If you have no ancestors, you have no being. In our family scrapbook in Hawaii there were no snapshots of the old village, no stories, except for a few embarrassed whippers about my great-grandfather, the foundling. But, how he fascinated me! I thought his story was as potent as Moses in the bulrushes.

Empire of Heaven was my attempt to turn that shame into a source of pride. So out of the tattered memories of my grandfather, the foundling's son, who remembered his father's sadness and the mud, filth and bandits of the ancestral village, came the hero of the book — the rebel Pao An, who is cast out of the Chen clan, joins the Taiping army and leads a battalion that almost topples an empire.

The second shame involves a pair of shoes—my maternal grandmother's.

My grandmother had bound feet so mutilated in girlhood that they were no more than three inches long, the ideal sized "golden lily" that would snare a rich husband. They did. They were a mark of pride in my mother's family in China and in Hawaii, a family rich enough so their women need not stand too long, nor walk too far, nor work too hard. I loved my grandmother. What I did not love was a society that would so mutilate a woman's body. I could see how that hobbling extended from a woman's feet to a woman's spirit. Why did women in my grandmother's clan allow this to be done to them? Why were they too weak, too afraid to change their fate?

I longed to know unbound women who were strong and free, but there were few in my family. I knew from my research, though, that Taiping women did not bind their daughter's feet, that the women fought alongside their men in battle. I knew too from the legend of Fa Mulan, the Yuan dynasty amazon, that there was a prototype in Chinese society of a strong, self-sufficient woman who made her own way proudly. Every Chinese girl learns this myth from her mother; you undoubtedly know it from Maxine Hong Kingston's glorious book *Woman Warrior*. Thus, out of legend, history, and my own yearning for a woman role model, I created Rulan, the heroine of my book, who fights in the vanguard of the Taiping army, who struggles against huge odds to change her fate, and who loves and is loved by the real warrior Pao An.

The third shame was that of the village that cast out my grandfather, On Ting. On Ting is a single-surname village. This means that every family is related, every family bears the name Ching. It is an immensely tight, rigidly ordered clan society. On Ting became for me a symbol of the mysterious and lost motherland of China. And like any angry and abandoned child, what I wanted to know was this: what happened in villages like On Ting in the 19th century to make mothers and fathers throw away their babies and force their sons to sell themselves like pigs to plantations overseas? If China was our mother, she was a cruel mother indeed. Out of my anger and the need to visualize the people who had tossed my great-grandfather, the foundling, into the void, the semi-fictional village of On Ting rose fully formed into my imagination. I saw its well and tangled narrow streets, its paddies and canals. Had it always been there?

As if in answer to this question, there came walking into my life last year a student from China named Ching-Feng Gao. The grandson of the founder of the Shanghai Stock Exchange, his family had suffered terribly in the Cultural Revolution. Ching-Feng was starting all over again in America at twenty-nine, with no English skills, no money and half of a Chinese university degree that was useless in America. "I have to learn" was his refrain. And he did, painfully but with astonishing rapidity, until after two months in this country he was fluent enough to be able to talk to me candidly.

One day he told me this story, his broad open smile belying his pain. He told me his mother had been jailed since he was two. Her crime? Making a joke comparing Mao to the first Chin emperor who burned the scholars and their books. His father had been forced to divorce her. He himself, as a child in the Red Guard, had denounced her. His manic laughter at this admission broke my heart. On the eve of his departure to America, he received a letter from his mother. "Go away, my son," she wrote. "Forget about me. Study hard and I will be proud. In you I live again in Gum San."

What was I hearing? In Ching-Feng I met my great-grandfather, the foundling, and heard his story from his very lips—the same story of exodus and

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rebuilding that informs the history of every immigrant people who comes to Gum San, the "Gold Mountain" of America. Danny from Ireland. Ching-Feng from Shanghai. My great-grandfather from On Ting. All were part of the seemingly endless cycle of violence at the hands of autocratic societies which send their children to wander in search of another homeland. But it was also the story of loving parents who had given up their claim on their children so that the family could grow.

I would like finally to tell my friend Stephen, who for all I know may still be struggling to articulate the Unknowable, the Unspeakable, the ineffably Sublime, to set his sights a little lower. The real world offers meaning powerful enough for any writer. That world is as close as our classrooms. And teaching, far from stanching the flow of stories, can set them free.

THE AUSTRALIAN CHARACTER

Carol L. Nelson-Burns

A study of Australian drama widens recognition, and hopefully appreciation, of literature from other cultures. While Australian drama has not received the recognition that British and American plays have, the three playwrights discussed here, Ray Lawler, Richard Beynon and David Williams, are widely respected Australian writers. Their plays portray Australia's "melting pot" society and characterize the struggles and aspirations of ordinary working class people. Examining Australian drama encourages recognition of the universality of such human experience as the alienation felt by those who are "different" from mainstream society (*The Shifting Heart*), the anguished search for lasting meaning in our most intimate relationships (*Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*), and the attempt to reconcile our humanistic ideals with our materialistic urges (*Don's Party*).

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll and *The Shifting Heart* are set in typical two-story brick rowhouses of inner city Melbourne, with wrought iron railings and verandas front and back. *Don's Party* is set in a contemporary home in an affluent Melbourne suburb, Lower Plenty—a name deliberately rich in connotations. The language of the plays captures the colorful character of Australian slang, communicating a casual "she'll-be-right" attitude to life, a contempt for heavy-handed authority, and a gregarious yet vulnerable sociability.

The Shifting Heart, written by Richard Beynon in 1957, reveals the prejudice which immigrants encounter when attempting to assimilate into another culture. Gino Bianchi, a 21-year-old Italian immigrant, is beaten and stabbed when he "crashes" a Christmas Eve dance in his neighborhood which has suddenly decided to bar those who are euphemistically called "New Australians." Gino's death is the culmination in a series of indignations, hostilities and ostracisms which the Bianchi family continue to experience after eight years in their new homeland, despite the citizenship ceremony that granted "naturalization" papers.

LUKIE. (police officer sent to investigate Gino's death): With a name like "Gino..." he couldn't exactly claim to be a native, now, could he?

CLARRY (Gino's brother-in-law): He's been here for eight years. He grew up here.

LUKIE: Not quite the same thing, is it?

CLARRY: He's naturalized. That makes it the same thing.

LUKIE: I dunno. There's a lot of people—I don't say me, mind you.—but a lot of others who look on that as—well—just a formality. A sort of lever, you know, to cash in on privileges that'd otherwise be denied them.

(Act Two, Scene 2)*¹

*All three texts discussed in this paper have been published overseas and do not contain line numbers for the acts or scenes. Reference to these plays is given by Act and Scene (for *Don's Party*, by Act only). I have also provided a page reference, for the text I have used, in the endnotes.

Gino's distraught and confused mother sums up her inability to understand racism when she beseeches Lukie. "Why they do this?" The answer, never given to Mrs. Bianchi, is revealed to the audience in a series of dialogues between family and neighbors.

The shopkeeper, seemingly innocently, addresses Mrs. Bianchi as "mamma macaroni." When Clarry pushes Donny, a drunken neighbor, for striking his wife, Donny turns instead to Mr. Bianchi, shouting,

DONNY (to Poppa): You don't shove me. 'Cos I was born here, and no rotten dago's gunna shove me. (he shoves Poppa).

(Act Two, Scene 1)²

Even Clarry, though married to the Bianchis' daughter, Maria, is reluctant to accept Gino into partnership, and Clarry's mother has, for eight years, spurned invitations to meet her in-laws. These simple affronts drive home the point that the Bianchi family has not been accepted, even by members of their own family.

The police officer investigating Gino's death—an official representative of the establishment—reveals racist attitudes in the assumptions and generalizations he makes about Italians when he speaks of Gino while investigating his death. In fact, his tone throughout the investigation implies that he regards Gino as somehow responsible for his own murder:

LUKIE: I was under the impression that all da—Italians carried knives. Thought it was a national trait.

(Act Two, Scene 2)¹

The dialogue communicates the assault which people outside a dominant race or ethnic group experience in their daily lives. We see the failure to consider the Bianchis as people—the isolation and rejection of someone who is "different"—whether they be blind, black, or poor, in Australia or America. *The Shifting Heart* illustrates prejudice, not as an abstract social phenomenon but as a daily confrontation in ordinary community activity and in casual conversations that create barriers in our relationships with others. The play further captures the desperation and perseverance of people who, through no fault of their own, are excluded, and we see how vulnerable and helpless is the individual who is different.

LUKIE: Well—you know this area—it's filling up. "New Australians" everywhere. They like to dance—some of them're not bad, they tell me. Trouble is, if they don't get their way, they go all temperamental. Start breaking things up. It was getting expensive, so the management down there took the only course they could and decided to bar 'em altogether.

(Act Two, Scene 2)¹

The Shifting Heart vividly captures the humiliation and exclusion immigrants may experience from their neighbors, workmates, sometimes even their family. Clearly, pledging allegiance to a new country does not guarantee social acceptance. We learn from this play a new perspective of what American immigrants must also have experienced. People from Hungary, China, Ireland, Poland, and more recently Mexico, Cuba, or Vietnam may have encountered similar hostility that

a dominant society ignores or fails to recognize. A new beginning in a promised land offering a better way of life may become a lonely and persistent battle against prejudice.

This play can serve as a medium for examining our own insensitivities. Recognizing in ourselves the shopkeeper who coins clever nicknames, the police officer who too freely uses slang terms for a racial or ethnic group, the friend who draws a line about acceptance, we may see how we harbor and perpetuate prejudice.

Finally, *The Shifting Heart* reveals that tension and resolution are ongoing rituals, never as certain or final as fiction portrays them. The choices we make, daily, provoke new cycles of interaction that lead to still other choices. The play ends with the birth of Maria and Clarry's first child, a boy, whom Clarry determinedly names Gino. While this ending may seem too trite and simplistic, with its obvious symbolism of a 'savior' who unites warring factions, the birth of the baby also provides, as does life itself, another chance—an opportunity to learn from the mistakes we have made so that tomorrow may be different.

While *The Shifting Heart* portrays the anguish and isolation of people outside mainstream society, *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, written by Ray Lawler in 1955, examines the every day expectations and frustrations of ordinary working class people in their relationships as friends and lovers. Most poignantly, the play illustrates the unarticulated fears and desperate longings that end, tragically, in failed relationships.

Summer of the Seventeenth Doll captures the sense of emptiness and hopelessness that pervades an existence where people cannot identify or secure significant meaning or purpose. These people aren't heroes or heroines who have great dramas to explore; they are merely aging men and women who make do with a little joy or success in otherwise drab lives. Caught up in illusions about happiness, these characters struggle miserably to hold on to dreams, only to find they are delusions.

For seventeen summers, Roo and Barney have spent their lay-off seasons from sugar-cane cutting with two Melbourne barmaids, Roo and Olive, Barney and Nancy had settled into a pattern of repeated activities at familiar holiday spots. But these seasonal rituals cannot last: the play opens with a hushed discussion about Nancy's wedding, which Olive refused to attend. Pearl has arrived to take Nancy's place.

The transience of the seasonal romances juxtaposes with the repetition of the lay-off seasons, revealing the ambivalence of the characters to enduring relationships. Olive wants to re-create earlier lay-off seasons, but Pearl is apprehensive. A stiffly "proper" widow, Pearl is uncomfortable about becoming Barney's partner, yet willing to accept this relationship rather than none at all. She clearly prefers marriage. On the other hand, Olive denounces marriage, cherishing her relationship with Roo for offering something which she believes marriages cannot:

OLIVE: Compared to all the marriages I know, what I got is—(she gropes for depth of expression) is five months of heaven every year. And it's the same for them. Seven months they spend up there killin' themselves in the cane season, and then they come down here to live a little. That's what the lay-off is. Not just playing around and spending a lot of money, but a time for livin'. You think I haven't sized that up against

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what other women have? I laugh at them every time they try to tell me. Even waiting for Roo to come back is more exciting than anything they've got....

(Act One, Scene 1)⁵

Clearly, Olive yearns for sustained glamour and excitement in a relationship, not unlike Tennessee Williams' Amanda or Arthur Miller's Willie Loman. The illusory nature of their relationship is further characterized by the dolls that Roo has brought Olive each summer. Symbolic of Olive's child-like nature, these dolls are only carnival koozie dolls, with tinsel skirts and cheap paint. Their representation of the relationship between Olive and Roo becomes more poignant as the play unfolds.

Illusions about what really matters in a relationship underscore the perspectives of the minor characters as well. Olive's elderly and hardened mother, Emma; Pearl's eighteen-year-old daughter, Vera; and Bubba, a neighbor girl who has grown up watching the seasonal arrival of "the boys" as though they were romantic Santa Clauses—all are caught up in the myths of romance and the fears of commitment. Bubba has become so infected with misconceptions about meaningful relationships that she rejects "normal" ones, seeking to find what Olive has. Emma's cynicism bespeaks her loneliness and pain, and Pearl protects Vera from the kind of lifestyle she herself has come to accept.

While these women nurture illusions of romance, Roo and Barney exhibit problems with a fundamental quality in mature relationships, responsibility. Pearl priggishly lectures Barney about responsibilities he should have demonstrated to children he has fathered, and Roo accuses Barney of not standing by him when he needed him. When Barney admits he's planning to take off to pick grapes rather than finish out the lay-off season with Pearl, Roo chastises Barney for walking out on "the girls."

Another concern evident in the play is the fear of time and aging. These characters attempt to prevent the changes that time's passing must bring, whether in changing dimensions of relationships, or in changing physical capabilities. This year, Roo walked away from his job as foreman because his reputation, built from his physical prowess, was threatened by a younger man's agility and adeptness. When Dowd exhibited more stamina and produced more work than Roo, Roo left the gang rather than accept the prospect of aging.

But change comes anyway. Roo takes a job at a paint factory because he's broke, and Pearl and Barney don't hit it off. The romance Olive clung to is missing. The first act ends prophetically on New Year's Eve with a sad rendition of *Auld Lang Syne*.

Not only do the characters resist, or fear, aging, but they suggest a failure to have matured emotionally or psychologically. Olive's character is introduced to the audience as

curiously unfinished—an eagerness that properly belongs to extreme youth... intensified...by her nervous anticipation.

(Act One, Scene 1)⁶

And when Olive's dolls are smashed in a fight, Roo comforts Olive as he would a child:

y'know, a man's a fool to treat you as a woman. You're nothin' but a little girl about twelve years old...

(Act Three, Scene 3)⁷

The men, in turn, resort to excessive indulgence in alcohol to hide emotions or excuse behavior. When Barney announces to Roo that he's been spending his days drinking with Dowd, he behaves as if he were intoxicated, until Roo confronts him and he sobers instantly. Alcohol has been a vehicle to deflect responsibility for behavior and to avoid emotions which these men do not want to deal with.

Expectations of friendship, particularly the "male bonding" found in the Australian institution of "mateship," are also revealed in the play. Originating with the predominantly male settlement of Australia, "mateship" has survived into twentieth century Australian culture as an honored, almost sacred, relationship among males. Whether they were transported as convicts or came seeking adventure, the men who migrated to Australia found themselves far removed from the civilization they knew. The ruggedness of the Australian desert environment bred individualism and a solitary existence. The men who stayed grew accustomed to a life without women and to friendship as a more permanent bond than marriage. Many of them are portrayed in other Australian literature as being unaccustomed to women, and thus overly formal and uncomfortable in their presence. Although not unlike the rugged individuals we characterize as settlers of the American frontier, these men were seldom family-oriented, and their first obligations were to the loyal mates who shared their lonely fires. They were not "homesteaders," seeking to clear the land, secure a wife and raise a family; they had accepted a life with no more permanent, nor less secure bond, than the friendship of a fellow stockman.

Not only has Roo spent the last seventeen summers with Olive, but throughout this time (and probably before) he and Barney have been "mates." However, their relationship is also strained this season: Roo has harbored anger at Barney for staying on the job, rather than walking out with him. When Dowd turns up in Melbourne, Roo bitterly accuses Barney of sidling up to Dowd in order to borrow money when his runs out. We see Roo's jealousy, fear of abandonment, and underlying expectations of loyalty which characterize his complex feelings for his mate, Barney. And we see Barney's recognition of his responsibilities when he counters.

Righto—so I didn't walk out with you up north. But that was the only time I ever slipped. I've stood by you other times, haven't I?

(Act Two, Scene 1)⁸

The changes during the summer of the seventeenth doll culminate in Roo's decision not to return north but to settle in Melbourne. However, when he asks Olive to marry him, her refusal is powerfully displayed: as she has clung to her dolls, Olive now clings to a relationship that is only an illusion. The play climaxes with the force of that illusion:

OLIVE: You think I'll let it all end up in marriage—every day—a paint factory—you think I'll marry you?

(Act Two, Scene 3)⁹

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As Roo smashes the last doll, Barney abandons his plans of grape-picking with Dowd:

We'll go off on our own, Roo, we'll make a fresh start....there's a whole bloody country out there—wide open before us.

(Act Three)¹⁰

It is a tragic picture of immature behavior and romantic illusions, but one in which enduring loyalties to mates compensate for failed romances.

Imperfect and illusionary relationships and an inability to articulate our deepest feelings are clearly seen in American society and depicted in our literature. Olive's childish substitution of fantasy and fun for commitment further develops themes illustrated by American playwrights (Albee, Miller, Williams), helping us see the universality of this theme and examine our own illusions about romance more objectively. Barney's inability to recognize that his actions affect others, and his failure to put others first, offers us the opportunity to explore the nature of mature relationships. The lack of any real communication between characters who profess intimacy results in a tragedy paralleling the explosive ending of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe?* or Willie Loman's death.

A more contemporary view of Australian life is offered by David Williamson's *Don's Party*, written in 1971. Set in the Melbourne suburb of Lower Plenty in October, 1969, the play portrays five couples and a male friend at an election night party at the home of Don and Kath Henderson. All are socially mobile young professionals—a teacher, dentist, artist, business executives, and wives. The ensuing party, where banter and innuendo flow freely amid the beer and scotch, is ribald and hilarious, light-hearted yet revealing. Williamson's voice and judgment about his characters and their action is less evident than that of Benyon or Lawler. With a Shakespearian quality, Williamson uses an historic event as background and places characters in parallel circumstances from which their separate choices determine their different outcomes.

The play depicts several characteristic facets of Australian culture. First, the political system stresses not only the rights the individual enjoys but also the responsibilities of life in a democracy. Secondly, the society promotes a comfortable style of living for its broad base of working class individuals. Third, in an era of sexual revolution, the play examines the impact new freedoms of thought and action have had on sexual activity and on security with one's sexual identity.

The Australian political process, which uses preferential voting to rank the candidates, creates a greater opportunity for voters to determine government leadership. If no clear majority is reached on the first ballot, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated and those votes are redistributed to the voters' second choice. Because voting is regarded as a social responsibility, those who do not vote are fined. Australians therefore regard voting in a somewhat different way than most Americans, and the system seems to promise that an individual's vote can make a real difference.

It is this attitude that leads to an election night party, where young professionals who have been supporters of the Labor Party (somewhat like our Democratic party) since their university days, gather to witness what they hope will be a "victory" for their side. Jody and Simon, Kath's friends, support the Liberal

party, which is akin to our Republican party. At the time of this play, the Liberals, (who are the conservative party) had been in power for nearly twenty years. A powerful coalition, the Liberal Country Party, attracted many rural and conservative voters. The play reveals the impact that upward mobility has had on the values and life styles of working class people who must reconcile their new materialism with their old liberal ideals. While their professional careers now afford a home in the suburbs and more expensive "grog" such as scotch, elements of their working class background remain, in their social habits and their loyalties. Williamson explains these differences in values in a lecture he delivered at Murdoch University:

Working-class virtues were courage, manliness (which you can equate on the other side of the coin with male chauvinism) simplicity, spontaneity, practicality, sincerity, generosity and compassion....(while middle class virtues are) tolerance for diversity, individualism, concern for the pursuit of knowledge (and)...for the plight of all mankind, responsibility, rationality, humility and intellectual exploration. These middle-class values emphasise impersonality ...and the right to privacy and to have time alone, while the working-class culture is more tribal and conformist.¹¹

These young professionals voice the social concerns of the working class, yet they otherwise seem to be trading their social consciences for suburban comfort. The political ideals which are remnants of their "uni" days conflict with the social reality they live daily. Earning more money than he knows what to do with, Evan examines the real differences a "new" government might bring:

EVAN: If Labor gets in we might get a slightly better health scheme, slightly better social services and that's about it.

SIMON: And you're never sure how they're going to pay for it.

EVAN: They could take some money from us for a start.

SIMON: What, more tax?

EVAN: I don't know what you're earning, but I pull in over twenty thousand dollars a year clear. On that sort of salary I can send my kids, (ruefully) if I ever have any, to the best schools, I can take out oodles of assurance, and because it's all tax-deductible it costs me about half the price of someone on a low wage. That's not bad for extracting the odd molar is it?

SIMON: Are you a socialist?

EVAN: Yes. Aren't you?

(Act One)¹²

Liberal supporter Jody is scoffed at for her unabashed materialism:

JODY: If we end up with three or four children we want plenty of space.

MAL: Haven't you got three or four bedrooms already.

JODY: It's not just the bedrooms. We'd like a music room and a play room and a study for Simon.

MAL: A music room and a play room and a study for Simon...!

JODY: If one child wants to play the radiogram we'd like them to be able to do it.

MAL: And if one of them wants to fly to the moon you'll have a spaceship there in the backyard. What kind of logic is that. It's all bullshit in any case. There is one reason and one reason alone why you are moving from a thirty thousand dollar home and that is status. S.T.A.T.U.S.

(Act One)¹³

Mal ironically reveals his class consciousness, not realizing how it clashes with his Labor Party ideals:

MAL: Jenny's just bought a swimming pool for the kids.

KATH: A swimming pool.

JENNY: A swimming pool. I won't have my kids being patronised by that bloody cretin down the street.

MAL: A bloody plumber and he's got a fifty-by-twenty filtered pool.

(Act Two)¹

Says Williamson:

Don's Party has a very severe look at the materialism of supposedly Labor Party supporters who are just as worried about the plumber next door having a bigger swimming pool than they do as any Liberal voting supporter.¹⁵

But the play reminds us graphically that real political change involves more than casting a vote, and that true 'upward mobility' means more than simply being able to afford a house in the suburbs. Values, ideals, habits and attitudes must be shaped by our new wealth and our new circles. The play depicts the increasing loss of left wing inclinations as working-class people become more affluent and removed from their earlier ideals. Williamson remarked there is a "relative indifference" among the characters to the actual election results. They have gathered ostensibly to cheer on a Labor victory, but

Actually none of the party are going to be materially or psychologically affected to any great degree by the election results. Perhaps a few days of depression, similar to the effect of their football team having lost. It's not a crucial concern to their life style who wins.¹⁶

Thus Williamson captures the dilemma of idealistic young people achieving a certain level of success that affords comfortable living but leaves them without new direction. These voters express support for a party and platform that no longer really matters to them.

Don's Party also portrays the search for sexual identity amid stereotypic characteristics of chauvinism, liberation, and traditional sex roles. The diversity of sexual attitudes, interactions and practices depicted by the characters embody different facets of Australian sexual mores, taking on a farcical quality at times.

Throughout the play, expectations of sex roles create tension. Kath expects her husband to play "male host" by serving drinks to guests while she, as female hostess, serves food. Jody and Simon share that expectation, and are annoyed when Don does not fulfill his duties. Similarly, Simon expects his wife to be responsible for their children, repeatedly 'reminding' her to call the baby-sitter to check on the children, (a task he himself will not perform). The females converse about their homes, praising each other's ability to decorate or furnish, and inquiring politely about one another's children. When Susan announces she doesn't want children, the other women are offended and find her strange. Susan remarks:

Don't let's talk babies. The men outside on politics, the women inside on babies. The all-Australian party.

(Act Two)¹⁷

The men gravitate to the television and election results. It is the men, except for Susan, who initiate talk of sex, while the women respond by resisting, or encouraging, their sexual advances. Jenny remarks, "men are always trying to pick up something. It's in their makeup." When Susan retorts, "It's in our makeup too," Jenny finishes: "Yes, but we can control it better."¹⁸

However, despite the tensions that sexual roles provoke in all the characters, each character has a distinct sexual attitude, fear or need:

Simon expects men to serve drinks and women to call baby-sitters, displaying a traditional role orientation. Don reveals the old-fashioned double standard: flirting with Susan, he confesses he has had extramarital affairs, but when Susan asks him to bed and suggests they tell his wife, he pales and retreats. Tolerant of Cooley's sexual appetites, Don criticizes Kerry (a female) for indulging in the same behavior. Mal, drunkenly lamenting the size of his penis, chases first Jodie, then Susan, as if to abate his anxiety by conquest. Mack, we learn, was impotent, but encouraged his wife to have sex with his friends, then photographed them and sold the photos (she has just divorced him, so he is alone at this party.) Evan, who can neither accept nor prevent his wife's blatant extramarital affairs, appears ineffective. Cooley is grossly, but comfortably, chauvinistic—the typical "ocker"—who makes no attempt to camouflage, excuse or explain his behavior.

The female characters are equally complex in their sexual attitudes and expressions. Jody uses alcohol to loosen her inhibitions and responds to the attention men pay her, in keeping with a role-identification not unlike her husband's view. Although Kath had wanted children early in her marriage, she deferred to Don's career, which she seems to resent. Now she takes "tablets" (tranquilizers for depression) and snipes at Don but remains submissive to his will. Jenny, who married when she discovered she was pregnant, describes her marriage to Mal as "a farce," but—similar to Evan—is unable to identify or initiate options that will resolve her unhappiness. Suffering from a migraine throughout the party, she is described as emanating a "suppressed resentment." Kerry is worldly, strong, seductive, and enjoys sex, which she describes as a "natural part of the growth" of any relationship. She dismisses Evan's distress at her blatant affairs as "adolescent." Susan is aggressively sexual; the female counterpart of Cooley's vulgarity, she is direct and open, offending and threatening others with an inferred acceptance of bisexuality.

Through these diverse sexual expressions and repressions, Williamson portrays sexuality as more complex than male "chauvinism" or female "submission." Undeniably, *Don's Party* depicts a lack of understanding between members of the opposite sex which may result in treating one another as 'object' rather than responding to their humanness. Yet this lack of understanding does not seem to be a power struggle to control or suppress another, so much as an immature and ego-centric drive for pleasure. Despite its revelation of Australian life, *Don's Party* parallels the social awareness, political activism and sexual license of America in the '60s. This play allows us to examine a very powerful era in United States history from another perspective and thus to consider its ultimate effects on our society. By

this, we may have a clearer picture of where we have come from and where we hope to go.

The political and social changes these party guests hope will materialize with a Labor government remind us of the idealistic university graduates endorsing the Kennedy-fashioned social concerns that many hoped would change the world. Realizing that radical upheavals in social and political thinking (followed by a conservative backlash) occurred beyond the United States gives a different perspective to that era, which must cause us to reexamine its origins and meaning.

The sexual liberation of the 1960s with its explosive confrontation and anguished search for "real meaning" is well portrayed in the avante garde Susan, and in Kerry's pronouncement to her husband, "I'm not your chattel!" as she emerges from having been caught in bed with Cooley. Yet these characters also portray the confusion and tension that the search for a freer sexual behavior brought: these so-called "liberated" adults seem to be merely playing an adult version of that frantic children's race, musical chairs.

These three plays clearly reveal to an American audience the complex character and culture of the Australian people. Australia's struggle to assimilate its many new and diverse immigrants, the tradition of mateship, the preferential voting system—these are features characteristic of the Australian way of life which the reader will experience. In addition, American readers can recognize that Australians are struggling with the same sorts of personal and societal issues in their lives that we are struggling with in our own. How can we reduce prejudice and promote a harmonious, multicultural society? Must we choose between vitality and stability in our relationships? How can we acquire the material goods our societies have made available to us, yet still retain our concerns about the social issues that make us a caring people? Enriching and entertaining as drama, these plays allow us to see the pressing concerns of our own society in another culture, offering the "aesthetic distance" that allows us to see our own situation more clearly.

NOTES

- 1 Richard Beynon, *The Shifting Heart*, (London, Angus and Robertson, 1969)p. 71.
- 2 Beynon, p. 62.
- 3 Beynon, p. 72
- 4 Beynon, p. 71.
- 5 Ray Lawler, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, (London: Angus and Robertson, 1957), p. 20.
- 6 Lawler, p. 12.
- 7 Lawler, p. 123.
- 8 Lawler, p. 75.
- 9 Lawler, p. 125.
- 10 Lawler, p. 126.

- 11 David Williamson. "The Australian Image." a talk at Murdoch University, Oct. 27, 1981. *Australian Playwrights* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), p. 39.
- 12 David Williamson. *Don's Party*, (Sydney: Currey Press, 1983), p. 44
- 13 Williamson, *Don's Party*, p. 46.
- 14 Williamson, *Don's Party*, p. 83.
- 15 David Williamson. "Radio Interview by Jennifer Palmer." *Australian Playwrights*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), p. 164
- 16 David Williamson. "Interview by Staff and Students at Aarhus University, *Australian Playwrights*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), p. 79.
- 17 Williamson, *Don's Party*, p. 68.
- 18 Williamson, *Don's Party*, p. 70.

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**CONTEMPORARY BRITISH DRAMA:
GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF POWER**

Robert Turley

Humanities and literature classes dealing with the themes of myth and history, and interested in raising important questions about current social, economic and political ills, might do well to look at some examples of contemporary British drama. Several recent plays suggest that reconstructing characters and works from the past can shed much light on today's society. The thread connecting many of these works is the desire to develop an understanding of the present by providing imaginative insight into historical figures and processes. Setting their works in the context of significant historical times, places, and events, a few British playwrights have used a variety of techniques linking political and social concerns with such feminist issues as gender stereotyping, family relationships and sexual oppression, the division of labor, ethnocentrism, and class struggles. Literary and cultural characters from the past, shown struggling with power, gender relationships, and values in a particular historical context, are offered as emblems for serious contemporary contemplation. Writers such as Edward Bond, David Hare, Caryl Churchill, Howard Brenton, and Pam Gems investigate particular periods of history to create socio-political dramas which explore contemporary issues of sexuality, power, and values. Two, in particular, stand out for their innovative styles and their use of themes dealing with myth, gender, and history. Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, and Pam Gems's *Queen Christina*, are both keenly interested in those myths which promote competition, aggression, and possibly even self-destruction and which have become codified as values for a repressive and oppressive society. Many of these myths are associated with how women and men perceive one another in relation to aggressiveness, leadership qualities, and notions of violence. The playwrights juxtapose contemporary issues with issues from the past, not to uncover specific historical facts but to reveal how the past somehow lives on to misinform the present.

Many of Caryl Churchill's plays reconstruct historical periods and characters to raise questions about particular aspects of current socio-economic and political practices. Using her British cultural heritage and perspective, she employs history in her 1982 play, *Top Girls*, to reveal the class struggle as it has persisted in every time and place. *Top Girls* combines irony and history to explore the roots of injustice and oppression especially in relation to ideas and myths of success and achievement for men and women. This play is an important beginning point for understanding both the imaginative use of history throughout Churchill's work, and, more broadly, the various ways history is being used in contemporary British theater to encourage audiences to consider how society might be improved.

Churchill's use of history as a central motif in her dramas goes back well before *Top Girls*. She based her 17th-century play, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (with Joint Stock, 1976), on a 1649 *Digger Pamphlet* of the same name. Inspiring this work was the revolutionary belief in the millennium that pervaded the Middle Ages and influenced English thought at the time of England's

civil war. Soldiers in that war fought the king believing Christ's return would soon follow, establishing a heaven on earth. "What was established instead," Churchill points out, "was an authoritarian parliament, the massacre of the Irish, the development of capitalism" (Churchill, *Plays One* 181). Her concern in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* focused on certain aspects of history which textbooks sometimes treat lightly or overlook. The 17th century was also the setting for *Vinegar Tom* (with *Monstrous Regiment*, 1976) which showed how a variety of nonconformist women came to be labelled as witches. Churchill wrote *Vinegar Tom* from a feminist perspective, using twenty-one scenes of various women—sometimes singing songs while dressed in modern attire—with differing attitudes toward their male-defined roles. Some of these women wholeheartedly accept their roles in the play while others rebel, defiant to the end. Regardless of their position, that end is always the same: all witches are put to death. Churchill explains that her point was not to investigate "... the interesting theory that witchcraft had existed as a survival of suppressed pre-Christian religions..." but rather to explore "... the theory that witchcraft existed in the minds of its persecutors, that 'witches' were a scapegoat in times of stress like Jews and blacks" (*Plays: One* 128). As with some of Edward Bond's work, where history is an important source, Churchill says she "...didn't base (*Vinegar Tom*) on any precise historical events, but set it rather loosely in the seventeenth century ..." (*Plays: One* 130). And like *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Vinegar Tom* represents Churchill's phase of exploring overlooked and incorrect information in history which has filtered down through prejudices and misconceptions in films and monographs. Churchill wrote two other plays in 1978 which also used various historical settings to call into question contemporary notions of feminism, gender stereotyping, class struggle, and the distribution of labor according to sex. These works, *Softcops* and *Cloud Nine*, were intended, as Mark Brown states, "... to elucidate contemporary attitudes and assumptions in terms of their historical perspectives"(41). Perhaps Churchill's most famous and successful effort in this group of plays is *Cloud Nine*. Brown argues that its dramatic technique parallels Eastern philosophy in character changes and time scheme. Half of the play takes place in the historical setting of 1880 colonial Africa, but, as Brown points out, "... Churchill again undermines assumptions about selfhood by requiring members of the cast to change characters for the second act" (42). The time scheme is confusing to audience and critic alike, because Act II occurs in London, 1980, following the 1880 setting for Act I, "... but for the characters it is only twenty-five years later" (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 4). Mark Brown thinks that understanding Churchill's interest in Eastern philosophy offers insight into *Cloud Nine* because these dramatic devices of confusing time schemes and character changes

... [heighten] the contrast between the two periods but reinforces the concept of historical and individual rebirth. The play asks the audience to adjust on so many levels—changes of time, location, actor/character relationship, and social 'norms'—that the assumptions which underlie modern Western views of reality are again strongly challenged. (43)

Churchill's early work dealing with historical sources and settings is preparation for her more recent experiments using history to, as Lou Lappin writes, "... provide archetypal characters, plots and situations that become emblems for contemporary thought and feeling" (Lappin 1987, 42). Lappin's observation, it is sig-

nificant to note, parallels Brown's view even though Lappin does not rely on Eastern models to develop his argument. Churchill deconstructs history, employing character changes and irony to make the viewer not only see himself more clearly in the past but also contemplate possibilities for a better future: one with less social and economic injustice and oppression. She looks for this future in two of her more recent plays, *Top Girls* (1982) and *A Mouthful of Birds* (with David Lane, 1986) which also display perhaps her greatest range of creativity in the use of history. Churchill's recent dramas show a concern for revealing the history of women and men in their social relationships and ideas of success and achievement, along with their desire to create a better social, economic, and political future. Her work from the early to mid-1980s is also closely connected with historical revisions that have emerged from the modern women's movement as written and performed texts, but her plays are in contrast to those dramas—such as that found in much of Pam Gems's work—which primarily search out and celebrate previously unrecognized achievements of women. Helene Keyssar places Churchill's recent work in the category of "dangerous history plays [which] take the past as warning that to transform ideas of gender requires changes in culture and consciousness for which there are no precedents" (Keyssar 136). Keyssar believes Churchill's *A Mouthful of Birds* "...provides convincing evidence that drama may yet have a unique role to play in shaping the future" (137).

The seven stories in *A Mouthful of Birds*, staged in short sections and pieces, have their sources in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Euripides' *The Bacchae*. In her "Author's Notes," Churchill explains that her interest in this subject came from a workshop where the idea of "possession and ... women being violent..." came up as topics. She points out that women traditionally have been seen as more peaceful than men, and that this view has been politicized, particularly by women protesting nuclear weapons. There is a danger of polarizing men and women with this traditional view, so that men, especially, have no reason to change. It seems important to recognize women's capacity for violence and men's for peacefulness. (Churchill, *A Mouthful of Birds* 5)

Keyssar believes "Churchill's dramaturgical strategy here, as in others of her works, is to cast the audience as Hamlet, half-aware that there is something rotten in our past and present state, but lacking 'gall to make oppression bitter;' one common goal of many of Churchill's plays is to provide the gall that will make bitter the particular oppressions of gender and class" ("Doing dangerous History" 138). This is not unlike the "rot" that Edward Bond confronts in *The Woman*; Bond also shows, in *Hecuba*, a woman's capacity for violence as well as peacefulness. Churchill, however, explores a wider range of techniques in calling assumptions about violence into question. She not only insist that both women and men have a capacity for violence; she also disturbs conventional definitions of violent acts. Characters are transformed, sometimes with ironic inconsistencies, from peaceful into violent beings, in ordinary and extraordinary situations. Meanwhile, the audience tries to keep up with conventional distinctions between violent and non-violent acts, such as killing soldiers and/or civilians in war and peace. While *A Mouthful of Birds* compels the audience to think about the history of violence, Churchill's 1982 play, *Top Girls*, is concerned with the roots of injustice, oppression, and despair. In it, she tries to persuade the audience to contemplate the possibility of new cultural practices by confronting the responsibilities both men and

women share in the process of change. To achieve this, she stretches the use of historical process—transforming the past so that the audience may reflect upon and discover an alternative future—in a way which links her earlier uses of history with more recent creative endeavors like that in *A Mouthful of Birds*.

Rather than focus upon one period of history as she does in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *Vinegar Tom*, or as Bond does in *The Woman*, Churchill's *Top Girls* uses figures from various periods of history to connect historical settings and circumstances with contemporary society. The result is a production which begins with a fantasy from the past, leads into realistic scenes from the present, and offers unsettling possibilities for the future. Her transformation of historical figures through a sort of time warp is a counterpart to the transformation needed in society today.¹ The cast of characters includes Isabella Bird, the 19th-century world traveler from Edinburgh; Lady Nijo, a 13th-century Japanese Emperor's courtesan and later a Buddhist nun who travelled on foot through Japan; Dull Gret, the subject of the Brueghel painting of a woman in an apron and armor leading a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils; Pope Joan, who, disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope between 854-856; and Patient Griselda, the obedient wife in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The play's curious beginning can only be put in proper perspective as the characters' personalities unfold and develop and in relation to the conclusion. The dinner party focuses upon Marlene, a contemporary business woman who has just been promoted to managing director of the "Top Girls" Employment Agency. The party is to celebrate her promotion. The humorous and touching first scene reveals the lives of these women—their adventures, triumphs, and losses—through lengthy, energetic conversation that finally dwindles into a somber mood of sobbing, crying, and drunkenness.

Much is revealed through their meeting and dialogue. This long scene with the dinner party is the only non-naturalistic event as well as the only scene in which all seven performers appear in concert. Later, these female fantasy characters, along with the waitress, assume the roles of Marlene's clients, co-workers, sister, and daughter respectively. Janet Brown says that the dinner party operates "almost (as) a parody of feminist glorifications of women's community . . . [and] also a serious comparative study of the lives of remarkable women, historical and fictional, a kind of dramatized women's studies class" (127). Brown further compares the play to Judy Chicago's famous work, *The Dinner Party*, in which Chicago creates place settings to represent famous women from history. However, some critics dispute whether or not Churchill's opening scene is integrated with the play's second half, finding it difficult to see how the two halves of the play complement one another (Nightingale H 22). The clue to understanding the play's integrated theme lies in a close look at what the characters represent from their respective historical and cultural periods, how Churchill uses them in this scene, and how she relates the overall structure of the play to historical events and materials through them.

Churchill's two contrasting parts in *Top Girls* are as important to exploring historical processes as are those of Bond in *The Woman*. In both plays, the contrasting segments are integrated through the actions and events of history. Beneath the wild and funny chatter of the dinner party guests, certain commonali-

ties begin to emerge in spite of the disparate circumstances of their lives. Watching a variety of characters come together from different cultural and historical periods in Part I, the audience may at first assume that Churchill intends to demonstrate the common bonds they share as heroines united in their celebration of achievement in overcoming patriarchal systems. But Part II reveals the breakdown of the commonalities among the fantasy characters and between these characters and Marlene, and this breakdown produces Churchill's theme concerning the roots of injustice and the need to consider alternatives for the future. The play's title then displays Churchill's use of irony: the conclusion is a criticism of Marlene's position at the "top" rather than a celebration of it. Concerning commonalities and disunity among the characters, Michelene Wandor points out that the dovetailing of the dialogue suggests a sharing of experiences, and the interruptions give a sense of bubbling excitement while also suggesting (depending on the nature of the production) the ways in which the women can chatter on and on without necessarily listening to one another. (*Look Back in Gender* 123).

A close look at the characters' actions and dialogue at the dinner party reveals the play of unity and tension among the fantasy figures and Marlene. Dull Gret at first seems the most out of place, eating more than she converses, asking for soup or bread, and contributing to the conversation only by saying she raised ten children and a pig (I.i., 4,18). But Janet Brown, concurring with Wandor, points out that the adventurous life stories of Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, and Pope Joan show how all of these women, "... isolated from other women and from family life, ... are (except Griselda) terrible egotists who interrupt one another continually" (Brown, "Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* Catches the Next Wave" 127). When these fantasy characters assume the roles of present day office workers, clients, and family members in the second part of the drama, Churchill shows how Marlene fails to unite the women into a group which can celebrate the achievements of women. The play, therefore, combines irony and history to create a revelatory theatrical experience. Marlene's own history becomes important and revealing, just as the opening scene uses historical characters and their cultural distinctions to uncover the roots of social oppression. Marlene's past is revealed to be that of a working-class woman who gave up her illegitimate child for adoption and ignored her parents and class to get to the top. Janet Brown says, "The play is, at one level, a critique of the individual woman who achieves equality in the work world without regard for her sisters (literal or figurative), and even at their expense" (124). Ironically, Marlene thinks she will ultimately help her "sisters," and in the opening scene she wants to celebrate her accomplishment with fellow heroines. Mel Gussow believes one of the ironies in the play is that "none of the heroines is really heroic" (Gussow, C17). Marlene's final separation from her sister Joyce, highlighted in the reference to "us and them" in the last scene, mirrors her separation from the five historic fantasy "sisters" in the first scene.

The demythologizing in *Top Girls* is less subtle than in Bond's work. Churchill uses an all-female seven member cast to play sixteen different characters, five of whom are out of the past. Her dramatic events force the audience consciously to consider social principles and gender relationships through role reversal and the deconstruction of history and geography. History is not used in a traditional sense, to separate the past from the present. Rather, it is turned upside down, with identifiable characters from the past meeting in the present. History is evoked

through references to the characters' experiences rather than by setting the action at an identifiable point in the past. Churchill, therefore, dramatizes cyclical rather than linear images of social and political events. An effect of alienation is achieved through defamiliarizing and subverting common and ordinary expectations regarding social hierarchies and gender. Rather than challenging established historical myths through male and female confrontation, as Bond does in *The Woman*, Churchill takes a popular myth of the childless career woman and leads the audience to judge the "feminist hero." She uses this idea to play off radical feminist positions against socialist feminism, providing a unique and different approach to gender, myth, and history than is found in Bond's writing. But the two playwrights have in common an interest in the irrational aspect and historical foundations of certain myths and how individuals have been or can be manipulated by them. Both raise important questions about contemporary British culture which have significance for many others facing issues of oppression and injustice.

A second way to use historic characters and situations to challenge and debunk certain myths that have been legitimized through time can be found in the work of Pam Gems. Like Churchill, Gems expresses a sense of disgust and outrage in her attacks on practices and mythologies from the past which continue in modern British society and other Western industrialized countries. But rather than attack ideas and raise questions, as Bond and Churchill do through their recreated fantasy and fictional characters, Gems prefers to examine how historic and mythical women have been overlooked or misrepresented in various literary or historical accounts. She can be grouped with Bond and Churchill as a writer from the left, but her primary focus has been on women who have seized opportunities to create or make their own history. This is the approach in *Camille*, *Piaf*, *Guinevere*, and *Queen Christina*, with each character going against conventional role expectations. Gems is interested in how various roles—from courtesan, to singer, to queen—can change or even be distorted when they clash with traditional cultural expectations and designs. "All the stories have been told long ago," she says. "Your job is retelling. Relighting. You have a number of weapons as a dramatist . . . humor, suspense, sexual attraction . . . anything to make people come alive" (Betsko 204). In Gems's *Camille*, Dumas fils' heroine, Marguerite, is demystified by being given a new image as a working woman. The idea of romantic love and sacrifice displayed in the novel is superseded by the image of a community of women working and struggling together for survival in a competitive, patriarchal 19th-century business world. Marguerite's enterprise supports servants, workers, mother and brothers in Gems's retelling. The progress of the relationship between Marguerite and Armand is shown through the willingness of Armand to turn away from his father's aggressive and patriarchal system and code of values. Gems is concerned with how women protagonists continue to be portrayed as "... the old emblem, just as before ... sexy, moody, mysterious, and a right old turn-on ..." (Betsko 203-4). She seeks to break down certain stereotypical gender-related attitudes in which "... women have been used as emblems ... as objects of desire, worship ... to be feared, guarded, protected ... humiliated, enslaved, most particularly as property" (Betsko 204). That is why Gems labels recent plays such as David Hare's *Plenty* as "most inaccurate," for perpetuating this "emblem" of a sexy, neurotic female, pursued and protected by her male counterparts. Gems's answer to plays like *Plenty* is to retell the stories of historic personalities, making them "metaphors" rather than "emblems."

In *Piaf*, she recounts the French singer's life not as that of a romanticized heroine, climbing to the top by mere determination, sexiness, or talent, but, rather, as the life of a woman who has a tough, independent attitude toward the world. "Piaf is no longer a brave Cockney sparrow," writes Lou Lappin in his analysis of Gems's play, but a figure sustained by her hardiness and her sexual and economic independence. In her drive for drink, drugs, and a succession of casually used and dismissed lovers, Piaf possesses an active and vigorous appetite as well as the kind of toughness and resiliency that are commonly identified with the male power structure. In her transformation from street waif to chanteuse, Piaf never denies her working-class origins or loses her ability to view the world without sentimentality and illusion. (Lappin 43)

In contrast to the *Piaf* character who knows exactly who she is and what she intends to do with her life, Gems recreates another character from the past, *Queen Christina*, who is less certain of her own identity when it comes to the paradox of gender roles and male/female codes of behavior. Like Piaf, Queen Christina is also caught up in certain conflicts over conformity to gender patterns, but, lacking Piaf's self-assurance, Christina is trapped and isolated by certain sexual attitudes dictated by political roles and expectations.

Gems both summarizes the play and explains her reason for selecting this subject in her Program Notes to *Queen Christina*. She explains that, like many people who had seen the Garbo movie about the 17th-century queen,

I had the idea ... that Christina had been a shining, pale, intellectual beauty, who had, romantically, chosen freedom. The reality is harsher. The real Christina was a dark, plain woman with a crippled shoulder, daughter of a beautiful mother whose health and nervous system had been ruined by yearly pregnancies in the effort to provide a male heir. Since Christina was the only survivor, she was, at her father's instruction reared as a man, educated and taught all the male necessities ... how to lead an army. And then, on her accession, told to marry and breed, that is, to be a woman. (*Queen Christina*, Program Notes 47)

She goes on to explain that Christina also adopted the male viewpoint about women of the era, namely, that they were "weak, hysterical, silly creatures" (Notes 47). The play shows how these gender conflicts eventually led to Christina's abdication to Rome, where she hoped to find a new life of "warmth and freedom" after experiencing the "cold, Lutheran north." When one of her suitors tries to persuade her to join him as her "Queen-General" in ruling Poland, she refuses, on the basis that he only wants a political arrangement to help in the war effort. Her reply is

No. No more killing. I begin to perceive that I am a woman. What that is heaven knows . . . the philosophy is yet to be written, there is a world to be explored. (II.vii., 45)

Gems uses the play to challenge both past practices and continuing discrepancies in 20th-century gender roles, especially in Western industrialized countries. Throughout, she shows the confusion the Queen experienced in searching for her identity. Women of Christina's time could not develop the "cognitive or artistic side of their nature ... [since their role] was confined, necessarily, to the production and rearing to maturity of children" (Notes 47). Gems notes that the "inadvertent,

frequent, often fatal" pregnancies of Christina's age have fortunately been replaced in this century with safer conditions and the choice not to breed if a woman so desires. But she also points out that all these so-called "wonderful freedoms" still lead to "trappy dilemmas." Gems believes reading contemporary literature, magazines, and novels reveals a dichotomy. On one hand, there is

A whole movement which emphasises women's rights, the right to join, to have equal opportunity, to represent. At the same time torrents of romantic novels, proliferating magazines on the traditional 'female' roles and skills ... cooking, sewing, interior decorating, the art of cosmetics, fashion. Given the needs of manufacturers to sell their goods, it is still a colliding mixture of signals. Having our cake and eating it? Freedom with security? Whichever way we look at it, the old norms won't do any more We have a lot of thinking to do. Is it possible to create a multi-society which accepts, equally in society, gay relationships, the motherly man, the fatherly woman, the chaste, the sexually needful. Perhaps, if we can hang on to the best of permissiveness, and not back-lash into our old, beloved Puritanism, this anarchic, chaotic time in England's history, when the consent to be governed has given way, new norms, new models might emerge. (Notes 48)

Of these two recent British playwrights, Churchill and Gems, Gems might come closest to raising questions about re-defining roles in a complex society. But both achieve their goal to present stimulating, entertaining drama which compels their audiences to ask meaningful questions of universal significance. For those developing lessons in humanities and literature classes, who want to offer a critique of contemporary culture, these recent British dramatists offer some exciting possibilities. Perhaps more than anything, they can help students recognize that certain themes, questions, ideas, and problems are not simply current concerns but enduring issues which transcend the boundaries of time and culture.

Endnotes

- 1 Helen Keyssar argues in her article, "Doing Dangerous History," in Phyllis Randal, ed. *Caryl Churchill: A Casebook*, that Churchill uses character transformation in her drama to suggest ways that society might be transformed.

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“BARTLEBY THE SCRIVENER” AS ALIENATED WORKER

Jack Wortman

Among American writers, none, with the possible exception of William Faulkner, has displayed a greater disdain for public acceptance than Herman Melville. In his obsessive search for meaning, Melville made no compromise with public taste, or even public understanding. From time to over the past twenty years I have struggled to teach one of Melville's most enigmatic stories, “Bartleby the Scrivener.” The most obvious interpretation of “Bartleby,” which was published two years after *Moby Dick*, is as an autobiographical account of the author's sense of estrangement from American culture. There is little doubt that Melville felt alienated as an artist. After the publication of *Moby Dick* his popularity waned, and even his friend Hawthorne was cool toward the work and toward Melville. But I would like to go one step further and argue that while the story might be interpreted as dramatizing the plight of the artist, it can also be read more generally as describing the increasing alienation of all workers, that is, about the changes taking place in the American workplace that make it more and more difficult to experience fulfillment in one's job or to feel part of a human community.

The story is told from a first person point of view, and is, therefore, designed to tell us not only about Bartleby but also about the narrator himself. We learn that he is an elderly man who, as he tells us, likes his ease and security and is, above all, prudent. There are other important characteristics we can deduce from the first person narrative: that he is a decent man, a man who would like to do the right thing, a man who in telling the story to us, reveals a deep sense of guilt about his part in it. I will return to the narrator later.

The setting is also revealing. The Lawyer's offices are on Wall Street, a location which can be taken two ways. First, it is a story about commerce and the commercialization of relationships. Second, it is a story about walls, about entrapment. As the narrator tells us, his office view looks onto a white wall on one side and a blackened wall on the other. While using black conventionally as a symbol of evil, Melville repeats his use of white from *Moby Dick* to symbolize something more terrifying than the positive evil of black. White here represents the void of meaning, the sheer terror of nothingness. As we proceed, I will argue that there is a confluence of the meaning of these two aspects of the setting. The story is a story of that entrapment which grows from commercializing human relationships for the sake of profit.

As the narrator tells us, this is a story about law copyists -scriveners-particularly Bartleby, a most unusual example of this tribe. But before examining Bartleby we need to look at two other points. First, we should ask ourselves why Melville has picked this particular occupation to build his story about, and second, we should examine Bartleby's fellow scriveners, each of whom has his story.

Melville has chosen an occupation which would seem to represent the ultimate in job alienation — endlessly copying the impersonal “legalist” words of another person all day can hardly qualify as a job in which to take pride or as a job in which one can demonstrate craft or cleverness. Bartleby functions as a human

xerox machine. At the same time, his two fellow workers dramatically support this idea of alienation. Turkey, an elderly Englishman, is a capable worker in the morning but is dysfunctional in the afternoon after "drinking" his lunch. A hopeless alcoholic, Turkey has responded to alienation in a familiar manner, by blotting out his consciousness. His younger colleague, Nippers, abstains from alcohol, but is so driven by frustrated ambition that he, too, is only functional for half a day, in the afternoon after calming down. Nippers displays all of the neurotic symptoms of the modern worker caught in a meaningless job: anger, restlessness and a bad stomach. A third member of this office, "Gingernut" has been sent by his father to learn the trade and serves as an office boy. His street vendor father hopes to give his son a better life, but judging from the adults in the office this does not seem likely.

The center of this tale is Bartleby himself, or more properly, the relationship between Bartleby and the narrator. Bartleby, a strange quiet man, foreshadowing characters created nearly seventy-five years later by Franz Kafka, begins as an almost compulsive workaholic, feverishly copying night and day. At a strange juncture, he begins to withdraw, refusing to join in the customary reading of the copy for errors. At this point we sense that the narrator himself is, in some mysterious way, a troubled man. Rather than firing Bartleby, he rationalizes and continues to employ him. Bartleby, for his part, does not flatly refuse to check his work. Rather, he replies, as he will from this point throughout the rest of the story, that he "would prefer not to" (947). After a time, Bartleby not only refuses to read but also ceases to copy, depriving his boss of any reason to keep him on. Even so, the narrator, after much soul searching, continues to tolerate Bartleby's presence in the offices, which by this time have become his permanent abode. In time, his presence will become an embarrassment and a threat to the business, which will cause the narrator to abandon the offices and ultimately to abandon Bartleby to imprisonment for vagrancy. Actually, in one sense the narrator does not abandon Bartleby. He visits him in prison and arranges for food and care. Bartleby responds by refusing to eat and dying in a fetal position, curled up with his face to the cold stone wall.

The great puzzle in this story centers on the question of motivation, of Bartleby, obviously, and, no less critically, of the narrator. The universal response to this story, in my experience, is frustration with the main character. As one of my students said of Bartleby in a recent class discussion, "I wanted to slap him." Other students agreed and could find no better explanation for his actions than to label him crazy. I think Melville would appreciate the irony of these responses. Perhaps Bartleby is crazy, but, if so, I believe it is a meaningful craziness. Better yet, perhaps he should be described like another more contemporary anti-hero, Yossarian from *Catch-22*, as a sane man in an insane world.

In attempting to find method and rational motivation to Bartleby's actions, I would begin by pointing out that he doesn't just stop working all at once. There are clear stages to his actions. He begins by working obsessively. Then he withdraws from reading, next from copying, and finally he begins to get in the way of the business; he becomes obstructive in a passive sort of manner. At each stage of withdrawal the narrator finds a way to accommodate what has happened. It is only after this accommodation that the withdrawal moves to the next stage. It is as though the scrivener is challenging his employer in some way, pushing him like an errant child pushes parents to see where they will draw the line. It should be clear at this point, as I suggested earlier, that this is not just Bartleby's story. His actions would not have meaning, indeed would not be possible, without the cooperation of the narrator. This is a story about a relationship, the relationship between the boss

and his scrivener. It is a relationship tested to the utmost by Bartleby, who, like the errant child, is testing the limits and will finally, much to his sorrow, find them.

To better understand Bartleby's acts of inaction, it may be useful to examine a more familiar, analogous, situation. We are all aware of instances of teen-aged children, typically from well-to-do homes, who act in anti-social ways. Imagine the child from a prominent family who consistently embarrasses his parents with acts such as public drunkenness. Imagine him warned by his father that further such acts will force him to disown him. Typically, the son will again drink himself into a stupor in defiance of his father. Public response to this kind of event is predictable. There is anger and confusion that someone who is materially privileged, and presumably without motive, would do such a thing. This sounds very much like the typical response to Bartleby. I would argue that both situations reflect a common malady. Robert Coles in his study of affluent suburban children found that although they had been given all the material wealth that any child could ask for — their own T.V., an eighteen speed bike, a computer — they hadn't been given much attention. Children are demanding and often troublesome; for parents with the means, it is easier to buy them off than to spend time with them. I would suggest that these children have a special hunger that their parents cannot satiate with things. Perhaps the anti-social children are desperately testing, trying to find out if their parents will love them in spite of the inconvenience they are causing. Such children are crying for acceptance as human beings, having been the subject of an implicit bargain where they stay out of their parents' hair in exchange for their own T.V. and spending money. They finally rebel and demand that they be regarded as something other than the object of a commercial transaction. They say: here I am in all my human messiness. Love me, or reject me. In similar manner, Bartleby, as a member of the human family, says: I will not be bought off. I will not accept these other jobs you offer me. I will not do the meaningless work. I will, in fact, become an embarrassment, an inconvenience to you until you either accept me or reject me.

This returns us to the narrator. The question is, why should he feel any obligation to Bartleby, whom he has just met and whose actions can hardly be endearing? Or, perhaps more to the point, what is the nature of the feeling that he does have? The narrator offers us several hints. At one point he quotes Christ: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another" (962). He later says that after a time he accepts the belief that Bartleby has been billeted upon him "for some mysterious purpose by an all wise providence, which it is not for a mere mortal like me to fathom" (962). That is, he believes he is being tested, and since, as he goes on to observe, the test is easy to pass, he will submit to it. He clearly does not understand the nature of Bartleby's Christ-like demands. When Jesus is confronted by a rich man and asked what he must do to achieve eternal life, he tells the man that he must sell all his goods and donate them to the poor. The rich man leaves in sadness, we are told. The rich narrator refuses to recognize the all encompassing nature of Bartleby's demands, at least on a conscious level. Bartleby demands of the narrator that he choose between the easy world of commercial success and worldly acceptance and the world of humanity. Sadly, this seems to ask too much.

If Bartleby's employer is being tested, what is it that drives Bartleby to test him? This is the crux of the issue. What experiences have so alienated him? The only hint we have, other than the evidence of his actions in the law offices, is that he formerly worked at the dead letter office in Washington, D. C. What this seems to have in common with the scrivener's job is that it, too, is personally meaningless work. Disposing of failed communication would seem to offer as little consolation as

copying other people's words. But if it is meaningful work he is seeking, how can he achieve it by withdrawing his cooperation in his present work? I believe the key lies in understanding more precisely what is wrong with Bartleby's work. The problem is not just that it is boring and offers no opportunity to display skill or intellect or other human qualities, although this is certainly true. It is also that the work has become the sole measure of his worth. Just as a xerox machine, in its case very properly, is valued solely for its function, so Bartleby is regarded in terms of what he can contribute to profits. He has become a commodity.

In connection with this it is important to go back to the setting. Wall Street is used not just to symbolize the entrapment of walls, but also to represent the new market-oriented economy that is part of the industrial transformation of 19th century America. The transformation is from a small town and rural economy, where the family is the basic unit of production, to the impersonal market economy of modern America. In a world where human worth and human relationships more and more are defined by one's productive capacity, and where the productive process does not quite require those skills and abilities that allow us to demonstrate our uniqueness, what options are available to us? Turkey and Nippers represent the choices made by many, but they are not very attractive choices. Bartleby chooses differently. If not a more hopeful choice, it is certainly more heroic. He refuses to work and live as a machine, "he prefers not to." By withdrawing his work in stages, he challenges his employer to accept him solely for his humanity rather than for his productive value. He seems to say that human communities cannot be built on a commercial basis. Like Christ, Bartleby offers no compromise: only a choice. The choice is to accept humanity on its own terms or to reject it completely. Earlier we saw that the narrator viewed Bartleby as a test sent by Providence. He is determined to accept Bartleby because there is a minimal cost in accepting him. But again Melville brings us back to the hard choice. As Christ makes clear in the New Testament, you cannot serve two masters. Bartleby's final rejection is brought about by the force of public opinion, and it is a rejection reminiscent of Peter's rejection of Jesus. The difference is that Peter was able to redeem himself; the narrator is not able to make amends, although he does try. Bartleby is hauled off to the tombs, that is, to prison. The narrator shows up and tries to help, but this last attempt at compromise fails. This time Bartleby rejects him. The narrator attempts to buy off his conscience by paying the grub man to meet Bartleby's physical needs. But Bartleby is not eating. The narrator has failed the challenge and Bartleby, who is determined to live only as a human must now die. In this scene there is anticipation of an equally bizarre 20th century character, Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa. Gregor, who has been transformed into a noxious bug by the inhuman work world and the collapse of the modern family, finds that his hunger is not for the ordinary food that modern market economies provide for us, but rather for the spiritual food symbolized by his sister's music. When denied this food, he too curls up and dies, another martyr to the dehumanization of modern work and society. The paradox seems to be that in producing the affluence of the modern world something very vital has been lost. We are able to provide an abundance of material goods, food for the body. But in the process of making ourselves so materially abundant we seem to have lost the capacity to provide food for the soul. We have lost the ability to find meaning and community in our work and in our lives generally.

Finally, we are left to ponder the narrator's final words: "Ah Bartleby, ah humanity" (970). As I interpret the story, Bartleby is truly a hero of humanity. Just as Melville refuses to compromise his artistic integrity, so Bartleby refuses to com-

promise his humanity. I believe there is more than a little irony in this final exclamation. It is made by a man who seems to have failed, at least on a conscious level, to understand the meaning of Bartleby's actions. Does this mean that he does finally understand that he has failed Bartleby's test, and that he, rather than Bartleby, is the truly lost soul? Perhaps. But given Melville's profound pessimism about the human condition, I suspect that such self awareness is not his intention.

ENDNOTES

1. All references which follow are to Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener," *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, ed. Nina Baym 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1986).

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**“POLAR” AND “SUPRAPOLAR”:
KARL HEIM’S INTERACTIVE MODEL OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND NATURAL SCIENCE**

Daniel W. Hackmann

Introduction

The modern perception that science and theology are at loggerheads is no longer so very modern, and seems to have become much like the weather: everyone talks about it, but no one does anything about it. Of course, there are many who would prefer that the situation remain this way, since the “warfare” model of the relationship between science and theology, initially dominated by theology, has long since resulted in its surrender.¹ At last, from this perspective, science was “free” to go about its research without deference to the superstitious claims of religious approaches to reality. Fortunately, at least from the perspective of a theologian, there is a tendency today to put the warfare model to rest and attempt some sort of restructuring of the debate along the lines of “dialogue” or “interaction.” Yet, there remain substantial problems to be overcome before anything like real interaction takes the place of conflict between theologians and natural scientists. This is true for a number of reasons.

The Recalcitrance of the “Warfare Model”

First of all, to borrow Thomas Kuhn’s terminology, “normal science” is the quotidian mode in the natural sciences. Once a paradigm gains ascendancy, most scientists will quite naturally occupy themselves with tracking down the various ramifications of the hypotheses which drive and provide connective tissue for it. If, instead of doing “normal science,” these same people undertook to examine the conceptual apparatus which gave birth to the paradigm, the process of scientific discovery might literally come to a halt. In other words, reflection on the philosophy of science can at best have a critical function. Most scientists are, legitimately enough, deeply involved in the business of doing science from within a certain paradigm. A critique of their conceptual foundations will probably be seen by those doing “normal science” as either interesting, but of little account, or, at worst, as an activity seeking to subvert their aims. To put it another way, most scientists have enough routine research to do. Inquiries into the conceptual framework underlying that research may seem to be counterproductive luxuries.

A second and analogous reason for this persistent impasse has to do with the way in which many theologians have responded to the challenges of the natural sciences. As it became evident that 18th and 19th century theological strategies to combat the perceived onslaught of scientific knowledge were doomed to failure, some theologians intentionally pursued a course which would end the embarrassing challenges posed by the natural sciences forever.² Dialectical theology and its various descendants display this tendency in spades. The a-scientific and a-historical interpretations of Christianity put forth by Tillich, Barth, Bultmann, and others are well known. Many of these theologians self-consciously made their theological doctrines independent of scientific explanations of reality.³ It does not appear that any of them adopted this strategy because they thought science was an unnecessary or

counterproductive activity. On the contrary, they respected and valued scientific endeavors and wanted to see an end to the conflict which had enmeshed theology and science. Their answer was to emphasize the absolute otherness of God, and to stress the inability of the natural sciences, as well as all other human undertakings, to deal adequately with the divine. Properly conceived, they thought, theology and science do not conflict, because the realms with which they deal are utterly separate from one another. Theologians could go on talking about the reality of God's creation with the assurance that no scientific discoveries could touch the realm of faith.

Now, from one point of view, theologians would be free to pursue their own interests without the constant fear that some present or future scientific discovery would compromise their doctrine of God. In fact, this is exactly the claim that some scientists have made. Jeffrey S. Wicken, a biochemist, believes that science and theology each provide essential contributions to a "partial understanding" of the cosmos.⁴ The domains of theology and science are, respectively, the "interior dimension" of life, and the "exterior, objectifiable dimension" (54). Wicken doubts that evolutionary biology or sociobiology will ever be able to understand the inner, "sensitive" dimension of life, thus preserving a domain for theology. Within its domain, theology should "stand its ground" (55). Furthermore, Wicken talks of the way science "oversteps its authority," (54) and the "identity crisis" within which theology wallows, since science has "undercut" its basis (45). Wicken makes a much needed plea for better communication between theology and science and proposes that problems of basic language use need to be resolved (48,49), but his own language betrays the persistence of the warfare model, even though he is in the midst of arguing for an end to the hostilities.

Clearly, from his perspective, it is science which has and will continue to set the agenda for theology. The territory Wicken carves out for theological research has very little to do with reality as conceived by most scientists. He criticizes theologians like Pannenberg for accepting "monodimensional" views of reality (49). He implies that theology will experience further "erosion" if it tries to engage itself with scientific reality. Therefore, he assigns it to some vague alternative reality, a place where theologians can safely work out the intricacies of the "inner dimension of life." Although Wicken calls his notion of the relationship of theology and science a "dialogue," and makes a slight attempt to soft pedal reductionist claims on the part of science, his overtures sound like concessions offered by a conqueror. His opening remarks reveal this attitude well:

I feel diffident about commenting on theological treatises. I know little about theology, and much of my commentary will reflect that fact. This disclaimer having been made, I put aside the diffidence to observe that contemporary Christian theology seems to be in the midst of an identity crisis brought on by accomplishments of modern science which have undercut its traditional creationist base. (45)

I certainly do not blame Wicken for his "diffidence." It is my claim here that the warfare model, or perhaps better put, paradigm, is difficult to escape, precisely because it has shaped the current situation and largely continues to dominate. When scientists like Wicken try to heal the disputes, (and there is no reason to doubt his intentions), their proposals often have an undercurrent of condescension. To talk of "dialogue," "common language" and a "creative tension" between theology and science (49) is only of help if a true "conversion" to an interactive view of science and theology is in the offing. Wicken, at least, does not yet seem to have achieved this.

If we are looking for dialogue, an honest and mutual examination of basic assumptions is necessary. Wicken seems a bit too quick to accuse theologians of not understanding science, but he does not appear quite so willing to examine the fundamental issues regarding how he knows what he does with his science. Until this deeper clarification takes place, we will delude ourselves into thinking that our dialogue is making progress, when in fact it may be merely perpetuating the old conflict model we all wish to leave behind.

It seems to me that what is lacking in our efforts to banish the warfare model for good is alternative models which could provide new images of the interaction of science and theology. It is one thing to affirm, as practically everyone involved in the debate does today, that the warfare model is either passé or unhelpful. But new structures must be imagined which articulate this insight.

Interactive Models

Karl Heim is one theologian who proposed alternatives to the antagonistic relationship between theology and science, models designed to foster interaction rather than conflict. By interaction, or "interactive," I mean simply that the models imply interdependence or mutuality from the outset. The universe Heim envisions does not have an unbridgeable crevasse across which scientists and theologians must carry on dialogue.

Heim does not explicitly claim that his images should be used to clarify the relationship between theology and science. He did, however, devote an extensive portion of his career to discussions with natural scientists about the nature of reality. On the jacket of Heim's *The Transformation of the Scientific World View*, the physicist Pascual Jordan describes Heim as "...a theologian who knows how to evaluate the weight and significance of the contemporary natural sciences in all their breadth and depth."⁵

Heim was one theologian who made great strides in coming to grips with what his colleagues in the natural sciences were talking about. We shall attempt to apply models derived from his discussion in order to continue the dialogue he began.

Polar and Suprapolar

Ingemar Holmstrand, in his helpful volume on Karl Heim, notes with stunning understatement, that "the literature on Heim cannot be said to be very great."⁶ It is indeed unfortunate that Heim has not been read more frequently and carefully as a resource in the current debate, especially since he was so involved with analogous questions and anticipated much of the debate forty to fifty years ago. Before World War II Heim was interacting with scientists who were working out the "new physics."

Heim thought that theology and science could be integrated without either field losing its integrity. His program was designed to search out and develop the connections which he assumed to be there between theology and the natural sciences. His model focusses principally on the concept of "space" and the polar relationships within space(s). He thinks through the concept of space theologically in order to aid in the formulation of a total view of reality. As Holmstrand points out, Heim's concept is generalized from modern science (particularly physics).⁷

Heim explains what he means by "polar" by using examples from existentialist philosophy and modern physics. At one point he illustrates the polar or relational nature of time in the following way:

In the objective time series the point *now* is an arbitrary point, one of an infinite number of successive points of time, like a bead in a necklace....The point *now* moves forward along this endless road like a lonely traveller. Where he happens to be at any particular moment is a matter of no importance or consequence.⁸

He notes that the direction of time could conceivably be reversed as well, if only our own perception is left out of the matter. We could check objectively to see how much entropy there was in the universe at point t_1 , compare it to t_2 , and determine the direction of time.⁹ The only way a particular point can be located is by its relationship to at least one other point. Without this relationship, a single point is both "everywhere and nowhere," and this goes for points in space as well as in time. Heim gives many other examples, but generalizes his discussion in the direction of a basic philosophical insight. That is, he claims that all experienced reality is relational, and that the "space" in which each of us live is *polar space*.

Furthermore, there are many different kinds of space, all of which are related to each other. In fact, the very notion of space is inherently relational:

...the structure of space has its origin neither in the subject nor in the object but always in the *relation* which arises between a particular subject and a particular object whenever they encounter one another.¹⁰

Heim uses various images to explain this insight. One he draws from Edwin Abbott's ingenious book, *Flatland*. There, worlds of one, two, and three dimensions are described, and the way inhabitants of each would perceive inhabitants of worlds of different dimensions. He uses the difficulty which Flatlanders (inhabitants of a two dimensional world) have conceiving of a sphere, or even seeing it accurately, as a key to understanding the nature of the space we live in, as opposed to other possible spaces. Even though we cannot imagine adequately, let alone see in four dimensions, our space is capable of connection to other types of space by way of mathematical formulas. We can "translate" our existence to a space of higher dimensions, and we intuit that space in a nonobjective fashion, but we cannot see it.

These observations lead to two insights which can contribute significantly to our discussion. First of all, Heim's emphasis on the role of the observing subject in modern physics should provide a healthy corrective to the notion that the natural sciences are primarily engaged in gathering data which is objectively "there" and using that information in a more or less continuous spread of knowledge. Quantum mechanics knows all too well of the connection between the form which the universe takes and our particular vision of it. This means, quite obviously, that modern science does not stand in a more direct relationship to the "real world" than do other disciplines.

A good example of this can be seen in the recent stupendous discoveries facilitated by the Voyager spacecraft. Now more than 3 billion miles away, it has sent back the first pictures of the planet Neptune. Of course, the signal which it sends is extremely weak, initially of a magnitude of twenty-two watts, and by the time the signal reaches earth, after its four hour journey, it is reduced to a tiny fraction of the power of a digital watch battery. Nevertheless, Voyager's weak voice has

provided scientists with an exciting look at the eighth planet. Yet it is plain to most people involved with the project, that our "look" at Neptune is influenced in the extreme by the means, both theoretical and physical, by which the data were generated. And "generated" is the appropriate word here, not "collected," even though *Voyager* only seems to be taking pictures of what is "out there." Actually, there would be very little in the way of new discoveries without the aid of computer enhancement of photos transmitted by *Voyager's* tiny radio, and without computer graphic simulation of various models within which the data can be structured and interpreted.

Although Heim's insight regarding the subjective character of the process of discovery in the sciences is no longer new, we must keep in mind that he developed these ideas well before 1950. Ingemar Holmstrand claims that Heim anticipates some of the major parts of Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory, one point of which involves the relativity of scientific viewpoints.¹¹ Moreover, Heim's image of polarity has the advantage of starting within the structural relatedness (and limits) of all knowledge. Theologians and natural scientists do their work within the same polar space.

But Heim's model does not consist merely of an insight into the relativity of all existence. Heim's second insight, regarding the logical and mathematical possibility of other kinds of space, is developed in his notion of "suprapolar" space. Utilizing images drawn once more from Flatland, he develops a scenario which describes the conditions for and the necessity of the existence of another space which is both continuous and discontinuous with polar space. The point of our discussion is not to recount Heim's extended arguments regarding the disclosure of suprapolar space, which, according to Holmstrand, amount to an elaborate hypothesis regarding the problem of the transcendence of God.¹² For our purposes, it will suffice to understand what Heim means by suprapolar space and to examine how it relates to polar space.

Suprapolar space is revealed at the moment in which the opposition between two mutually exclusive alternatives is eliminated. Suprapolar space is more comprehensive than polar space and bridges the gap between the contradictions inherent in the either/or relationships in polar space. He gives an example from geometry:

If, in plane space, there are three points, A, B and C, lying one behind the other on a straight line, and I wish to proceed from A to C without passing through B, then, within the plane, I am compelled to choose between two possibilities. I must go round B either to the right or to the left. But if solid space has been disclosed to me, then a third possibility is suddenly made available, transcending the choice which plane space offered me, transcending, that is to say, the two possibilities which alone presented themselves within the plane. I can proceed in a third direction and pass from A to C by moving in a third dimension, either over B or under it.¹³

Expressed another way, the inhabitants of Flatland suffer from a "limit of dimension" when a sphere enters their two dimensional world. They can only see a circle which grows and decreases in size as the sphere passes through the plane which defines Flatland.

Heim's model of the relationship of polar and suprapolar space could be quite stimulating for the process of rethinking the relationship between theology and

science. The suprapolar space is the space where God is present for us, yet suprapolar space is not identical with the reality of God. The space in which God is disclosed overcomes the contradictions inherent in polar space, where subjects and objects seem to encounter one another, where the I and Thou meet in nonobjectifiable space.¹⁴

The realm of the suprapolar has implications for both science and theology. Heim derives his concept of the suprapolar from the way in which contemporary physics resolves the problem of the contrary notions of space and time, analyzing both within a cosmology which transcends the contradictions between the two, and resolving the problem in something like a "space/time receptacle." Suprapolar space can have the metaphorical function for theologians of conceptually unifying the immanence and transcendence of God.¹⁵ Neither problem can be solved within observable, or polar space, but the virtue of the polar/suprapolar model is that it can overcome the contradictions which are so difficult to deal with from inside our limited dimensionality.

Polar and suprapolar space are in a relationship of continuity and discontinuity, says Heim. On the one hand, suprapolar space encloses the whole of polar space within it. In this sense, there is continuity. In a sense, we live within the space in which God is disclosed such that God is present at every moment, but is accessible to us only something like the way in which the fourth dimension is related to our three dimensional space. This "thinking in spaces" allows Heim to account for why the reality of God is simply "not there" as long as one remains within the area described by polar space.¹⁶ Just as two spaces within polar space are cut off from one another (as we have seen, the problem of objectivity/subjectivity arises when scientists try to observe reality), so the suprapolar space may seem not to be there at all, even though it surrounds and touches it at all points simultaneously. It is both similar to and qualitatively different from our space.

I believe that Heim's model of the relationship between the space in which God is disclosed and our polar universe can provide new and thought provoking images for the relationship between theology and science. Both theology and science provide comprehensive models of reality which may appear, from a view of limited dimensionality, to be mutually exclusive, or at least in opposition to one another. Heim's model, in which the contradictions of polar space are "aufgehoben" in suprapolar space, opens a new way in which theology and science can interact. Suprapolar space, the space in which God is disclosed, is totally removed from the world of everyday observations, but is at the same time intimately related with and present in the world, but from the direction of a dimension which is as hard for us to conceive as the third dimension was for Flatlanders. Heim's model has the further advantage of allowing natural scientists and theologians to work out various aspects of a reality which comprehends their sometimes opposing interpretations of the universe. This should keep both theological and scientific models of reality from being taken too seriously, since they are both merely limited anticipations of suprapolar space. If this model were applied, neither scientists nor theologians would labor under the delusion that they were dealing with the "one true reality," believing that they alone were deriving true knowledge directly from the "data" at hand. Heim was convinced that once one had experienced the breaking in of the suprapolar space, living in polar space would never be the same. Again, it is like the experience of the character in Flatland whose perception of reality is permanently altered by his experience with the representative of Sphereland, limited and flawed though that experience may have been.

One other benefit of this model could be a mutually helpful cross fertilization of conceptions and images. Heim's own work is a good illustration of the mutuality which could arise between modern theological and scientific insights about reality.¹⁷

Critique and Summary

There are two main difficulties with Heim's model. First, though he refers to theology as a science, he never describes the conceptual apparatus that could make such an identification acceptable. If he had done so, he could have been clearer about the relationship of theology to science. As it is, he assumes theology is a science, and hence is limited in the way he describes theology's scientific status. He relativizes both theology and science, but performs no further clarification of the way each explores its particular vision of the universe. Heim should have probed the scientific method more deeply. This would have brought greater clarity, and it might have led him to address a second problem as well.

Heim describes the discovery of suprapolar space as a "transformation."¹⁸ What he means is that an understanding of the suprapolar comes in the form of a gift, as a conversion experience prior to which the idea of the suprapolar is totally opaque, or, better yet, totally invisible. No intellectual argument or teaching can bring a person to the realization of the suprapolar space. Now, given that Heim's polar and suprapolar spaces are somewhat like two paradigms in Kuhn's scenario, such that one often replaces and embraces the other but at a higher level, we recall that a conversion must usually take place to move a person between the two. Scientists functioning in different paradigms will often see completely different worlds, and their arguments aimed at each other will pass like ships in the night.

But Heim's own imagery mitigates against his claim that no leading or intellectual arguments will help a person "see." In Flatland, the inhabitants who have contact with the three dimensional world do experience something, and their "conversion" to three dimensional thought is facilitated by imperfect, yet important reflection on what the other world might be like. So it is not true that intellectual argument is ineffectual.¹⁹ In fact, Heim's whole strategy is based on the idea of making a good case, using various extended arguments, for suprapolar space as the space of God. In this case, Heim's discussion of his model undercuts what he may have already accomplished for his reader through his use of images.

Heim's model of the relationship of polar to suprapolar space points the way toward one possible solution to the relational problems which have hounded theology and science for the last 150 years or so. He proposes a strategy which would avoid insulating or isolating either group from the claims of the other. The model he proposes is sufficiently rich to enable a complex "re-visioning" of an interactive mode for theology and science without significantly compromising the integrity of either. Heim used just such a model effectively during his lifetime, and it is time his efforts received the attention and application which they deserve.

Endnotes

1. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Theological Questions to Scientists," *Zygon*, 16.1 (1981):65.
2. For instance, there is the well-known "God of the gaps" gambit. This was, from the beginning, a defensive and flawed posture, based on the mistaken notion that the natural sciences could never proceed to explain everything independently of the deity, and hence there would always remain a "sacred space" for theology *within* the universe. It could be argued that natural science is just as far from explaining the universe today as two centuries ago. But this would not be acceptable to many scientists and would have no effect on the faith in science to fill the gaps of knowledge, thereby leading to the same claustrophobic position that the original argument fostered.
3. See Pannenberg, "The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science," *Zygon*, 23.1 (1988): 6; and the response by Robert John Russel, "Contingency in Physics and Cosmology: A Critique of the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg," 25.
4. Jeffrey S. Wicken, "Theology and Science in the Evolving Cosmos: A Need for Dialog," *Zygon*, 23.1 (1988): 45. The numbers in parentheses in this part of the discussion refer to Wicken's article.
5. Karl Heim, *The Transformation of the Scientific World View* (London: SCM Press, 1953). A translation of *Der Christliche Gottesglaube und die Naturwissenschaft, II: Die Wandlung im naturwissenschaftlichen Weltbild*.
6. Ingemar Holmstrand, *Karl Heim on Philosophy, Science, and the Transcendence of God* (Stockholm: LiberTryck, 1980) 8. The context makes it clear that he is referring to the number of works published on Heim, not their quality!
7. Holmstrand 16.
8. Karl Heim, *Christian Faith and Natural Science* (New York: Harper, 1953) 61.
9. *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 157.
10. *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 135. Italics in original.
11. See Holmstrand 141ff.
12. See *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 139-150, and Holmstrabd's analysis in Holmstrand 114-116.
13. *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 145.
14. *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 163, 164.
15. *Christian Faith and Natu:al Science* 168.
16. *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 170.
17. See Heim's books, the *Transformation of the Scientific World View* and *The World: Its Creation and Consummation*.
18. *Christian Faith and Natural Science* 171.
19. Thus, I am also claiming that the satirical judgment of Heim's theology, that it is either "despair or Jesus," is not fair to him.

**SCHOLARSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE:
CHECKLISTS FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY**

*Evelyn Edson
James R. Perkins
and
Isa N. Engleberg*

Is the community college a place where faculty incapable of doing research and scholarship take refuge? Are community college teaching and scholarship mutually exclusive? These and similar questions have been used to describe and even demean community college educators. In recent years, however, community colleges have led a movement that intimately connects teaching and scholarship as a means of enhancing the community college mission.

Effective and experienced educators, no matter where they teach, know that faculty scholarship brings vitality to the classroom. Without active and on-going scholarship, notes become yellowed and lectures lifeless. The separation of teaching and scholarship at the university, so vitriolically described by Page Smith in *Killing the Spirit*, has not been a community college attribute. In fact, Smith sees community colleges as the hope of higher education.

[community colleges],...with close ties to their parent communities, free for the most part of the snobbish pursuit of the latest academic fads that so warp their university counterparts, and free also of the unremitting pressure to publish or perish, are, I believe, the hope of higher education in America. Unheralded and scorned or patronized by "the big boys," they carry out their mission with spirit and elan. (19-20)

"Publish or Perish" is not an appropriate model for scholarship at community colleges. A more realistic and defensible approach was developed by George Vaughan:

... the systematic pursuit of a topic, an objective, rational inquiry that involves critical analysis. It requires the precise observation, organization, and recording of information in the search for truth and order. Scholarship is the umbrella under which research falls, for research is but one form of scholarship. Scholarship results in a product that is shared with others and that is subject to the criticism of individuals qualified to judge the product. This product may take the form of a book review, an annotated bibliography, a lecture, a review of existing research on a topic, a speech that is a synthesis of the thinking on a topic. Scholarship requires that one have a solid foundation in one's profes-

[The checklists presented in this article were developed as part of a program, "Scholarship and the Community College Faculty," presented at the November 1990 meeting of the Eastern Division of the Community College Humanities Association in New York City. James Perkins and Evelyn Edison were members of the program panel; Isa Engleberg was a member of the audience.]

sional field and that one keep up with the developments in that field.
(27)

Page Smith's concept of scholarship is even broader in scope and equally applicable to the role and responsibilities of community college faculty.

... the best research and the only research that should be expected of university professors is wide and informed reading in their fields and related fields. The best teachers are invariably those with the greatest range of interests and the most cultivated minds. That is real research, and that, and that alone, enhances teaching. (179)

Just as community colleges expanded educational opportunities for Americans seeking higher education, community colleges can also enlarge the function and form of scholarship.

The need for scholarly work on the campuses of this nation's community colleges cannot be satisfied by adopting or emulating university models. Scholarship must take a new direction and a new form. In order to stimulate discussion about the need for and role of community college scholarship, we offer three checklists. The first is designed to assist community college administrators assess the degree to which their institutions support and promote scholarship. The second list provides examples of the ways in which community colleges can promote scholarship among faculty and staff. The third checklist can be used by faculty to assess their commitment to and pursuit of scholarship appropriate to the community college mission. All three checklists are designed to provoke thought and discussion in relation to the role of scholarship on the community college campus.

SCHOLARSHIP AND THE ACADEMIC DEAN

James R. Perkins

Because community colleges were developed as teaching institutions, not as research institutions, academic deans may find that many institutional policies or practices act as barriers to scholarship and professional development. Academic deans should examine policies and practices at their institutions to determine if unnecessary obstacles inhibit scholarship. An advisory committee of faculty could be helpful in identifying these barriers.

Areas where barriers might be present include policies that govern faculty leave, instructional load, facility design, and space assignment. For example, some institutions recognize traditional graduate study as the only justification for leave with partial pay. New constructions and existing space assignments often fail to provide space for instructional research and scholarship. Team teaching or other collaborative activities often are not recognized in faculty load calculations. Few institutions have reward structures which give recognition to faculty scholarship.

The following checklist offers community college academic deans one means by which to assess the degree to which intellectual activity and scholarly involvement are promoted within the institution, for students as well as faculty.

Intellectual Climate Checklist

- ___ Promoting intellectual and scholarly activity among students and faculty is a stated goal of the institution:
- ___ Reward systems are in place which give recognition to scholarly endeavors by students and faculty:
- ___ Opportunities are made available for faculty and students to engage in scholarship as a normal part of their employment or study:
- ___ Resources are available within the college budget to support scholarly activities:
- ___ Institutional evaluation systems include consideration of intellectual development and scholarship:
- ___ Promotion and tenure decisions recognize faculty participation in scholarship:
- ___ Institutional support in the form of clerical assistance, facilities, travel, photocopying and mailing services, and library resources are available to support faculty and student scholarship:
- ___ Professional development plans that include intellectual development are in place for all college employees:
- ___ Summer research grants, sabbatical leaves, and release-time opportunities are available to support the scholarly activities of college employees:
- ___ Student activities programs include opportunities for students to develop the intellectual as well as the social and physical dimensions of their lives:
- ___ Institutional ceremonies, traditions, and celebrations reflect an emphasis on the importance of intellectual development and scholarship among faculty and students:
- ___ Forums are regularly organized which provide opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to share the results of their scholarship:
- ___ The president and academic deans promote intellectual development and scholarship by serving as positive role models:
- ___ Innovative teaching methods are encouraged and the results of the experimental methods are shared:
- ___ Current publications in higher education are available in the faculty lounge and are routinely circulated among college employees:
- ___ Proposals from faculty and college administrators to secure funds to support the intellectual development of the campus are encouraged and assistance is available to help with the preparation of the grant applications.

Although there are many opportunities for faculty to develop scholarship as an integral part of their teaching function, deans must realize that unless the institution actively supports faculty scholarship it is not likely to be an important element within the culture of the institution. Through positive action scholarship can become a valued activity.

Academic deans might promote scholarly attitudes and endeavors in a variety of ways.

- Establish a summer faculty grant program which supports faculty scholarship and research for the improvement of instruction.

- Develop faculty colloquia in which results of scholarly endeavors are shared with colleagues. Be the first speaker.
- Establish a faculty reading room in which space, materials, and quiet are available for thinking and learning.
- Establish recognition ceremonies to bring attention to faculty and staff who have published an article in a professional journal or presented a paper to professional peers at a regional or national meeting.
- Establish a professional development budget which represents 2% of the general instructional operating fund and assign a portion of that budget to a faculty and staff committee which is charged with developing and promoting scholarly events on campus.
- Encourage collaborative efforts among faculty from different disciplines. Provide incentives for participation in collaborative activities.
- Investigate grant opportunities which provide funding for faculty development and scholarly activities.

FACULTY SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A COLLEGE'S INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE

Isa Engleberg

The call for an intellectual climate that fosters faculty scholarship in the community college has been sounded and heard. Faculty members applaud essays that argue for the centrality of scholarship in the community college. Faculty cheer administrators trying to tear down walls (heavy teaching loads; restrictive leave policies; lack of facilities, support, rewards and recognition for scholars) that bar faculty from pursuing scholarly goals.

Yet amidst the calls, applause, and cheers for an intellectual climate, the responsibility for scholarship has been described, too often, as institutional. Some faculty contend that they cannot pursue scholarly goals because the community college workload and climate prevent it. "If it weren't for my heavy teaching load; if only we had sabbaticals; if the administration would only recognize and reward scholarship." Such complaints, however, ring hollow if faculty members are unwilling to make an equally significant personal commitment to scholarship.

It is important to assess the degree to which intellectual activity and scholarship are promoted within an institution. At the same time, faculty members should assess the degree to which they are willing to make a personal commitment to scholarly and intellectual activity. The following checklist is offered as a means of assisting faculty members with such an assessment.

___ I engage in scholarship as a normal and regular part of my job.

___ I am willing to or do commit at least 2% of my salary to scholarly materials and activities (e.g. tuition, books, conference, travel).

___ I am an active member of a professional association and/or learned society related to higher education and/or my academic discipline.

- ___ I subscribe to, and read, at least one professional journal on a regular basis.
- ___ I have identified one or more areas of specialized study in education and/or my discipline that I follow through reading, research, and colleague discussion.
- ___ I can identify and describe three significant movements or findings in education and/or my discipline that have affected my teaching (content and/or pedagogy) in the last five years.
- ___ I can name three of the leading, living scholars in my discipline and describe their contributions.
- ___ I know and often converse with scholars at other two-year and four-year institutions of higher learning.
- ___ I can name five currently outstanding university departments in my discipline and can explain what makes them outstanding.
- ___ I am familiar with texts used by students at the junior/senior and graduate levels in my discipline.
- ___ I am familiar with the content of many of the junior/senior levels course taught at the college and/or university to which my students most often transfer.
- ___ I annually read and/or informally review at least three primary texts in my discipline.
- ___ I read at least ten books a year outside of my discipline.
- ___ I annually revise my course (objectives, content, lectures, exams pedagogy) at least every two years, based on educational research and/or the scholarship of my discipline.
- ___ I continue my professional education via traditional means (pursuit of higher degrees, graduate course) and/or through professional development opportunities (summer seminars, short courses, reading regimes).
- ___ I meet with faculty from other disciplines to discuss cross-disciplinary interests.
- ___ I try to promote intellectual and scholarly activity among my students, regardless of their academic interests and majors.
- ___ I give recognition and support rewards to scholarly endeavors by my colleagues.
- ___ I support setting aside a portion of my department's or division's funds to provide additional support for distinguished faculty scholars and/or those serving as officers in professional/scholarly/organizations and societies.
- ___ I have applied for scholarly opportunities (summer seminars, scholarship, grants, awards, special conferences, released time projects) as a means of furthering my intellectual and scholarly growth.
- ___ I have served as an educational consultant and/or discipline expert at other educational institutions (colleges, high schools, etc.) professional associations, and/or businesses.
- ___ I have presented my scholarly work to public audiences (e.g. lecture, art exhibit, concert).
- ___ I have published (e.g. book, short story, poetry, textbook, journal, or popular press article, essay, newsletter).

Most community college faculty cannot and should not be expected to check every item on this list. But those who consider themselves to be teacher/scholars should be able check several. The extent to which faculty can describe themselves as teacher/scholars represents the degree to which an institution should support and reward faculty scholarship. Faculty and administrators must be equally committed to scholarship and willing to work together to create the intellectual climate essential to quality education on the community college campus.

If, like their colleagues at universities, community college faculty members were required to publish in order to earn tenure, promotion, and pay increases, a steady stream of publication would result. Rather than holding the "publish or perish" sword over the heads of their faculty, though, community colleges should promote an institutional climate conducive to intellectual activity and scholarly involvement. By focusing on teaching, community colleges should continue to demonstrate how good scholarship and quality instruction are inseparable from effective learning outcomes. At the same time, faculty members should assume personal responsibility for their own intellectual and scholarly growth. Only when the administration and the faculty are committed to scholarship can intellectual climate assume its rightful place in community college education.

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A SECULAR HUMANIST TEACHES THE BIBLE

Skip Lowery

Ten years ago, the Cultural Arts chairperson at Daytona Beach Community College recruited me from the English Department to teach the required Humanities courses. Ever since, I have been reluctant to tell people what I do for a living, at least when they are outside higher education. I don't mind saying I'm a teacher. It's the question, "What do you teach?" I find discomfiting. If I say "Humanities," they look puzzled, as if their mental computers are scanning a list under College-Courses-I-Have-Heard-Of, and the only thing under H is Horticulture.

When this happens I try to turn the conversation to something more tangible, like the weather, or excuse myself to go to the bathroom, because I dread the next question more than the first: "Tell me, what is Humanities...exactly?"

I am tempted to admit I don't know, exactly. Humanities means whatever the Humanities Department or the instructor says it means. In my case I say, "Well, it's a kind of cultural history of western civilization," and hope that ends it.

Often when I admit I'm "in the Humanities," I sense immediate hostility and defensiveness: my listener is a Christian fundamentalist. Such people translate "Humanities" into "secular humanism," and I am made to feel like Socrates, accused of atheism and corrupting the morals of the youth. "Isn't it terrible," a woman sitting next to me on a plane exclaimed. "You can teach those humanist doctrines to our children when the Word of God is banned from the schools!"

Sidestepping the chance to play Socrates further and ask her to define what she means by "humanist doctrines," I offer a conciliatory reply. "Well, my students aren't exactly children, and in my classes we spend a great deal of time studying the Bible."

This brings me to my point. Because the courses in our department are essentially a cultural history of western civilization, I am discovering more and more that a sizeable part of what I call Humanities is a critical study of Judaism and Christianity as they are developed in the Old and New Testaments.

Why do this? Why spend so much of the semester teaching the Bible when, unlike many of my Humanities colleagues, I am not religious, have few academic credentials as a Biblical scholar, and have been warned by teacher friends to stay away from such matters in the classroom?

One reason, obvious to any ex-English teacher, is that the Bible contains some of the finest literature of western civilization. The King James translation of the stories of Joseph, Job, the poetry of Psalms, the parables of Jesus, are worth teaching for the pure beauty of the language. But the Bible-as-English Literature approach usually skirts the religious issues and concentrates on such elements as character development and genre analysis, isolating the biblical selections from their religious context. Among English and Humanities teachers who include selections from the Bible as part of their required reading, few look at the texts in light of critical scholarship, especially that of the German school of biblical exegesis which suggests that the Bible is an often contradictory body of myth and legend further con-

fused by translation difficulties. Nor do most teachers I know have their students read the Bible with an anthropologist's detachment, as critical thinkers asked to make inferences about the nature of the two "revealed religions" which have had such a profound effect on western thinking.

It is exactly this latter perspective I want my students to acquire. I give them some hypothesis in biblical research; then they look for themselves to see what they can discover. They are asked to read selections as if they were from another culture. They are to act as scientists, as problem solvers.

The Genesis account of the Creation is an interesting example of such an assignment. I tell students of the claim by many scholars that the first three chapters of Genesis actually contain two stories of the creation of the world, and that these do not necessarily agree. Did anyone know this before? I ask. No one does, usually. I show them where the two stories divide (I have done my homework in such references as Bernard Anderson's *Understanding the Old Testament*.) I ask students to look carefully and, if they are convinced there are two stories, to write a comparison-contrast based on their findings.

Most discover remarkable differences, both in the nature of the Creator and in the order in which animals, man, and woman appear. The God of the first story, they realize, feels "good" about His efforts, placing man and woman (created concurrently) as the finale in a cosmic chain of events in relation to which He appears as a remote First Cause. This God gives man and woman dominance over the earth and its creatures, with the implication that it is theirs to do with as they please. In the second story, God becomes Lord God (Jehovah, in the King James translation) a deity who creates man (Adam) not to have dominion over the earth but to take care of a garden (Eden). Woman is created as his "helpmeet." We all know the rest of the story, even if we are not Bible readers. Jehovah, unhappy with Adam and Eve's sin in eating the fruit of knowledge (woman being given the primary culpability), sends them out of the Garden to a world of toil and death. Woman, the archetypal temptress, must, in addition, experience pain in childbirth.

Students realize that Jehovah is not the benevolent, somewhat distant creator of the first story but a more tyrannical, anthropomorphic god who is concerned that Adam and Eve might also eat of the tree of life and become "as one of us, and live forever." Invariably, a student will ask, "Who is us?", and off we go on a discussion of the progress of Hebrew religion from monolatry to monotheism.

They have other questions based on further points of comparison. For instance, women always note the discrepancy between the punishment given to Eve in the Garden story when in the first story God makes woman equal with man. Yes, I respond: and which version do you think has dominated western religious thinking and may have helped to keep women from religious and social prominence?

They get the point. The Bible is a work of great poetic imagination, but it can be a misleading if not dangerous source of evidence for sociological doctrine.

Helping students understand the Bible as a sometimes paradoxical work of poetry and myth rather than a factual account of events helps them understand an important lesson about the nature of symbolic communication in general. Language symbols, general semanticists like to say, are like maps for the territory of human perception. Or, to use Wittgenstein's metaphor: language is like a series of games we play with words. Each game has its own purpose, its own set of rules. The trick, I tell students, is not to get the map confused with the territory, or apply the

rules of one game when you are playing another. When people take the Bible literally, as if it were indeed a report instead of a metaphor-and by extension, a myth-then trouble starts. It would be like arguing that the statement, "It's hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk" is the same language as "It's 98 degrees outside." The latter "game" allows verification by measurement. The former can only be won or lost by how well it serves to help us sense the temperature.

Once students learn the purpose of metaphor and myth in contrast to the language of observed reports, they realize that the biblical accounts of the creation and, say, Darwin's theory of evolution, are both "true;" but they are different types of truth, different languages for describing the process of creation and evolution.

Of course there are facts in the Bible, as well as myths. We read of the important migrations of the Hebrews from Canaan into Egypt and the later exodus under the leadership of Moses. This gives students some sense of the geographical and historical importance of Israel and its problems in the world today. Here again, though, they must learn to be cautious. The biblical reports of such events passed like a gossip game from actual occurrence into oral legend and eventually into sacred history (mythology). Most scholars accept the Exodus as a reality; but the Egyptians, who kept pictorial records showing the important events of each dynasty, do not mention the Hebrews leaving Egypt, nor Moses, nor the Red Sea parting...strange omissions if the biblical accounts are indeed historical "reports."

Thus even when the Bible sounds like a news bulletin, it is safer to think of it as imaginative literature invented to explain, to make visible, the abstract and ultimately unexplainable relationship the Jews felt with their God. I help students realize the difference between mythical language and report language by having them write a newspaper account of an event, say a tornado touching down in a small town, and then write about the same event as it might have been recorded in the Old Testament, keeping in mind that in the latter case the writer would have no scientific knowledge of the cause of tornadoes but would have believed them sent by God as punishment for sin. The results are interesting. In the biblical "report," the student must use words of propitiation couched in metaphor: "Alas, Jehovah sees our wickedness. He visits cruel winds upon us. Sorrow is heaped upon sorrow. We are cast down. But for His mercy we would all perish...." This is not the kind of language one would check for accuracy.

Students also develop a more anthropological perspective on biblical language when they are introduced to some myths of other cultures. Here the Humanities becomes comparative religion. In stories from American Indian traditions, for example, they learn how most Native Americans see the earth and its creatures as spiritual brothers with whom they must maintain a kind of cosmic balance. Contrast this ideal with the Genesis story of Noah. When the covenant is established between Noah and the Lord, Noah is told that: "The fear and dread of you shall be upon every beast of the field, upon all that moveth upon the earth." The western tendency to think of the earth as something we own, students realize, results in part from such biblical "reports." From this type of comparative analysis, they can read Genesis as an important and interesting picture of the world, but know also that it is just that, a picture, and not by any means the only one.

In the cosmology of Hinduism, to cite one more example I introduce to students, God did not 'create' the world in the subject-verb-direct object sense we read in Genesis. The world simply is, and time is perceived as cyclical rather than linear, an endless pattern of births and rebirths called *samsara*. The

gods, 330 million of them, are involved in the same process. Most Hindus are careful, too, not to confuse the stories and images of the gods as 'true.' They know they are metaphors for the ultimate and indescribable oneness they call Brahman. With the concept of cyclical time, and with so many mythical gods, Hindus regard historical truth as unimportant. Thus, the Christian archeologist's search for Noah's ark, which supposedly would 'prove' the accuracy of the biblical story, appears to Hindus, and to students who think about it critically, an enormous waste of energy that misses the point and purpose of mythical literature.

This act of missing the point, confusing the functions of language, seems to happen in religion as much as it does in advertising and politics. That is why I think it is the job of the Humanities teacher to bring the source of the confusion out in the open by making linguistic distinctions clear to students. Fundamentalists are probably right in thinking I am thus corrupting their children, but I am convinced that my subversion is justified if the result is the development of more tolerant and self-aware minds. The examined life must begin with doubt, with questions, as Socrates observed. I agree.

Has this led to trouble, as my colleagues feared it would? Yes, sometimes it has. In a sophomore honors class one semester we were discussing the Genesis creation stories and Darwin in light of the debate raging in many public school districts over Creationism and Evolution. I was trying to help students see the issue as so much sound and fury signifying nothing more than a misunderstanding of the rules of Wittgenstein's games. In the class were three students who had graduated from a local Christian Academy. They were experiencing some of that Socratic doubt and confusion over what I said, but it wasn't leading them toward wisdom. They were just angry at me. (I should mention here that in no way do I let my students' beliefs or lack of them influence their grades in the course. I only want them to understand me, not necessarily agree with me.)

The tension was high. I asked the Academy students if they would like to bring in someone to present the creationist view. Yes, they said, they would: a preacher from a local Southern Baptist Church. Before the day of his visit, I admonished the class to listen with an open and critical mind, as I hoped they listened to me.

When the minister arrived, I explained the situation: that we were approaching the Bible as a literary work rather than as a work to be taken literally. He was a courteous, well-spoken man who presented his denomination's acceptance of the Bible as the revealed word of God to man and, as such, true and indisputable. The Bible, for him, was fact. I tried to keep out of any open debate, letting the students ask the questions. Several did, including one who wanted to know how the Baptists could condone a belief in a god of mercy and love who also condemned unbelievers to everlasting hell. The minister's answer was couched in references to scripture-St. Paul, Revelations-and the importance of the faith of the believer in the fairness of God's justice. His visit satisfied my students. I had played fair.

Here I confess another reason I want to teach and learn more about the Bible: a fascination with Christian fundamentalism in general, similar to that a pacifist might have for war. I spent many wide-eyed hours watching Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart before their financial or sexual shenanigans forced them off the air. More recently I showed my students an item in the paper about an incident in Toccoa, Georgia, where a delegation of Christians-Baptists, Church of Christ, even Lutherans-coerced the city council into banning Yoga classes from the

city's recreational department offerings because Yoga, the article quoted one person as saying, is "a form of New Age mysticism that leads to devil worship." I asked if anyone could find a biblical admonition against stretching exercises and why the devil would take such an interest in them.

What I wanted my students to realize, of course, is that there are some strange things happening out there in the name of religion, a kind of national paranoia which can lead from superstition to intolerance and bigotry. Somebody must try to educate people to fight for common sense and sanity. I feel like a secular missionary, a classroom Isaiah crying "Repent of your ignorance. Think for yourselves. Research!" As any good missionary, I use the local religion against itself, exposing its most sacred truths, in this case, the Bible's, for what they are: an arbitrary system of mythical symbols which helped an ancient people explain the world.

There is a final and more practical reason I am in the religion-Bible-missionary business as a Humanities teacher. I want students to see why the Bible can be a misleading map of the real world. But they also should learn certain details about the mythical territory the Bible represents. Without some understanding of the Old Testament stories in Genesis or the gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, students will have a difficult time appreciating the rich body of biblical allusion in Western art and ideas. Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling comes to mind, or Leonardo's Last Supper, or the music of Bach and Handel, not to mention the obvious, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The history of Europe from the fall of Rome to the 18th century Enlightenment was largely religious history, and biblical stories were the most important reference in European and American education.

Today the Bible is effectively absent from public schools, and few of my students have much memory of their church-going years. I can no longer assume they share what once was a common cultural vocabulary. For instance, one day I was discussing Leonardo's Last Supper fresco, referring to the figure of Judas clutching the money bag with the thirty pieces of silver. I noticed several students staring rather blankly at me and the painting. I asked, "How many of you don't know the story of Judas?" More than half raised their hands. Several of these were not even certain what the Last Supper represented. I have done other informal polls since then, only to discover how little students know about the most widely published book in the world. Since the Bible contains many of the central metaphors through which our culture describes the world, I reason, to be unfamiliar with it is to be semi-literate.

I have arrived, then, at this ironic point: the Humanities professor, the secular humanist, atheist, devil-inspired corrupter of youth, as Sunday School teacher. Students bring their King James translations with them to class, and we read aloud or study together the plight of Abraham and his son Isaac, or the not-so-patient words of Job contending with the Lord. We act as anthropologists trying to reconstruct Jesus the man from the evidence of the gospels, and recognizing that Paul, not Jesus, was the father of Christianity. All of this is explored within the context of Judeo-Christian and pagan history, and with a critical eye to the uses and misuses of language and the unresolved paradoxes within religion itself.

What the result will be of this redefinition of myself as a Humanities teacher I cannot predict. But already I am seeing students, Fundamentalists notwithstanding, approaching the world with clearer eyes and a more critical vision. I believe they will be better citizens for this, better able to keep the democratic process work-

ing, and better prepared to understand the cultural legacy which the Bible, taken in context, offers them.

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**GENERAL WASHINGTON MEETS GENERAL SCHWARTZKOPF:
DESIGNING HUMANITIES COURSES TO ADDRESS THE
CRISES OF THE '90s**

Julie Houston

We started innocently, a team of four at Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, designing a humanities course for a community college that had never had one. We spent two years enlisting faculty support, winning a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, and designing curricula. As a result, we won the first major grant for our college, and nine of us worked through a three week, intensive summer session to prepare to teach our creation. We sighed with satisfaction: we thought we had accomplished the difficult part.

History intervened. The very day I walked into class to begin our inaugural humanities course, U.S. jets began bombing Iraq. The morning I'd planned to introduce Madison and Jefferson's concepts as expressed in the Federalist Papers, I saw instead the stunned and pale faces of students who had never anticipated war in their lives. And suddenly, impromptu, I began a semester of relating the humanities issues of American democracy to an instant, television war.

In an era which moves at the speed of FAX, we can increasingly expect to find ourselves teaching courses which appear to be overwhelmed by extraordinary current crises. It is, therefore, imperative to create specific strategies by which our courses connect the themes of the humanities to present events. At one and the same time, we will need to maintain the integrity of our courses and integrate the extraordinary experiences of our own day.

The course our faculty team had designed at such length, and which I expected to be teaching that blustery January morning, was an introductory mix of American literature, painting, politics and history. It was ambitiously titled "The Democratic Experiment 1776-1990." Our faculty group had studied for three weeks with speakers filled with the wonders of the humanities: Lillian Miller, Curator of the Smithsonian's Charles Wilson Peale Papers; Elizabeth Johns, Eakins expert from the University of Pennsylvania; and Gabor Boritt, Lincoln specialist from Gettysburg College. Our initial reading list reflected the specialties of these speakers. Happily suited to humanities professors, it included Jefferson, Madison, De Toqueville, Paine, Hawthorne, Eakins, Casset, Linco'n, Peale, Twain, and Douglass.

The major focus of this carefully crafted course was to introduce students to reading primary sources and have them use collaborative learning techniques to create responses to these materials. Our core question for the semester was "What is freedom?" - which was to be considered in personal, political and creative terms. These considerations seemed superfluous on the morning of the ferocious bombing of Baghdad. Instead, we found ourselves responding to the Gulf War both methodologically and emotionally. Our personal involvement was high. Community College demographics were immediately evident: I had four former students serving in the Gulf whose faces I waited to see on CNN, minute by minute, everyday, week after week. One member of the class had a brother fighting in the Gulf. Two oth-

ers had served in peace marches in the '60s. Another was considering entering the military, and yet another was involved in the present peace movement. Surprisingly for our usual class make-up, there were no veterans among us.

At first the students were reluctant to express personal or political opinions, but by the third class this reticence disappeared. As they found their voices, they learned to value their own opinions, and they found themselves frequently supported by the rest. The class was, in fact, becoming an expression of democracy itself.

Connecting the issues of the humanities with the war helped us all with the initial shock. My students were utterly unprepared for war. They thought of the military as a way to obtain job training or a college degree, ignoring the essential purpose of the military. Nor had they considered that soldiers were ordinary citizens: their own classmates, potentially themselves. Breaking into our pre-set curriculum allowed them to voice fears, and at the same time to hear more clearly and perceptively the voices of people living two hundred years ago. After all, how did the nineteen-year-olds in 1776 react? As the news of Lexington and Concord raced through the Colonies, were they emotionally prepared for war, or were they just as shocked as we were? What was it like to receive news of a battle three weeks after it had been fought, rather than as it was proceeding? This became a research opportunity: what written evidence could my students find to answer these questions?

The most essential outcome of this connection was to help students develop their imaginations and gain compassion. At first many seemed unable to imagine the everyday lives of people long dead. Then they began to initiate questions. How are we like and unlike those of the past? What was it like to sew your husband's clothes in those January snows of Valley Forge? In a moment of sudden discovery, one student announced that to wait for a brother's letter from Daharan is not so different from waiting for a brother's letter from Antietam. One extremely narrow-minded student, who had difficulty feeling even the most vague sympathy for others and later almost brought the class to blows over his racist pronouncements, was able to begin slightly understanding our present enemy by looking at past enemies. As the course proceeded, he read the words of Yankees and Confederates expressing wary compassion and respect for their enemy, and he wondered out loud how people who shot at each other could later deliver messages for each other.

One of our students, John Wenner, helped us understand. He was assigned to a hospital unit in Saudi Arabia and suddenly found himself guarding twenty thousand Iraqi prisoners. He was particularly moved by the suffering they had endured: before they surrendered "they were lucky if they were eating one bowl of rice a day, and [they] were often covered with lice and scabies." He described one Iraqi, a cook, who, press-ganged off his mother's roof, fell and ruptured his spleen. He received no medical care until he got to Wenner's hospital. Beside caring for the cook, Wenner was particularly struck by another prisoner, a Kurd named Jaffe, whose village had been gassed by Saddam Hussein. The moment Jaffe was put into the Iraqi front lines, he took off his shoes and meticulously picked his way for days through thirty miles of mine fields to reach the Americans. Wenner explained that when Jaffe was repatriated to Baghdad, he was marched off the plane and machine gunned as a deserter.

Allowing students to discuss their reactions to this war benefitted their psyches as well as their intellects. We used connections to validate their experiences

while learning to value the lives of the Americans we had originally set out to study. In the next semester I will be teaching this course again, and I have requested the student Gulf War veteran who befriended the prisoners as a speaker—which will both enlighten present students about the conditions of the war and give our returned student a chance to validate himself.

I also used the Gulf war to make more real the two major wars examined during the course: the American Revolution and the Civil War. We began by contrasting the ways the wars were projected by the media of their separate times. My students were particularly offended by the censorship of the media during the Gulf War. They made lists of the language used by the military and the media to dehumanize the enemy and make killing another human being acceptable. They were especially concerned by the transformation of "killing a grandfather" into "collateral damage". They no longer saw armies as mechanized blurs. They expressed concern for the mental health of anyone who has been successfully taught that the enemy is not truly human, a marked contrast, they saw, to the attitudes of most Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers. The students were equally concerned for those of us at home who docilely accepted the dehumanization of our language. They expressed very real concern about what this boded for democracy, and they were relieved by our returning students who had been deeply moved, not numbed, by what they had seen in the Gulf.

Past and present were most forcefully unified for us on a field trip to Gettysburg. We walked through the Slaughter Pen, fingered spent bullets, held globs of shot welded together in the air by the heavy bombardment of the battle. Students were shocked at how differently our country reacted to death in different eras: the 128 American Gulf War dead, compared to the fifty thousand dead in the three-day carnage of Gettysburg. We wondered if America would tolerate such a slaughter today. We compared values of honor, and how military equipment has dictated strategy. And we discovered a much over-looked similarity between the Gulf War and the Revolution: both were largely "reservists' wars," a characteristic that deeply affected Americans perceptions of them.

During the entire course, the collaborative learning techniques we employed exposed the powerful liberal and conservative contingents in the class. We became a small democracy, reflecting bigotry and idealism. My students were stunned and delighted to see themselves putting the theory of democracy into practice: the majority rules, but the minority always has another day to reverse the decision, and things might be very different in the concluding vote.

Several students were horrified to realize that in Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, our momentary allies, disagreement with the ruling class might mean imprisonment or beheading. They were bewildered by the absolute lack of rights in Saudi Arabia for any but a few wealthy men. This gave us additional opportunity to discuss the Bill of Rights, a part of our original curriculum. The irony of this was lost on no one, particularly since we had several women students then risking their lives to defend a country in which, if they were citizens, they would have not even been permitted to drive a car. In addition, I told the class about a former student of mine who had been in Saudi Arabia several years before, at the time of the attack on the Kaaba. As a foreigner, he was rounded up and forced to watch the punishment of one of the perpetrators: public beheading.

Our ideological battles within the class and arguments over rights reflected how comparative ideologies have clamored with one another in American democra-

cy. The students became more immediately aware of the cramped rights of the individual when they could not convince others of their points. They discovered the challenge for individuals in any group: to support their group, or to stand for their own view instead. We became, therefore, an example of what we were discovering: the inequality of the classroom, the semi-democracy of collaborative learning, helped each of us see that in the rule of democracy rights are tempered with responsibilities.

The most essential point of enhancing a humanities course like this with current crises is clearly to create specific connections between the curriculum and daily experience. I used this extraordinary convergence of events to relate our core issues (in this case democratic concerns) from the past to the present. I specifically did not desert our pre-arranged issues. I believed it vital to keep the integrity of the course by using current experiences to illuminate past ones.

We, therefore, allowed parallels to emerge between contemporary politics and those of the 1700s and 1800s. For example, we considered issues of personal freedom, comparing the conscientious objectors of 1991 to Quakers of the 1860s. In examining political freedom, we debated how Congress supported or denied the war aims of various presidents throughout our country's brief history. We examined how the individual was affirmed or denied by various legislative decisions. And in the light of our reaction to the war, we argued the importance of education in developing an active citizenry who would assume responsibility as a fourth branch of government. Were we living up to Jefferson's hope for our enlightened electorate? Or were we an example of what others have often accused us of being: the nation with the most opportunities for education and the least willingness to take advantage of them.

I determined not to mangle our curriculum into a grotesque parody of itself to fit present events. In fact, as the war progressed I was asked by a colleague, "Is it even valid to address the present?" I obviously believed the benefits of doing so were extraordinary, but I carefully directed class discussion away from including every world crisis that came along. We focused almost exclusively on the Gulf; to include each issue tangentially would have become fragmentary and superficial.

I also preserved the course's integrity by using the source materials which already had been chosen, although often in unexpected ways. We didn't add books, we used copy machines. I specifically created an atmosphere which encouraged students to introduce their own sources. As we discussed Thoreau, one student brought to class her IRS Peace Tax Form. Another suddenly saw how Whitman's "Specimen Days" was an example of how the arts assist a nation to heal after conflict. He led us in a surprising debate about whether there would be post-Gulf expressions of art, and why there had been so little artistic reaction to the Vietnam War until twenty years after it. But our most unexpected adaptation of original material was our field trip to the Gettysburg battlefield, an experience far more intense than it would have been in peace time. It became stunningly unforgettable when we turned a corner and saw an ROTC class formed up beside what appeared to be headstones, but were, in fact, their helmets.

I also added unexpected speakers both to rectify the biases of past historic interpretations and to add personal reaction to present experiences. One speaker was an adjunct professor, an Air Force Reservist and Vietnam Vet awaiting deployment to the Gulf. She expanded the course in meaningful ways, first by clarifying the genuine historic role of women in the American military, thus adding to the inte-

gral issues of the original course. Then she gave us insight on the Gulf War's effect on her unit: many were veterans of 20 years ago, who, having survived the horrors of Vietnam and post-traumatic-stress-disorder, faced the ultimate insult of experiencing it all over again.

A direct outgrowth of these connections was that they empowered students, making all of us more directly involved in politics. It encouraged us to take part in the issues of democracy and humanities: voting, marching for what we believed, placing ribbons at a local peace candle, writing our reactions to the war and other issues. From the original material, students saw how a politically active artist such as Charles Wilson Peale created statements of both politics and personal vision. And because of this, one student photographer suddenly began questioning censorship at a show in which his work was displayed. The most moving outcome, however, was the action of a student of great political savvy and consciousness, who had long been involved in putting her democratic rights into action. Right after our "Democratic Experiment" ended she went to Sri Lanka, where she is presently a human shield for human rights activists, putting her life in danger to serve democracy as much as our military students did in the Gulf.

Our connection of humanities issues with the present showed how humanities help us comprehend the changes of our lives. We had the opportunity to consider the excitement and concern of an ever-changing world, and to discuss how the humanities can help us to endure, to make sense of what is inchoate. We discussed art as a way to speak the unspeakable: Frederick Douglass trying to comprehend having been beaten by a slave-breaker, and Abraham Lincoln on a barge trying to understand the apparent cheerfulness of a slave who had just been sold, the first slave Lincoln had ever seen. And we compared to this the way our friends saw death in the Gulf. The students saw that the genesis of much art is, after all, to be found in the personal shouts of pain by the artists. There is, for example, no greater statement against slavery and for individual freedom and the sheer freedom to enjoy life than Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. Nor are there more moving descriptions of the Civil War dead than by Whitman. Side-by-side with these we placed letters from our friends in the Gulf, who at first were careful (because of censorship and shock) to tell us nothing, but later, when they came home, used their photos and words to express the horror of seeing the charred, blown-off-at-the-waist torsoes of Iraqis.

If a major point of the humanities is to make us more sensitive beings, able to understand cultures other than our own, aware of a greater range of our species' experience, then the connection of past issues to contemporary affairs is not only valid but a necessary goal. By doing this we gain the perspective of seeing ourselves and our times not as the terminus of history but as part of a continuum. We can see ourselves as we grow from the past to create the future: a vision that is uniquely human and uniquely possible to the humanities.

REPACKAGING THE HUMANITIES: HUMANITIES AS A WORLD RELIGION COURSE

Paul Benson

Quite often a basic Humanities course in a community college is an introduction to Western art and music with little if any material on Asian, Near Eastern, or native American cultures. This is unfortunate, since most students take only one Humanities course, so that they are never exposed to any non-Western cultural values, art history, architecture, musical traditions, or basic belief systems. One effective way to address this situation is through a general introductory course in world religion. Although such a course might not cover every aspect of non-Western societies, at least students can start the process of understanding cultural systems which may be alien to them.

Some years ago, I was asked to offer my World Religion course experimentally for freshman honors students. The plan worked so well it has become a standard feature of the Honors' offerings every year. The Humanities students especially appreciate learning about cultures, such as those in Asia, which are not usually familiar to them. The advantages of teaching world religion to Humanities students are manifold. Hinduism, for example, offers them a significant way to begin understanding the Eastern world view. Since Buddhism comes directly from Hinduism and has had a profound influence on the cultures of China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos, studying Buddhism helps these students see the East through entirely new eyes. Furthermore, a study of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Levantine religious traditions allows a student to realize the considerable influence these religions have had on the development of Western cultures.

The classroom portion of my course uses a traditional lecture/discussion and slide presentation approach. The heart of the learning experience, though, is a major field trip program. Each weekend of the semester, students are encouraged (but not required) to participate in a field trip experience. Although a few students participate in all the trips, the majority chose six to eight experiences during the semester from the possible services, lectures, discussions, or tours available. Certain key trips are strongly encouraged: a Hindu Temple experience, a Buddhist meeting, a Jewish service, a Bahai international dinner and discussion, a Greek Orthodox tour, and an Islamic meeting.

My suggestion to Humanities teachers is that they build several such voluntary field trip experiences into the traditional course. For those students who cannot attend, alternate assignments may be given. (This seems to work better than a giving extra points for making field trips, a system which always favors those who have the time and transportation to attend.) Students should be encouraged to attend as a way to learn about a culture directly rather than through a lecture or textbook. If a teacher cannot take part in a field trip, he should appoint a student to act as a leader if there are to be meeting with officials of any particular group.

The choice of field trips is a critical decision for the teacher. Most medium and large American cities offer a host of interesting cultural/religious opportunities,

but teachers should try to find non-European experiences which have previously not been a part of their students' backgrounds.

One outstanding possibility in many communities is a trip to a Hindu Temple. The International Society of Krishna Consciousness operates many temples and a lesser number of vegetarian restaurants throughout the country. In the Krishna religious community, students have the opportunity to hear a Hindu scholar explain the basic beliefs of Hindu culture, such as the transmigration of the soul, reincarnation, and vegetarianism. This explanation often includes a brief discussion of Indian painting, art and music, all well represented in the temple. The visit may culminate with student participation in a festive Hindu service which includes traditional Indian percussion music, dancing, incense and flame purification rites, as well as a viewing of the ceramic Hindu deities in elaborate costumes and in an opulent setting of altars and floral displays. To finish the trip, students might enjoy dinner at a Krishna restaurant or at some other local Indian restaurant where they can continue this "Indian" experience and discover yet another aspect of Eastern culture.

Another possibility for studying Asian culture may be found in a visit to a local Buddhist group. The largest Buddhist organization in this country is Nichiren Shoshu of America, and it is usually not too difficult to find a neighborhood regional cell discussion meeting. These Mahayana Buddhists follow a simplified form of Buddhism that gives students an entirely different view of Eastern religion. Here they will find an iconoclasm which is in sharp contrast to the Hindu temple's richly anthropomorphic tableau. More akin to a New England Congregational Church, the meeting center is devoid of religious icons; instead, there is a beautifully crafted altar called a Gohonzon toward which the devotees direct their repetitive Nichiren mantra. Following the mantra recitation, members relate personal experiences of what the repetition of the mantra has done for them. Among other things, this opens the world of meditation and its potential to the students.

Most students will readily take an interest in the religious traditions of the Far East. They are usually just as enthusiastic about the culture and history of the Middle East, which they may discover through field trips and class lecture/discussions of Judaism, the Bahai Faith, Islam, and the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church or Coptic Orthodox Church. Virtually every city of any size in the United States has at least one Jewish synagogue, and it is fairly easy to arrange for students to attend a service and tour the facilities. Students begin to appreciate the reverence of the Jewish community for the "Word," particularly as revealed in the Torah. During the service much loving attention and study is given to the Scriptures, and students learn something about the power of tradition. The "oriental" sound of the cantor's singing and the use of Scrolls are two aspects of the service which lend themselves to later discussion in the classroom. Although the students may visit a Reformed, Conservative, or Orthodox congregation, the Conservative and Orthodox congregations have a more traditional format than the Reformed.

Another good field trip opportunity may be the monthly international dinner and discussion meeting of the Bahai community. The Bahai faith is the youngest of the world's religions and, as such, affords students an opportunity to see the full workings of syncretism. Incorporating tenets and teachings from many of the world's religious traditions, Bahai promotes toleration among all religious communities. Its monthly dinners, held in many communities, provide an ideal opportunity for students to learn more about the Bahai world view while being entertained and exploring a smorgasbord of international dishes. Bahai is closely connected to

Persian culture, offering another incentive for study. It is often possible to have a Bahai member who is also Iranian come to class and talk about Persian culture. In fact, the Bahai organization actively solicits invitations for speakers and will send its representatives some distance to attend speaking engagements.

A trip to an Islamic Mosque for a service and lecture reveals the essential simplicity of this faith. Although Jewish and Christian students are surprised by the similarities with their own religions, they also often start to see the cultural connections between Islam and its Arab birthplace. Students rarely leave a mosque without a deeper sense of the spiritual piety of the Moslems they have met. In addition, the Moslem/Arab architecture of the building, with its minaret, mirrab, and minnbar, help introduce student to some of the central differences between Eastern and Middle Eastern architecture.

Finally, a visit to a Greek Orthodox Basilica or neighborhood church can sometimes be arranged in connection with a local Greek food and culture festival. Here students will be intrigued by the Byzantine service and iconography, and priests are often willing to offer special tours and explanations. Sometimes a Greek dance and music program can be arranged through the local Greek community. An excellent time to make this field trip is following a class lecture on ancient Greek mythology. It is often possible for students to make some important connections between the ancient religion and the new.

Finding new and exciting ways to teach the humanities is the never ending challenge of dedicated community college humanities teachers. All pedagogical approaches are by definition limited and limiting, but different content methods must be tried to make progress toward that unattainable goal of presenting the "ideal" course. Bringing religion, and especially religion field trips, into a standard humanities course will enrich the offering for all the students and immeasurably for some. There are few greater joys for any teacher than seeing his students learn from direct personal experience and come back to the classroom with new enthusiasm to explore a culture that was previously unknown to them. In the end, one major purpose of all humanities courses should be to awaken students to the rich cultural traditions of both past and present. The religion field trip experience can bring those cultures to life, making them tangible in the minds and hearts of many students.

BOOK REVIEWS

Deborah Tannen. *You Just Don't Understand*. New York. Ballantine Books: 1990. 298 pp + notes and references.

If you are a Carmelite or a Trappist, you may really not need to read this book, subtitled "Women and Men in Conversation." But if you talk to people with any regularity, if you talk to people of the opposite sex, and especially if you talk for a living, *You Just Don't Understand* is well worth your attention.

Deborah Tannen makes it clear at every opportune moment that this is not a scholarly work. Almost by definition, this means that she presents her argument clearly, in interesting ways, without jargon or esoteric language. She does, however, present an argument: that men and women behave in very different ways, both when they speak with each other and when they converse with those of their own sex. These gender differences seem to be culturally derived and reinforced. Among the most observable: men take turns speaking in a conversation, while women interweave; in mixed conversations, men generally speak while women listen; men argue as a mode of discussion, women agree and support; men tend not to converse directly, eye-to-eye, while women do; men treat conversations as opportunities to establish positions of dominance, while women treat them as opportunities to create or demonstrate equality. What comes of these differences in style when men talk with women? Frequent opportunities for misunderstanding, confusion, argument, and emotional disruption.

Tannen sometimes goes a little too far in her argument, it seems to me. Discussing a research project in which men and women of various ages were taped in conversation, she comes very close to saying that all women and all men display the characteristics of conversational style and body language seen on the tapes. She also sometimes offers her analysis in a fashion which suggests that it is the only possible explanation for the conversational behavior she's observed. But these problems are minor compared with the strengths of the book. She admits, for instance, the difficulty of separating the questions of gender and ethnicity in attempting to explain conversational styles. She flatly refuses to suggest that one style is preferable. In a great many ways, her point is a simple one: that we need to be aware of the differences which exist and incorporate that awareness in our own relationships.

Anyone who spends time in front of a classroom ought to pay attention to Tannen's book. Among other things, the implication of her argument is that if you do spend time in front of the class you have adopted a male conversational style, and if you lecture you have made it completely your own. Further, if you conduct discussions but don't tolerate interruptions you are imposing a man's style of speaking on all your students, male and female alike; and if you insist on forming mixed discussion groups, you are more than likely creating situations in which women will remain silent and make little contribution.

There is one final great strength in *You Just Don't Understand*: anyone willing to remain silent and observe the conversations of others can test Tannen's conclusions personally. The real question is: is there a teacher who can do this?

John H. Seabrook

Stephen Scully. *Homer and the Sacred City*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press: 1990. 127 pp. + appendices.

Is there a member of a Humanities faculty anywhere who *hasn't* used Homer, in one form or another? So do we keep alive the myths, if not the values, of the ancient Greeks, exposing new generations to the sulking of Achilles and the eternal recurrence of rosy-fingered dawn.

If you're looking for something new to help rejuvenate your own analysis of Homer, Stephen Scully may have just the thing for you. *Homer and the Sacred City* is a good, well written, clearly argued study which suggests that many of us may have been focusing on the wrong thing when we read the *Iliad*. "The *Iliad's* true center of gravity is Troy, the point where the threads of events crisscross and the metaphysical place on which the sacred fiction of the poem turns." (116-117) Scully is well aware that Homer transposed the emerging *polis* of the 8th century B.C. back to Mycenaean times. But this has little to do with the role the city plays as a sacred place, the focal point of paradoxes: "immortally and mortally constructed, ...divinely and humanly defended; ... at once part of the natural world and yet a world of humankind that defies natural law and order; ... although the place of male dominion, it partakes in form and spirit of the female order." (15)

What is it that makes the city sacred? Not, Scully says, the obvious things: that the gods helped in its construction, that there are temples there, not even that certain of the gods fight to protect it. The city - Troy - is sacred because "it shelters civilization within." (50) It is the place of *oikos* and *agora*, sheltering women and children, the place where people become distinctly human. "By separating himself in the walled *polis* from nature's randomness, man ... occupies for the first time a space that can be called exclusively human. The spirit of enclosure and the conferring of a human identity define the sacral essence of the Homeric *polis*...." (25)

If Troy is sacred, why do the gods seek its destruction? There are several possible answers. It might have been simply the fate of a place which often seems nothing more than a plaything in the domestic squabbles of the gods. Or it might have been destroyed as a divine object lesson, the lot of those whose conduct offends the gods. But Scully has a different, more interesting answer. Troy had to be destroyed because its people thought it it was indestructable. All things, except the gods, die: even Hektor, even Achilles. "The *polis* melts into the eternal." (125) The battle between Hektor and Achilles is a type of the struggle between civilization and the immense force of nature. Ultimately, nature always wins.

As he constructs his argument, Scully offers brief but effective supporting side trips. He brings in Rome and the cities of the middle east for comparative purposes, and there is a chapter on Mycenaean and Ionian city-types which looks at the decay of the one and the rise of the other in 8th century Asia Minor. There is a fascinating discussion of the wall of Troy, "the boundary between war and peace, between the wild ... and culture, between the life-taking and the life-sustaining." (45) For lists and counters, Scully provides an appendix on "Nature and Technology in Place Epithets," another listing all the sacred places named in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, and a third which reviews the "Sacred Cities of the East." For everyone, he provides an interesting, provocative way by which to revisit a classic.

John H. Seabrook

Lawrence J. Hatab. *Myth and Philosophy: A Contest of Truths*. Open Court, 1990. \$18.95 pb.

The publishing world was surprised last winter when Robert Bly's *Iron John* (Addison Wesley, 1990) quickly rose to the top of the *New York Times* best seller list, and many people were even more surprised by its enduring popularity. Why would a rather dense book about an obscure fairy tale appeal to so many Americans? The answer lies in part, I am sure, with Bly's decade-long campaign for the exhumation of truly meaningful myths for contemporary American men. But Bly, like any seller, must have a product people want, and the fact of his sales success cannot lie entirely with the advertising he and a few others did in men's groups and conferences throughout the 1980s. The growing "men's movement" springs from wells that run deep in the psyches of American men.

How are we to understand the genesis of this movement? Or, in like manner, how are we to understand the crucial importance of images, myths and other stories for the feminist movement of the past two and one half decades? Unlike the social sciences (especially the Jung-Campbell line of myth studies), Anglo-American philosophy as a whole offers little help. The Logical Positivism of the 1930s and 1940s involved itself with the reduction of myths and related symbolic forms to "mere emotion expression," leaving the ordinary language movement to save such expressions from complete ignominy. As a result, mainstream Anglo-American philosophy in this century has had little to say that would shed light on the crucial role myths seem to be playing for millions of Americans as they struggle to make sense of their lives.

Happily, at least one American philosopher, Lawrence Hatab of Old Dominion University, offers some real help in divining the power of myth, and he does so in a way that makes some of the more obscure (and possibly profound) philosophies of our time accessible to a general educated audience. Calling on the insights of existentialism and phenomenology (especially Nietzsche and Heidegger), Hatab argues not only that myth and other such symbolic forms cannot and ought not be reduced to other modes of expression (such as rational explanation in philosophy, mathematics or science), but that myth offers up truths as real and important as those of rational discourse. His anti-reductionism cuts against fundamentalism in religion as well as positivism in philosophy and scientism in science, and his epistemological pluralism opens up a new positive understanding of the power and place of myth and other "poetic" forms.

Hatab's study takes its lead from Heidegger, focusing on the Ancient Greek transformation from a mythic to a more rational culture during the time of Plato and Aristotle. He gives the reader a substantial tour of Greek myth and religion, their epic, lyric, and tragic poetry and drama, to set the stage for Plato and Aristotle's break with the mythico-poetic past. In the process, he shows how this great poetic tradition formed the issues, tones, and styles of its philosophical offspring; and in his chapters on Plato and Aristotle, Hatab makes it clear that the great rational systems of the philosophers retained many mythical and poetic dimensions.

For Hatab, philosophy "grows out of" myth more in the sense that myth spawns philosophy than that philosophy outgrows myth, and in his final chapter he contends that philosophy (rationality in general) which tries to break off completely from myth (mystery) loses its way. The same can and does happen to a culture or to individuals. (James Carse, in *Finite and Infinite Games*, says that "a culture is as

strong as its strongest myths.") In the end, Hatab would agree with Bly: the problem is not so much to re-mythologize as it is to find and live more satisfactory myths. By believing we can and must do without myths in order to "progress beyond the primitive" we have weakened our ties to the deepest and best myths (and truths) in our cultural heritages, rendering ourselves susceptible to opportunistic images and stories (such as the Marlboro Man or *homo economicus*).

Myth and Philosophy has its own shortcomings, of course. Chief among its failings is the lack of sustained dialogue with any of the theories of myth by social scientists such as Jung or Levi-Strauss. Hatab does discuss the sadly neglected writings of Cassiere, through, and his discussion of Heidegger's theory of truth and Nietzsche's oft-misunderstood views on the poetic in *The Birth of Tragedy* compensates for what he omits. Hatab's concern is with myth and philosophy, and his thoughtful final chapter in its own way sheds much light on the broader concerns of myth and culture we discussed earlier.

How we become more mythic again is rather unclear at the moment, but people like Bly, Hatab, and many feminist scholars can help us. *Myth and Philosophy* will deepen and sharpen your understanding of both its subjects. It might also convince you that contemporary philosophy can contribute to the most important of human endeavors, the search for meaning.

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Helen Osterman Borowitz. *The Impact of Art on French Literature: From de Scudery to Proust*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985.

The Impact of Art on French Literature sounds as if it might be a study of particularly influential artists who have inspired various French writers. Instead, it is an historical account of how various French authors from the precieuse, neoclassicist, romantic, and symbolist periods have appropriated the power of the artist in order to "control and exploit it - even...to identify" with it.¹ Although W. J. T. Mitchell leveled this criticism at ekphrastic poetry, it accurately describes the type of interart connection examined by Helen Osterman Borowitz in her 1985 study of French art and literature. She writes from the point of view of the authors of fiction, surprising since she herself is an art historian, the curator of the Department of History and Education of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

One of the most interesting aspects of this study is an opening lengthy abstract in which Borowitz examines four strategies through which authors combine art and fiction. In the first, the artist appears as a character in the novel, as, for example, Robert Nanteuil was used by Madeleine de Scudery under the name of "Nelante" in her novel *Clelie*. The second involves "art work used as a visual emblem to define character or as a visual analogy to a literary theme" (21). So

W.J.T. Mitchell, "Against Comparison: Teaching Literature and the Visual Arts," *Teaching Literature and Other Arts*, ed. Jean Piere-Barricelli, Joseph Gibaldi, Estelle Lauter. New York: MLA, 1990. 34.

Balzac feminized the male image in painting and sculpture to "symbolize the theme of sexual ambiguity in life" (23). In the third strategy, the novelist uses a character as spokesman, playing the role of art guide or critic. Mme. de Stahl did this in *Corinne*: her heroine leads the reader through the museums and monuments of Italy, relating the architecture of Rome to its society as an illustration of the connection between art and politics (23). In the last, perhaps the most subtle and effective of the four strategies, art may be taken as an "aesthetic standard that functions as the measure of literary achievement and as a guide to experience" (23). Proust's character, Bergotte, says, when looking at a patch of yellow in Vermeer's *View of Delft*, "This is how I ought to have written" (quoted in Borowitz 24). With such a connection, visual art becomes the model of aesthetic excellence to which the writer aspires.

Borowitz enlivens the body of her work with gems of actual encounters between the authors examined and various artists, and explores the authors' attitudes toward art. Sections on Balzac, Huysmans and Proust are especially thorough, and in fact, very interesting. For example, Borowitz relates that Balzac, in critiquing and attempting to reconcile conflicting schools of "Idea" and "Image" in literature, demonstrates that painting, like literature, can be analyzed according to its formal means. Balzac compared artistic "color" and "drawing" to "Idea" and "image" in literature. He then compared Raphael to Rubens, noting that while both are gifted artists, one uses more color while the other focuses on drawing; but both must combine color and drawing to create a work. In much the same way, ideas and image must combine for a successful work of literature (134). Borowitz notes that Balzac's recognition of correspondence between the formal problems of the painter and the writer reveals a broader vision about controversies in the art and literary worlds, although she does not broaden her discussion to consider these controversies.

The Impact of Art on French Literature is a valuable historical chronicle. Although Borowitz demonstrates a certain affection for the precieuse period, the strength of the study can be found in her analysis of the romantic and symbolist eras. While the strategies examined do not provide any kind of meaningful formal comparisons, they do provide the reader a conventional historic view of how art and literature have co-existed over the years. Despite the fact that the actual comparisons made between art and literature provide only conventional analyses for the student of interart comparisons, the accumulation and organization of facts are impressive, and certainly this study would be fascinating reading for the student of literature.

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Working in America, Edited by Robert Sessions and Jack Wortman. University of Notre Dame Press: 1992. 544 pp.

Robert Sessions and Jack Wortman have created a humanities reader on the subject of work that opens with the subtle tones of wind chimes calling attention

to fresh breezes moving over old topics and ends with thunder and lightning as new insights hit your mind and work on your emotions.

Working in America begins by meeting us in the present tense. I choose the term deliberately, because "tense" is the word that best describes our present condition. In Section One, we listen to sundry voices from the workplace reflecting these tensions. As in every section, here poetry and scripture march in tandem with literature, essays, and, in this section, Studs Terkel's interviews with workers. Between the shadows of Frost, Auden, Twain, Sojourner Truth, Mailer, the inevitable Melville, and Dylan Thomas, readers will have a feast-but one which might shake up their consciences as they are brought face-to-face with the conflict between materialism (Benjamin Franklin) and the spiritual dimension (Thoreau). We face a dilemma. Must we choose? Do we really have a choice?

The way out of such a dilemma lies, at least partly, in the past. We can't make such decisions without knowing how our situation arose. Section Two of *Working in America* gives us a clear picture of the past. In the process, it helps us see how world views change, how change occurs in all our values and priorities. It also gives us the sense that, if change has taken place in the past, it is possible in the future. Sessions and Workman take us back to see how we have been shaped, by Plato and William Langland long before the Industrial Revolution, and by the likes of John Locke and Adam Smith ever since. The American landscape was seen as paradise, not in some unspoiled sense, but in some infinitely spoilable sense. Yes, we do have problems, and they are not all strictly personal ones that evolve from what we each may do as work. Our problems are also bigger than all of us, and evolve from the way we have seen work in the past. By the end of these readings, we can see that we do have a choice, and that we must choose our future and what work will mean in that future.

Section Three points the way to the future, and it speaks with force and vigor. If I ever wondered what distinguished me as a humanist, I now understand it is that I am more concerned "with vision than with prediction, with how the world might be if humans made one set of choices rather than another, and with imagining the most desirable futures," this insight from one of the many short "lectures" by the editors with which the book is graced.

There are nine powerful voices in this section: John Paul II, Marshall Sahlins, Dorothy Lee, Bob Black, Albert Camus, E.F.Schumacher, Henry Adams, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and the irresistible and remarkable Frithjof Bergmann. With the Pope, we learn once again from the past; from the anthropologists, we learn in a most moving manner just what life meant to the indigenous peoples and what we might still learn from them; from the anarchist, we refocus our sense of humor; from the visionaries we can see, as our editors tell us, that

...(the) why of these changes is crucial. If employers improve working conditions merely to improve profits, these alterations could prove to be fleeting. We will experience something like consumerism, wherein we substitute a form (purchasable item) for substance, (what we more basically need). In the end, visions of good work which are based on a deep understanding of human nature and human history, are eminently practical!

Working in America is at once visionary and eminently practical. I highly recommend it as a text for students in courses devoted to the subject of work. But even more, I recommend it as the humanities reader that it is, beautifully centered

upon the theme of work, and perhaps for that very reason, accessible and of great interest to students in English courses and humanities courses of every kind.

One last and very serious recommendation remains. This is a superb book for dialogue among faculty. What a wonderful excuse to bring the humanities faculty and the "Voc-Tech" faculty together for a mutually profitable dialog! *Working in America* deserves a vast readership both among students and among faculty. Robert Sessions and Jack Wortman have given us a very precious gift in their reader. The University of Notre Dame Press must also be congratulated for having the vision to see the eminent practicality of their gift.

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Joran Graf Haber. *Forgiveness*. Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1991. 110 pp.. Notes. Bibliography.

Forgiveness is a surprising title for a philosophical work. The idea that comes to mind is that in some way fairness and justice are not being served when forgiveness is practiced. Yet, in this book Mr. Haber argues that forgiveness is a virtue and as such should receive its proper attention along with other virtues that are the subject of philosophical discussion.

That Mr. Haber has chosen to argue about virtue is also somewhat surprising. For many years, philosophers in this country have contented themselves with clarifying other people's language, a task that was not always appreciated and frequently useless. Here, the focus is on trying to define what is good and what it means to be a virtuous person. This work is a discussion about ethics, what is good and right and what one ought to do. It gives up the dubious claim of many philosophers to be analyzing positions on moral issues from a morally neutral point of view. This shift in position has the potential of making contemporary philosophical discussion more honest and more engaging and a more vital part of the on-going discussions (both in the class room and in the work place) of issues about the meanings and purposes of people's actions and lives.

Haber makes a second and perhaps equally important argument, that virtue and philosophy have to do with the affections. This argument, that the good must take account of the emotions, is at least as old as Aristotle (whose discussion of virtue is frequently referred to in this work), but the affections haven't been a part of recent philosophical discussion.

When philosophers actively participate in philosophical debate rather than simply act as neutral commentators on the meaning of the language, the debates will be more engaging for all of us. Still, it must be said that *Forgiveness* will probably not engage most people even if they think about forgiveness as an important action. Perhaps it is the mark of the book's origins as a dissertation, that the author spends most of his time surveying the recent philosophical literature and arguing his own position as distinguished from that of other philosophers. This book is part of a

debate among philosophers, though the occasional references to religious and literary works do add interest.

There is a second and perhaps related reason that the book may not engage the non-professional audience. Having argued that the affections are appropriately considered in defining the ethical person, it seems that the tools of modern philosophy and the presentation of this book don't do justice to the arena of feelings. When one reads the works of Nietzsche (an admittedly high standard), the subtleties of the psychological dimension are much more clearly and persuasively presented. The problem is most clearly seen in the second part of the book. Mr. Haber argues that forgiveness, properly understood and offered, is a virtue. The argument goes that resentment is an appropriate response to certain actions by others. A lack of resentment would reflect a lack of self-respect. Mr. Haber defines resentment as appropriate or justified anger at personal injury. Forgiveness, then, is giving up this anger when the one doing the injury intended to do so but is now repentant and has suffered proper punishment. A philosopher should make this all seem "reasonable," but one might hope that the ambiguous dimensions of the emotions, the reflexive nature of resentment, and the superior stance of the forgiver might also find a place in an analysis that deals with the realm of the affections.

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Anthony Kemp. *The Estrangement of the Past: A study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness*. New York. Oxford University Press: 1991.

This short study (four chapters plus epilogue, 178 pages in all) falls in the category once known as historiography, now perhaps called metahistory: the history of histories. Kemp doesn't examine all histories, though, or even all the best known ones. "I have not attempted a comprehensive survey of historiography, for the result of comprehensiveness is an inevitable superficiality with regard to any particular author or history. Rather, I have selected certain nodes in the ideational development of the two historical models and examine these in detail." (vii) The two models he refers to are, first, that firmly established by Eusebius with the *Chronicorum* and the *Historia*; and second, that arising from the Reformation and Renaissance, examined by Kemp through the writings of Wycliff and Luther. Both are Christian, one Catholic, the other Protestant.

Eusebius provided the model which lasted for a thousand years, compiling all the sources he could find for the time from the birth of Christ to his own day and, in the process, creating a structure with them. That structure is designed to establish the concept of "the faith once delivered to the Saints," the notion that all thoughts and actions since the time of Christ must be measured against the eternal truth in Christ's words and acts, "reported faithfully in the Gospels and interpreted correctly in the writings of the apostles...."(8) Eusebius writes to set forth this truth, to show how it was proclaimed in the lives of martyrs, and how, after a period of turmoil when people strayed, it was restored by the Emperor Constantine. So, Kemp suggests, Eusebius essentially froze time and rejected change, showing in his

work how the faithful of all generations clung to the unchanging truth of the gospels.

An official commitment to the unchanging past was a hallmark of western Europe through the middle ages. It gave authority and legitimacy to those who identified themselves as its heirs, whether emperor or pope. It was in this tradition that Charlemagne was hailed as Augustus, and Henry VIII condemned Luther for innovation.

Henry Kemp points out, was right. Luther was an innovator, although perhaps not in the ways Henry meant. "In asides and fragments Luther framed an entirely new and revolutionary way of viewing the past; in him the new system is essentially complete...." (75) He does this, oddly, by asserting the authority of the past; but it is a different past. Rejecting the custom, the tradition, by which authorities had tied past to present, Luther introduces discontinuity: an authoritative past, betrayed by those who claimed to be its inheritors. "...the Lutheran vision of time...is the opposite of medieval syncretism: instead of books, the single book; instead of the past, tradition, as the source of truth, a great division driven between the primitive apostolic Church, lasting only one generation, and the present; instead of a universal, catholic, apostolic Church, a hidden and persecuted and invisible body of the few faithful within the apostate." (81) And so Luther, followed by England's John Foxe (to whom Kemp gives extended attention) used the past to break from the past; imitating kings and popes, protestants, too, claimed their authority from history.

Luther built on what others had done, and Kemp gives some attention to Petrarch, Valla, and Wycliffe as the founding thinkers of this new view of the past. The method they shared was characterized by two principles: that older sources have more value than newer ones, and that "history is dynamic," a place of constant change. To follow the development of the method based on these principles, Kemp turns to the English colonies in America and to the writing of William Bradford, Edward Johnson, and Cotton Mather. And here is the final irony, as Kemp presents it: that the Puritans were attempting to achieve what the medieval Church claimed it had achieved: unity with the past. It was the Puritan ambition to recreate the past in the present, the new Jerusalem in Massachusetts. It was the sad task of Puritan historians to record their failure.

In many ways we have not gone far beyond these uses of history. We have introduced "science" into its study, as Kemp shows in his epilogue on Emerson, Nietzsche, and Henry Adams. But we still appeal to its authority, we still select from it what we will, dismissing what is inconvenient to our purpose. And above all, we still think that it has some objective reality, that, somehow, it waits somewhere, out there, to be discovered, examined, understood. Kemp knows differently: "...the past has no perceivable existence beyond its literary expression." (vii) It is perhaps the clearest sentence in his book.

John H. Seabrook

Charles Michael Stanton. *Higher Learning in Islam: the Classical Period, A.D. 700-1300*. Savage, Maryland. Rowman and Littlefield: 1990. 186 pp. + recommended reading, bibliography.

For all too many Humanists, there is usually some "bread and butter" course: the requirement in the curriculum which makes certain there are students to fill the classes and that we continue in employment. I suspect that there are three such classes which provide this service for a substantial majority of community college Humanities faculty: the first semester of freshman English, western civilization, and American history. Of these, western civilization is undoubtedly the most widely discussed and controversial. Humanists call the name itself an oxymoron. Tories treat it as the last bastion of hope in an otherwise wild-eyed time. Whigs want to reform it. Liberals think it has outlived its usefulness.

Whatever your own feeling, if you are involved with courses in western or world civilization, Charles Stanton has written a nice short book which is well worth your time. He has three themes: the growth of centers and methods for learning in the Islamic world, the wide ranging and impressive varieties of scholarship which characterized Islamic learning, and the transmission of much of both these things to Europe. There is little that is new here. Stanton isn't trying for original scholarship. But he writes clearly and succinctly, and his argument is important and timely.

Most western civilization textbooks cover Islam. Most get it over with in two or three pages, covering the six hundred year period Stanton addresses with about the same amount of space given, say, to Henry the Eighth and the creation of the Church of England. Islam is treated as a successor to Rome, along with the Byzantine Empire, one of those obligatory topics to be disposed of so the writer can get on with the really important history. Stanton's point, however, is that much of that "really important" history represents a deep intellectual debt to the learning of Islamic scholars.

Education emerged quickly in the Islamic world, as might be expected in a society dedicated to the absolute authority of the written revelations of the *Q'uran*. Within its system of learning, several ingredients came together as a package: Arabic, as the language of revelation, the *Q'uran* as its substance, *hadith* (stories of the Prophet, told for guidance and instruction), and the mosque, as the center for religious teaching and study and the place for weekly gatherings of the faithful. All of this focused on the law, jurisprudence, both religious and civil. Using analogy and communal consensus, scholars and teachers filled in the many gaps left by *hadith* and *Q'uran* alike, to develop the laws and practices essential for life in an every-growing, polyglot empire. To achieve this, they developed the skills of grammar, philology, logic and exegesis.

Into this culture, already dedicated to education and with formal structures in place to advance it, came the intellectual legacy of the Greeks. The process of absorption began with the Muslim capture of Damascus, which became first a provincial capital, then the imperial city of the Umayyad caliphs. The Umayyads turned to Nestorian Christians as their physicians, were impressed by their Greek - and especially Neoplatonic - learning, and began the process of translating Syriac manuscripts into Arabic as early as 683.

The great age of translation was from c. 750-850, especially under the Caliph al-Mamun. One Muslim scholar, Hunain, translated almost all the writings of Galen, many of those of Aristotle, Plato, Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Ptolemy - and portions of the Old Testament. To put things in some perspective, Stanton picks up the comment of Phillip Hitti about this same period in western Europe, whose rulers, Charlemagne being the best known, "...were reportedly dabling in the art of

writing their names.” (67) Most of the classic texts on medicine, science, and astronomy were translated by the mid-800’s.

Translation was only the start. Islamic scholars took these resources, and those from other parts of the immense Muslim world, as the foundation for their own studies. Stanton touches on the work of many such scholars and their work in medicine, astronomy, alchemy, mathematics, optics, music. He touches on the work of Ibn Rashid (Averroes, to Europeans) and ibn-Sina (Avicenna), the best known of the many Muslim scholars whose work laid the foundation for much of European intellectual life.

Finally, Stanton shows how this wide range of learning made its way into Europe through Spain and, especially, Sicily and southern Italy. There, Roger II, in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and Frederick II, his successor and Holy Roman Emperor, were especially important in creating the conditions which reintroduced Europeans to Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Ptolemy, Avicenna and Averroes followed, as did Umar al-Khayyam, the concept of zero, the experimental method of al-Haitham, and the use of hypnosis in surgery. From this pre-Columbian exchange came scholasticism and sofas, hospitals and possibly even humanistic studies. All-in-all, the Islamic world seems to have given better than it got.

John H. Seabrook

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