

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 534

JC 000 374

AUTHOR Seabrook, John H., Ed.  
TITLE Community College Humanities Review, 1995.  
INSTITUTION Community Coll. Humanities Association.  
PUB DATE 1995-12-00  
NOTE 92p.; Published annually. For the 1994 issue, see ED 384 394.  
AVAILABLE FROM CCHA, Community College of Philadelphia, 1700 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19130 (\$5). Tel: 215-751-8850.  
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)  
JOURNAL CIT Community College Humanities Review; v16 Dec 1995  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Community Colleges; \*Educational Strategies; \*Humanities; Interdisciplinary Approach; \*Literature Reviews; Science and Society; Two Year Colleges

## ABSTRACT

This annual volume of the Community College Humanities Review (CCHR) presents a wide range of articles dealing with humanities--from Lloyd Kaplan's attempts to set the record straight (by presenting a more accurate appraisal and a truer perspective of Dave Brubeck's outstanding contribution to the course of jazz) to Walter Krieglstein's exploration of recent discoveries in basic science (by attempting to evaluate their potential as a stimulus for cross-fertilization between the sciences and the humanities). Contained are the following articles: (1) "Comments at the National Conference of the Community College Humanities Association: Washington, D.C., November 9, 1995" (Sheldon Hackney); (2) "Conform, Go Crazy or Take a Nap: Nourishing the Prophetic Vision" (Mary Rose Reilley); (3) "The Legacy of Dave Brubeck" (Lloyd Kaplan); (4) "Interdisciplinary Study: Towards the Millennium" (Maryanne M. Garbowsky); (5) "The Silencing Canon: Native American Texts and Literature Study" (Mary Roseberry); (6) "Life in the Iron Mills: Differing Responses to Moral Responsibility within the Community" (Mary Ellen Byrne); (7) "Can Chaos Theory Close the Gap between the Sciences and the Humanities?" (Walter Krieglstein); and (8) "'There Are No Serbs': The Language of Genocide" (Mark Grimes). (VWC)

Berry, D.A.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 441 534

1

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES REVIEW

December, 1995

Volume Sixteen

CHA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to  
improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this  
document do not necessarily represent  
official OERI position or policy.

## THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES ASSOCIATION

The Community College Humanities Association is a nonprofit national organization devoted to promoting the teaching and learning of the humanities in two-year colleges.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Members at Large:

David A. Berry, *Chair*  
Essex County College  
Newark, New Jersey

Frederick W. Capshaw (*ex officio*)  
*President*  
Community College of  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Constance Carroll, *President*  
San Diego Mesa College  
San Diego, California

Stephen Mittelstet, *President*  
Richland College  
Dallas, Texas

Daniel Moriarty, *President*  
Portland Community College  
Portland, Oregon

#### Division Presidents:

##### Central Division:

Rick Bailey  
Henry Ford Community College  
Dearborn, Michigan

##### Eastern Division:

Noel P. Robinson  
County College of Morris  
Randolph, New Jersey

##### Pacific-Western Division:

Jeffrey Clausen  
Green River Community College  
Auburn, Washington

##### Southern Division:

William Paquette  
Tidewater Community College  
Portsmouth, Virginia

##### Southwestern Division:

Nancy McCollum  
Pikes Peak Community College  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

#### CCHA OFFICE:

c/o Community College of Philadelphia  
1700 Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
215-751-8860

**Executive Director,** David A. Berry

**Office Manager,** Joeann Logan

**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.

**Editor:**

John H. Seabrook, Ph.D.  
Essex County College  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

**Editorial Board:**

Myrna Goldenberg, Ph.D.  
Montgomery College  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Pamela Benson  
Tarrant County Junior College, NE  
Hurst, Texas 76054

Brian Damiano, Ph.D.  
Tidewater Community College,  
Chesapeake Campus  
Chesapeake, Virginia

Robert Sessions  
Kirkwood Community College  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

**Publisher:**

Colby & McGowan Publishing Company  
Roselle, New Jersey

Manuscripts for the *Community College Humanities Review* are welcome. Submissions should focus on issues consistent with the purposes of the journal and should be submitted to the Editor through the Community College Humanities Association office at the Community College of Philadelphia. Submissions should conform to the *Review* style. All will be acknowledged, and authors will be notified of the decision of the Editorial Board. The Editor reserves the right to make changes not affecting the substance of a submission. Authors will receive three reprints of their articles. Additional copies may be obtained from the CCHA office upon request: include a check payable to CCHA for \$5.00, to cover costs.

CCHA wishes to acknowledge the support of the Community College of Philadelphia; Essex County College, Newark, N.J.; and Richland College, Dallas, Texas.





**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Comments at the National Conference of the Community College Humanities Association Sheldon Hackney	1
Conform, Go Crazy or Take a Nap: Nourishing the Prophetic Vision Mary Rose Reilley	13
The Legacy of Dave Brubeck Lloyd Kaplan	23
Interdisciplinary Study: Towards the Millennium Maryanne M. Garbowsky	32
The Silencing Canon: Native American Texts and Literature Study Mary Roseberry	48
Life in the Iron Mills: Differing Responses to Moral Responsibility Within the Community Mary Ellen Byrne	58
Can Chaos Theory Close the Gap Between the Sciences and the Humanities? Walter Krieglstein	64
"There Are No Serbs:" The Language of Genocide Mark Grimes	74

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Mary Ellen Byrne** is Professor in the Humanities Department at Ocean County College, Toms River, New Jersey.

**Maryanne M. Garbowsky** is a member of the faculty at the County College of Morris, Randolph, New Jersey.

**Mark Grimes** is an Assistant Professor of English at Howard Community College, Columbia Maryland.

**Sheldon Hackney** is Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Lloyd Kaplan** is a member of the faculty in the Department of Music at the Community College of Rhode Island, Warwick, Rhode Island.

**Walter Krieglstein** is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

**Mary Roseberry** is an Assistant Professor of English at Niagra County Community College, Sanborn, New York.

**COMMENTS AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES ASSOCIATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 9, 1995**

Sheldon Hackney  
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Speaking at the University of Texas on October 16, 1995, in the wake of the racially disparate reaction to the jury verdict in the O. J. Simpson murder trial, and on the same day as the Million Man March in Washington by black men for "atonement and reconciliation", President Clinton called upon Americans of all races "to clean our house of racism." "We must be one," he asserted, " . . . all of us, no matter how different, who share basic American values and are willing to live by them." Then, recalling the moments of crises from America's past, when the nation "had the courage to face the truth about our failure to live up to our own best ideals", the President said the country became stronger by becoming more inclusive. "At each of these moments, we looked in the national mirror and were brave enough to say, this is not who we are; we're better than that."

"This is not who we are." Well, who are we? That is the question, and it is a crucial question. Who we think we are influences what we do. The idea is tutor to the act. Archibald McLeish, in an essay published in 1949, wrote, "The soul of a people is the image it cherishes of itself; the aspect in which it sees itself against its past; the attributes to which its future conduct must respond. To destroy that image is to destroy in a very real sense, the identity of the nation, for to destroy the image is to destroy the means by which the nation recognizes what it is and what it has to do.

Small wonder, then, that in recent months we have witnessed rancorous public disputes about the image of our past: the aborted Enola Gay exhibit, the canceled American history theme park by Disney near Manassas, the proposed National History Standards, and perhaps the attempted abolition of the National Endowment for the Humanities itself. The question posed by those disputes is, "Who owns history?" Who



controls our collective image of ourselves? Who can show the country what it has to do by holding up the national mirror?

By now we can all recite the litany of domestic social ills threatening our sense of wellbeing; we are also feeling the anxieties of an illdefined "new world order" that have replaced the ironically comfortable certainties of the Cold War; we are painfully aware of the depredations the global market place is visiting upon the domestic economy; we have seen the polls indicating that most Americans think the country is "on the wrong track," that the younger generation will have a much more difficult time realizing "the American dream" than their parents, that the members of each racial group in distressingly high percentages hold negative stereotypes of the members of each of the other racial groups in the American population; and we have heard critics as diverse as Cornell West and William Bennett declare that America is in a spiritual crisis.

Furthermore, there is a long list of public policy issues whose resolutions will be driven by notions of the American identity: race conscious Congressional districting, affirmative action, immigration, bilingual education, Afro-centric curriculums, teaching values in schools, and perhaps such indirect matters as welfare policy, urban policy, and public education itself. It is time to look again into the national mirror.

The National Conversation on American Pluralism and Identity, a project of the National Endowment for the Humanities, does just that. It invites diverse groups of Americans to come together — by teleconference, on the internet, through the radio, in face-to-face discussion groups — to talk and to listen to each other about what holds us together as a country, about shared values in a heterogeneous society, about common commitments in a society that contains all the divisions of race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion that are the source of sectarian violence in almost every other quarter of the globe, about the *unum* in our national motto, *E Pluribus Unum*.

The National Conversation has been underway for only a few months, so the projects are still in their early stages.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Conversation was two years in the making, and I have travelled all over the country talking about it, conducting trial conversations, seeking advice, and listening to Americans respond. There are already lessons that can be drawn from it. This, then, is an interim report.

The first thing to be said is that Americans are eager for the National Conversation. They may be a little puzzled at first if the subject is defined in its most abstract form, but the feeling of social fragmentation, of people drifting apart from one another, is very much on their minds, so they recognize the topic and understand its purpose. In addition to

describing the project to dozens of audiences and seeking the advice of a score or more of interested groups, I conducted six "pilot conversations" in communities that differed in geography, ethnic composition and economic base. The groups were composed of diverse cross sections of their communities and of people who had not known each other previously. In each case, the groups spontaneously asked at the end of the evening if there was a way they could come back together to continue the discussion. This was a testament to the recognition of the importance of the topic, its protean nature, and also to the reality that it takes some time before participants begin to trust each other enough to express something of their deeper feelings, fears, and dreams.<sup>2</sup>

There are, of course, flash points and dead ends to worry about in these discussions, but the conversation has an integrity and a currency that draws people along with it across the tiger pits of discord and suspicion.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a few vignettes from some of the discussions I have led will hint at the rewards and lessons of the conversation.

I went for my first "pilot conversation" to Garden City, Kansas, a remote "meat factory" town in the middle of the prairie. There, physically tough, low wage jobs in the slaughter houses have attracted recent Hispanic and Asian immigrants, making the small town quite diverse. The group that gathered at the public library was as diverse as the town, but the conversation went smoothly. They talked of tolerance, the rewards of pluralism, the challenge of equal opportunity, and the ideal of democracy. There were very few points at which tensions could be observed. At the conclusion, after the discussants had all left, I asked the host if I had heard an honest discussion. "Yes," he said, "but at its most polite level." I had, he thought, heard what the group thought would make their community look good in the eyes of a visitor, especially a visitor from, Washington. I was disappointed. Crushed might be a more accurate word. My long years of experience as a teacher had failed me. On the way home on the plane, however, I began to think of the conversation in a slightly more positive way. This diverse group, after all, when it wanted to present itself in the best possible light, had reverted to a set of civic values that the town may not have lived by but which they recognized as shared ideals — "our own best ideals," as the President said. True, they had not been able to talk candidly in front of a stranger about how they fell short of their ideal, but they held in common a notion of civic virtue that was inclusive and tolerant and based on equal access to justice and opportunity. I felt a little better.

I travelled not long after that to Detroit and spent a wonderful evening talking about America with a group that was racially and ethnically diverse, but was generally well educated and prosperous. The group was a bit shy, but it found itself agreeing in short order with a particularly

articulate Euro-American who argued that the essence of Americanism was a reliance on the Constitution and the political system it defined, along with a commitment to equal individual opportunity, self reliance and maximum individual freedom. When it became clear that a surprising agreement had been reached, one of the group looked around and said, "I wonder if the underclass would agree with us?" The ways in which opportunity is structured by class almost always came up in these discussions, along with other social justice issues.

In Boston, I found myself engaged with a group that was not designed to be a pilot conversation but nonetheless fell naturally into a feisty discussion of the American identity. After that discussion had been boiling along for a while, a young Latino activist was recognized, looked steadily around the big table and said in a voice full of challenge, "I am not an American. There is nothing about me that is American. I don't want to be American, and I have just as much right to be here as any of you." What an American thing to say - squarely in the great tradition of American dissent. He was affirming his American identity even as he was denying it. I think he was also launching a preemptive strike against the threat of exclusion by declaring that he did not want to be included, and he was announcing that his pre-American identity was very important to him and he did not want America to deprive him of it.

I was conversing in Oklahoma City long before it became a national symbol for both the cynicism that is corroding American democracy and for the kind of communal solidarity in the face of catastrophe that is the antidote to our alienation from what Jean Elshtain in *Democracy on Trial* calls "democratic dispositions," the habits of civic engagement and willingness to compromise that strengthen "civil society."

In Oklahoma City, after much talk of grievances held by various American groups, as well as about the ideals of equal opportunity and equal justice, a Chinese American man told his story. He had been born and raised in China and had been fortunate enough to have been sent by the government to the United States to get his PhD. Like a lot of his compatriots in that first wave of Chinese students, he defected. He stayed in America and now is a college teacher. For a long time, he told us, he thought that for him the appeal of the United States was the higher standard of living, the material comforts it afforded. Then, he told us, he began to realize that what he valued most in his new American identity was freedom. "Here," he said, "no one tells me where I must live, what job I can have, what I can read, what I must think, what I can say, how many children I can have."

Houston is an interesting city because it does not have a racial

majority. It is about a third Anglo-American, a third African American, and a third Hispanic. The group that came together to discuss the meaning of being American represented those major communities plus the smaller Asian American portion of the population. At one point, after the group had been discussing family and how America viewed older people, a Vietnamese American made a powerful point through a poignant autobiographical statement. In all cultures influenced by Confucian thought, he said, family is the highest value, and older people are revered as being wise and deserving honor.

He had thus devoted his life to his family. He had risked everything to escape Viet Nam, and he had managed against great odds to get his family to the United States. Once in Houston, he had worked very hard to earn a living in a strange land. He was now teaching English as a second language to mostly Chicano young people (prompting from me Yogi Berra's famous response to the news that a Jew had been elected Mayor of Dublin, "Only in America!" and he devoted all his resources to his family. By working very hard and saving, he had managed to provide a good education for his two daughters. They had just graduated from college and had gotten good jobs, but, he said, with resignation more than anger in his voice, "They do not bring their money home!" That is, they were not pooling their money with his as if they were part of the family unit. What he was really saying, of course, was that his daughters had become individualistic Americans while he was still culturally Vietnamese.

In Lawrence, Massachusetts, a Cambodian American and a Vietnamese American argued over the value and wisdom of bilingual education. The Cambodian American took his daughter out of the program after the second year because, according to him, she could read neither Cambodian nor English. One inferred from all he said, however, that he was very intent on blending into his new surroundings. On the other hand, the Vietnamese American was pleased with the same program because he thought it was very important for his children to maintain their cultural identity. Among the other reasons he cited for this was the fact that he had gotten an enormous amount of help from the Vietnamese community in getting started after his immigration. The ethnic community as a support group is an old story in America. Out of all these conversations comes my sense that almost all Americans have an answer to the question of what it means to be an American, even though it may be somewhat inchoate until it is summoned up into full consciousness and tested. When examined, the question, "Who are we?" turns out to be three related questions: (1) what principles of governance for our common life should we hold dear, (2) what widespread traits of character or typical behavior give evidence that we

and (3) how do we think about or describe the whole, the "ONE," and what does that imply about who is really included in the nation. "How wide the circle of we?"

The answer to the question of what it means to be an American usually begins with a belief in the universal values expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, a belief that what keeps our differences from developing into major conflict is a shared commitment to the idea of democracy, an agreement about how to resolve our disagreements. "Civic nationalism," this is usually called, and it is the foundation of almost all popular conceptions of the American identity. The ever changing size and shape of the gap between aspiration and achievement is a central theme of American history.

There is also here the problem that is inherent in our democracy, the problem that flows from the fact that we committed ourselves in the beginning to both Liberty AND Equality. In a society with a great deal of liberty, one will soon have a lot of inequality. That is true because people make different choices, have different amounts of luck, different desires, different talents, start in the race at different points on the track. They therefore will have very different degrees of success in life, especially success measured by material rewards.

Americans have handled the apparent contradiction between their two fundamental principles by saying that "equality" refers not to equality of condition but to equality of opportunity, equality before the law, and equal access to the political process. Much of our political dialogue historically has been about whether or not equality of opportunity actually exists at a particular time and in a particular situation. Conservatives generally argue that equal opportunity actually exists and that, therefore, the inequality of condition that is observable is justified. Liberals generally argue that there are all sorts of unfair barriers and impediments to equal opportunity and that, therefore, the inequality of condition that is observable is not justified. The liberal cure, of course, is some sort of government action to improve equal opportunity.

Unfortunately, as we are increasingly aware, people with more economic resources (sometimes referred to as "special interests") have much more power to influence the political process than those with fewer economic resources. Equality of opportunity, then, "justifies" economic inequality, but economic inequality erodes democracy by providing unequal access to the political system. Because democracy is the core value of our society, this is a serious and continuing tension in our system.

That tension can not be resolved; we must simply manage it. There are dilemmas as well. When presented with a hypothetical situation

that required them to choose between the values of nondiscrimination and loyalty to ethnic group, many conversationalists found it impossible to choose. Participants almost invariably expressed a desire to be tolerant of differences growing out of the cultural traditions or beliefs of another group; but some different practices were too much to tolerate. The more obvious examples of this are polygamy, female genital mutilation, ritual drug use, the subordination of women, putting the health of children at risk because of a religiously based refusal to use modern medicine, and so forth. The problem comes when trying to define what class of things must conform to the moral judgment of the majority of citizens and what class of things can be allowed to be different. Cultures may be equally legitimate but they are not equally admirable in their every feature.

Assuming that these dilemma's can be managed without rupturing the social bonds, the question then becomes, "Is civic nationalism enough to hold us together?" Most Americans with whom I have talked so far think that it is not, but they believe that there is an American culture - "conventional ways of believing and behaving" - that is shared across regional, religious, ethnic and racial lines. The problem is that for almost every trait one can cite as being characteristically American, there is its opposite as well. One can construct a veritable Yin and Yang of American culture.

Americans believe in equality and are instinctively suspicious of people who "put on airs." Yet, Americans are also fascinated by celebrities. We love to see exceptional people do exceptional things, and we are just as eager to see them crash after attaining exalted heights. Icarus is a naturalized American.

Americans proclaim that hard work is its own reward, but we are also constantly on the lookout for get-rich-quick schemes. From the gold rush to the land rush to their modern-day equivalents in Wall Street and Las Vegas, we think there must be a way to get rich without having to sweat. The lottery is a poor man's investment in the American Dream.

Americans, thus, may be motivated by greed, but we are also the most philanthropic people on the face of the globe. we are materialistic, but we have the highest percentage of church members among the developed industrial nations. New Age cults and mysticism thrive amongst people who are pursuing the main chance.

We are heterogeneous in almost every imaginable way, and tolerance of difference is thought to be a virtue; but we have sprouted the Ku Klux Klan, the Nation of Islam, Know Nothings, Anti-Masons, Militias, and assorted nativist groups. Ninety percent of Americans describe themselves as middle class, and middle class virtues are enshrined in our

Puritan heritage. Yet we are also the land of instant gratification, of minute rice and fast food, of hot tubs and easy credit, of Hollywood escapism and theme park fantasies.

We think of ourselves as a practical and self-reliant people, but we have been host to more utopian experiments in communal living than any other nation on earth. Competition is such a natural thing to Americans that almost every activity is organized into a contest so that we can find out who is the best at it. On the other hand, our national imagination is full of the icons of cooperation: barn raisings and corn huskings, wagon trains going west and communities rallying in selfless solidarity after a hurricane or flood or terrorist's bomb.

Individualism is an American fetish, but our real genius is for large-scale organization — witness the transcontinental railroad and telegraph, corporate giants like IBM and GM, the winning of World War II, putting a man on the moon, and our devotion to team sports.

President Clinton in his Austin speech mentioned optimism as a traditional American trait, and he is certainly right, but there is also a long and honored tradition in Puritan America of the Jeremiad.

I believe that it is virtually impossible to tell which one or the other member of these antipodal pairs is more typical than the other. The pairs indicate fault lines in the culture, locations where there is active stress. They are interesting for that reason. That is where the cultural action is.

Bearing in mind the questionable claim of such cultural traits to being useful in distinguishing Americans from others, it is nonetheless interesting to know how Americans think of themselves. Participants in the National Conversation mentioned not only the foregoing traits but a number of other characteristics they thought were especially American: a high value placed upon free speech and the other individual freedoms protected by the Bill of Rights; a tendency to favor the underdog; a belief that people should have a second chance and that social mobility is a good thing; the expectation of progress and that "things should work;" the belief that striving for success is the normal condition of life, and that individuals are obliged to attempt to improve themselves and their circumstances; that choices should be available; that education is a ladder for social mobility; and that individuals have a duty to contribute to their communities.

When one moves from individual traits to the task of imagining the group, one discovers three conventional categories in use. Most writers agree that the dominant cultural style at least until the 1960s was Anglo-American (growing out of British and later out of more general European heritage), and that members of other groups were expected to conform



The social revolution of the Sixties not only opened up the mainstream of opportunity to members of ethnic and racial minorities, but it replaced the notion of a single acceptable cultural style with a multiplicity of equally legitimate cultural heritages, an orientation known as pluralism. By then the theory of pluralism, rooted in the work of Horace Kallen and popularized first by Randolph Bourne, was half a century old.

The idea of America being a melting pot has existed since Hector St. John de Crevecoeur defined "this new man, this American" during the Revolutionary struggle, but it did not become popular as a goal of social policy until Israel Zangwill's play in 1908 struck a responsive chord amidst the anxieties about the lack of social cohesion resulting from the flood of immigration from eastern and southern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Anglo-conformity does not work as a model because it does not allow the sort of dual and mixed identities that many Americans want, and because it denigrates the non-European heritages of many Americans. The Melting Pot metaphor accounts for the huge amount of assimilation that has actually gone on in the United States, but it does not accommodate itself to the huge amount of persistence of pre-American cultural identities that is also part of our reality. Not only do these preamerican cultural identities persist, but Americans want to maintain them and will resist any notion of Americanism that requires the obliteration of these identities of descent.

Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, comes in many forms, but in its most equalitarian form it does not recognize the historical fact of the primacy of British, European and Western Civilization's cultural parentage. All heritages are equally legitimate, but all were not equally influential. Furthermore, there is a separatist version of Pluralism that views the United States as simply a holding company for a collection of nations, an umbrella organization for diasporic national fragments whose members get their identities from, and owe their loyalties to, non-American states. Such a vision of America is seen as a dangerous pathology by most Americans. Even more important, pluralism in any of its current guises does not provide for a shared American culture, an area of overlapped cultures perhaps, that actually exists and that most Americans want. For these reasons, existing forms of pluralism are inadequate. Americans seem to want a way to think about diversity that is not provided by any of these existing models but goes beyond them.

There is a new conception of the American identity that one can assemble out of the talk created by the National Conversation and out of recent scholarship.<sup>4</sup> First, the new conception is rooted in "civic



nationalism," a shared belief in our democratic governance system and the universalistic values to which we committed ourselves in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Second, there is a sense that out of our history has come a set of meanings and attitudes and preferences and typical behaviors and tastes that amount to a national character. However difficult it is to specify it with accuracy, it is nonetheless real, and it is recognized by other Americans, and especially by foreigners encountering Americans.

Third, the new way of thinking about the American collectivity allows for both a common American identity and an identity of descent. It accommodates itself to the American devotion to mobility, both geographic and social. It permits change over time — change in the boundaries and in the meaning of identities, as well as the creation and demise of identities. It accounts for both assimilation and for the persistence of pre-American identities.<sup>5</sup> Most important, it recognizes the hybridity of American culture. That is, it reflects the understanding that when various world cultures encountered each other in North America over long periods of time, the relationships were not simply those of dominance and submission but of mutual influence. The resulting American culture therefore may be built on a British and European base, but it is more accurately understood as a hybrid of many cultures, and that it is not identical to any of its root cultures.

The National Conversation about American Pluralism and Identity is at flood tide now, so I invite you to launch your own deep draft vessel, either with or without flotation devices from the National Endowment for the Humanities. There is no more important topic before the public at this time. You may draw your own conclusions from the conversation, of course; the harbor is big enough for many ships.

My own belief is that there is a national identity that we can share in a way that brings us together so that we can more easily solve our common problems but that also honors our differences. Based in democracy, this identity guards individual rights but recognizes the need for a sense of duty to the community. I worry that rights-based individualism on the Left, and market-driven libertarianism on the Right will leave insufficient room for a common vision for the common good. The question absent from our national catechism is, "What do I owe to my fellow citizens?"

I believe, further, that there is an inclusive historical narrative in which we all recognize not only the stories of our kith and kin but in which we acknowledge that we all are playing roles in a common story, in which we are all linked to each other across barriers of time and boundaries of

achievements, in which the meaning of America is to be found in the common ground of its aspirations of liberty and justice for all.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thus far, the NEH has awarded \$1.3 million for 29 projects through the special grant competition, and \$3 million for 33 additional projects that competed in our regular programs but are substantially related to the theme of the National Conversation. A film that is still in preparation and a small amount of extra funding for the state humanities councils are extending the conversation even more broadly. The cumulative total of projects funded through November 1995 is 1,540 "conversations" in 224 cities and towns in 39 states.

<sup>2</sup>There are certain criticisms that the National Conversation has had to face. Critics on the Right accused it of being a covert effort to impose a multicultural ideology on a naive public. Critics on the Left suspected that it was a camouflaged attempt to reimpose a pre-1960s Anglo-American version of the American identity. Some said there is no real problem in the United States, so why talk? others insisted that the nation state is archaic and the source of much human misery, so we should be talking about cosmopolitanism. The search for cohesion is fundamentally misguided, another argument insisted, because it would deprive "the Other" of the right to a nonconforming identity. If the conversation is in English, isn't that already an oppressive statement? Talk is like crabgrass and doesn't need subsidizing, ran one line of criticism, missing the distinction between idle chatter and a purposeful humanities conversation based on a text. What will you do, asked journalists circling like vultures over the cultural battlefield, when people start shouting at each other rather than talking to each other? Indeed, was not the subject so charged with emotion that talking about it might make it worse? Despite these attempts to make the National Conversation seem controversial, it has enjoyed an enthusiastic reception by humanities and public interest groups and by the general public.

<sup>3</sup>With financial and logistical assistance from the MacArthur Foundation, we brought together in Chicago a group of scholars to help us sharpen our focus, define our questions, and explore the subject. They were enormously helpful. They were: William Galston, Henry Louis Gates,

Nathan Glazer, Amy Gutmann, Bennetta Jules-Rosette, Stanley Katz, Martin Marty, Martha Minow, Martha Nussbaum, Diane Ravitch, Renato Rosaldo, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Richard Sennett, Catherine Stimpson, Rennard Strickland, Ronald Takaki, Michael Walzer, Iris Marion Young, and Jamil Zainaldin. James Q. Wilson could not attend that meeting but participated in other ways and provided a short essay for the resource kit. The resource kit is available from the NEH; phone 1-800-NEH-1121

<sup>4</sup>In addition to my discussions and pilot conversations, and in addition to the advisers listed above, my thinking about the American identity has been enriched and informed by my reading in the works of the following scholars and writers, though my ideas do not coincide completely with any of them: Joyce Appleby, "Recovering America's Historic Diversity: Beyond Exceptionalism," *The Journal of American History* (September 1992); Sheldon Wolin, *The Presence of the Past* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1989); Os Guinness, *The American Hour* (New York: The Free Press, 1993); Jean Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986); Arthur Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979); John Higham, "Multiculturalism and Universalism: A History and Critique," *The American Quarterly* (June 1993); Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited and introduced by Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994); David Potter, *Freedom and Its Limitations in American Life*, edited by Don Fehrenbacher (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1976); Benjamin Barber, *Jihad Versus McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995); David Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1995); Lawrence Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1990); James Davison Hunter, *The Culture Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), and *Before the Shooting Begins* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); and Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup>As David Hollinger writes in *Postethnic America*,

"Postethnicity prefers voluntary to prescribed affiliations, appreciates multiple identities, pushes for communities of wide scope, recognizes the constructed character of ethno-racial groups, and accepts the formation of new groups as part of the normal life of a democratic society."

## **CONFORM, GO CRAZY OR TAKE A NAP: NOURISHING THE PROPHETIC VISION<sup>1</sup>**

Mary Rose O'Reilley

Several years ago I wrote an essay titled, "Conform, Go Crazy or Become an Artist." I was keen about this subject because it touches the work closest to my heart, encouraging teachers about the worthiness of the work we do, the necessity of reawakening—if it should be sleeping—our definition of ourselves as artists and visionaries.

I still believe in the prophetic vocation of the teacher, but these days I'm a little more weary, and a diet of honey and locusts falls short of my minimum daily requirements. It occurs to me that exhorting my fellow teachers to take risks every day, to head for the artistic edge, might be enough to do them in. Prepare your classes, teach school, read student papers, make helpful comments on them, keep office hours, meet with committees, spend quality time with your friends, children and partners, cut your fat intake, practice meditation, get in your aerobic exercise, and, oh, in your spare time, be a visionary—

So I decided to think through a different series of thoughts, beginning with this question: what are the conditions that might make it possible for us to operate at a modest level of prophetic inspiration, to bring a daily beauty to our lives, sustaining to ourselves, our students and our communities? When I wrote "Conform, Go Crazy or Become an Artist," I ranted against materialism and the culture of criticism as the enemies of art. It was quite a cosmic analysis. Right now, I'd like to be a little more personal. For the last few months I've been burrowing into my own experience and asking myself what I have learned about creating the conditions necessary to be an artist—of whatever kind, of whatever definition—an artist of friendship, of gardening, of making dinner, of making poems—whatever your gift might be. I don't want to preach: to say, "This is what you have to do." I'm just going to say, "Here are some

<sup>1</sup> A version of this essay was delivered as an address to the Community College Humanities Association Regional Conference, October 7, 1994, in Colorado Springs.

things that worked for me and maybe they'll speak to someone else's condition."

Let me try, first, to establish a frame for thinking about this business of being an artist. I mean it in a very communal and inclusive way. I collect folk art, especially the subclassification called "visionary" art. I started my collection years ago when I taught crafts in a psychiatric hospital. The art work people made and gave me was strange and beautiful. It **had** to be made. I like art that has a feeling of "I had to make this or die. I had to make this so badly that it didn't bother me that I don't know color theory." So my first question of you, if you wish to begin this inquiry, is "What do you **have to** make? What is calling inside you? What can only you make?"

Of course I am speaking of visual art in a metaphoric sense. You don't have to start painting on velvet. I am not going to pronounce that overworked word "creativity." "Creativity" has for me overtones of superficial activity: frosting on the cake of life. What I'm hoping for is something better than that. How can we find our deep prophetic vision? How can we do what only we are called to do? Bharati Mukherjee, in her book *Jasmine*, talks about how, in the Hindu tradition, we might come to earth merely to perform a single minor action essential to the great tapestry of creation: to raise a window or draw back a blind, "to move a flowerpot from one table to another" (53). "The incentive," Jasmine says, "is to treat every second of your existence as a possible assignment from God" (53-54). But what if we miss the moment? What if we are grading papers when we are needed by all the forces of humankind to move a flowerpot? How, given the noise of our lives, can we listen to our deepest call?

Seven years ago I spent a sabbatical in a contemplative Quaker community which pretty much unfitted me for the academic world I had left behind. When I came back to my university, I was as confused and befuddled as some kind of alien from a neighboring galaxy. In the year after my sabbatical, I would stare at a photo from the Science Museum called "Pink Nebula in Orion," a splatter of rosy light, and long for home like E.T.

The problem was, nothing I had learned on sabbatical had fitted me to sit at a university desk. In fact, I had not come back from sabbatical. Somebody had come back, but it was not the person who left. Still, I had hundreds of things to do, inherited from the person I used to be and no longer was. Teach school, for example. That person had a contract.

I tried very hard to do the work left behind for me by this woman who had gone away and not come back, but the harder I tried, the more I became physically or metaphysically ill. That woman, the former inhabitant of my body, lectured four days a week, three hours a day, just like her

colleagues up and down the hall. When I opened my mouth to deliver her lectures, my chest started to hurt and a smothering sensation came over me. I ran out of breath and got faint. It had nothing to do with “getting used to it again,” as my helpful colleagues suggested. I just didn’t believe the words I was expected to deliver, and my vocal apparatus refused to make the sounds.

I was no longer able to tell my students what they needed to know, because I didn’t know what they needed to know, though only a year ago I had been quite sure.

**What are you doing?** What are you **really** doing? What is your deepest sense of call? Your true vocation? My “consultant” (something like a spiritual director) in the contemplative community had asked me those questions week after week, and I had come to a vague answer. **To listen deeply**, whatever that meant. On re-entry to this galaxy, I quickly became aware of what it did **not** mean: lecturing on Joseph Conrad, shmoozing at academic cocktail parties. These activities and a few others (some of which were contractual obligations) brought on symptoms that felt like a heart attack. Heart break, maybe. It’s easy for me to resist my deepest sense of call—especially if the call interferes with my ambitions about making a living and gaining prestige. But you can’t teach school if your lungs won’t work. I was confused about priorities, about what I was supposed to be doing. I couldn’t possibly get through all the work delegated to the woman whose contract bore my alias, and I was going home every day feeling that, no matter what I had accomplished, I had not done the right thing.

Somewhere in the middle of this crisis, the idea of composing a job description for myself occurred to me. I decided to write down a sentence that reflected my clearest sense of the task. Then I could feel that, whatever else got screwed up, I had been faithful to some inner light. **Peaceful listening**, I wrote on a three-by-five card, and tacked it over my desk. The phrase helped me to pull my days together. When all the telephones were ringing, committees meeting, students lining up, I could tell myself, “The only thing that needs to happen is peaceful listening.” This turned out to be a useful role for me. Since not too many people were listening to anybody, ever, around the university, I could take up a little slack.

Lecturing and even the form of pseudo-lecturing called leading discussion yielded place to peaceful listening. I began to ask students what they wanted to know. They were willing to tell me. I—the energetic pacer—began to sit down in the classroom, talking to small groups, sometimes talking to one or two students, sending others off to pursue this or that and report back. Gradually I learned to breathe again. Things still piled up on my desk like one of those Welsh mine tips that occasionally slides down and

is a village. But I felt I was doing my job.

I have read that, in a time of crisis, the old myths tell us to **loosen our strings**. "When a woman has reached that dark moon land of No-Return..." writes the Jungian analyst Nor Hall, "this would be the time for her to undo every knot on her garments, unlock the doors, open windows, uncork bottles, untie shoelaces, unbraid her hair, set the cows out of their stall, free the chickens, free anything that is tied!" (102).

Had I not followed some instinctive wisdom, let my academic chickens roam, I would have missed rich lessons. I learned a great deal that year about the dialectics of speech and silence, doing and being. Of course, I've blown most of it, as I inevitably do. I've decided, once again, that I know what my students need; I'm ranting away about my latest theories. I have stopped yearning after strange galaxies. I hardly ever listen to anybody.

But I have another sabbatical this year. In a few days I'm headed out for a Vietnamese Buddhist community, and I'm pretty sure that I will not come back.

The next step, after you figure out your job description, is scarier: publish it to your department chair. He or she will probably be happy to know.

Maybe not. In an ideal world, we might define the task of administration in terms of **discerning gifts**. "There are a variety of gifts but the same spirit." How happy, in this world, your department chair would be to know who you really are. Instead, so often we hitch race horses to pull wagons, or make those big Clydesdales run races. But let's put aside the judgments of other people: **your** deepest business is to know what kind of horse you are. It took me years and years of concentrated attention to even begin to figure that out. When, in the course of a planning session, I explained to my department chair who I was and what I hoped to accomplish that year he listened with great courtesy and approved my goals. Then he told me who he was and what he wanted to accomplish. Both of us, I think, came away content.

My next suggestion: keep a sabbath. My youngest daughter works as an accountant for our local Hasidic Jewish community, so we are always wrapped around in Jewish festivals and holidays. It seems that there is always a celebration ready to erupt, or a **meaning** to be affirmed and witnessed. My daughter was raised in the Quaker tradition; we have a testimony that all days are equal and all to be celebrated—which means that in practice nothing gets celebrated much. But she really loves the Hasidic sabbath. On Friday the excitement starts, with the rabbi—who runs her company—blessing all the workers. On Saturday nobody works and we see the rabbi on his front porch with his prayer shawl on, looking very different



than he does on weekdays. We prairie Quakers looked at this for a while and decided there must be something in it.

A couple of months ago I talked to my friend Emily who is an Episcopalian. She told me that she takes a sabbath every Monday. "What do you mean?" I said. "What do you do on that day?"

She said, "I just get up on Monday and spend the whole day without a plan. I eat breakfast in or out, or skip breakfast, I call the first person I think of calling. I write a letter if it occurs to me. I drive to Iowa and sit in a cornfield. Whatever. All day. Every Monday."

What is the point of making one day so different from the others? Obviously, this is not the place to reflect theologically, but neither do I want to take a sacred tradition and put it to a merely secular use. I will simply say, it's impossible to hear a subtle call if you do not create a conscious time to listen to it. Who are you and what are you doing here? How do we even **begin** to answer this question? With our heads? With our hearts? My friend Bob recently told me that he used to figure things out with his head, but that led to overly intellectual decisions. Then he tried his heart but that led to overly emotional decisions. "Now" he told me, "I reason with my feet. I look at where I've been walking. Where I tend to turn up. I figure that this might be where I am going."

With her Monday sabbath, Emily is, over a period of time, gently watching her feet. After a while, this may tell her important things about who she is and what she is doing: how she feels without breakfast, who it is important to keep in touch with, what kind of landscape nurtures her spiritually. She is training her intuition.

For my part, I am too analytical, and if someone tells me to follow my instincts they might as well tell me to follow a scent like my dog, Shep. If my hind brain ever knew how to do this, it has forgotten. But I think that Emily is following a syllabus for intuition. When you simply follow your feet around for twenty-four hours, you become sensitive to the tiny nudges of spirit.

"I have a feeling I'm wrong about my thesis," one of my students told me in the course of a writing conference.

"What does that feeling feel like?" I asked, because I, the Analysis Queen, really wanted to know.

"Like a little mouse-tooth, gnawing away," the student replied.

I think we have to give some space and time to learning to see and feel the subtleties of the world around us. Or maybe they are not even subtle, these instincts, intuitions and visions we shut out. I don't know about you, but when I take an afternoon of retreat, or even an hour of staring at



nothing, it's as though a parallel universe comes at me with a sound like the rush of trains that used to go by our house at night.

Maybe you don't have one day a week to practice sabbath—I think you should talk to my daughter's rabbi—but maybe you have an hour a day or an hour a week. There are lots of mini-sabbaths around, if you know where to seek them out.

Here's a slightly different kind of sabbath.

Several years ago I went canoeing with my friend Robin who used to work for the DNR. I hate canoeing, because the very idea makes me tired. But Robin lured me onto Lake Pokegama with some promise of visiting a heron marsh, and soon I was busy flailing around and feeling like a fool. And getting tired and ready to whine. At that moment Robin gave me a very important piece of information: **rest in the stroke**. He said, "The reason you are getting tired is that you keep your paddle moving all the time. There is an almost imperceptible rest that you have to take at the end of every stroke, and that's where you find the energy to paddle for hours. Rest in the stroke."

This advice doubled my stamina. It also gave me a new way of looking at a lot of physical and metaphysical processes. It's the Garfield school of professional conduct: when can I take a nap?

It is possible for us to miss lots of naps in the course of the day. Or let's say, moments of rest, moments of vision, moments of beauty. I am capable of working so hard in my garden, whipping down a row of geraniums with my pruning shears, that I never see or smell them. Why am I growing them anyway? I am able to walk to class so full of what I'm going to say that I couldn't tell you what kind of day it was. Of teaching with such a fix on ideas that I don't notice who has dyed her hair magenta, or who has a new nose ring. In the Buddhist tradition, practicing mindfulness is the whole point of life: **this** geranium, **this** weather, **this** student. Each moment of attention a little sabbath.

In struggling over time with the practice of mindfulness, I've discovered that one of the reasons I get so tired out teaching school and living life is that I hold a lot of unnecessary tension in my body, and that it is possible NOT to do that. Let me give you a couple of examples. One of the most hellish times in my day used to be the hour when, as a single parent, I left school, picked up my children from day care, trundled them home and made supper. My spiritual quest in those days was to get food, any food, on the table and I brought tremendous physical tension to the task. Now when I was at Pendle Hill, that community I talked about earlier, one of the cooks had a lovely custom. When she was feeling pressured by the demands of feeding fifty people—and each of them would be practicing a different

dietary fad—she would light a candle and put it on the table where she worked. Usually this was a raucous kitchen, one that might have a ball game on the radio, or a couple of Swedish fiddlers playing—I don't want to give the impression that it was a pietistical environment. But the candle changed things. It called us to attention.

I brought home the candle custom, and it changed our kitchen, too, though the changes took about five years to effect. I learned to consciously let go of my tension when I lit that candle. I learned to make tamales from scratch. This is no great accomplishment for some people, but I come from an ethnic tradition where it's big deal to make turnips from scratch. I learned, let me put it this way, the spiritual practice of making tamales from scratch. I came to love the process of stripping the corn out in my garden, of using everything: the corn, the husks, the cobs to steam the little bundles on top of; I loved the feeling of solidarity with the ancient world of women. Seven years ago I used to toss hot dogs to children who snapped them up like puppies. Today, by contrast, we practice something we call The Religion of Food and Beauty. My friends constantly tease me about the hours I spend in the kitchen and they tell me how they send out for pizza and how their freezers overflow with frozen dinners—and that's OK, because everybody's idea of rest will be different—but I'm evangelical about this Religion of Food and Beauty. Last week we made a cherry pie, from real cherries, that we talked about all week in theological terms.

I am saying, if you don't have time to breathe, if you are run off your feet, try spending twice as much time as you usually spend on a task. It may rest you very nicely. I **try** to light the candle sometimes over my freshman essays (resisting the obvious temptation to set them on fire). It may take me another seven years to establish a religion about this, and by then I'll be ready to retire. But here is one thing I've discovered. I used to spend a lot of energy arguing in absentia with my freshman and scolding them, which does not promote the tranquil mind. "You dummy, I told you to put your name in the upper-left-hand corner. I'll bet you were stoned when you wrote this." And so on. If, by contrast, I cultivate an attitude of friendly visiting as I grade freshman essays—you with the red hair, you with the nose ring—it takes longer but it's twice as restful. And I feel I have done less tearing at the web of life.

My new mantra, then, is "it takes as long as it takes." Some short cuts complicate life enormously. There's an archetypal Peace Corps story about a young engineer who worked in Africa. He saw the women walking miles every day to the well and decided to help them by digging a well in the village. But the culture of the village immediately began to decline. The children started to fight. Families stopped speaking to each other. Finally the village picked up its houses and moved two miles from the well. That

daily walk was essential to shaking out the troubles of the group, offering sympathy and friendship and solutions. I have a young Senegalese friend named Nambe who likes to come to my house for the tamales and she says "I just don't understand Americans, they don't take time to make dinner, they don't take time to make love...."

Making love and making dinner take time, but they also give you back.

When I was eighteen I start studying yoga with a Catholic monk who stood on his head every day to remind himself that the world could be seen from a different perspective. I have never mastered standing on my head, but I think each of us needs to remind ourselves daily that we are seeing only a limited reality. The poet William Stafford used to rise every morning at four a.m. and write a poem. Somebody said to him, "But surely you can't write a good poem every day, Bill. What happens then?" "Oh," he said, "Then I lower my standards." Three great lessons here—practice your art every day, lower your standards, and claim a time or place or an attitude that will challenge the bourgeoisie idea of reality. Four a.m.! I told this story to one of my friends, who immediately began getting up at dawn. He called me long distance from Berkeley. "It shakes up your whole soul," he said of that time of day, "it changes things better than Prozac."

The point here is not that you should be getting up at four a.m., but it **is** a bottom-line question: **What are you going to give?** To function as an artist of whatever kind in the academy, or to make tamales from scratch, the sacrifices are big. One of the first and obvious things you might have to put on the line, for example, is academic prestige. But, indeed, each of us might pause here to think about an important piece of self-knowledge we have gained, think about the art we do, or the art we live...Now let us reflect for a moment on what that blessing **cost**...

If you met a witch in the woods and she said, "I'll give you self-knowledge, but you have to give me [blankety blank]." Insert here what you gave, blindly or with no choice, or with an overflowing heart, for your best knowledge. With the options presented clearly, as they seldom are in life, most of us would say, no thanks. In Minnesota if you want to be a hardanger fiddler, the old guys will tell you, "Well, you have to go into the woods and when you come to a waterfall, you will hear a **fossegrim**, a kind of troll, playing his violin behind the waterfall. That's where they live. If you apply to the troll for lessons, he will take your fingers and pull them. It will hurt unbearably, but in the end you will be a hardanger fiddler."

So get up at four a.m.; it's an easy way to placate the trolls of art.

Let me conclude with a final koan that seems to have something to being an artist. I'll call this story, "Somewhere There is a Great

Mystery That Wants to Live in your House and Change Everything.” I was out walking, again with my friend Robin the naturalist, on the university campus near his house. By the side of the road, we came upon a tiny newborn baby animal, covered in white hair, eyes closed, moving feebly. Now both Robin and I have raised baby animals pretty successfully—so we paused a long moment to look at the creature. After a while, as I looked carefully at the contours of its tail, I reached a fatal conclusion. I am from the East Side of St. Paul, where we do not even **say** a certain word, we spell it, as in “I think I saw an r-a-t in the basement by the drain.” On the East Side, we do not like this animal. So I said to Robin, I think it’s a r-a-t.” With that piece of labeling we left the animal and walked on.

Later that same evening, I visited my neighbors up the street. This is a preacher’s family who have for years been famous in the neighborhood for their absolutely fastidious behavior. It’s the kind of house where you take off your shoes at the door, where the furniture is covered in plastic, the car always washed, the bushes pruned, etc. On this particular evening, as I stopped to pass a few moments, my neighbor the preacher wanted to show me the wonderful thing he had literally up his sleeve: their pet squirrel. I had heard about this squirrel. In fact the whole neighborhood was talking about it. They had found it in their yard after a storm—a tiny baby then—and they had been raising it for a year. What the neighbors were saying was, “Do you believe the transformation at the minister’s house? This squirrel has the run of the place. It goes up and down the drapes. It eats from its own little dish at the table. They let it leave its little messes all over and they just laugh.” With great pride, the minister showed me his squirrel. Now you see where this story is going. The animal was enchanting, and tame as a kitten. And as I looked carefully at it, observed the way its ears were set against its skull, the lie of its tail, I knew what I had walked away from earlier in the day.

Or had I? This is a koan. How do we tell a transforming miracle, an angel unaware, from a r-a-t? And would my catalyst for change be the same as the minister’s? Surely not, as I need an angel of order rather than an angel of misrule. One of my friends huffily told me, “A squirrel is just a dirty rodent anyway. You’re always making everything into a big metaphor.”

There is no simple moral to this story. It’s yours. Take it home if you want to, or let it be. But **somewhere** there is a great mystery that wants to live in your house and change everything.

## WORKS CITED

Hall, Nor. *The Moon and the Virgin*. New York: Harper, 1980.

Mukherjee, Bharati. *Jasmine*. New York: Ballantine, 1989.

## THE LEGACY OF DAVE BRUBECK

Lloyd Kaplan

There are many jazz artists, past and present, who deserve further study, but nobody deserves reassessment more than Dave Brubeck, the most underestimated jazz performer since 1950. The Brubeck legacy is, in fact, being presented in a distorted and unfavorable way to students of jazz history in too many of today's jazz textbooks; hence, this article is essentially an attempt to set the record straight - to present a more accurate appraisal and a truer perspective of Dave Brubeck's outstanding contribution to the course of jazz.

Dave Brubeck's place in the history of jazz is comparable to that of Claude Debussy's or Igor Stravinsky's in the history of classical music, in the sense that Brubeck has consistently been a highly successful and highly visible modernist with the public, one who has significantly altered the course of jazz with a unique and totally individualistic approach. Similarly, just as Debussy and Stravinsky attained popular success without artistic compromise, so, too, has Brubeck been able to achieve the same in the world of jazz.

One can be a modernist by approaching art in one of two ways: by breaking completely from the past and creating something almost totally different, or by essentially "stretching" what has been before and propelling the updated art form forward. Brubeck, like Debussy and Stravinsky, represents the latter approach, and, like the two classical music geniuses, Brubeck has not only been the innovator but has also been the culminator of a unique musical language. About this "stretching" of the art of the past, Brubeck has said the following in the liner notes of his LP *Brubeck Plays Brubeck*:

The great contributors to jazz, the men whom I admire the most in the field, are strong individuals - and they can contribute the most to the art of jazz by retaining and developing that individuality - exploring that facet of jazz which has profound significance to them. Each of us hopes to add new dimensions to the mainstream by pushing its present boundaries a little wider, digging a

little deeper, and perhaps discovering new sources of inspiration in neglected tributaries.

Since the early 1950s, Dave Brubeck has emerged as a full fledged international star in the world of jazz, and the Brubeck groups have become headliners at major jazz concerts, jazz festivals (his festival career began at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1955 - the first year it was held in Freebody Park), and television specials. Through these public appearances, as well as recordings, Brubeck has introduced jazz to a great many young people, especially those of the 1950s and 1960s.

As the sales of his recordings and the many honors and awards he has received prove, Brubeck's music continues to be loved both in this country and abroad. About record sales, Mark Gridley says in the fine book, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, that "in the period 1955 to 1985 Brubeck ranked second in record sales among all jazz recording artists" (90). The awards and honors are too many to list, but consider just the end of 1994 to get an idea of the artist's popularity. On October 14, President Clinton presented Brubeck with the National Medal of Arts Award. In this same general period Brubeck also received the first Connecticut Arts Award (a lifetime achievement award) and the San Francisco Arts Festival Achievement Award.

Despite his track record of success, Brubeck has all too often been snubbed by authors of jazz texts, jazz critics, and compilers of jazz anthologies. This paper will explore this strange treatment after a brief presentation of biographical material and a look at Brubeck's evolution as an artist, leader, and composer.

David Warren Brubeck was born on December 6, 1920, in Concord, California. His father was a lifelong cattleman and a championship rodeo roper. His mother was a talented pianist, who had studied in Europe with English concert artist Dame Myra Hess. Elizabeth Brubeck decided to forego her promising career as a concert pianist and devote herself to her family. She did, however, continue in music as a piano teacher in the town of Ione, California, where the Brubecks settled. One of her pupils was her son Dave, who started instruction at the age of four. As a youngster Dave was cross-eyed, and this may have been a major factor contributing to the difficulty he experienced when trying to learn how to read music. Dave would listen to the musical exercises played by his mother's students for long periods of time. Having been blessed with an outstanding musical ear, he was able to memorize the exercises so that by the time his own lessons began he could successfully fake his way through while staring intently at the sheet music as though he were reading the

He was so convincing at this that he was able to fool his mother

for years. He even did the same as a music major in college, and it wasn't until he was a senior that his reading problem was discovered. About this situation, Brubeck related that he eventually began to improve his music reading skills by trying to write music, rather than by any reading materials.

Brubeck spent most of his youth in Lone, California. From the age of thirteen he was playing in local jazz groups, but also working as a cowboy on his father's ranch and attending school. At this period of his life he was more interested in ranching than music. While riding his horse, he would, like many cowboys, think of music, but rather than create cowboy songs about dusty trails and dogies, his music would consist of improvisations of songs or polyrhythms (the simultaneous use of conflicting rhythmic patterns) which he would sing against the patterns created by the pounding of animal hooves. He continued this way until he graduated from Lone High School in 1938.

From high school, Brubeck went on to the College of the Pacific in Stockton, California. He intended, at first, to become a veterinarian, but he switched to music after a year. Meanwhile, he kept playing the piano professionally in night clubs in order to help pay his way through college.

1942 was an important year for Brubeck. He graduated from the College of the Pacific. He also started to study music with Darius Milhaud (a twentieth century French avant-garde composer), which was the start of a very significant artistic and personal relationship. And he entered the Army, becoming the leader of a jazz group that toured the west coast and Europe. Finally, about three months after joining the army (while on leave) he married Iola, his first and only love. Their marriage was to eventually result in six children, several of whom would become musicians of consequence, and more than fifty years of wedded bliss, which is no easy achievement for a couple, one of whom is a touring musician.

After being discharged in 1946, Brubeck resumed his studies with Milhaud, who taught the young man some of the technical aspects of composition such as counterpoint (music consisting of two or more melodic lines sounding simultaneously) and polytonality (music in two or more tonalities or keys simultaneously). These studies took place at Mills College in Oakland, California, and they lasted for about three years while Brubeck was in pursuit of his master's degree.

During this period Milhaud strongly encouraged Brubeck to be himself (follow his own instincts) and to retain jazz in his compositions. Milhaud also emphasized the importance of modulation (the changing of musical keys) and the idea of having a strong feeling of direction of the music. About 12-tone music, a technique of composition created by Arnold Schoenberg to destroy the concept of "key" or the domination of any single



tone, Milhaud once told Brubeck "The reason I don't like 12-tone music is that you're never someplace. Therefore, you can never go someplace." While still at Mills College, at the urging of Milhaud, Brubeck formed and became the leader of the Dave Brubeck Octet, a group assembled to play the compositions of the graduate students. The octet included Paul Desmond - alto sax, Dave Van Kriedt - tenor sax, Bill Smith - clarinet, Dick Collins - trumpet, Bob Collins - trombone, Jack Weeks - bass and Cal Tjader - drums. The group's theme song, "Curtain Music," was a thirty-three second composition by Brubeck, and it is included in the wonderful collection of Brubeck recordings, *Dave Brubeck Time Signatures: A Career Retrospective* (Columbia/Legacy 52945, 4 compact discs).

The octet played music that was not commercially oriented, and the group was apparently too large to be sought after by club owners, so Brubeck had to accept a variety of playing jobs under various leaderships, among which was Paul Desmond's in 1949. Desmond's gig lasted only three weeks, but it was during this engagement that the seeds of their contrapuntal dialogue style were sown. Unfortunately, Paul Desmond pulled the proverbial rug from under Brubeck by accepting a job elsewhere for the band, with the exception of Brubeck. At this time Brubeck told his wife that he never wanted to see Paul Desmond again.

In the meantime, Brubeck continued to keep his octet alive and managed to get a few concert dates for the group. It was at one of these engagements that a deejay named Jimmy Lyons was in attendance. Fascinated by what he heard, Lyons was able to convince the people at his radio station to present live broadcasts of Dave Brubeck, but it was to be a trio instead of the octet, a trio that included Ron Crotty - bass and Cal Tjader - drums and vibes. The program, emanating from San Francisco, was called "Lyons Busy," and it helped greatly in the launching of Brubeck's career.

Brubeck subsequently started to make recordings with this trio, and three of the group's recordings were named later in 1951 on the best-of-the-year list in *Metronome's Yearbook, Jazz: 1951*. The music of Brubeck's group started to gain attention, earning honors for the budding artist in this very early stage of his career.

In 1951, Desmond came back into Brubeck's life via the influence and urging of Iola. At this time only the personal relationship was reestablished, for Brubeck accepted a job in Honolulu, Hawaii, with his trio. While in Hawaii, he suffered a near-fatal diving accident which broke his back. In traction for three weeks, Brubeck saw the job end and his musicians leave Hawaii to work elsewhere. It was at this time that he wrote Desmond, suggesting the idea of establishing a quartet. So, in

1951, Dave Brubeck formed the first Dave Brubeck Quartet with Paul Desmond, Fred Dutton - bass, and Herb Barman - drums. Several players would be used on bass and drums in the ensuing years, including Wyatt "Bull" Ruther, Bob and Norman Bates, Lloyd Davis and Joe Dodge, before the permanent status would fall to drummer Joe Morello in 1955 and bassist Eugene Wright in 1958. This foursome (Brubeck, Desmond, Morello, and Wright) worked as a unit from 1958 until the quartet disbanded in 1967.

The quartet played standards until 1956, at which time Brubeck's creative juices burst forth with "In Your Own Sweet Way," now a jazz standard, and "Waltz" (both songs written in one night). These tunes were soon recorded on an LP entitled *Brubeck Plays Brubeck*, on which nine original compositions by Brubeck were introduced, including "The Duke" and "Two Part Contention." Brubeck's compositions would come to reflect his fascination with polyrhythms, his love of counterpoint, sudden modulations, polytonality, and metrical (time signatures) diversity. The latter characteristic - metrical diversity - provided the common thread between the various selections of Brubeck's history-making LP of 1959, *Time Out*. Some of the most popular pieces from this LP include Desmond's "Take Five" and Brubeck's "Blue Rondo A La Turk," and the unusual number by Brubeck "Three To Get Ready," which, after the first chorus, features the constant shifting of meter every two measures, switching continuously from three beats per measure to four beats per measure. With "Take Five" having a time signature of 5/4 and "Blue Rondo" being in 9/8 it is clear that new ground was being broken in the world of jazz by Dave Brubeck. In the liner notes for *Time Out* by Steve Race, the importance of Brubeck's contribution is clearly pointed out:

Dave Brubeck, pioneer already in so many other fields, is really the first to explore the uncharted seas of compound time. True, some musicians before him experimented with jazz in waltz time, notably Benny Carter and Max Roach. But Dave has gone further, finding still more exotic time signatures, and even laying one rhythm in counterpoint over another.

Brubeck didn't stop working with unusual meters. In 1961, he made another recording for Columbia records, *Time Further Out*. One of the pieces found on the new recording was a brief two-minute work called "Unsquare Dance," which was in 7/4 meter. This work hadn't even been written down before the recording was made: it was sung by Brubeck to the

group on the way to the recording session. It was so difficult that Brubeck had to promise not to do it again. Morello's sigh of relief can still be heard at the conclusion of the original recording. In later years Brubeck recanted, as he did, indeed, include "Unsquare Dance" in his concerts.

If Dave Brubeck never did a thing after his *Time Out* and *Time Further Out* albums, his place in jazz history would have been solidly secure. He did, however, continue to perform, tour, and compose throughout the following decades; in fact, he has never stopped. A few examples of his countless activities include the recording of a movie sound track *All Night Long* with Charlie Mingus, and several recordings with Gerry Mulligan, Alan Dawson, and others. He also did some recordings with his sons Darius - piano, Dan - drums, and Chris - bass and trombone, as well as other musicians such as Jerry Bergonzi - sax and Perry Robinson - clarinet. In recent years, Brubeck has toured and recorded with Bill Smith, his friend from Mills College - clarinet.

Dave Brubeck's many accomplishments and contributions to jazz are just briefly touched on in what follows, but they should suffice in providing the reader with some insight into the extent of Brubeck's significance.

To begin with, Brubeck broadened and expanded the language of jazz by emphasizing, and in some cases, initiating such elements as polytonality; sudden modulations; polyrhythms; contrapuntal techniques; and most shockingly, a variety of meters that helped shatter the 4/4 barrier that had been previously "automatic" in jazz.

Brubeck has been prolific both as a recording artist and as a composer. He has been responsible for 112 albums, including the legendary *Time Out*, which became the first instrumental album in the field of jazz to sell more than a million copies. Brubeck also surpassed the century mark in the area of musical composition. Along with some of the pieces already named, there are oratorios (lengthy dramatic-musical works with no stage action that are usually based on religious texts) such as "The Light In The Wilderness" and "Beloved Son;" cantatas (similar to oratorios, except they may be secular as well as sacred) such as "The Gates of Justice" and "Truth Be Fallen;" a mass entitled "Festival Mass To Hope;" ballets such as "A Maiden In The Tower" and "Points On Jazz," and a musical entitled *The Real Ambassador*.

Along with such jazz artists as Stan Getz, Miles Davis, Erroll Garner and John Lewis, Brubeck helped keep jazz alive in the 1960s when it had reached its nadir in terms of popularity. This loss of popularity was not only due to the growing excitement over rock and the generation gap of the 1960s, but also because of the advent of various jazz styles that simply

didn't appeal to major portions of the jazz audience, an example of which was free jazz with its lack of recognizable or composed melodies and the unsatisfying quality of unresolved dissonance. Brubeck's popularity resulted in his becoming one of this country's major musical ambassadors, as the Dave Brubeck Quartet toured Europe, the Middle East, part of the Orient, and several iron curtain countries in the 1960s, including what was the Soviet Union. These concerts were often sponsored by our government and were consistently sellouts due to Brubeck's international fame.

Dave Brubeck established a new market of jazz fans; namely, college students. He was probably the first jazz artist to consistently perform **in concert** on college campuses. He even made live recordings of these concerts such as *Jazz Goes to College* and *Jazz Goes to Junior College*. In his *Writings In Jazz*, Nathan Davis points out that "beginning with Brubeck, colleges and universities grew to be the largest market for jazz in the U.S." (119). Brubeck also helped integration efforts considerably by maintaining an on-going integrated ensemble from 1958 to 1967. Eugene Wright, an African-American, was the regular bass player during these years. Doing this reflected Brubeck's courage and his character, as it meant a loss of work, not only in certain areas of the country, but also in terms of television appearances. Some of the black musicians who paid tribute to Brubeck over the years include Charlie Mingus, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Miles Davis.

Just as Louis Armstrong convinced the public of his time of the greatness of jazz, especially the jazz solo, and as people like Benny Goodman, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk convinced their audiences, becoming the spokespeople of their eras, so, too, was Brubeck the man of his time, the leader in convincing the audience of the 1950s that jazz could be considerably modernized - rhythmically, harmonically and texturally - and still swing in the traditional way. For Brubeck, jazz had to retain the jazz beat and the element of improvisation in order to remain jazz.

Having contributed so much to the world of jazz, one would assume that there would be several biographies of Dave Brubeck, but at the time of this writing no authorized biography has been published. One would also assume that there would be ample coverage of his accomplishments in the various jazz history textbooks, but here, too, with a few exceptions (Gridley, Martin) such has not been the case. Most authors manifest little understanding and/or appreciation of Brubeck's contributions, or they promulgate an elitist attitude, maintaining that if he has been so successful with the public at large then he couldn't have been that great, because the

is not capable of recognizing true genius.

A small, but representative, sampling of the paltry coverage afforded Brubeck in some of today's jazz books is presented in the following material.

In *The Jazz Tradition* (New and Revised Edition, 1983), Martin Williams presents a series of essays about 21 people in jazz history but ignores Brubeck completely; in fact, Brubeck is not listed once in the index. This is not too surprising though, for Williams, responsible for the Smithsonian Collection of jazz records, excluded any of Brubeck's recordings in this famous anthology. In the 457 pages of *Jazz: A History* (1977), Frank Tirro dispenses with Brubeck in a paragraph on page 333 and one line on page 338. Fortunately, in his latest book, *Living With Jazz: An Appreciation* (1996), considerably more time is devoted to Brubeck, including some analyses of Brubeck's compositions.

In *Jazz: A Listener's Guide* (2nd edition), James McCalla provides no mention whatever of Dave Brubeck. (Recall that Brubeck was second in record sales for three decades!) For a listener's guide not to include so popular and important a jazz artist as Brubeck is simply preposterous. In his *A Short History of Jazz* (1993), Bob Yurochko manages to devote five lines (of 318 pages) to Brubeck. In books by Nat Hentoff, Megill and Tanner, Megill and Demory, and a host of others, Brubeck is treated in a similarly shoddy manner. Along with the lack of understanding and the elitist theory, another possible explanation for this completely inadequate treatment of Brubeck is reverse discrimination. One would have hoped that racism, too much a factor in the jazz scene of the past, would have disappeared by now, but apparently this is just wishful thinking. In his recent article "The Color of Jazz Becomes a Hot Issue for Musicians" (Dec. 23, 1994), Howard Reich, syndicated columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, points out that accusations of racism are occurring with increasing frequency nowadays. Ironically Dave Brubeck, a long time champion of civil rights and a firm believer in integration, might just be another victim of reverse prejudice.

Dave Brubeck's greatness has too long been overlooked by too many of the so-called academicians in the field of jazz. The underestimation of his solid contributions has resulted in a biased version of jazz's evolution. Hopefully this situation will be corrected in the near future and Dave Brubeck will be listed among jazz's greatest innovators and most creative geniuses.

## SELECTED RECORDINGS

*Dave Brubeck Trio*, Featuring Cal Tjader, Ron Crotty (1949, Fantasy 3204); *Jazz Goes to College* (1954, Columbia CL566 and CS8631); *Brubeck Plays Brubeck* (1956, Columbia CL878); *Time Out* (1959, Columbia CL1397 and CS8192); *Time Further Out* (1961, Columbia CL1690 and CS8490); *Bravo! Brubeck!* (1967, Columbia CL2695 and CS9495); and *Back Home* (1979, Concord CJ-103).

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

D. Brubeck. "Jazz Evolvment as Art Form," *Down Beat* xvii (1950): 13.

Brubeck and D. Brubeck. "Jazz Perspective," *Jam Session*, ed. R. Gleason. New York: 1958.

D. Morgenstern: "Two Generations of Brubecks: a Talk with Dave, Darius, and Chris," *Down Beat* xxxix (1972): 12.

C. J. Stuessy. *The Confluence of Jazz and Classical Music from 1950 to 1970* (diss., U. of Rochester, 1978).

"Dave Brubeck," *Swing Journal*, xxxiv (1980): 164 [discography].

Storb, I. "Dave Brubeck, Komponist und Pianist," *Jazzforschung*, xiii (1981): 9-43.

## SPECIAL RECOMMENDATION

Perhaps the best way for someone to become acquainted with the music of Dave Brubeck is to get access to the collection of four compact discs entitled *Dave Brubeck Time Signatures: A Career Retrospective* (Columbia Legacy 52945). This marvelous assortment of pieces includes recordings spanning the years from 1949 to 1991, involving not only the Brubeck octet, trio and quartet, but also some recordings with such artists as Carmen McRae, Gerry Mulligan, and Louis Armstrong. This set is also accompanied by a wonderfully written booklet featuring insightful material

ug Ramsey and Juul Anthonissen.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY: TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM

Maryanne M. Garbowsky

### *"To build a house"*

... there was a construction crew that wanted to build a house. So the crew opened a college, which soon split into departments that specialized in hammerology and saw science.

It was not long before members of the hammerology department divided into two sub-specialties, due to a split between the physical hammerologists and the cultural hammerologists.

Specialties continued to proliferate, until one day somebody realized that no house was being built.  
(Mooney 11)

This fable told by Robert Costanza, an associate professor at the University of Maryland's Center of Environmental and Estuarine Studies, parallels the situation in most traditional college curriculums. There is too much "over-specialization" for the faculty and not enough of "the big picture" for students (Mooney 11).

Recently Jacques Barzun, Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, accepted the university's 1994 Hamilton Medal given to commemorate the college's core curriculum, one of "the oldest uninterrupted programs of general education in America" ("The Hamilton" 4). Accepting the award on behalf of all those who have taught the course, Professor Barzun said that the program fought "against Specialism" and that one of its main purposes was "to enlarge the vision, by unfolding a panorama against which to place whatever the student would learn in college and during the rest of his life" (4).

This "panorama" is what interdisciplinary study attempts to provide. We do not live in a vacuum. Nor do we live in isolation from our neighbors,

our community, and our environment. Yet when it comes to education, this is precisely the case. Certainly, as human beings it comes as no surprise that we lead "interdisciplinary lives" (Sbaratta 38). Yet that is not what we present to our students. Instead, we show them a fragmented replica of life found in the traditional curriculum, where we study individual subjects cut off and isolated one from the other. Thus we approach literary works and their authors as if they had no relation to the world around them, as if they had sprung up without regard or reference to their era, to the events of their time, or the current of ideas that nourished and inspired them.

In the interdisciplinary curriculum, this is not the case. Literature is not separate from history, nor music from art, nor philosophy from science. The classes become a microcosm of the real world outside the classroom door and the syllabus reflects the breadth and diversity of real life rather than the narrow restriction of the textbook.

Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, believes that the substance of general education should be the "study" of "such issues as the cycle of human life and the role of religion in the world, along with the arts, the environment, and sociological and anthropological issues in other cultures" (Mooney 12). These goals can be best fulfilled through interdisciplinary study. "Subjects are not wholes from the world to be studied in isolation. Nor are they experiences of a special kind with no relation to experiences of other kinds" (Sbaratta 38).

Recently the *U.S. News and World Report* highlighted several schools in which curriculum renovation has yielded good results. In University Heights (Bronx), faculty are not divided into departments but make up "six interdisciplinary teams" guiding students to look at themes from varying perspectives (Toch 53). In this way, students study "fewer subjects more intensively." School "reformer" TheodoreSizer argues that the answer to the superficiality of U.S. schools is "to teach fewer subjects in greater depth" and to "illuminate the connections between them" (53).

The results have been positive; students have been drawn "deeper into the subject matter" and "understand the relationship of the information they are learning" (Toch 56). A similar program in Los Angeles shows that students not only improved their writing and understanding of "abstract concepts" but also had less absenteeism and lower drop out rates (Toch 56).

But let's clarify what interdisciplinary means. The term refers to a variety of attempts to bring together disciplines such as English, history, and art into a common curriculum. An interdisciplinary course crosses both departmental and divisional boundaries - from the humanities to science to



business technology. Most often done in the humanities, interdisciplinary courses can also include vocational areas as well.

A workable definition of interdisciplinary study is found in a recent issue of *Change*: "Multidisciplinary programs are those in which faculty members bring to bear a discrete set of disciplinary skills and perspectives on common problems" (Miller 28). An interdisciplinary course allows for focus on a "topic, rather than a discipline" (Hoffnung 31). It emphasizes "integrating available approaches and resources rather than mastering a single disciplinary approach" (31).

Traditionally, critics of this "inclusive" (Watters 17) classroom argue that "combining more than one discipline in a course weakens each of the disciplines" (Sbaratta 33). In the *Academic Crisis in the Community College*, Dennis McGrath and Martin B. Spear caution against such programs, especially at the community college level where faculty are trying to "bridge the gulf between nontraditional students and academic life" (88). To add interdisciplinarity to this already difficult task tends "to weaken the academic culture further by diluting discipline-based standards of rigor and norms of discourse" (89).

Most recently, Harold Bloom, in *The Western Canon: Books and Schools of the Age*, bemoans the future when "we're not going to have departments of English or literature. A lot of them already are being named departments of cultural studies, and doing Batman comics and theme parks and all sorts of *hazari*, to use the grand old Yiddish word for it" (McMillen 25).

However, lest we lose all sense of perspective, let us examine the benefits such programs can yield as adjuncts to—rather than replacements of—the traditional curricula.

The advantages of an interdisciplinary approach are multiple and include benefits for the institution, the faculty and the students. Since the nature of interdisciplinary study is "inclusive rather than exclusive," it allows for using the resources a college has already on hand in a new way. Thus, in a period of constrained monies and cutbacks, a college can add to its course offerings without the expense of hiring new faculty—"all personnel and other resources are already extant through existing departments" (Miller 32). Thus the cost of funding a new program is little or nothing.

Furthermore, in a time of declining enrollment it is a way to attract new students. Thus, a "new or growing institution" has the opportunity to start a program in "a small, new field rather than a mediocre one in an established area" (Miller 30).

In an effort to strengthen the humanities in a time of eroding enrollment, North Shore Community College implemented a series of interdisciplinary courses under a new department of interdisciplinary studies. Since that time, an array of courses has been developed which have grown in number and have "enjoyed consistent popularity" among students (Sbaratta 38).

For the community college especially, student retention has become a major problem. Interdisciplinary study has been shown to be highly effective in addressing this problem, especially considering that only "1/3 of all beginning full time students at their level" go on to get their degrees (Tinto 26). In this regard, Seattle Central Community College in Washington started a Coordinated Studies Program which not only crosses departments in the humanities, but also in the math-science and professional/technical division. Students meet together in one large class which then breaks up into smaller group sessions.

The students in this program are more involved, not only in their courses, but also in campus wide activities. They see themselves as learning more and participating more than students not in this program. According to Vincent Tinto, this "multi-disciplinary approach... provided a model of learning that encourages students to express the diversity of their experiences and world views." As an added benefit, "it allowed differences in age, ethnicity, and life experience to emerge and become part of the course " (Tinto 27-28). The result of this program was that students were retained in greater numbers, not only those who were adequately prepared for college but also those with "substantial remedial needs" (29).

In other programs, results have been the same. Faculty at Santa Rosa Junior College have found that by using an interdisciplinary approach in their remediation program, students not only did better, but the rate of attendance and retention was higher (Palmer 62).

Another advantage to the institution is that an interdisciplinary program provides an opportunity for faculty development. Teachers, as well as students, can "lose interest in their lessons...." But with the challenges of interdisciplinary courses, "each learning situation becomes a novel way of using imagination to create new routes to personal understanding" (Sautter 436). In the exchange and planning that goes into an interdisciplinary curriculum, teachers are challenged to build bridges and make connections between disciplines. It means more work for teachers but assures them a new way of thinking and seeing than simply out of the narrow lens of one discipline.

For faculty the benefits are many. It helps participating faculty overcome the isolation of their individual departments and gives them an

avenue by which to explore "special interests, talents, and expertise which do not fit the traditional discipline mold" (Sbaratta 38).

In my own college, faculty are not only divided by disciplines but also have physical barriers such as separate buildings to contend with. An interdisciplinary course would engage and stimulate faculty from different departments and allow them to overcome such real physical dividers as well as purely artificial ones. This cross-pollination would be healthy for the faculty as a whole as well as for the individual participants. In New Jersey, a survey of attitudes among those involved in the Raritan Valley Community College's interdisciplinary program found that faculty enjoyed the presence of "other teachers in the classroom" and thought of team teaching as "one of the main draws to participate in the program" (Valasek 18).

Such courses ground academics in a common goal and help them overcome the normal "insularity of faculty" (Sbaratta 38). According to Philip Sbaratta, "the interdisciplinary structure is a forum for faculty creativity"; it is "an antidote for the 'learned ignoramus,' José Ortega y Gasset's label for the specialist confined by the myopia of his specialty" (39). In addition to regeneration and recreation, the challenge of synthesis in the curriculum might well lead faculty to new research and to produce "scholarship that otherwise might fall though the cracks" (Mooney 12).

But it is the student who reaps the greatest rewards. The traditional classroom has been known to stifle "imagination and creativity," but in the interdisciplinary curriculum the student can fully exercise imagination and creativity in the context of meeting broader academic goals" and for "longer term learning" (Sautter 436).

The classroom is enriched by the broader base of knowledge and experience presented by the faculty team teaching the course. "Multiple instructors" bring to students "a wider range of academic and experiential background" (Hoffnung 31). Students are not fed "isolated facts," but are encouraged "to discover how ideas are connected" (Geoghegan 458). According to Ernest Boyer, "without an understanding of large patterns," we are not preparing students "for wisdom but for a game of Trivial Pursuit" (458).

In the interdisciplinary classroom where instructors are brought together "to teach collaboratively" the atmosphere takes "on an intellectual richness that traditional courses lack" (Tinto 28). Both students and faculty enjoy the experience of being in class with more than one teacher (Valasek 18). The diversity in the classroom opens up conversation that empowers students to add their own experiences as well as validate "their ability to contribute to the progress of the course" (Tinto 28).

There are many varieties of interdisciplinary studies, ranging from

whole new departments, to core curricula, to individual courses, to modules. Some simply merge the humanities area, while others bring together the vocational and professional with the academic. One outstanding example of the latter is at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which offers an "integrated studies program" for freshmen. In a year-long course, students study six technologies by reading about the subject as well as using a hands-on approach. Thus, a unit on timekeeping begins with comparative cultural readings and ends with students designing their own timepiece. In this way, students acquire "an understanding of technology" and at the same time are better able to "understand economic and social history." MIT's goal is to graduate students who have both "a broad knowledge of industry" and "transferable skills that will serve them well in later career changes" (Rosenstock 436).

However, courses that commonly make up interdisciplinary studies involve a combination of humanities, such as those offered at Raritan Valley Community College for the past decade. Such courses have been offered successfully at other local New Jersey colleges such as Bloomfield College, Fairleigh Dickinson, and Stockton State College.

The County College of Morris, my own institution, has a history of such courses. Back in the early 1970s, the college offered Humanities I and II, a six credit sequence that encompassed a broad chronological study of history, philosophy, music, and literature. Team taught, it was a humanities elective course.

Today, 20 years later, we are rethinking such a course offering. Currently we offer only a handful of courses that use an interdisciplinary approach. But in the near future we are planning to resurrect a course similar in structure to our Humanities I and II. In preparation for such a change, our college received an NEH grant in the summer of 1993 for an intensive study of poetry. During a four week period, twenty-four participants selected from both the full and part-time faculty would complete a "Journey through the Humanities" which would allow them to travel through time and across continents studying poets as diverse as Geoffrey Chaucer, W.B. Yeats, Emily Dickinson, and Jorge Louis Borges. The poets were varied in language, in era, in country of origin, and in theme.

Diversity characterized the poets studied and the participants as well: there were faculty from math, visual arts, languages, and music-along with those from English. One of the objectives of the project as stated in the proposal was "To enable the teaching of poetry in English classes where it is traditionally taught, in foreign language classes, and in humanities courses *it is not presently included or minimally utilized*" ("Journey" 6).

Thus one of the offshoots of the project was that these faculty would cross traditional disciplinary divides to bring the subject of poetry into their respective classrooms. Not only would the four week saturation in poetry revitalize faculty, but it would also become a challenging interdisciplinary experiment. During the closing week, visiting scholar Linda Georgianni from the University of California at Irvine presented her experiences along with sample syllabi from her college's Humanities Core Courses, a "three quarter sequence dealing with the problem of cultural differences over belief systems, race, and gender" (syllabus). The course readings range from Dante's *Inferno* to John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* to Freud's *New Introductory Lectures*. Faculty participating in the course came from philosophy, English, history and languages.

One option offered as a follow-up project at the end of our grant was to prepare "a course proposal and/or evidence of substantial integration of poetry into existing courses" ("Journey" 19). One participant submitted the literature component to a larger interdisciplinary course which would incorporate philosophy, history, the visual arts, and film among other disciplines. Organized around the theme "the artist as social critic," the proposed course would follow a chronological format from Plato to WWII and would be offered as a humanities elective. Thus, our summer grant allowed our college to reconsider and reactivate an earlier interdisciplinary course. Currently the course is under consideration, and we hope to offer it in the next year or two.

But why now? Why after twenty years is our college reconsidering interdisciplinary coursework? Why is "higher education experiencing significant new growth in interdisciplinary scholarship and programs" especially in the humanities? (Miller 28). One reason for the timeliness of a move towards interdisciplinarity is the current "crisis" in the humanities, which according to one professor has been "tortured vocationalism," been called "irrelevant" and is "declining" in enrollment (Bauman 38).

Walter Jackson Bate and William J. Bennet have both discussed this crisis over the last decade. In "The Crisis in English Studies," Bate argues that "The humanities are not merely entering, they are plunging into their worst state of crisis since the modern university was formed..." (noted in Jeffords 102). William Bennet agrees and describes the "heart of the humanities" as "fragmented, even shattered" (102). One of the major culprits is the "increasing fragmentation and specialization within the university" (Jeffords 102).

In answer to the problem of "over specialization," they suggest "interdisciplinary" or "collaborative" projects- both within and across departments (Jeffords 106), focusing on connections rather than

differences, on commonality rather than diversity. In the traditional humanities curriculum, information is “thrown out to... students like brightly colored bits of confetti.” Faculty do not “tell students how this information links to other disciplines or how all learning is interconnected.” It is as if the “disciplines were created by a supreme being and that we cannot cross lines between them” (Englehardt 105).

In sharp contrast, courses which are interconnected (like an Ethics and Values course used as an example in a journal article) were extremely successful. Linking philosophy, literature, religion and history, this course has been ranked one of the most “enjoyable” by students and has helped them to learn more effectively since it used “more than one discipline” (Englehardt 105).

According to Murray Krieger, director of the University of California's Humanities Research Institute, “we are facing a revolution of the curriculum...The disciplines are being undone, redone, amalgamated in new ways by questions that we weren't asking only a few years ago” (Miller 31). Mary Clark, the organizer of a five day conference on “Rethinking the Curriculum,” says “The world is changing, and we are standing still” (Mooney 12).

An article in *The Futurist*, on the “University of the 21st Century,” suggests that interdisciplinary studies better serve the needs of our students' future. The belief is that the “interdisciplinary approach” is “needed to deal with a changing world” since our current system is becoming “increasingly inadequate” (53). The Commission on the University of the 21st century called for “an end to the ‘tyranny of the disciplines’” (“University” 53), believing that the problems students will face in the future will not be “organized according to the categories of scholars” (Gaff 57) and that the solutions will “cross the lines of traditional disciplines.” “Given the competitive climate around the globe, it is essential that we draw from all the intellectual resources of every field to improve productivity and to attack the scourges of the human community” (Gaff 57).

In addition, since many of our students in the two-year college do not go on to more in-depth study in an academic subject, the interdisciplinary approach gives them a broad base and serves their individual educational needs better. According to various studies reviewed by ERIC, “the interdisciplinary approach... makes room for the generalist” (Palmer 59).

Beyond purely academic concerns, interdisciplinary studies can be an effective way to prepare students for the future. Every study indicates that the jobs of the future will require “more thought, more analysis, more decision making and more understanding” (Renyi 444). To this end, the disciplinary focus on integration between subject areas will benefit

students. "An academic, aesthetic, creative, and social learning environment is one way to equip students for the challenge they will face in the complex cultural mosaic that will be their future" (Geoghegan 458).

Peter Drucker, in a recent issue of the *Economist*, describes our world as one "in the midst of a transformation in which the organizing principle of life is evolving from analysis (or rational thought) to perception" (Oddleifson 451). He believes that "the world's new realities are configurations and as such call for perception as much as for analysis" (451). If we do not prepare for this change, Drucker predicts a dismal future. From the year 2992, he looks back and sees "democracies" marching "straight from the climax of their 20th century victory over totalitarianism towards disaster" (451).

This dire prediction should encourage educators to rethink the curriculum and see how it can better prepare students for a world that will be multi-cultured and more "globally oriented" (Perrin 453). Students of the future need to be trained not for "specific tasks" but as "creative thinkers and problem solvers...able to work well with others" (Perrin 452).

Interdisciplinary course work can better prepare students for these goals. Since it is the occasion of an "interdependence of learning" (Hoffnung 31) and departs from the traditional "content oriented" classroom, it "focuses on skills of thinking, analyzing, and understanding" (Renyi 439). In answer to the U.S. Department of Education's observation that our nation is "at risk" because of our schools' inability to prepare "students for the complex lives they will face as adults in the new millennium," Judith Renyi suggests an arts/humanities based curriculum using an interdisciplinary approach. In these courses the goals are long term rather than immediate. Instead of producing an end product, the focus is on improving our human state, trying to open ourselves to the past, the present, and to the future by stressing commonalities, not differences.

A recent article in the *New York Times* confirms this new trend. One Juilliard School of Music graduate, who is currently a founder of a new multimedia company called Music Pen, states that when she was a musician performing as "a concert pianist," she would never have thought she would go into the technology business. "It's delightful to see that the future of technology has so much to do with creativity" (Pulley B2).

In an innovative yet extreme position, M. Garrett Bauman suggests a whole new core curriculum for the liberal arts of the 21st century. Its four components include global studies, self-reliance skills, interdisciplinary studies, and selected traditional studies (Bauman 40). He stresses one "essential element," that "all courses must combine skills performance and intellectual rigor" (41).



To remedy the “smorgasbord” (Bauman 42) that most curricula serve, that is “subjects pedagogically unrelated to one another—or to real life” (Hanna 603), Bauman proposes “interdisciplinary courses, particularly those combining technologies and traditional liberal arts” (42). Thus, students will be taught to “deal with the edges between fields and systems” and will be “required to synthesize as well as specialize” (42). Some courses he foresees in this curriculum would include Technology in Literature, Technology and Values, or Social Effects of Technology (43). He suggests that such courses, along with courses from the other three areas, would make up the students’ first two years of college and would give them “a solid base of general liberal education on which to erect a major” (43). In the community college, this is especially appropriate.

Bauman is not alone in calling for a complete revamping of today’s liberal arts curriculum. There are other such proposals, such as the one at University College in Toronto which insists “on breadth, at least at the beginning of a university career, before the student moves on to more specialized work” (Morgan 35). To that end, the new “Integrated Studies (Unity of Knowledge) program” allows for time spent on “interdisciplinary studies in the fields of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences” (Morgan 36). Not as drastic as Bauman’s proposal, this program aims at “curriculum renewal” (Morgan 37) and at “unity” rather than “fragmentation of knowledge” at the university level (38).

For many educational prognosticators, the 21st century looms ahead with frightening (even apocalyptic) prospects. A whole issue of *Change* magazine focused on the question of technology’s impact on the liberal arts. Because today’s world and the world of tomorrow is “vastly more complex” (Edgerton 5), we cannot ignore the place of technology, which some call “a new liberal art” (Edgerton 4). One of the key questions faced by the contributors to this issue of *Change* is how to “infuse the stuff of engineering in a deeper way throughout the entire curriculum” or the question posed by the editor—“Why Would a Humanist Envy an Engineer?” (4).

As the 21st century beckons, our educational curriculum must be rethought, revitalized, and renewed. One direction clearly indicated through research is interdisciplinary courses, “championed” by the Sloan Foundation and the Carnegie Report on the Improvement of Postsecondary Teaching for “the thinking skills they foster” (Bauman 43). If we are to prepare students for a world in which “problems. . . tend not to have the fixed, single correct answers that characterize” academic problems (Eisner 595), and if “fragmentation—or lack of interconnection. . . is one of the chief characteristics of contemporary American society,” we must give students something that aids them in seeing “overall relationships” between diverse parts” (Jeffords 104-105).



The next question is how to begin such a change. One of the best ways is to follow the pattern of a successful program from its inception through its current operation and to learn from it. There are many such opportunities available both nationally and locally. Journals such as *Alternative Higher Education: The Journal for Non-traditional Studies* and *The Education Digest* publish many such studies.

A particularly healthy pattern is found in the experience of the Utah Valley Community College (now Utah Valley State College) in Orem. In 1987, they began a sophomore level interdisciplinary core course in Ethics and Values (Englehardt). The first necessity was administrative support; in this case a highly supportive dean rallied faculty and ran interference with the administration. The timeline was another important consideration since there are hurdles to overcome, so that this particular program began work at least two years before its projected implementation.

The proposal first went through a humanities committee and then through a college curriculum committee. A three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities funded a pilot program which gave faculty a chance to prepare through several summer seminars in which visiting scholars came and lectured. Faculty workshops were offered with a consultant from the NEH—Donald Schmeltekopf, a former Midcareer Fellowship participant and founding president of the Community College Humanities Association (Englehardt 98). After this preparation and development, the course was set up and continues to be an exceptional adjunct to the curriculum, one that students say is “the most important and most enjoyable class they have taken in college” (105).

A local and more recent program to use as an example is that offered at Raritan Valley Community College. In the fall of 1993, three “Introduction to Humanities” courses were offered. Student opinions surveyed by Thomas E. Valasek confirmed that students enjoy “the interdisciplinary team-teaching approach it employs” (21).

Despite the positive effects of such programs, there are many obstacles to overcome, not the least of which is “subject-matter turf” between faculty and the amount of time and work that goes into such a change. One experienced instructor notes that there is also the expectation on the part of students that the teachers have “control” over the subject area, when in reality this “is impossible in new courses drawing on intellectual traditions outside their own” (Englehardt 101). Thus another problem may be “fear,” which, on the part of the instructor, “is a natural accompaniment to new interdisciplinary courses” (Englehardt 101).

However, the benefits clearly outweigh the drawbacks. For in the end it is not only the students who will gain, but the faculty as well. Team-teaching

offers faculty the opportunity to work together, to learn from each other, and to build mutual respect. Though teaching styles may differ, they will enrich the course and may, as one participant found, build an effective, creative tension in the classroom (Hoffnung 33).

As the professor moves into the next century and faces the prospects of "a period of limited mobility and growth" (Watermeier 280), cross-disciplinary courses can fire the imagination of faculty, renewing their vitality and giving them new opportunities for professional development and growth. "At their best, interdisciplinary programs go beyond intellectual integration (as important as that is) to create a community of learning between students and faculty" (Gaff 60).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bauman, M. Garrett. "Liberal Arts for the Twenty-First Century." *Journal of Higher Education*. January/February 1987: 38-45.
- Bodino, Angela. "Using Writing to Integrate the Curriculum: The Constructs at the Core." Paper for Midcareer Fellowship Program, Princeton 1988.
- Boer, Ildy. "Interdisciplinary Science Teaching—New Direction." *CCM Update*, January 1995: 10.
- Collett, Mary Jane. "Music as the Basis for Learning." *The Education Digest*. May 1992: 61-64.
- Culley, Margo. "We are Here to Stay": Curriculum Transformation in the 90's. *Transformations*. Winter 1991: 4-14.
- Eber, Janet. "NEH Study Project: 'Journey Through the Humanities' Literature Component for Proposed Humanities Course." County College of Morris, 1993.
- Edgerton, Russell. "Feeling in Control: Or, Why Would a Humanist Envy an Engineer?" *Change*. March/April 1986: 4-5.

Eisner, Elliot W. "The Misunderstood Role of the Arts in Human Development." *Phi Delta Kappan* 73 (1992): 591-595.

Englehardt, Elaine E. "Curriculum Diversity Through a Core Approach to Ethics." International Conference for Community College Chairs, Deans, and other Instructional Leaders. February 17-20, 1993.

Everett, Marianne. "Developmental Interdisciplinary Schools for the 21st Century." *The Education Digest*. March 1992: 57-59.

Fogarty, Robin. "10 Ways to Integrate Curriculum." *The Education Digest*. February 1992: 53-57.

Gaff, Jerry G. "Interdisciplinary Studies in Higher Education." *The Education Digest*. October 1989: 57-60.

Geoghegan, Wendy. "Re-Placing the Arts in Education." *Phi Delta Kappan*. February 1994: 458.

Georgianna, Linda. "Confronting Differences in Belief Systems; Humanities Core Course." Syllabus for University of California. 1991.

Gough, Pauline B. "Art for Our Sake." *Phi Delta Kappan* 73 (1992): 579.

"The Hamilton Dinner Honors the Core Curriculum's 75th Anniversary." *Columbia*. Fall 1994: 3-4.

Hanna, Judith Lynne. "Connections: Arts, Academics, and Productive Citizens." *Phi Delta Kappan* 73 (1992): 601-607.

Henderson, André. "Los Angeles: Humanities For All." *Governing*. Oct. 1992: 40-41.

Hoffnung, Michele and Pearl Brown. "Interdisciplinary Studies." *Transformations*. Spring 1992: 29-35.

Jeffords, Susan. "Present Rhetoric and Future Opportunities in the Humanities." *Liberal Education* 72 (1986): 101-108.

"Journey Through the Humanities: A Faculty Study Project on the Diversity of Poetry." County College of Morris. June 1992.

Kolde, Rosemary F. "Integrated Learning for a Competitive Work Force." *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 (1991): 453-456.

McGrath, Dennis and Martin B. Spear. *The Academic Crisis in the Community College*. New York: SUNY P, 1991.

McMillen, Liz. "Literature's Jeremiah Leaps Into the Fray." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 7 September 1994, sec. A: 11+.

Miller, Margaret A. and Anne-Marie McCartan. "Making the Case for New Interdisciplinary Programs." *Change*. May/June 1990: 28-35.

Mooney, Carolyn J. "Long-Ignored Interdisciplinary Teachers Seek Support for Changes in Curriculum." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 5 July 1989, sec. A: 11+.

Morgan, Peter. "Bloom, Frye, and the Academic Aspiration after the Unity of Knowledge." *Interchange* 22 (1991): 29-38.

Oddleifson, Eric. "What Do We Want Our Schools To Do?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1994): 446-453.

Palmer, James C. "Interdisciplinary Studies: An Eric Review." *Community College Review*, Summer 1983: 59-64.

Perrin, Stephanie. "Education in the Arts is an Education for Life." *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1994): 452-453.

Proposal for Summer Institute at Raritan Valley Community College. April 1992.

Pulley, Brett. "New York Striving to Become Technology's Creative Center." *New York Times* February 13, 1995: A1 +.

Rényi, Judith. "The Arts and Humanities in American Education." *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1994): 438-445.

- Rosenstock, Larry. "The Walls Come Down: The Overdue Reunification of Vocational and Academic Education." *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 (1991): 434-436.
- Sautter, R. Craig. "An Arts Education School Reform Strategy." *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1994): 432-437.
- Sbaratta, Philip A. "Defeating the Learned Ignoramus: Interdisciplinary Education." *Community College Review* 10 (1982-83): 33-39.
- Schneiderman, Jill S. "Curriculum Transformation in the Earth Sciences: Women's Studies and Geology." *Transformations*. Spring 1994: 44-56.
- Shoemaker, Betty Jean Eklund. "Education 2000 Integrated Curriculum." *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 (1991): 793-797.
- Smith, Bruce M. "The Art of Being Human." *Phi Delta Kappan* 75 (1994): 427.
- Smith, Page. *Killing the Spirit*. New York: Viking, 1990.
- Tinto, Vincent. "Constructing Educational Communities." *Community College Journal* 64 (1994): 26-29.
- Toch, Thomas, et al. "Less-is-More Curriculum." *U.S. News and World Report.*, 11 Jan. 1993: 53-56.
- "University of the 21st Century." *The Futurist*. September-October 1990: 53.
- Valasek, Thomas E. "A Survey of Student Attitudes in 'Introduction to Humanities,' An Interdisciplinary, Team-Taught General Education Course at Raritan Valley Community College. Paper for Midcareer Fellowship Program. Princeton 1994.

Watermeier, Daniel J. "The Avant-Garde (1890-1925): An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Humanities Through the Arts." *Alternative Higher Education*. 6 (1982): 269-280.

Watters, Barbara L. "Turning 'Baby Steps' into 'Great Strides'." *Transformations*. Spring 1994: 17-24.

## THE SILENCING CANON: NATIVE AMERICAN TEXTS AND LITERATURE STUDY

Mary Roseberry

I will tell you something about stories,  
[he said]  
They aren't just entertainment.  
Don't be fooled.  
They are all we have, you see,  
all we have to fight off  
illness and death.

You don't have anything  
if you don't have the stories . . . .

Leslie Silko  
*Ceremony*

Over the last twenty years, some of the most significant changes in the humanities have occurred in the study of literature and the analysis of its nature. Debates have raged, especially, over what new texts will be *permitted* (emphasis mine) to join the *sacred* (emphatically mine) canonical texts selected by the high priests of literature after World War I. Fueling the debate, and the best thing that could have happened to literature, is the appearance of texts by traditionally marginalized writers: African Americans, women, immigrants, Native Americans, and writers of Asian and Hispanic descent.

But professors of literature, and perhaps professors of history, philosophy, and art, have yet to re-focus their courses around these exciting texts. Rather, we tinker, adding or including a few new writers to the fixed and formulated canon, unwilling to let it live and change as it should be free to do. Unless we radically alter our concept of literature study and prepare teachers to do so, we will perpetuate a passive, static academic

culture which de-centers not only minority students but all students. And that passivity, in turn, contributes to a cultural passivity that as humanists we claim to struggle against.

The critic Frederic Jameson describes literature as “a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community” (70). This definition requires that we ask: Whose meditation do we examine? Whose community is reflected upon in the classroom? Whose destiny is at stake in such a meditation? Whose symbols illuminate experience for students? What we do when we present the standard canon to students is limit their access to the rich meditations of other cultures. And in so doing, we also limit their ability to truly see and contemplate their own.

Let me articulate what I see to be the task of literature courses through two meditations of my own. During the fall semester of 1992, Niagara County Community College presented a series of events by and about indigenous people, in honor of their survival in the face of 500 years of colonization. The College, near Niagara Falls, is located on land that has been inhabited by the people of the Iroquois Confederacy for many generations and is only a few miles from the Tuscarora reservation. The semester’s events included poetry readings, traditional storytelling, dance performances, art exhibits, films, lectures and discussions.

Two contemporary poets, Sherman Alexie and Joy Harjo, were invited to read their work. After Alexie’s reading, one of our students, a Tuscarora woman, stopped me in the corridor to ask if I had something to do with organizing the semester’s events. When I acknowledged that I had, she said, “I want you to know something: I have always wanted to be a writer. I’ve been writing all my life, but I never knew until I heard Sherman Alexie read today that I could write about being an Indian.”

And a second story: Recently, the poet Lucille Clifton read in Buffalo, New York, where she was raised. She recalled that in the elementary and high schools she attended, there were photos of writers on the walls in the classrooms, and all of the writers were white males. What is sad, she commented, is not that she did not see herself in those photos, but that she did not *miss* herself.

The young Ms. Clifton and the community college student have much in common: an educational practice which refused them the opportunity to recognize themselves in the language of literature.

These two observations elucidate what needs to be done to transform literary study into the living, powerful force it could be. Rather than restrict it to its past practice of examination, admiration, and description, we might better apply the meaning more common in fine arts, the object of study is the student’s work, and a *model* (the human



body, a still life, a geometric shape) is merely the catalyst for meditation by students themselves.

The re-focusing of literary studies encourages and assists all students to meditate on the destiny of the multiple, sometimes confrontational, communities in which they live and in which they must forge their own identities.

Although many literature courses have moved away from the ahistorical approach espoused in the 1960's, relatively little effort has been made to engage students in the multiplicity of cultural and literary traditions that would shed real light on both the mainstream and 'marginalized' traditions.

We continue to ignore the *multiple* contexts from which texts and writers emerge, the cultural contexts of the "Others" whose experience places a given text in relief. A white male writer comes out of a historical experience different from that of a person of color or a woman. How can students grasp the uniqueness of that writer's meditation unless they can also see the perspective of persons of color or women? As one who puts words on paper, a writer identifies herself with a particular form of self-expression and use of language that is different from the oral tradition. But how can students, raised within the confines of a writing tradition, grasp its unique characteristics unless they also understand the characteristics of the oral tradition?

Native American texts, in particular, offer perspectives on language, art, and culture that can illuminate literature for all students. Texts by Native writers come from a rich unbroken tradition of forms (both oral and written), linguistic devices, symbol systems, and the constituent elements of mythology and cultural and political background. This tradition has existed contiguously with the Euro-American tradition and has been profoundly at odds with it.

The forced separation of indigenous people from the mainstream led to disenfranchisement and neglect that continues today. Yet, ironically, by virtue of this separation, Native communities have retained a cultural and literary history that mirrors, confronts and revitalizes the mainstream, while offering continuity to their own future generations.

Contemporary Native writers and traditional storytellers provide that angle of light in which to see mainstream texts. By placing their experience of this nation at the center of any given text, Native writing offer students new perspectives on patterns of knowledge and cultural origins, on philosophical and historical reality, on literary form and content, on the nature and functions of art, and on the role and value of language.

While traditions vary from East to West and from North to South, common elements appear in the texts as well: textual forms including oral texts (now transcribed) such as songs, chants, and vision narratives; and written texts including autobiography, and more recently, poetry, short fiction and the novel. We find similar narrative devices such as the trickster or the use of multiple narrators; myths of origin and survival; rituals of birth, marriage and death; and the incorporation of traditional symbols. In both the oral and written texts, we find repeated themes of the land and its loss, with the psychic rootlessness that follows such loss; the need for community and the ancestors; the connection between the sacred dimension and everyday life; the devastation of racism and religious conflict with whites. Comparisons with the mainstream's view of itself and of Native cultures provides students with an invaluable perspective.

Among the many "literary" differences is that between the oral tradition, whose presence remains even in contemporary Native texts, and the written Euro-American tradition whose roots in spoken language and community are all but lost. Western literature idealizes and authorizes the individual author, while oral traditions authorize the communal voice. In Foucault's words, "The coming into being of the notion of 'author' constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences" (in Owens 10).

But in Native cultures, which retain a connection to the oral tradition long since lost in Euro-American cultures, the individual is not privileged above the community. The Native tradition does not privilege either the individual writer or the Olympian protagonist in his splendid isolation. Rather, stories arise *from the community* and are *about the community*. Even though contemporary Native authors participate in the 'privileged moment of individualization' of affixing their names to their texts, the content and structure of those texts makes clear the vital role of the community. As Native writer Paula Gunn Allen points out,

The purpose of traditional American Indian literature is never simply pure self-expression....the tribes do not celebrate the individual's ability to feel emotion for they assume that all people are able to do so....The tribes seek — through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales — to embody, articulate and share reality, to bring the isolated, private self into harmony and balance with this reality.... (85)

Among the best-known contemporary Native novels are Leslie masterful *Ceremony*, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*,

and the works of James Welch (*Fool's Crow*, *Winter in the Blood*) and Louise Erdrich (*Tracks*, *Love Medicine*). All use contemporary western novelistic techniques, but each also resounds with a powerful communal voice. Wisdom is handed down from the grandmothers and grandfathers. The community shapes the individual. Without community, the individual is silenced and paralyzed. These novels refer to traditional ancient songs and chants which evolved in their various communities through generations, reinforcing the role of the community in the life of the individual.

Further, as Native critic Louis Owens writes, the self from which contemporary Native American protagonists are alienated is generally moved "toward a coherent personal identity entirely dependent upon a coherent cultural identity"(20). Owens goes on to point out that while postmodernism celebrates the fragmentation and chaos of experience, texts by Native authors tend to restore the individual to community and continuity. The individual regains balance (an important cultural theme) by re-membering with the community. The protagonist in Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* "had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void" (96). Later, the words of the traditional Navajo Night Chant restore him to health:

Happily I go forth.  
My interior feeling cool,  
may I walk.  
No longer sore, may I walk.

The protagonist in Silko's *Ceremony* must also make a ritual journey and return to his origins in the ancient stories in order to be healed.

The use of traditional songs and chants in Native texts (and this is true as well of African American, Chicano, and the literatures of other American communities) also returns literature to its roots in spoken language. Oral traditions 'read' language very differently from writing traditions, in that they perceive language as transformative, not merely descriptive. To speak is to create, to bring a listener into being. As Owens explains, "With written literacy, language becomes descriptive/historic and begins to lose its unique power as creator of reality"(9). Written language becomes absolute, and so is, at the same time, disconnected from life. Unless there is a "listener" who has a story to tell, the inscribed word has no real bearing on life. Oral traditions keep the past while reinterpreting it to each new generation in story and song, chant and dance.

You don't have anything  
 If you don't have the stories.  
 (Ceremony)

It is perhaps the richness of the oral tradition, or the connection with the land, or both, that gives so much of Native literature its stunning beauty. The poetry and fiction of current writers is radiant with imagery, compelling and immediate in its appeal. The list of "must reads" includes Joy Harjo, Lucy Tapahonso, Charlotte DeClue, Simon Ortiz, Lance Henson, Sherman Alexie, Leslie Silko, Scott Momaday, Linda Hogan, Wendy Rose (several anthologies are included at the end of this article).

In her poem "Story Keeper," Wendy Rose writes of the continuity of the past and the present:

The stories  
 would be braided in my hair  
 between the plastic comb  
 and blue wing tips  
 but as the rattles would split,  
 the drums begin,  
 along would come someone  
 to stifle and stop  
 the sound  
 and the story keeper  
 I would have been  
 must melt  
 into the cave  
  
 of things discarded  
  
 and this is a wound  
 to be healed  
 in the spin of winter  
 or the spiral  
 of beginning.  
 This is the task —  
 to find the stories now . . . (25)

Another compelling element in Native texts is the presence of the mythic world. Spirit, dream and magic are as real as, and interact with, the daily lives of people. The western split between rational and non-rational, thought and emotion, the sacred and profane, does not exist in the Native view. In the novels mentioned above, as well as the short fiction and

poetry, Spirits, Watchers, Shape Changers, Tricksters all participate in the dance or the journey or the remembering which return humans to themselves.

Perhaps the most familiar referent in Native texts is the land — in fact, perhaps the land is the primary text. Land is essential to the Native view: one's ancestors and rituals and community are connected to the land. Not only does wisdom and health come from the land, but one's very identity. In the words of Wendy Rose in her poem "Walking on the prayerstick":

When we go to the fields  
we always sing; we walk  
each of us at different times  
on the world held  
like a feathered and fetished prayerstick.  
We map our lives this way: trace our lineage  
by the corn, find our words in the flute,  
touch the shapes that feed us with dry seed.  
We grow as shrines grow from human belief;  
we sing a penetration through our pottery bodies.... (Green 194)

To lose the land is to lose the past and one's ancestors, and to lose them is to lose one's identity. "It takes a while to speak with these two voices/as it takes a while to walk on two feet/each one going the other way," writes Diane Glancy in "Iron Woman" (61). And in his poem "old country," Lance Henson writes, "i am crossing/the same/endless/bridge/wrapped in a strange garment/ looking for/myself" (Hobson 158).

The past is present at all times in Native thinking, while for the Euroamerican mind, especially in modern and postmodern America, the past is over and done with. Native texts reestablish connections between one's past and one's future, one's ancestors and one's identity. The integrity of the past, recreated in story, makes an integrated future possible. Linda Hogan writes in her poem "Heritage":

From my mother, the antique mirror  
where I watch my face take on her lines . . . .

From my father I take his brown  
eyes the plague of locusts that leveled our crops,  
they flew in formation like buzzards . . . .

From my uncle the whittled wood  
that rattles like bones  
and is white . . . .

From my grandfather who never spoke  
I learned to fear silence . . . .

And grandmother, blue-eyed woman  
whose skin was brown,  
she used snuff . . . .

That tobacco is the dark night that covers me.

From my family I have learned the secrets  
of never having a home. ( Green 165)

The unique cultural and "literary" tradition is found not only in the works of contemporary authors mentioned above, but in much earlier, overlooked texts as well, those of D'Arcy McNickle, Pauline Johnson, Zitkala Sa (Gertrude Bonnin), John Joseph Mathews, Dan Talayesva, among others in the early part of this century. (See Allen (ed.), *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*, 1989; *Voice of the Turtle*, 1994.) Native literature in particular offers the opportunity for meditation because it illuminates the complexity of life and art that actually form one's individual and communal identity. Native texts can open up conversation about literary form, language, audience, symbolism, and about worldviews and power. Finally, Native texts, emphasizing as they do community and continuity, and evoking the power of language and myth, can help to return literature to the hands of students, where it belongs.

## SOURCES

Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Boston: Beacon, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Spiderwoman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women*. Boston: Beacon, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Voice of the Turtle: American Indian Literature 1900-1970*. New York: Ballantine, 1994.

Alexie, Sherman. *I Would Steal Horses*. Niagara Falls: Slipstream, 1992.

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Brant, Beth, ed. *A Gathering of Spirit: Writing and Art by North American Indian Women*. Sinister Wisdom, 1984.
- Bruchac, Joseph, ed. *New Voices from the Longhouse: An Anthology of Contemporary Iroquois Writing*. Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review, 1989.
- Bruchac, Joseph, ed. *Returning the Gift*. Tucson: U. Arizona P, 1994.
- Dooling, D.M., and Paul Jordan-Smith, eds. *I Become Part of It: Sacred Dimensions in Native American Life*. New York: Parabola, 1989.
- Glancy, Diane. *Iron Woman*. New York: New Rivers Press, 1990.
- Green, Rayna, ed. *That's What She Said: Contemporary Poetry and Fiction by Native American Women*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1984.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, and Giles Gunn, eds. *Redrawing the Boundaries: the Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*. New York: MLA, 1992.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn. *Writing a Woman's Life*. New York: Ballantine, 1988.
- Hobson, Geary, ed. *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*. Albuquerque: U. New Mexico P, 1981.
- Hogan, Linda. *Savings*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1988.
- Jameson, Frederic. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1981.
- Krupat, Arnold. *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*. Berkeley: U. of California P, 1989.
- Mander, Jerry. *In the Absence of the Sacred: the Failure of Technology and the Survival of the Indian Nations*. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1991.
- Momaday, N. Scott. *House Made of Dawn*. New York: Harper, 1968.

- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Niatum, Duane, ed. *Harper's Anthology of 20th Century Native American Poetry*. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.
- Owens, Louis. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U. Oklahoma P, 1992.
- Riley, Patricia, ed. *Growing Up Native American: An Anthology*. New York: William Morrow, 1993.
- Rose, Wendy. *The Halfbreed Chronicles and Other Poems*. Albuquerque, NM: West End Press, 1985.
- Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown, and Jerry W. Ward, eds. *Redefining American Literary History*. New York: MLA, 1990.
- Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown. *American Indian Literatures: an Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography*. New York: MLA, 1990.
- Silko, Leslie M., *Ceremony*. New York: Penguin, 1977.
- Velie, Alan R., ed. *American Indian Literature: An Anthology*. Norman: U. Oklahoma P, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Lightning Within: An Anthology of Contemporary American Indian Fiction*. Lincoln, NE: U. Nebraska P, 1991.



**LIFE IN THE IRON MILLS:  
DIFFERING RESPONSES TO MORAL RESPONSIBILITY  
WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

Mary Ellen Byrne

In 1861, in the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*, the young Rebecca Harding published her first work, *Life in the Iron Mills*, a devastating critique of the contemporary structure of American society. One hundred years before Carol Gilligan's *In A Different Voice*, with its ground-breaking research on women's moral development, Harding portrayed women as defining their moral and social responsibilities to their fellows in far different ways than men define theirs. Just as Gilligan came to understand decades later, the women in Harding's world act with compassion, concern and empathy for others whereas men often act with distance, arrogance and indifference. With only the seminary education appropriate to her social class and gender, and without the psychology background of Gilligan, Harding, a young Southern woman, crafted a scathing indictment of the male dominated, business owner elites. As she dissected the plight of the poor wage slaves of the iron factories, Harding countered her condemnation of the male world with a celebration of women's social involvement and mercy.

More than forty years later in her memoir, *Bits of Gossip*, Rebecca Harding Davis wrote, "It always has seemed to me that each human being, before going out into the silence, should leave behind him, not the story of his own life, but of the time in which he lived" (30). In *Life in the Iron Mills*, Rebecca Harding Davis does indeed write the story of the time in which she lived, a story of the abject social and economic conditions of her day.

In the midst of these horrific social conditions, men and women view their moral responsibilities toward the workers within the community very differently in *Life in the Iron Mills*. Central to the novella is the question of the moral and social responsibility of the owners/aristocrats to the wage slaves/workers. Almost a quarter of the book is devoted to the question of the responsibility of the upper class males — labeled the "Head," "Heart," the "Pocket," (38) and the "Christian reformer" (49) — in

regard to the wage slaves, the mill workers. In her study *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*, Jane Tompkins notes that the popular American fiction of the first half of the nineteenth century, often written by women, attempted to "redefine the social order" (xi). These writings, often classified as "sensational or propagandistic," sought to prod their audience to certain actions, to question religious beliefs, social practices, and the economic and political circumstances that produced these social conditions (xiii). Moreover, stereotypes were common "instruments of cultural self-definition," according to Tompkins (xvi). These stereotyped male characters, allegorical figures from the class structure of the age, articulate outlooks on society and its structure which are fundamentally dissimilar from the outlooks of the female presences in the novel — the author, the narrator, Deborah, and the Quaker woman.

The male upper-class attitude in *Life in the Iron Mills* suggests that "to be fully human... a person must belong to one class... which gives physical, social and spiritual identity to the person and dignity and worth" (Tompkins 118). These men believe that one's goodness or badness comes from one's position in the social and class structure. The conversation of the three males, the Head, the Heart and the Pocket, visitors to the nighttime world of the mill, reveals their lack of moral development, their selfishness, their lack of understanding for the causes of suffering, and their total disregard for any individual responsibility for the wage slave poor.

Kirby, the son of the mill-owner, is accompanied by the town physician, Dr. May, along with Mitchell, a visitor to the South. They have come "for amusement" (28). They quickly "forget" the presence of the furnace-tenders, the working class lessers. However, when watching them, Hugh Wolfe (the worker/artist figure in the novella) recognizes his own "filthy body, his more stained soul" in contrast to the "refinement" of Mitchell, "the thorough-bred gentleman" (29-30). In Mitchell, Hugh Wolfe finds "the pure face, the delicate sinewy limbs, in harmony with all he knew of beauty or truth" (40). For Wolfe, Mitchell epitomizes "Man all-knowing, all seeing, crowned by Nature, reigning," the Emersonian ideal (40). Wolfe recognizes with the "sharpness of the bitter certainty that between them there was a great gulf never to be passed. Never!" (30).

Kirby, "the pocket of the world" (36), the allegorical figure of business, is the Pilate-like presence in the scene. This mill-owner's son boasts that "my father brought seven hundred votes to the polls for his candidate last November" (28). Yet even though these masters control their workers, the owners express fear of the worker and the threat of strike. "Let them have a clear idea of the rights of the soul, and I'll venture next they'll strike for higher wages" (38). Clearly, the

owners/aristocrats/masters had to maintain the workers' ignorance, illiteracy, deprivation and disease to perpetuate the system of their own success. Yet Kirby can repeat, "I wash my hands of all social problems — slavery, caste, white or black .... I am innocent of the blood of this man" (36). "I am not responsible" (35). He views his duty to his workers as a pay check. With a coarse, jeering laugh, Kirby states, "If I had the making of men, these puddlers and furnace tenders who do the lowest part of the world's work should be machines — nothing more — hands" (34).

Mitchell, the blasé, scholarly "head" figure, who is the allegorical representative of "taste, culture and refinement," declares, "I am not one of them!" (38). His insufferable disgust at the smells and shapes in the night-world factory scene is reflected in his "cool probing eyes — mocking, cruel, relentless" (33). His is the "Self of ice though brilliant still" (29), a presence "bright and deep and cold as Arctic air" (36). Mitchell, the dilettante, views Wolfe as a "rare mosaic in the morning; only the man was the more amusing study of the two" (36). To Mitchell, "reform is born of need, not pity" (39). The masses must raise up their own Messiah. It is Mitchell's pocket that Hugh's faithful friend Deborah picks; she hopes the money will free Hugh from his deadening work world. Ironically, however, Hugh is falsely accused of the crime and sentenced to prison. There in his cell, Hugh becomes bitterly aware of his desperate, impossible plight and commits suicide. Although Mitchell's and Hugh's fates have become intertwined, it is only Hugh who suffers.

Dr. May, the town physician, the "heart" (36) figure, the allegorical do-gooder, the "philanthropist in a small way" (36), pleads that "I have not the means to help Wolfe" (37). Still, he glows with self satisfaction at the vague idea that "much good was to be done here by a word or two: a latent genius to be warmed into life by a waited-for sun beam" (37). His is the "affable smile which kind hearted men put on, when talking with these people" (33). In a "way people have with children and men like Wolfe," May talks "down to the capacity of his hearer" (37). While pleading lack of funds, May "glows with his own magnanimity" (37). After adopting Mitchell's theory that the masses must raise themselves, May "prayed that power might be given these degraded souls to rise; (then) he glowed at heart" (39).

A month later, after Hugh Wolfe has been imprisoned for the theft he did not commit, Dr. May reads to his wife of Hugh Wolfe's "conviction for grand larceny and his sentence of nineteen years hard labor in penitentiary." May exclaims, "Scoundrel! Serves him right! After all our kindness that night! Picking Mitchell's pocket at the very time!" His wife notes the "ingratitude of that kind of people" (50).

Finally the old man, "the Christian reformer," (49) the allegorical presence of Christian faith, zeal and charity, speaks in the church a language suited to "another class of culture" (49). Seeking solace, Wolfe has wandered into this church, a "Gothic pile... built to meet the requirements and sympathies of a far other class" (48), but the preacher there spoke as "in an unknown tongue" (49). Because he saw with an eye "that had never glared with hunger and a hand that neither poverty nor strychnine-whiskey had taught to shake" (49), the reformer failed to reach Hugh Wolfe's needs.

While these males in the community are hypocritical and aloof from the worker poor, the female presences and characters in *Life in the Iron Mills* are closer to and more a part of the commonplace world. Moreover, for Harding Davis, women exemplify a higher model of moral and social responsibility. Deborah, the actual thief who filched the money from Mitchell's pocket, does so for love of Hugh, an unrequited love at that. It is Deborah who feeds the hungry, who "almost nightly" (19) walks to the mill with food for Hugh, from whom she gets little thanks. Deb's is the story of a "soul filled with groping passionate love, heroic unselfishness, fierce jealousy, of years of weary trying to please the one human being whom she loved, to gain one look of real heart-kindness from him." (21-2). Deb sorrows in the neighboring prison cell because Hugh suffers wrongly for her deed.

Into the prison cell on the day after Hugh Wolfe's suicide comes "only one woman. She came late, and outstayed them all. A Quaker, a Friend, as they call themselves. I think this woman was known by that name in heaven" (61). This Quaker woman cleaned the cell, "laying straight the limbs" (61) of the dead Hugh, and in "a still, gentle way, brought a vase of wood-leaves and berries, and placed it by the pallet, then opened the narrow window" (61-2). This Friend plans the burial of Hugh on the hills above the river. When Deborah is released from prison, the Quaker woman takes her to live in the Quaker community on the hill where the Friends gather "in their grave earnest way, waiting for the Spirit of Love to speak, opening their simple hearts to receive His words" (63).

Here at the close of *Life in the Iron Mills*, the Quaker woman vivifies by her maternal actions one of the favorite stories of nineteenth century American culture, namely "the story of salvation through motherly love" (Tompkins 125). Thus Harding Davis rejects the old society and its ways, a society ruled by men. By focusing at the close of the novella on the Quaker woman and her community of Friends, Harding Davis highlights not the exploitation of the worker, but, rather, cooperation among equals. Furthermore, these Quakers live the ideal of the Good Samaritan, an ideal which Harding Davis extols in her turn-of-the-century memoir, *Bits of* p. She upholds the "methods of the good Samaritan who out of his

own pocket, helped the man fallen by the wayside" (148-9). She condemns those who "wanted all alms given through agents of organized charity boards, only to those found worthy" (148-9). Those business men who buy charity and good will in an impersonal fashion, to Harding Davis, do not practice brotherly love. But the reformer who uses "the most feminine methods of attack" (231) does her work most effectively. In *Life in the Iron Mills* women, not the enlightened men, practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

In addition, Harding Davis constructs her novella so that the narrator is present at the start and finish. This narrator can arguably be identified as the author herself. It is this female narrator/creator presence which articulates the strongest statements of moral and social responsibility in the novella. Immediately in the beginning the narrator sneeringly addresses "the amateur psychologist" and invites him "who studies psychology in a lazy, dilettante way" to enter the "massed, vile, slimy lives" of these wage-slave poor (12-13). The narrator asks this psychologist what it means to be alive like this and answers that for these huddled masses, life is a "drunken jest, a joke" (12). Theirs are lives of "incessant labor, sleeping in kennel-like rooms, eating rank pork and molasses, drinking." Reformers, political and private, have "gone among them with a heart tender with Christ's charity, and come out outraged, hardened" (15).

But such is not so of the women in *Life in the Iron Mills*. They are not hardened by life among the lowly mill workers. The narrator exhorts the reader to "be just" in judging Hugh Wolfe's actions — "not like man's law, which seizes on one isolated fact, but like God's judging angel whose clear, sad eye saw all the countless cankering days of this man's life, all the countless nights" (25). Finally the narrator declares, "I do not plead his cause. I only want to show you the mote in my brother's eye: then you can see clearly to take it out" (46).

Here, then, in *Life in the Iron Mills*, the dichotomy within the community between male and female values, and between the male and female senses of moral responsibility, is clear. Men are legalistic, disdainful, indifferent to others. Men view their fellows as property. They deny involvement or responsibility for others, for their lessers. They intellectualize life; they are distant and aloof in their arrogant self-righteousness. They feel no necessity to act to correct the wrongs of society. Women, however, exemplify the Christian concept of "brotherly" love; women care for their brethren. They do not judge by man's law. They are compassionate and concerned. Women view their fellows as suffering humans whose plight must be attended to. They involve themselves with others. Having acknowledged the social wrongs, women act to correct them. Prophetically, an a century before Carol Gilligan and her research on women's

moral development, Rebecca Harding Davis recognized that women spoke and acted "in a different voice."

### WORKS CITED

Davis, Rebecca Harding. *Bits of Gossip*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1904.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Life in the Iron Mills*. Edited by Tillie Olsen. Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1972.

Gilligan, Carol. *In A Different Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982.

Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

## CAN CHAOS THEORY CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN THE SCIENCES AND THE HUMANITIES?

Walter Kriegelstein

“Chaos Dreaming, Chaos Screaming, Want To Be  
More, Want To Be More.”

*The Dead Poet Society*

This paper will explore recent discoveries in basic science and evaluate their potential as a stimulus for cross-fertilization between the sciences and the humanities.

In the modern world, science has taken over the place that once was reserved for philosophy. When one wants to know what the future will bring, or seeks explanations for contemporary problems or behaviors, one turns to science in search for answers. Scientific thinking, in turn, produces philosophical world views that express the strength, the arrogance, but also the limits of science.

Throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, all fields of academia tried to emulate science and its method. Sociology, psychology and political science are just a few of the disciplines that adopted empirical methods such as quantification and statistics in order to be accepted as scientific by an increasingly more science-conscious society. Arts and the humanities were largely left out in this general run for measurability, though, and conflict developed between these disciplines and the sciences. Robin Williams' satirical presentation of a quantitative approach to poetry in the movie *The Dead Poet Society* is well known. Few would not get the irony of reducing a poem to a graph. But the depth of the conflict becomes perhaps more apparent when one reflects about the lines sung by the students in the dead poet cave: “Chaos dreaming, Chaos screaming, want to be more, want to be more.” So, at the close of the twentieth century, science has lost some of its security and prestige. This was caused by a number of significant discoveries in basic physics.

At the core of a recent critique of science and scientific methodology is a new evaluation of chaos. As an intuitive expression of the

subconscious mind, chaos has traditionally been part of the artistic heritage. It was because of this connection to chaos, which often resulted in unmeasurability and unpredictability, that the humanities seemed to lag behind modern intellectual development. The arts were seen by many as an old fashioned mode of expression connected with a mythological past. Under the scientific paradigm, numbers seemed to be at the center of truth, order seemed to be the proper appearance of the divine. But then, nearing the end of the twentieth century, scientific thought took a new turn. No longer could it be assumed that nature was destined to an ever increasing representation of order. Chaos suddenly became respectable.

But what good can be expected from chaos? What has changed in the modern mind, that chaos suddenly assumes a reputable role as a force to be reckoned with, at times even the role of creator? And perhaps more importantly, aren't there real reasons for alarm, even fear?

*The Dead Poet Society* is only one example of how discoveries in the Science of Chaos, a scientific theory that mathematically describes non-linear systems, has put a new emphasis on creativity and open-endedness, ways of understanding and thinking which were traditionally reserved for the humanities and the arts. Another popular movie, *Jurassic Park*, held the collective imagination in grip for well over a year. This film stressed the other side of chaos, the destructive, dangerous one, the one that is hostile to our concept of goodness and progress. *Jurassic Park*, nevertheless, made the Science of Chaos and the Butterfly Effect almost subjects for dinner table conversation.

In the development of Chaos Theory, a new generation of scholars has taken a fresh look at the traditional hierarchy of order over chaos, first established by Greek philosophers. Order as the creation of the *demiourgos* was placed on the top, while chaos and disorder were at the bottom, a mistake of lower celestial gods. Chaos was simply an *apeiron*, an open space, a void, which needs to be filled with form. Nothing was better suited to fill the void than the human mind with its logic and rationality. Creativity and art, the dark, subconscious side of the human being, though still in relative high esteem among the early Greeks, lost more of its importance as Western Civilization merged with Judaeo-Christian thought, which interpreted chaos as the work of Satan. Hand-in-hand with the denunciation of chaos in Western civilization went the gradual rejection of all animistic practices, the disregard for imagination, a low esteem for our emotional self and even the domination of women. The Age of Enlightenment finally fully established the priority of reason.

Even art was cultivated as primarily a moralizing activity, as it was put in the service of reason and rationality. Ethical norms, just like the laws



of nature, were seen as the pillars of a decent life and were projected into art and literature. Whenever a rebellious art refused to adopt this ethical responsibility, it was quickly branded as marginal, asocial and unworthy. Through academic expulsion or censorship such art was kept on the sidelines. Conservative analysts, from Rome and Berlin to Washington, more than once tried to establish a canon of acceptable art and literature, which they believed would teach the proper selection of texts that are suitable to educate Western man.

Little wonder, then, that the acceptance of chaos as a respectable force has many enemies. Perhaps rightly so. But let us take a closer look.

After a lecture I recently gave about the implications of Chaos Theory and the connections between science and art, a science professor warned his students that they should be aware of the dangers inherent in such ideas. Chaos Theory addresses the heart of traditional science. It puts in question the fundamental faith of the scientific world view. In a "Point of View" article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 10, 1992), J. Trefil and R. Hazen explored the effectiveness of general science courses as the key to scientific literacy. The most useful way to study science, the authors found, was "to organize scientific knowledge around a series of 19 overarching scientific principles." The most basic principle of science, the authors stated, is "the idea that the universe is regular, predictable, and quantifiable."

It is this faith of traditional science that Chaos Theory now puts into question. In a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 11, 1994), Dennis Farney discussed the implications of Chaos Theory on the ecology debate and on secular humanism. "If nature is not governed by an ultimate order," Farney asks, "what is the place of man?" He continues pessimistically: "Chaos Theory seeps into ecology debate, stirring up a tempest."

Farney contends that with the spreading of Chaos Theory "one of history's great intellectual upheavals is unfolding. It amounts to a reshaping of the thought-world that Western man inhabits like a turtle in a shell." Farney quotes Irving Kristol, a fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, who calls it "a shaking of the foundations of the modern world." Kristol is convinced that "we are at a unique moment in Western culture, the collapse of secular, rationalist humanism."

Farney and Kristol may be right when they predict that, with the popularization of this new scientific theory of chaotic systems which describes nearly all of nature, a more or less unproved faith in the ability of human reason and rationality to always make the right choices will have lost its leading edge. Equally, therefore, a traditional brand of atheism based

on the gospel of materialistic and reductionist science is also in question. But since Allen Bloom, in his heretical and somewhat confusing book on the *Closing of the American Mind*, had blamed European, and particularly German, nihilism for the demise of reason in America, many scholars have recognized the true agent that puts traditional rationality into question. It has become clear that the real cause of the loss of intellectual certitude is not only to be found overseas, in Europe, where Bloom would place the blame, but also right here at home, in the commitment to scientific thinking. Traditional positivistic practitioners may still dismiss the new discoveries as marginal when they try desperately to hold on to the only world view they know, dogmatic materialism masquerading as science, but this dogmatic materialism is nothing other than scientific fundamentalism, not unlike religious fundamentalism, the true enemy of the humanities.

A truly humanistic world view, I believe, was never built on dogmatic materialism. Humanism, as it was understood by some of the pillars of the continental Enlightenment, was built on the premise of a changing, open-ended and creative universe. It was in the works of art, where the human mind meets the spirit within the material world, never to fully comprehend it, but to enter into a dance with it just like two lovers enter a union of opposites. One and united in the dance, but never monistic and singular in intellect. Great works of art, from the Greeks to modernity, were always searching for the place of humanity in the universe, hardly ever assured of having found it. Only deeply ideological works and propaganda pieces for limited world views ever claimed to have arrived at the truth. In other words, humanistic art is more Socratic (a dialogic search for truth) than it is Aristotelian (having arrived at a universal concept of truth). Searching for, but not being there, was and is the motto for true humanism.

Many prominent scientists often diligently avoided ultimate questions and were content with the successful application of scientific principles in technology and the real world. In the face of the enormous success of science and technology, a narrowly understood and popularized pragmatic philosophy seemed to provide a seal of approval. But neither secular humanism nor other humanistic philosophies were ever totally based on a scientific pseudo-creed of total rationality. Thus, it is actually a popularized belief in the scientific principles expressed in the positivist faith that is now under attack by the science of chaos.

What are some of the principles that emerge from this new science that cause such an upheaval in our thinking? The idea of the Butterfly Effect is indeed central to the understanding of Chaos Theory. To quote again from *Jurassic Park*: "When a butterfly flaps its wings in Peking, it may cause a hurricane in New York." Chaos Theory, indeed, implies the down of the traditional connection between cause and effect, which,

since Aristotle, has guaranteed the stability of scientific prediction. If we were not able to assume that in nature, at least most of the time, the same cause may have the same or a similar effect, science the way we know it would not be possible. Moreover, traditional theory teaches that a small cause must have a small effect, and a big cause will produce a correspondingly larger event. Chaos Theory now shows that in chaotic systems this may not be the case. Very small initial conditions, after many sequences of feedback, may produce totally unexpected and large-scale results. Thus, in order to predict the outcome in such a system, it would be necessary to know the totality of all initial conditions, which in nature are almost limitless. In order to predict any event in the universe with total accuracy, one would need a computer the size of the universe, capable of working not only in the three standard dimensions but in the fourth dimension of space/time as well. This is quite obviously an impossible task, and those scientists and philosophers who anticipated a total predictability of natural events are understandably disturbed. Natural systems almost without exception are chaotic or at least have an element of chaos lurking within. Thus, Chaos Theory negates the notion of a total predictability of natural events. A nagging question is placed between scientific prediction and scientific result.

But is conservative pessimism really justified when it leads us to believe that Chaos Theory questions all progress? In his *Wall Street Journal* article, Denis Farney, echoing Allen Bloom, proclaims: "Progress is the promise of humanism; reason is its tool." And: "Through reason man would discover the 'laws of nature.' If man would just know enough and apply this knowledge, things would get better and better."

Do we have to concede now to right-wing fundamentalists who have prayed all along for the death of humanism and rallied against progress through reason and rationality? I believe not.

It is true that Chaos Theory puts into question all ideas that claim absolute veracity derived from a reference to nature and the natural world. But true humanism has never done this and therefore is little influenced by the Science of Chaos. For religious fundamentalists, God spoke through the prophets to the world. They alone were privileged to receive his message. And for these fundamentalists, from Augustine to Jerry Falwell, it has not been of much concern whether God's word agrees with scientific findings.

On the other hand the scientific community has never been as solidly dogmatic as popular perception might have it. The mechanical universe of the nineteenth century was never as fully Newtonian as it was the product of wishful thinking spurred by the popularization of scientific principles, which turned science into faith. This occurred when the

Newtonian laws of mechanics, which initially were understood only as a workable approximation to nature, became popularized as the universal laws of a machine-like universe.

In the wake of scientific positivism, some philosophers, among them Wittgenstein, realized the impotence of the scientific world view in answering the burning questions of metaphysical understanding, and they commanded silence. Under the same influence, philosophy itself, according to Bertrand Russell, gave up efforts to deal with "fuzzy metaphysical questions." Out of this developed a popular philosophy that put a nearly complete trust in human rationality as the engine of progress, leading to an assumption of total human control.

But total control has never really been the program of Secular Humanism. Both Manifestos of Secular Humanism have stressed the importance of creativity and art in human life and the role religions have played in the past in the creation of meaning. "The First Manifesto of Secular Humanism," published in 1933 and signed among others by John Dewey and Edwin H. Wilson, acknowledged the role traditional religions played in the establishment of the highest human values but conceded the need for a new secular religion in the face of "man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and deeper appreciation of brotherhood" (*Humanist* 1933 1-5). "The Second Manifesto of Secular Humanism", published in 1973, while acknowledging that "Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses" stressed the limits of reason as well as the limits of science and again emphasized the importance of creativity and art (*Humanist* 1973 4-9).

It was, rather, through the popularization of the scientific model and with the help of philosophers such as Comte, who adapted scientific principles to the social sciences and started a new science of sociology, that the principles of science were absolutized and began to serve as a hierarchical model for all of life. Once applied in the social sciences, these principles were introduced as a useful mechanism to establish influence and power. In this model, order was at the apex while disorder, chaos, had to be eliminated. Supported by the Christian-Judaic view that the human mission in this world is to bring order wherever it is lacking, and equipped with the principles of science and the tools of technology, human beings undertook the task of ordering and "cleaning up" the planet - with an eager eye to do the same to the rest of the universe.

Newton and Leibniz, each in his own way, knew that the accuracy of the scientific world view was based on approximation only. The calculus, which these two men invented, made modern technology possible by finding scientific laws in the closest approximation to universal laws

possible; but Leibniz, especially, was deeply aware of the difference between an approximation to a universal and a true universal.

The empiricist camp solved the problem by ignoring it, — and opened the doors for a near limitless succession of technological advances. The laws of mechanics are based on the faith that the scientific world view is close enough to the way the world works; a vestigial amount of uncertainty is - in most instances - insignificant. Unfortunately, many scientists preferred to forget this basic element of uncertainty in their science and inferred from the near absolute efficiency in the **application** of scientific principle to an absolute universality of the **principles** themselves. This, then, led to the popular view of the universe as a machine that operates according to eternal, predictable and quantifiable laws.

Quantum Theory and the Theory of Relativity began to question the machine model of the universe. The Copenhagen Agreement, Bell's Theorem and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle put a question mark behind all claims of scientific certainty. The new scientists of Chaos, led by Ilya Prigogine, a Russian scientist living and working in Belgium who, in 1977, received the Nobel prize in physics for his research work on the thermodynamics of non-equilibrium systems, extended uncertainty to cover all of scientific theory, whether it deals with the smallest quantum or the large-scale objects in the universe.

Out of the uncertainty of the quantum world and the re-evaluation of chaotic systems grew a new scientific understanding of the interplay of order and chance in the universe.

Driven by their discoveries of self-similarity, self-organization and feedback as systematically ordering principles that spontaneously create order out of chaos, those scientists are at the forefront of asking the big questions again: "What is truth?" or "What is the purpose of life?" or "What is truly good?"

Thus, with the advent of Chaos Theory, a number of prominent scientists, among them Prigogine, have already engaged in the attempt of reconnecting the humanities and science. Their endeavor is spurred not by the fear of losing control but by the rather exciting observation that creativity and openness is found to be the basis of all natural systems, as it is also the basis of art. These prominent chaos theorists do not stress the fearful and disquieting aspect of the new science; they emphasize that the self-organizing creativity of natural systems not only contradicts the deterministically predicted decay of the universe, as postulated in the Second law of Thermodynamics, but introduces a kind of conscious decision making aspect into what was traditionally considered an inanimate

While anthropologists and ethnologists reinvestigate the possibilities

of shamanism and of the return of spirits in a dispirited world, quantum physicists speculate about quantum animism and the presence of consciousness at the quantum level. (Herbert 1993).

The dissolution of universal laws (and here Bloom may be right) was to some extent the quintessence of Continental rationalism. It was an outgrowth of Kant's Copernican revolution and was philosophically initiated by Hegel's dialectic. Nietzsche only completed the job by pronouncing the death of the scholastic god, while, at the same time, giving birth to a dancing God who could be found in art and ecstasy.

In the nineteenth century the philosophical realization of a dogmatic nihilism ran against the solid wall of classical science. Newtonianism as the paradigm of classical physics, according to Alvin Toffler, pictured a world in which every event was determined by initial conditions. "It was a world in which chance played no part, in which all the pieces came together like cogs in a cosmic machine" (Prigogine 1984 xiii).

This was not a world view that could agree with Hegel's dialectic principle of a contradictory world and with Nietzsche's trust in the power of the creative mind. A new reading of Nietzsche, who once said "One must have chaos in the heart to give birth to a dancing star," may yet some day vindicate this unhappy philosopher and recognize him as the first true chaostician.

But, alas, the machine paradigm often still rules the sciences of modern times. Sociology and economics, especially, came under the firm grip of scientific determinism and to some extent still are held by that paradigm.

Newtonianism, according to Toffler, will eventually fit into a larger scientific image of reality. The old "universal laws," as Chaos Theory shows, are not universal at all, but apply only to local regions of reality. These regions happen to be the ones to which traditional science has devoted the most effort. Chaos Theory finally vindicates those scientists who made earlier attempts to apply the uncertainty that was found on the molecular level to higher structures as well. Chaos Theory extends the image of the dice-playing God, confirmed by Heisenberg for quantum processes, as ruler of the larger parts of the cosmos. It defines a new co-presence of chance and necessity, "not with one subordinate to the other, but as full partners in a universe that is simultaneously organizing and de-organizing itself" (Prigogine 1984 xxiii).

Many scientists of chaos, certainly not all, view this new science as holistic in its approach. As each system is a self-organizing unit, creating order out of chaos on its own terms, the human mind loses its special place as the sole ordering agent in the universe. Unsettling, perhaps, to those

who wish total control, natural systems sometimes make choices of their own that are different from those that we as humans with our own self interest in mind might have preferred. The natural world, from the smallest inanimate speck of *materia* to the large conglomerations of galaxies and galaxy clusters, appears suddenly not as a place of isolated units, fighting each other for survival but as systems within systems within systems, each equipped with an ordering sense, a community of single systems and yet with a sense toward establishing higher units. Order, it appears, is the cooperative result of all its members. Therefore, just as chance and necessity exist alongside each other, so do competition and cooperation. When order becomes stifling, a system often works itself to the edge of chaos to let the evolutionary dice fall into a new direction. Chaos guarantees the flexibility that a system needs for survival in times of stress. It has been demonstrated by scientists in computer-simulated models that when too much order is enforced in a system, the chances for weathering the onset of uncertainty from the outside diminish. Thus, within each system it is not so much order, but the skillful balance of chaos and order that assures survival.

In the light of Chaos Theory, the creativity expressed in the open-endedness of all the humanities, far from being a negligible, pre-scientific activity, is vital in the interplay of humanity with the rest of the world. Chaos Theory also puts new emphasis on the need for emotional attachment and imagination.

Most of all, Chaos Theory teaches us a new relationship to our own human nature, which itself contains a vital and necessary element of chaos at all levels. This chaotic element, a necessary evolutionary tool for survival we now realize, became - as a result of fundamentalism and dogmatism - almost extinct in the mind of the dominating world culture. The consequence of this near extinction, sought by all fundamentalist ideologies, would have been the suicide and extinction of the human species, because it would have prevented humanity from further adaptation and learning.

"Learning," suggests the late Heinz Pagels, is most intense and effective when it has an emotional, not just an intellectual component, when there are no explicit rules and the organism is thrown upon its basic resources for survival. These need not be negative emotions; Plato saw the erotic as an essential component of any real education. Our emotional life lies outside the framework of reason (although it can be examined by reason), and at its most intense we realize

that there are no rules or regularities to guide us into new territory. This is an opportunity for creativity, and we often emerge from an emotional crisis with newly learned rules and values. (327)

And so we return to *The Dead Poet Society*: "Chaos dreaming, Chaos screaming, want to be more, want to be more." Perhaps the dream of reason and the dream of chaos are not so far apart after all.

### WORKS CITED

- Bloom, Allen. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Farney, Dennis. "Natural Questions: Chaos Theory Seeps into Ecology Debate, Stirring Up a Tempest." *Wall Street Journal* 11 July 1994: A 1.
- "First Manifesto of Secular Humanism." *New Humanist* VI (1933): 1-5.
- Hazen, Robert and James Trefil. "General Science Courses are the Key to Scientific Literacy." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 10 April 1991: A 44.
- Herbert, Nick. *Elemental Mind, Human Consciousness and the New Physics*. Penguin, 1993.
- Lange, Diane. "In Pursuit of the Big Questions." *Insight* 25 Sept. 1989.
- Pagels, Heinz. *The Dreams of Reason*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.
- Prigogine, Ilya. *Order out of Chaos*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984.
- "Second Manifesto of Secular Humanism." *The Humanist* XXXIII (1973): 4-9.



## **"THEY ARE NOT SERBS:" THE LANGUAGE OF GENOCIDE**

Mark Grimes

In 1993 the journalist T.D. Allman, visiting a Serbian-run concentration camp, noted with all the beleaguered cynicism close observers of war accrue, "how grown men starve differently from the way children do" (Ali and Lifschultz xiv). As he wandered through the camp, he came upon a small group of Ukrainians known as Ruthenians, who had been living in Yugoslavia when the Serbian ethnic cleansing began in April, 1992. Surprised that such "ethnic innocence" should find itself victim of mass Serbian hatred, he asked a camp official who "answered benignly as though explaining the obvious to a child: 'They are not Serbs'" (Ali and Lifschultz xiv).

The purpose of this paper will be to examine the language used by the Serbian perpetrators of genocide in Bosnia. Such statements as "They are not Serbs" show a non-logic that nonetheless has a specific intent. The "logic" is of an all-too-simple species that does not incorporate anything more than the face value of words at first. It is the shallow iconography of advertising: "Drink Coke, not Pepsi." For what was indeed being "advertised" among those who were peaceful Serbian citizens living in the multinational, multicultural society of Bosnia in the early 1990's was the dictum: "Kill thy neighbor." Fabricated tales of Bosnian Muslim atrocities against innocent Serbs spread easily among the more gullible, the more fearful, as if through thin air.

Among members of the Serbian Democratic Party, who quickly became the "shock troops" of Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, this "face-value language" of strident, racist nationalism easily translated into an all-consuming push to rid Bosnia of all Muslims for the sake of a "Greater Serbia." The word had become flesh in a most violent birth. One-dimensional ideologues quickly became hardened civil war street fighters. In *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, David Rieff writes, "Getting individuals to fight is not that difficult. There is savagery in every civil war, and rarely any moral bottom" (Rieff 106). This was certainly true of the "shock troops" who became the instruments of "ethnic cleansing."

Their more peaceful Serbian brothers, however — especially those who lived in outlying ethnically mixed villages — called for a “tailoring of tactics.”

They had to transform those local Serbs who were either still undecided about joining the fight or frankly opposed to it. One common method used was for a group of Serb fighters to enter a village, go to a Serb house, and order the man living there to come with him to the house of his Muslim neighbor. As the other villagers watched, he was marched over and the Muslim brought out. Then the Serb would be handed a Kalashnikov assault rifle or a knife . . . and ordered to kill the Muslim. If he did so, he had taken the step across the line the Chetniks had been aiming for. But if he refused, the solution was simple. You shot him on the spot.” (Rieff 110)

We who are oceans away from the sundering and violent enigmas of who we are in relation to our “neighbors” perhaps do not hear the language that paves the way for mass murder. We do see the assault rifle and the knife handed to the innocent. And we do see the blood next door. But not having heard the self-honing language of “They are not Serbs”—as it ever sharpens its effects in an atmosphere of fear—we are prey to a dullness of our own. For some in the West do not see the transformative effects of shrill propaganda. They do not feel the informing effect of such “honied” visions as Karadzic’s “Greater Serbia” where, to some at least, peace might eventually seem to await.

In *Why Bosnia: Writings on the Balkan War*, Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz list many examples of those who have fallen prey to what amounts to a summarily dismissive chauvinism. William Hyland, former editor of *Foreign Affairs*, called the war in Bosnia “a fight among gangsters” (Ali and Lifschultz xviii). The current editor of *Foreign Affairs*, James Hogue, characterized the Bosnian conflict as a “civil war” where “there are no good guys,” while US Secretary of State Warren Christopher played the refrain of “a problem from hell” when referring to Bosnia’s tragedy (Ali and Lifschultz xviii).

Perhaps the most frightening example is A.M. Rosenthal, former editor of *The New York Times*, who could write: “There are no ‘Bosnians’—just Slavs who call themselves Serbs, Croatsians or Muslims” (Ali and Lifschultz xix). In tone, in logic, in its summarily dismissive lack of feeling we hear in this statement a distinct echo of the Serbian official who

What keeps our collective conscience alive, of course, is the fact that we live in a pluralist world with a diversity of voices, suffering but ready and courageous enough to speak the truth. Whether it be a Muslim resident of Prijedor saying, "Sir, I am going to be killed soon. Is there some way you could get my children to Stuttgart?" (Allman 39) Or whether it is Diego Arria, Venezuela's Ambassador to the United Nations, earnestly speaking truth to power when he addressed the UN Security Council: "Already two hundred thousand people have died . . . it is the international community's inconsistent attitude in the adoption of measures to stop aggression that has given free reign to the escalation of the conflict" (Ali and Lifschulz xxix). The complicated equation is balancing. The genocidal propaganda of the perpetrators is releasing a loud and long anguished cry from the victims, and the world is listening with a moral awareness heightened by the dialectic of embarrassed inaction. Likewise, the reactionary chauvinism of some in the West is beginning to "ring hollow" against the growing number of investigations of Bosnia's victimization which are filling the shelves of book stores. Nevertheless, land mines still explode.

As I write, the world community has sent multinational forces into Bosnia to enforce the Dayton Accord. We can only hope it is not too little too late. Daily we read of mass graves being discovered. We watch the delaying, politicized reaction of the West as Serbs, Croats and Bosnians still throb under the promise of treaty. Snipers fire through the language of intent. NATO obfuscates through one Lt. Col. Mark Raynor, who assures us: "Sniping can take place in any town in any place in the world, and does" (*The Baltimore Sun* 1 February 1996). It is a slow balancing. The syrupy taste of denial coats the tongue and does not wash away easily.

## Creating the Beast

In *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn define genocide by giving special attention to the "intent" of the perpetrator and the "definition" assigned the victim. "*Genocide* is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator" (23). For Chalk and Jonassohn, intent and its language, definition, are what create the "beast" the victim is to become in the eyes of the perpetrator. In support of this definition, they cite such far-reaching cases as the diatribes of the ancient Roman senator Cato against Carthage and the early railings of Hitler in *Mein Kampf* against the Jews. In the former, Cato "created" a new, militarily-threatening Carthage out of what was in actuality a rather benign, twice-defeated merchant-state. His words, "for the rest, it is my wish that Carthage be destroyed," chiseled in stone what A.N. Sherwin-Call calls Rome's "neurosis of fear" (Chalk and Jonassohn 77). In *Mein*

*Kampf*, Hitler eerily predicted his own success in redefining the Jew when he spoke of the “volcanic eruptions of human passions” that can only be “stirred” by the “firebrand of the word” (Shirer 129).

As Chalk and Jonassohn suggest in their definition, genocidal language is not only “volcanic” but also revisionist. It makes beasts of the innocent and victims of the guilty. Its workings perhaps find no clearer illustration than with the Serbian perpetrators of the Bosnian genocide.

In *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia’s War*, Ed Vulliamy notes that “our century tells us that the fabrication of giant conspiracies against a besieged race is a necessary prerequisite to unleashing the kind of violence that was to follow” (48). One of the prerequisites for the Serbs was “Radovan Karadzic’s biggest lie of all: the imminent *jihad* in Bosnia” (48). Muslims were to be persecuted because they lived on land that was to be “Greater Serbia.” The effect was the creation of a “mystical aura of Serbian nationalism” founded on a prior creation of a “persecution complex” that left hundreds of thousands of Muslims dead and that tangentially flowered in such absurd, “glossy” booklets as “Genocide against the Serbian People” (42).

Karadzic’s lies abounded before, during and after the violence began. His in-prison, genocidal “revelation” about “historic ethnic struggle”—which hauntingly echoes Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* transformation—shows him fabricating “reports of crucified Serbian babies supposedly cast into the River Drina with their eyes gouged out” (Vulliamy 48). Later, when the beleaguered Bosnian government made one of its numerous aborted attempts to defend itself against Serb aggression, Karadzic responded over and over again that the Serb army was “just trying to defend themselves” through its series of mobilizations (Rieff 84).

Such lies reach their apogee of intent when they blithely waltz on to the international stage and baffle world response. The Radovan Karadzic/Slobodan Milosevic lie, single in its intent, thoroughly outmaneuvered, for instance, the timid, politicized truth bartering of the Vance/Owen attempts to broker a UN peace in Bosnia. In his article, “A House Built on Sand,” Marko Prelec writes:

Milosevic chose his tactics astutely . . . master of manipulating the peace process to serve his own ends, he cultivated the Serbs’ image of dangerous unpredictability, violating countless agreements and committing spectacular outrages. The result of this was that the United Nations mediators ceased being surprised or angered by the Serbs’ failures to live up

to their promises and came to see keeping them at the peace table as a valued goal in itself. (Ali and Lifschulz 192)

But long before the international arena became aware of this tragic drama the script was being written and revised. The authorship, Ed Vulliamy suggests, grew from a combination of old historical wounds and personal pathology. Vulliamy describes Slobodan Milosevic, one of the progenitors of the new, genocidal national language of Serbia, as a "depressed, paranoid, master schemer" with the manic hobbies of "gardening and whiskey," who springs from a suicidal family: his "favorite uncle" and his father both shooting themselves, his mother hanging herself (Vulliamy 49).

Radovan Karadzic authored his "stories" of "crucified Serbian babies . . . with their eyes gouged out" from the curiously un-dried blood of a Serbian defeat 600 years earlier at the hands of the Turks. David Rieff shows the far-reaching effects of such un-dried blood trickling down to whet the hatred of the Serbian soldier. He describes a "history lesson" he received on the battlefield outside Prijedor, where the Serbian "footclan," in all their absurd and elliptically deductive logic, "talked about their defeat at the hands of the Turks at Kossovo in the late fourteenth century." When he left, he says, "I was sent on my way with a handshake, a jerrican of homemade slivovitz . . . and the word '1389'—the date of the Serb defeat at Kossovo" (Rieff 69). Where, no doubt, there were "crucified Serbian babies . . . with their eyes gouged out."

Ratko Mladic, commander of the Bosnian Serb army, also has an apparently deeply begotten irrationality, evidenced by such statements as: "The Muslims? If you make way for one of them, he will come along with five wives and before you know what is happening, you have a village" (Vulliamy 47). If the world did indeed mirror Mladic's fears, there would now still be 300,000 Muslim villages in Bosnia.

It is utter distortions like these that continue to breathe life into the fanged chimera that is "Greater Serbia." The delusion, regrettably, is also fostered by academics like Dobrica Cosic, who continuously fuels this "fire dream" through his many tracts about the "diaspora of some two million Serbs scattered as the mercy of their enemies" (Vulliamy 52).

The effects of such propaganda, though, reach their pathetic and horrifying extreme in the inarticulate street fighter.

Attila Balzas, a journalist and Serbian citizen of conscience, found himself talking to a Serbian soldier in a bar on Budapest's Great Boulevard. In the article that resulted from his evening with this "soldier," "The Harsh Song of the Circular Saw," Balzas describes meeting this Serb after he had just returned from an "ethnic cleansing spree." When asked what villages he had "cleansed," he replied, "It doesn't matter. What difference does it make?" They had been ordered to take their Muslim prisoners to a saw mill and detain them, the soldier told Balzas, when "one of the lads noticed this huge circular saw and had the bright idea of making firewood out of the prisoners." When asked why no one tried to stop it, he replied, "The boys were out of control. One of them had been spreading the tale about his kid being eaten by Muslims" (Ali and Lifschulz 101). The "kid being eaten" is the stepchild of Karadzic's "tale"—the "baby with its eyes gouged out."

One cannot, of course, trace a direct line of descent through history by the threads of language, but there is, nonetheless, a surprisingly close similarity here between the aggressive actions which have characterized the last fifty years in the Balkan region, and the propagandistic language which incited those actions. (Religious claims and counterclaims between Croatian Catholics and the Serbian Orthodox church have long fueled unrest in the Balkans. To this day, to mention the name of the "excessively pious" Croatian Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac—who could write "If there were more freedom . . . Serbia would be Catholic in twenty years."— is to immediately galvanize ethnic/religious opinion in Serbia and Croatia.) (Kaplan 5) The infusion and effects of political propaganda—which is the focus of this paper—appeared most noticeably with the Nazis during World War II and have since propelled events with all the tight cause/effect of the children's tale "The House That Jack Built." Here are the Croatian/Nazi Ustasha transgressors who murdered anywhere from 60,000 to 700,000 Serbs, depending upon whether you ask a Serb or a Croat, and here is the psycho-Serbian (and indistinguishable) anger of Slobodan Milosevic/Radovan Karadzic/Ratko Mladic carving a "Greater Serbia" from the homes of Muslims; here is the felt/unthought action of the Serbian footclan; and here—to use the title of Attila Balzas' article—is "The Harsh Song of the Circular Saw," where humans become firewood.

## Voices of Sorrow

When it happened, it was a beautiful summer's day. I stepped out on the balcony to breathe the warm air, then went back into the bathroom to shave. My wife was preparing lunch—mange-tout peas, the first of the year. I could hardly wait. As I came out of the bathroom, my wife said, 'It's the police.' I was standing by the door, my son sitting on the couch. Time had stopped. (Ali and Lifschulz 104)

For Kurt Jonassohn, in a paper delivered before the International Studies Association, one of the unique aspects of the Holocaust was that the Jewish survivors did not succumb to the "collective denial" so common to those who have endured forms of genocide in the past, where "It seemed as if the victims accepted their fate; they seemed to share the view that theirs was the lot of the weak and of the losers and was somehow ordained." On the contrary, Jonassohn says, "The Jewish survivors not only voiced their sorrow, but also gave expression to their outrage at such monstrous violations of common decency, human rights, and civilized values" (Chalk and Jonassohn 327).

The Bosnian Muslim victims of genocide give an added poignancy to this element of "voicing sorrow"—namely, its dire immediacy. The voices from Bosnia are indeed quite present and participatory. As such they pose a unique dilemma: they are dying as they speak. Theirs are the simple and raw and numerically diminishing voices of a people merely wanting to live, merely wanting to sit down to a lunch of mange-tout peas, the first of the spring.

And while the spring of 1996 may have been the brightest for the Bosnian victims in the past five years, with the signing of the accords in Paris and Dayton, the echoes of their own recent cries still inform and scar the future. These are the echoes that should sound most resoundingly for the likes of William Hyland, James Hogue and Warren Christopher, who would betray the conscience of the West.

A refugee from Zvornik: "I know they killed children in Tabaci. Among the dead was Sabit, a local driver, his wife, and two sons. They ordered my neighbor, Rama, to shoot several citizens. When he refused, they killed him." (Kajan 89)

A refugee from Foca: "When Radio Foca fell in Serbian hands, Velibor Ostojic declared over the radio that the township of Foca was Serbian. He said that Muslims would no longer be permitted to live in Foca. And he added that every Serbian woman would have to bear seven children." (Kajan 90)

A prisoner, escaped from the "Betonirka Garages": "I was convinced they were going to kill us all in the end . . . I dreamt I was by the River Sava with my wife and children. The kids were jumping into the water, and I jumped with them. It was so beautifully cool . . . . At one point I felt a searing pain in my chest. The water was long gone. A bottle was passed around. People urinated in it, then drank the contents." (Bosenic 107).

A survivor: "Salim Abdic and Murat and Muradif Hreljic tried to escape the village, but the Chetniks caught them and brought them back and killed them ruthlessly. After that the Chetniks went into Salim's house, where his older brother Musto Abdic, his father Saban, his mother Mevla, his daughter, his sister-in-law Zulfija, his son Samir, age seven, and his one-year-old baby were. The Chetniks killed them all at the same time. When we got to them, they were lying in blood, heaped one on top of the other." (Kajan 94).

Zlatko Disdarevic: "At dusk, on what had been a beautiful day, I saw a car heading toward the hospital; hanging out of the back door were the legs of a man who had been hit by a sniper bullet. The car passed by a little girl who was tossing a stick to her dog. A few minutes later, only 300 meters away, a shell took a whole floor off a gorgeous old house. The girl and the dog continued playing as if nothing had happened." (Disdarevic 67).

### **Roads**

You have decided to wipe me out whatever the price  
 Yet nowhere will you find  
 The real  
 Road to me  
 . . . .  
 You cannot know of the boundless



Space of time  
In which I am  
Immanent  
From a distant yesterday  
To a far-off tomorrow  
Thinking  
Of you.

– Mak Dizdar

### WORKS CITED

- Ali, Rabia and Lawrence Lifschulz, eds. *Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War*. Stony Creek: The Pamphleteer's Press, 1993.
- Bosnevic, Omar. "The Road to Manjaca." *Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War*. Stony Creek: The Pamphleteer's Press, 1993
- Chalk, Frank and Kurt Jonassohn, eds. *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1990.
- Dizdarevic, Zlatko. *Sarajevo: A War Journal*. Trans. Anselm Hollo. New York: Henry Holt, 1994
- Kajan, Ibrahim. "Is This Not Genocide?" *Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War*. Ed. Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschulz. Stony Creek: The Pamphleteer's Press, 1993.
- Kaplan, Robert D. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- Rieff, David. *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995
- Shirer, William. *The Nightmare Years: 1939-1940*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1984.
- Vulliarny, Ed. *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War*. London: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

The *Community College Humanities Review* is always interested in the writing of scholars working in community colleges and of any whose research might be of value to community college humanists. All submissions should be made to the editor through the CCHA national office at the Community College of Philadelphia. Please follow these guidelines :

1. Articles should be typed and double-spaced. The body of the manuscript should contain only the title of the work. Number the pages. **On a separate page**, provide the author's name, rank or title, academic department, affiliation, full mailing address, telephone number, and FAX number (if available).
2. All submissions should follow the style of the Modern Language Association for citations and bibliography. **Please note that titles and foreign words and phrases are indicated by italics (not underlining).**
3. Writers should submit one "hard" copy of the article, for editorial board review. Upon acceptance, they must be prepared to provide a copy on computer disk, 3 1/2" size. Include with the disk the name of the word processing software and operating system. (The editor uses Macintosh, as does our publisher. We are flexible, however!) In mailing, remember to tell the Post Office that the package includes a disk.
4. All articles submitted for publication are reviewed by the Editorial Board. Authors may be requested to edit their work, and the editor of the *Review* reserves the right to edit for length, conformity to style, and general intelligibility.
5. Authors must notify the *Review* if a submission has been printed elsewhere or is accepted for publication elsewhere.

# *Notes*

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES ASSOCIATION

*c/o Community College of Philadelphia  
1700 Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130*

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT No. 2190  
PHILADELPHIA, PA



**U.S. Department of Education**  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
National Library of Education (NLE)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



## **NOTICE**

### **Reproduction Basis**



This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.



This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").