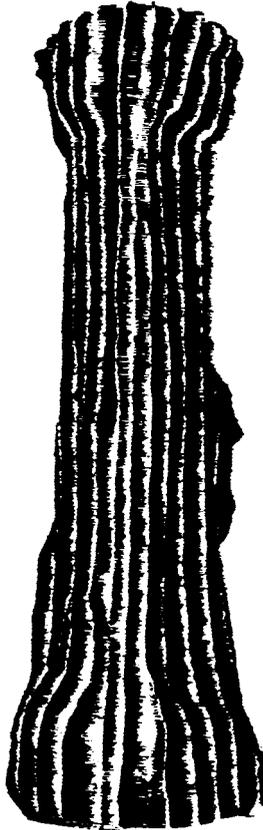


Volume

1

December

1989



Popular Culture Review

From the Editor



Editing *Popular Culture Review* for the last 27 years has been a labor of love. I would like to acknowledge the support of UNLV's College of Liberal Arts and Department of English as well as PCA/ACA and, most recently Policy Studies Organization.

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THE POPULAR CULTURE REVIEW

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The Popular Culture Review will be published twice yearly at The University of Nevada, Las Vegas under the auspices of the Far West Popular/American Culture Associations. One issue will appear in June and one issue in December. Members of the FWPCA/FWACA will receive each issue as part of their membership. Single copies may be purchased for \$7.50 by individuals and \$10.00 by institutions and libraries. Requests for back issues should be submitted to the editor.

Submissions to *The Popular Culture Review* should be sent to the editor, Department of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV 89154. The journal invites articles on all aspects of both popular and American culture. Manuscripts should be sent in duplicate, double-spaced, in current MLA style (except end notes will be preferred to a bibliography). Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with submissions. Articles over sixteen pages in length should be preceded by a query letter to the editor. Correspondence about membership in FWPCA/FWACA, which includes a subscription to *The Popular Culture Review* should be sent to Felicia F. Campbell, Department of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV 89154.



The Popular Culture Review gratefully acknowledges the contributions made to this journal by John C. Unrue, Senior Vice-President and Provost of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and Ray B. Browne and Pat Browne of the Popular Culture and American Culture Associations. Without their generous help, this publication would never have become a reality.

Printed for the FWPCA/FWACA and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas by R & S Printing, 3650 Decatur Blvd. #20, Las Vegas, NV 89103. © pending.

THE HUMOROUS DON JUAN IN POPULAR LITERATURE

At first thought, the idea of humor, at least in the traditional Don Juan legend, seems strange. What could be humorous about a vile seducer who misuses women, mocks his king, his father, the norms of their society, and tempts even God himself? When the probable author of the first Don Juan play — Tirso de Molina (*El burlador de Sevilla*, “The Playboy of Seville”), circa 1620 — constructed the legend as we know it today, seducing women may have been considered a more venial sin than feminists rightly would call it today, but the act was not arguably laudable, and mocking king, father, society, and God was definitely a serious, risky business. As for pulling statues’ beards or otherwise demeaning the dead, all that could be expected to provoke dire consequences. Even moral Christian I-told-you-so’s should scarcely be laughing, whatever their opinion of the miscreant’s character. Yet, there are a good number of laughable incidents in this play, despite its being penned by a Spanish priest of a religion that for centuries had taken and still took itself seriously enough to practice the Inquisition against scoffers of any stripe. Tirso did consign Don Juan to hell, a fate he was destined not really to escape until the advent of the more self-indulgent Romantics of the early nineteenth century.

Tirso’s version (not to speak of its many later avatars), in a word, displays more humor than would seem appropriate. However, in the period just before and after 1620, humor amid serious surroundings is part of a far more general phenomenon than something to be found merely in Tirso or even in Spanish drama as a whole. Cervantes gives us *Don Quijote*; Shakespeare has his Falstaff, his Toby Belch, his many so-called sops to the pit, the

harlots of *Measure for Measure*, not to mention comic moments in plots dealing with more tragic figures like Shylock; Marlowe lets his Dr. Faustus (1592?) waste devil-given powers in buffoonish pranks.

Beyond the narrow confines of stage or book, consider an institution as sacrosanct as the Church. Who has not questioned the appropriateness of grotesque gargoyles decorating the outer walls of the great cathedrals? Consider, even inside those sacred walls, fanciful, humorously conceived animals carved into the aisle sides of late medieval pews. Even more striking, consider one of the decorations in the cloister of the Church of San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo. You will find, prominently displayed, in clear detail, the figure of a monkey reading a book, while sitting on a chamber pot. Finally, consider the skeletons of the Dance of Death — the *Danse Macabre* figures that still haunt us on Halloween. Then as now they are depicted with a big grin on their leering skull-faces. All these remained part of Church decoration, Church teaching, however serious their intent obviously was. The mass public was conditioned to expect humor, even in the most solemn circumstances, and, we may assume, enjoyed it.

Let us not forget that the newer European Renaissance stage developed from classic Greek and Roman drama, which already boasted of its Aristophanes as well as its Sophocles and Euripedes, its Plautus as well as its Seneca. The Church mystery and miracle plays that it superseded already had a tradition of comic interludes. Neither let us forget that, by and large, in its very essence, the stage is a more democratic vehicle than, for instance, the epic, or lyric poetry, or, in somewhat later years, even the novel. Playwrights perforce accommodated the tastes of commoner and cavalier alike. It has been said that no play nor opera is truly un-popular. Little-read novels do get published, but a play must please a fairly wide audience simply to survive. It has always cost too much to be exclusivist — something even a Shakespeare realized.

First, a few details of humor in the Tirso play and in some of its many descendants, in various countries and media. Then, in conclusion, perhaps I may be able to explain, if not justify, the use of that humor. Though the activities of Tirso's Don Juan are couched in sprightly verse and the story preserves a rather frivolous, amoral tone, it is his servant Catalinón, sprung from those clever, backtalking classic menials of Plautus et al, who carries the true comic burden.¹ His name is Andalusian slang for "big turd" (Castro 205), a footnote, so to speak, which may help establish his character. He jokes about swallowing salt when shipwrecked (Castro 187-88; ll. 517 ff.), indulges in mild scatology (189, ll. 561-62 and 234, ll. 474-81), trades wisecracks with the statue, though terrified (271-75, ll. 541-626; 286-89, ll. 887-972), and fouls his britches (272, ll. 554-57). Remember the significance of his name.

Nothing much changes as the legend spreads through Europe. The Italian so-called pseudo-Cicognini *Convitato di pietra*, probably before 1650, replaces Catalinón with Passarino ("little sparrow," equally a symbol for fright), who similarly jokes about food and breaks wind. The Don Juan stage is soon to take up commedia dell'arte characters, with servants now named Hans Wurst ("Johnny Sausage"), Arlequin, Punch. Don Juan's lackey becomes Everyman's, and a figure so beloved that he even steals the lead role from his master. Jests, acrobatics, pantomimes, all manner of farce fuel these popular plays. In the midst of such fare comes Molière's *Dom Juan* (1665), a true masterpiece, but with only a slightly more serious servant in Sganarelle, still a fount of laughter, somewhat subtler, as one would expect of the French, but quite well suited to a tale spun by a comic playwright. Sganarelle's role is substantial. His polished verbal wit (I.2, II.4, IV.5, V.2, for instance) is perhaps best exemplified in the well-known M. Dimanche scene (IV.3), but even his serious speeches usually soon deconstruct into slapstick or farce (III.1, V.2). The pants-fouling gimmick appears (III.5), not unexpectedly. The servitor is even allowed to end the play, giving

the famous (or infamous) “mes gages, mes gages” speech, uttered in despair over his lost wages, now that his master has been sent to hell (V.6). If some of the dialogue does show high polish, chalk up the fact to Molière’s audience, often including the nobility of Louis XIV’s court. And yet, this play is not even written in the standard twelve-syllabled Alexandrine verse, but rather in prose, suitable for a more general audience.

Along with Molière’s, the three most important and widely imitated stage versions of all are Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (1787) and Zorrilla’s *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844). The former might be thought too lofty for popular appeal. Not so. It ranks as one of the most performed of all operas. Be it noted, Mozart called it an “opera buffa,” not an “opera seria.” To be sure, a “comic opera” (though a “buffo” is a buffoon, and, as an adjective, the word means something funny, comical, odd; and a “buffone” is a court jester, etc.) is partly a technical term, a work in two acts, not three. Nevertheless, the form is traditionally given less serious treatment, certainly so in the case of the Mozart opera. A case in point, the famous catalogue aria (I.2) sung by Leporello (“little rabbit”), in which he lists all of Juan’s conquests: in Italy 640, Germany 231, a hundred in France, 91 in Turkey, but in Spain already 1003 (“ma in Ispagna son già mille e tre, mille e tre, mille e tre”). Many are the even more burlesqued sequels to this spectacular total, not least among them Zorrilla’s.

As for Zorrilla (1817-1893), not only have there appeared endless parodies, in his case richly deserved, for his version, while less given to humorous lines than many others, unconsciously is so incredibly exaggerated in spots as to preclude keeping a straight face, but more to the point, he himself turned out a *zarzuela* version of his own play (music by Nicolás Manent) in 1877. (A *zarzuela* is a type of light opera or musical comedy.) The popular appeal of the original 1844 drama, exaggerations or not, caused it to become, all over the Spanish-speaking world, an international institution, per-

formed annually on or around All Souls' Day, November 2, often in churches. The mass Spanish and Spanish American public has come to regard it as a sort of modern version of some medieval miracle or mystery play.

I could allege other plays, popular in the narrower sense, such as Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1901-03), widely appreciated and filled with humor, even argue that most of them, at least peripherally, are popular in both senses. But, not to put too fine a point on my contention, I will move into more purely popular areas.

All during the eighteenth century, in Italy, Germany, Austria, France, Holland, even the United States (at least late in the seven-teen hundreds), we find Don Juan farces, pantomimes, and vaudeville performances that did very well, as can be proven from the few extant scripts and more frequent references. Even more in the popular vein was the puppet show, truly a part of folk theater. This genre adopted the commedia dell'arte characters; not unexpectedly, once again Hans Wurst appears in the role of Don Juan's servant. Juan himself often plays second fiddle to the actions of that popular figure. The dialogues feature funny dialects, gay, often coarse. These characters, remember, are puppets, and subtlety is not their long suit. In one scenario, Hans observes that his master has no business worrying over his inability to seduce a certain stubborn woman. Plenty of them around, he adds: they are cheaper than beef (Mandel 263). When some tourists enter an inn, the landlady says, "Chase out the pigs; we're having guests" (271). Such puppet shows were ubiquitous, cropping up here and there, like the farces and vaudevilles, all over Europe, but especially in Germany and the Austrian Tyrolean highlands, among the more uneducated areas.

As for the pantomimes, one entitled *Don Juan, or The Libertine Destroyed*, extant only in summary form, goes back at least as far as a London Drury Lane Theatre staging of 1782, more probably back to 1775; it was said to have been produced by David Garrick

himself, possibly even written by him. It was called a pantomimical ballet (“tragic pantomical [sic] entertainment”), with music from Gluck’s widely imitated score (1761?). It should be of especial interest to us here in the United States because, transported overseas, it played Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Alexandria, and Charleston, South Carolina, from its December 20, 1792 Philadelphia premiere, well on into the 1800s. New York’s April 3, 1865 performance is the last I can document. It served as America’s introduction to Don Juan. All these pantomimes and vaudevilles and the like were characterized by the usual unfixed stage action and dialogue. Acrobatics and humorous bits were de rigueur, with much burlesqued ad-libbing.

Late in the eighteenth century England devised something called the burletta (a comic opera, usually entirely sung). Two well-known practitioners were Thomas J. Dibdin (1776-1847) and William T. Moncrieff (1794-1859). The former presented the London stage in 1817 with an opus entitled *Don Giovanni; or, A Spectre on Horseback! a Comic, Heroic, Operatic, Tragic, Pantomimic, Burletta-Spectacular Extravaganza* (which Mandel [399] claims is the best line in the whole play). Moncrieff’s entertainment was a cut better. His *Giovanni in London, or, The Libertine Reclaimed! An Operatic Extravaganza in Two Acts* (also 1817) was good enough to warrant reprinting for some twenty-five years. The London production enjoyed twenty-nine performances in 1820 alone (Mandel 399). It mixed popular farce with equally popular, singable tunes. Leporello actually marries his master’s Donna Anna. Giovanni is pardoned - well, more accurately, banished from hell by the jealous Pluto for kissing the latter’s wife Proserpine. It is worth noting that in those days, if not now, classical myth could be considered popular fare. There were, it might be added, other similar Don Juan burlettas during the same century. Cf. John Churchill Brennan (?)’s *Don Giovanni, Jr.; or, The Shaky Page, More Funky than Flunky* (1875).

Dibdin and Moncrieff both borrowed heavily from Mozart's opera, while burlesquing it. Zorrilla, as I have already noted, was often parodied as well. For instance, I offer Carlos Arniches y Barrera and Enrique García Álvarez's *El trust de los Tenorios*, a "humorada cómico-lírica en un acto . . . y en prosa," with music by José Serrano (1910).

An ocean away, what are we to make of *The Stoned Guest*, a twelve-inch stereo record, with a dust jacket noting the "entire fiasco under the supervision of Professor Peter Schickele," "historic recording of the half-act opera by P. D. Q. Bach (1807-1742?)," replete with such characters as Donna Ribalda (mezzanine soprano), Carmen Ghia (off-coloratura), Don Octave (bargain counter tenor), Dog (a large friendly Saint Bernard houndentenor), and Il Commendatoreador, the Stoned Guest (basso blotto), a role taken by Schickele himself? Somewhere along the line, Don Giovanni has been dropped from the lineup (the would-be abductor and rapist turns out to be the heroine's brother Octave, drunk and befuddled, who, butter-fingered, drops her off the balcony). All this in no way leaves Mozart off the hook, the "entire fiasco" being one in a long succession of *Don Giovanni* satires, much like Dibdin's and Moncrieff's. Admirers of Schickele's peculiar but undeniable talents may still find a pressing of the record from the Vanguard Recording Society (1970).

I could, space permitting, mention a passel of motion pictures, of the kind more properly called *movies*, not *cinema*, popular fare dealing with Don Juan's escapades. A majority of them preserve the comic note. One of the very earliest, a 1909 one-reeler from Germany titled *Don Juan heiratet*, produced and directed by the great pioneer Otto Messter, has the hero accosted on his wedding day by three of his former lovers, who kidnap him. He manages to escape by pretending to hang himself. Another film, a 1934 production starring Douglas Fairbanks, is wryly amusing. The conceit would have it that once Juan has been falsely considered

dead, on his reappearance, women can no longer see any fascination in his charms. He is, so to speak, stoned as an imposter. These two examples among many. I might add that the frequent TV uses of the legend rarely rise above farce.

Then there are jokes (“Someone shot the great lover — Yes, they made a hole in Juan”; or, “He’s worn out: a wahn Don”), limericks, other types of humorous poetry, cartoons, and the like.

It will surely prove more difficult to explain why so apparently tragic a figure as Don Juan could have from the very start been couched in comic terms and spawned such myriad comic versions since. A few observations: Life was hard back in the late medieval and Renaissance years, for commoners and even for the middle classes. Tales of lighthearted amorous dalliance would doubtless have proven enjoyable, worth a chuckle or two. Futhermore, let us admit it, the legend was, and pretty much still is, told from the male point of view (no woman essayed it until George Sand, 1833, though more have in recent years). There is something of men’s locker-room braggadocio in the *Ur* version, by even so churchly a writer as the priest Tirso himself — a genial expansion of the dirty joke. Older readers may recall the pornographic movies of their youth (so unlike those of today), those nineteen-twenty and -thirty productions that tickled the prurient fancies of former generations. Viewers were allowed vicariously to enjoy fifty-nine minutes of steamy sex before retribution befell the sinners in the last sixty seconds. Tirso’s drama and so many of its successors could well have been playing a similar game. Don Juan sins, the plot seems to approve (the warnings are really light), the ominous undertone of reproach is kept rather muted. Juan, at least, like the moviegoers of my youth, scarcely believed in the fact of eventual payment. But Tirso’s society and his Church, like our Hays office, demanded it. That final minute was a real eye-opener. My own inclination is to accept this “masculine-slant” explanation: the ribald joy of male seduction.

Finally, however, there is another, existential explanation, a sort of black humor latent in the concept of perdition. Are we all doomed, and so, laugh lest we cry? Is there even a basic absurdity in demanding morality from fallible man (here, feminists may not cavil at the exclusive use of the masculine noun), when he lacks the strength to carry out his mandate? The great cosmic jest?

For whatever reason, common man enjoys stories that resemble the dirty joke. No character in all literature better exemplifies what makes such jokes run.

West Virginia University

Armand E. Singer

Endnotes

1. There exist several thousand versions of the Don Juan theme, many of them to some degree humorous. The only comprehensive listing is to be found, I must confess, in my own *Don Juan Theme, Versions and Criticism: A Bibliography* (Morgantown, WV: WV UP, 1965) and its five supplements in the *West Va. Univ. Philological Papers* 15 (1966): 76-88; 17 (1970): 102-78; 20 (1973): 66-106; 22 (1975): 70-140; and 26 Suppl. (1980): 1-112. A new, synoptic listing of all the preceding versions plus many more is expected in 1990, from the WV UP.

Among many studies of the Don Juan theme, one of the most recent in English and the best is Leo Weinstein's *The Metamorphoses of Don Juan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1959). Oscar Mandel's *The Theatre of Don Juan* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1964) offers not only a valuable anthology of versions, the foreign ones in translation, but excellent observations as well. Both volumes are indispensable.

2. For Tirso's play I have cited lines and page references to the edition by Américo Castro, *Clásicos Castellanos* ed. (Madrid-Barcelona: Espasa-Calpe, 1932), vol. 2 of his works. It is readily available, but my own preference would suggest Gerald Wade's ed., *El burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de piedra* (New York: Scribner, 1969), were it not for the fact that it conflates two different versions of the text. Mandel's anthology offers a good translation into English, as well as versions by Molière, Mozart, and Zorrilla, and the Moncrieff burletta.

3. See my 1965 bibliography, No. 317, pp. 37-38, and my "Don Juan in America," *Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly* 7 (1960): 226.

4. Available from the Museum of Modern Art in New York under the title "Early German Films." My own article, "Don Juan Goes to the Movies," is scheduled to appear in the fall 1990.

5. See my article, *WVUPP*, fall 1990. Fairbanks's vehicle was called *The Private Life of Don Juan*, a film version of Henri Bataille's drama *L'Homme à la rose* (1920).

6. These too will be treated in my forthcoming *WVUPP* article.

7. See my "People's Don Juan," *Selected Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference* (Greenville, SC: Furman U, [1987]): 327-30.

8. See my "Don Juan's Women Have Their Day in Court," *WVUPP* 32 (1986 [1987]): 29-35.

9. Gershon Legman authored two huge volumes psychoanalyzing the nature of the dirty joke: *Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor*, first series (New York: Grove P, 1968) and second series (New York: Bell, 1975).



***True Stories* as True Stories: The Use of the Narrator in David Byrne's Films**

A poet friend of mine was visiting and, as I often do, I put David Byrne's *True Stories* on the VCR in order to entertain him. It didn't work. Instead of laughing and enjoying himself, my friend told me that he didn't find much humor in the ridiculing of others.

"Come on," I said, "you can't be serious. Byrne is merely pointing out how ridiculous we all are. He's not turning this into a 'them-vs.-us' put-down. He's recognizing the foibles of human beings, of Americans, and he's just sort of gently poking fun at us for possessing them."

My friend wasn't convinced. If it weren't for the fact that this film was made by a hip East Coast rock star about "a bunch of people in Virgil, Texas," i.e., people of small town America, he might feel okay about it, he said. But otherwise he simply saw this as an exploitative film, a film which points out the ridiculousness of people in such small towns and which removes the hip, big-city audience from these idiosyncracies. I thought about it. He had some good points. Suddenly I was no longer convinced, either.

Hence, this study. What is David Byrne doing in this film? What is his perspective? Does he truly care about the people in this mythical small town, or is he using them for cheap laughs? I consider the stories of Raymond Carver, stories about the everyday lives of Americans who are not unlike those in the film, which are written with sympathy rather than cynicism or derision, which avoid the irony often implicit in the subject matter. Does Byrne share that appreciation for his characters? And I consider the bits by David Letterman, bits which poke fun at "Stupid People Tricks," at people who collect hair or people who call hogs. What

clues does Byrne give us as to his intent?

True Stories, the film, was released simultaneously with a closely related book of the same title containing the original screenplay as well as photographs, sketches, articles, and comments by Byrne. Both were made up of stories Byrne collected from newspapers, tabloids, and magazines, particularly, *The Weekly World News*. Starting with these pieces and the characters which they introduced and with an interest in the barren Texas location, Byrne hired Beth Henley (*Crimes of the Heart*) and Stephen Tobolowsky to put together a story line.

What emerged is more of a documentary than a narrative film, albeit a mock documentary, a loosely connected study of people not unlike Altman's *Nashville*. Byrne creates a narrator who leads us (as viewers) on a tour of a fictitious small town during one week, a week when the town is acknowledging its state's Sesquicentennial with a "Celebration of Specialness." The narrator, in a role reminiscent of the stage manager in Thornton Wilder's, *Our Town* sometimes talks directly to the camera and other times interacts with a few of the characters in the film. The two main characters with whom he interacts are the protagonist, Louis Fyne, who's unabashedly looking for a wife and is advertising on TV as well as in his front yard (with a "Wife Wanted" sign), and Earl Culver, the local entrepreneur who brought industry (and jobs and money and hope) to Virgil. The narrator takes us to a local manufacturing plant, a shopping mall, a parade, and a local talent show in this "tour." He also spends a great deal of time driving around in his red convertible just talking to the camera and pointing out such phenomena as metal buildings, freeways ("the cathedrals of our time"), and tract houses ("Who's to say they aren't art?").

The film uses a third perspective as well, one of omniscience. We initially get the feeling that we're seeing the town only through the eyes of the narrator, but soon we discover that's not right as we

see several scenes to which the narrator couldn't possibly be privy. We see disconnected moments in the life of the town: a night watchman at the celebration site singing an aria, a late-night worker practicing his dance steps, a couple of teenagers being tested for DWI, and a young man and woman walking and necking in a field.

Other scenes without the narrator are more fully developed and more closely connected to whatever story line might exist: We see Louis in several attempts at courting different women he's interested in, we see a rich woman and her secretary as she watches television and makes various comments, we see an evangelist haranguing on the conspiracies which control Americans, and we watch Louis interact with a spiritualist who is attempting to help Louis find a wife. The narrator isn't present during these scenes, but we viewers are.

A fourth view comes through the songs. We learn a lot about community socialite Kay Culver, the wife of entrepreneur Earl Culver, for example, in the song she sings as mistress of ceremonies of the mall fashion show. What starts out as a fairly routine narration of the activities of the show turns into a passionate paean to Kay Culver's hopes and dreams. Through a few of the songs, we discover feelings and attitudes which the character may not be otherwise revealing.

When we do see the narrator, we have other problems. Is he for real? Can we trust him? How closely does he reflect the views of David Byrne, the writer-director as well as the actor portraying the narrator?

Here's part of the problem: David Byrne is the major lyricist of the iconoclastic rock group The Talking Heads. It's hard to separate the persona of the rock star from the other persona of the narrator. With the Talking Heads, Byrne's known for his unconventionality. He and his group don't look or act like other rock groups; they are "lovable geeks" in their short hair, their button-

down shirts and their unusual stage presence. Such unconventionality puts their audience off guard, not knowing what to expect. More importantly, David Byrne is known for lyrics about the tensions in America, about a “Psycho Killer,” for example, or a middle-class man lost in his life:

You may find yourself
Living in a shotgun shack.
You may find yourself
In another part of the world.
You may find yourself
Behind the wheel of a large automobile.
You may find yourself
In a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife.
And you may ask yourself:
Well, how did I get here?

For those of us who know this David Byrne, how are we to react when we see the narrator, seemingly so straight and sincere, making statements and showing interest in these people? How else to react but to look at the narrator as a puppet with David Byrne pulling the strings? Are we really supposed to sympathize with the characters in this film? Are we to see them as honest, simple folks who have their own ways of doing things and seeing things? That seems to be the way the narrator sees them, at least some of the time. For example, he seems quite interested in the computer expert who is trying to send signals to extra-terrestrials. And he seems fascinated in the rather absurd dinner at which Earl Culver—who hasn’t spoken directly to his wife in several years—explains the industrial system to the narrator and to Culver’s children. And he certainly seems interested in Louis Fyne. In fact, Byrne makes Louis the prototypical middle American in his climactic song, “People Like Us”:

People like us

Who answer the telephone.
People like us
Growing big as a house:
We don't want freedom.
We don't want justice.
We just want someone to love.

So far, then, we have a conflict between our anticipated attitude of David Byrne based on what we know of his work in rock music and the expressed attitude of the narrator (whom we recognize as David Byrne). This conflict is further emphasized in those scenes mentioned earlier in which the narrator is talking directly to the viewer, usually while driving around the Texas countryside in his red convertible. These scenes can hardly be explained as other than satire. The deadpan delivery of the narrator in which he appears so sincere results in a viewer's distrust of the narrator—or at least in the viewer's confusion. Consequently, this leads to a questioning of all the rest of the material the narrator expresses. How can we assume that he's being straight with us in one scene and then recognize his tongue in his cheek in the next? As Pauline Kael notes, Byrne's "unacknowledged satire" is as if Byrne "refused to see any implication in what he shows us," as if he's "so afraid of giving offense that he wouldn't let himself consider any seaminess or think any harsh thoughts about his characters" (113).

The varied responses of the reviewers reflect this ambiguity. Whereas some reviewers see the narrator as an "Everyman guide" or a (not mute) brother from another planet" (Wyman 62), others claim that "his neutrality masks scorn" (Coulson 26), that *True Stories* is similar to *Blue Velvet* (released the same year) in that it "attempts to portray the panic beneath the surface of American self-satisfaction" (Kroll 103). Richard Corliss, writing for *Time Magazine* (in the issue which featured David Byrne on the cover and referred to him as "Rock's Renaissance Man") called *True*

Stories the “‘Divine Comedy’ for the ’80s.” In this analogy, Corliss sees the narrator as a modern-day Virgil (is it coincidental that Byrne named his town the same?) who is escorting us, the viewers, through Hades, through “the subterranean currents of bizarre behavior that bubble under Smalltown, U.S.A.” (80).

Corliss goes on to argue, however, that Byrne encourages laughter “of recognition, not of condescension” in this film, that he’s not warning viewers of the emptiness of the American Dream but that he’s illustrating how unique and harmlessly idiosyncratic that dream is (80-1). In fact, Jay Cocks, writing in the same issue of *Time*, suggests that Byrne is not attacking at all; instead he is exercising his “knack for making the everyday seem paranormal and the bizarre just something on the lee side of ordinary” (81).

Still there’s that other side of the message: *True Stories* as a “Middle-American Grotesque” (Coulson 26), a “casually self-conscious attack on the status quo” (O’Toole 70). Here’s where we must consider the pathological liar who claims to have written all of Elvis’ songs, to have slept with Burt Reynolds and JFK and “the real Rambo”; here’s where we meet the “cute woman” who turns all goo and gush when she sees babies, who must be surrounded by pinks and lavenders at all times, and who doesn’t like Louis Fyne because he’s got “all that sadness” in his life.

One way of dealing with this apparent contradiction in the style of the narrator and in the tone of the film is by recognizing the film as a text in post-modernism. In Todd Gitlin’s *New York Times* article, he writes that post-modernism “relishes the blurring of forms . . . , stances (straight-ironic), moods (violent-comic), cultural levels (high-low).” Gitlin stresses that post-modernism “neither embraces nor criticizes, but beholds the world blankly, with a knowingness that dissolves feeling and commitment into irony” (3). This combination of blurred edges and blank attitude describes *True Stories* perfectly.

In addition, Crocker Coulson, writing in *The New Republic* discusses “Attitude” in relation to Byrne and in relation to post-modernism. “Attitude,” he writes, “is post-modernism as a lifestyle, a way of reappropriating the castoff and demode. Its power derives not from the cultural objects themselves, but from the placing and the jostling of cultural objects in startling and contradictory contexts.” Coulson sees American life as so filled with options that “eclecticism” has become its “hallmark.” He sees David Byrne as a manifestation of post-modernism, particularly in his well-honed “Attitude,” his talent of putting on the demeanor necessary for disturbing the audience (28-9).

It’s okay, then, that we might not understand what Byrne is doing. Byrne might not understand either. Regarding his narrator’s fascination with shopping malls, for example, Byrne writes that he doesn’t know how he himself feels about them (Wyman 62). The narrator serves as a type of Alice in Wonderland in this foreign culture. Gitlin points out that America’s “eclecticism” and “poly-ethnicism” are the very qualities which illustrate it as a post-modern arena (3). In America, we have to acknowledge other perspectives; we need to recognize that, Allan Bloom notwithstanding, America is composed of diverse multi-ethnic arts and artists. “What could be more American than ‘humbling the highbrow’ by democratizing the arts?” Gitlin asks. He claims that “the essence of American culture is the variety show, finding a place for everyone—post-modernism’s prototype” (3). And certainly that’s what Byrne has done in *True Stories*. He gives the spotlight—both literally and figuratively—to the people of Virgil, ending the film with an actual variety show. This film truly turns out to be about “people like us / who answer the telephone,” people of different viewpoints, but people with similar values—a rich woman who stays in bed all day, a black man who practices white magic, a Latino who “reads tones.”

Post-modernist works are seen by Gitlin as “pastiche.” He calls the post-modern mode “compilation, recombination” (3). When we look at a movie which was compiled, as this one was, from a collection of articles taken from newspapers and magazines, we further recognize why this film is considered post-modern. In addition, critic Brian McHale explains that in literature, interviews between the author and the characters have become “especially widespread in postmodernism, [and] amount almost to a postmodernist cliché” (213). McHale goes on to point out how the post-modernists have exploited the “roman a clef” (206-9), an exploitation Byrne admits to partly in his title and certainly in his interviews and in his book. In fact, Byrne apologizes for calling the film *True Stories* and then having made up some of what appears. On the other hand, he scrupulously got permission from the real-life people whose stories were told in the news papers and magazine articles he used. *True Stories* puts together true stories and made-up stories, humorous—actually ridiculous—situations and characters and highly sympathetic characters, music and dialogue, documentary style and narrative style, realistic footage and obviously fake footage, and, finally, a fascination with small-town America, along with a cynicism of small-town America. Here we have a post-modern study of America.

And do I agree with my poet friend? Yes and no. *True Stories* may be, as one scholar has suggested, a highly political indictment of the Reagan era, a comment of the disturbing fact that Reagan has taught us not to want freedom or justice but to be satisfied with someone to love. That element is in this film. But so is the other side, perhaps more adamantly, the side that suggests that this is a humorous study of Americans and that David Byrne is keeping his viewers off guard by mixing his messages in his presentation of the film. However, the cynicism of a *Nashville* is missing, as is the terror of a *Blue Velvet*. Further missing is the more blatant

ridiculing seen in Errol Morris' real documentaries such as *Gates of Heaven* and *Vernon, Florida*.

What Byrne gives us, perhaps most appropriately, is a post-modernist depiction of a Frank Capra world, a successful quest by a protagonist for meaning through "normalcy," through love. Louis Fyne tries all the modern techno-techniques to find his wife. But when he finally resorts to the folk method, to the primitive medicine man, he succeeds. We can see the power in Louis as he takes the potion that Robert has prepared for him. His innocence—his trust in this final technique—has made him powerful. And he gets the girl. Happy ending. In like manner, we have a quest by a narrator (and, presumably, by Byrne) for an America he may not have known very well, an America that is removed from the East Coast hipness; and for what makes Americans the people they are: separate unique entities—sometimes rather bizarre—within a large and complex whole.

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Mrs. Calibans': Modern Beauties and Their Beasts

Many modern writers are re-shaping the Beauty and the Beast myth and bringing it into today's culture. This ancient story of a beautiful maiden in love with a repulsive but kindhearted stranger has taken an interesting turn in twentieth century popular literature. The twist on this old theme lies in the change in emphasis from the demands of family and society on a naive young woman, to the re-examination of a love relationship. No longer does the mystical and monstrous Beast necessarily turn into a Prince when the innocent Beauty professes her love to him. Today's Beast remains primarily in his alien form, bringing a unique quality to his union with the beloved. In turn, modern heroines are more than satisfied with their unusual partners.

The most well-known version of Beauty and the Beast came into American folklore from a Madame Leprince de Beaumont who wrote an educational work for children in which the story is found (Pearce, Author's Note). In this legend, the third and most beautiful daughter of a wealthy merchant is forced to offer herself to a magical Beast in exchange for her father's life. She must live in the Beast's palace and become the creature's "Queen," with all the pleasures and delights that any woman could possibly dream of at her command. In exchange, the Beast asks daily if Beauty loves him, but, alas, she cannot love "One such as him" (Pearce).

Beauty is content to live in the palace with the Beast until she learns that her father misses her. She asks the Beast to let her visit her family. The Beast grants her request on the condition that she return to him in three days. He insists that he will die if she is gone

longer. Beauty returns to her home, to the joy of her father and the envy of her sisters. The jealous sisters resolve to keep Beauty from returning to the palace, but Beauty escapes to find her Beast dying in the garden. She runs to him, confesses her love, and kisses him. At this moment the Beast is transformed into a handsome prince and the two are united in mutual love.

This fairytale is similar to the ancient Greek myth of the marriage of Cupid and Psyche. The similarities lie in the recurring themes of envy and the scorn of society, and the hidden nature of true love. Both Beauty and Psyche are banished from their families for their beauty, and both the Beast and Cupid hide their true identities from their lovers.

In the tale of Cupid and Psyche, Psyche's husband is hidden from her by the dark of night, while Beauty's lover is concealed beneath a bestial outward appearance. Psyche remains unaware that her mysterious husband is a god until she shines a lantern over him while he is sleeping, thus exposing his extraordinary beauty (Apuleius).

I have chosen to analyze these two legends in relation to the works of three modern female fiction writers: R. A. MacAvoy, Joanna Russ, and Rachel Ingalls. Each of these authors combines ideas from both myths in unique and often humorous ways, thus presenting a new theme that is more applicable to present day, and even, futuristic society. Furthermore they re-evaluate the archaic social dilemma in view of current trends.

The moral issue of envy is absent in these modern works. Instead, the effects of the relationships themselves are the focus: What are the complications and advantages of loving a beast, an animal, or, even, an android? How does such a relationship differ from the traditional heterosexual love affair? And, finally, can true love be found with a modern-day beast?

The bonds of passion between these modern heroines and

their lovers are as strong as those between Beauty and her Beast, and Psyche and Cupid. The contemporary conflict arises not from anyone's envy of these bonds, but from the question of personal versus social acceptance with regard to a relationship. This passion is considered abnormal in modern culture. The dilemma that each of the heroines must resolve is whether or not to accept her feelings for her partner, or to adhere to the dictates of society, thus refusing the Beast and denying her love.

The protagonists of these modern tales vary from strong-willed, independent women, to the meek, insecure wife of a philandering husband. In R. A. MacAvoy's *Tea With The Black Dragon*, we discover the beautiful but eccentric Martha Macnamara, a fifty year old fiddle player who travels from New York to San Francisco after an urgent phone call from her daughter.

In the lounge of her hotel, Martha encounters the enchanting and equally eccentric Mayland Long, who speaks cryptically of having known the son of Thomas Rhymer as well as Bodhidharma, an ancient mystic who sat, yoga style, for nine years facing a wall, attempting to find the meaning of truth.

Mayland Long is a slight man, seemingly of Oriental descent ("At least his eyes are," muses Martha, trying to determine his nationality), with long, tapering fingertips and unusually dark skin. His age is indeterminate as well and he is unwilling to reveal it when Martha bluntly asks (MacAvoy, 4, 19).

He has knowledge of an uncanny number of languages, even, to Martha's surprise, newly-created ones. When she tells him of her daughter's mysterious phone call, and her subsequent inability to contact the younger woman since her arrival in San Francisco, Mr. Long offers his assistance in escorting Martha to various computer corporations where her daughter has been working for the past few years: "Help me find Elizabeth?", Martha repeats his offer, "... Do you mean that you know about computers, *too*, as well as Ireland

and China?” “A language is a language,” Mr. Long mysteriously replies (25).

Martha is warned by the hotel’s bartender to be careful of Mr. Long: “I want you to know if you get him drunk, old Mr. Long will tell you that he used to be a dragon. And he’s not joking around when he says it” he confesses to her. And, when she remains unconvinced of any danger associated with her unusual new friend, the bartender furthers warns: “Still, be careful. They found a body in the hall last year, in front of his door. . . no marks, no blood, just his neck bone snapped” (21).

Undaunted, Martha accepts Mr. Long’s help and the story unfolds into a delightful tale that has Martha and Mayland tracking down extortionists in Silicon Valley and rescuing Martha’s daughter from blackmail and death. Her companion proves incredibly resourceful, even superhuman, in his ability to solve her problems, and Martha realizes that this odd man with the “strange, hybrid face” truly is a dragon — or was one, in any case. She remains unperturbed, confronting him at the end of their adventures with the question, “How long have you been a human being?” (162).

Mayland finally succumbs to her inquiry, revealing to Martha that he has been human for six years. He confesses that he has been seeking truth — much like the mystic before the wall — and he explains:

At first my quest was to find out what there was in man to make him act so strangely: to desire an abstract nothing with a passion that should be reserved for gold. But eventually I came to see that I would only find out the truth *about* man by finding man’s truth itself! (164).

It is Martha who makes him realize that she herself, and the love he has discovered in her, is indeed this elusive “truth” that he

has sought so diligently. "I know that you are my master," he announces to her in the final pages of the story. Martha laughs at his surrealistic revelation. "If you insist," she answers, "But I would rather be your mistress." And they reaffirm their bond of love with a kiss. (164-5).

In Joanna Russ' short story, "An Old-Fashioned Girl," the Beast takes the form of Davy, an android, and the heroine of the story is a futuristic woman with whom he lives. The couple have a home in the woods of Vermont that can actually "see" the arrival of guests, turn itself on in light and welcome, and even broadcast the Second Brandenburg Concerto, "a delicate attention I allow myself and my guests from time to time," the heroine confesses (Russ 126).

Davy is "the most beautiful man in the world," much like the legendary Cupid. He is also controlled by the central computer of the house which transmits a pattern of signals to his so-called "brain" to which he obediently submits. "He's a lovely limb of the house," Russ' heroine admits (130).

This woman is content to live removed from society with a companion that is actually an appliance of sorts much like her kitchen which she describes as "an armchair with controls like a 707's" (127). Davy provides her with emotional support and companionship, and he glows with adoration and devotion. He also fulfills her sexual needs.

Although Russ' heroine seems to have a deep tie to Davy, she gladly shares his sexual delights with her houseguests. Such a relationship is not perverse or immoral in the heroine's mind (although her friends are a bit horrified, albeit curious, about Davy), but merely an alternative—and apparently a beneficial one—to traditional relationships.

Russ forces her readers to seriously consider this type of "future sex." In the final paragraph of her story she writes: "...She

had never seen such soul in a creature's eyes...And she's right. She's right you know. Davy's soul is in Davy's beauty; it's poignant that Davy himself can never experience his own soul. Beauty is all that matters in him, and Beauty is always empty, always on the outside. Isn't it?" (130).

"An Old-Fashioned Girl" adds an ironic twist to the Beauty and the Beast myth in that Davy stands as a contradiction to both the Beast and Cupid. He is as beautiful as Cupid, but there is no "god," nor "prince" lurking beneath his gorgeous facade. There is only a mass of wires and computer chips. But, however "empty" Davy's beauty may be, it suffices to please his companion. Russ' heroine's satisfaction comes from appreciating this beautiful appearance. Davy's exterior beauty is all the truth that she needs.

Perhaps the most unique and fascinating reconstruction of the Beauty and the Beast legend in popular literature is *Mrs. Caliban*, a humorous but tragic story of a suburban housewife's relationship with a strange, lizard-like creature.

In 1983 Rachel Ingalls published this astonishing novel which details the affair between a middle-aged woman named Dorothy Caliban and a six-foot-seven-inch "Aquarius Man" complete with webbed hands and feet, and green, scaly skin. Ingalls avoids creating a farce by her genuinely serious tone in describing the growing love of Mrs. Caliban for the Beast which she names Larry.

At first Dorothy treats the giant lizard as a houseguest, cooking special meals for him and explaining such foreign concepts as television and dancing. Eventually she begins to fall in love with Larry and tenderly works at making him disguises so the couple may go out in public together. She buys him a huge overcoat, a large man's hat, sunglasses, and cardboard boxes which she designs into shoes for his odd-shaped feet. She even teaches Larry to drive. In his disguise they are able to take trips to the beach where Larry can swim in his natural environment.

The depth of isolation that Mrs. Caliban experiences in her marriage is demonstrated by her husband's total oblivion towards the fact that there is a huge, green animal living in his guest bedroom. Fred Caliban's only reaction to his wife's strange new habit of buying bags of avocados (Larry's favorite food) is to chastise her for spending so much money on the fruit.

The story builds around Mrs. Caliban's gradual entrance back into the "real" world through her relationship with Larry. She had been living in a numb trance prior to his arrival, unwilling to take an active part in the world around her. Before Larry appeared in her kitchen, Dorothy's existence was limited to shopping, cooking for her husband and his occasional clients, and a solitary exercise program. She had no desire to get a job or involve herself in community activities. She couldn't even muster the nerve to confront her husband about his various affairs with other women.

But when Larry enters her life, Dorothy Caliban is transformed. The alien creature provides the much-needed purpose that has been absent for too long in her life.

Unfortunately the society in which Mrs. Caliban lives does not allow such a relationship to exist for long. Eventually the lovers are revealed. Larry is forced to kill several humans in self-defense, and soon he is being sought by the authorities. It becomes urgent for Dorothy to get Larry to the coast so that he may escape his pursuers. As she drives him out of town, however, they are spotted by Dorothy's husband and his latest concubine on the local freeway. A car chase results in an accident which kills Fred and his lover. In a panic, Larry jumps from Dorothy's car and the two quickly resolve to meet at their favorite beach in the near future.

When the chaos of her husband's death and funeral subsides, Dorothy makes regular trips to the beach, anxiously waiting for her lover. But Larry never returns.

Mrs. Caliban presents yet another alteration of the legends.

Unlike fairytales, modern-day situations are not always resolved with a kiss. Despite the bond developed by Dorothy and her lizard mah, their love is destroyed by a society unreceptive to such an alien relationship.

Thus, we are presented with three very different versions of an age-old theme. In one, a Beauty finds love with a Beast turned-human; in another a futuristic heroine chooses a mechanical android for personal fulfillment; and in a third, an alien love affair is destroyed by an unaccepting society.

These modern women welcome their unique partners for what they are, regardless of the demands of society, and with their acceptance comes an interesting statement about modern love. The heroines have reached a point in their development where they can shrug off society and live their lives as they see fit.

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THE PASSAGE OF GROWTH IN THREE MODERN MYTHS : A COMPARISON OF *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER*, *SWAMI AND FRIENDS*, AND *LORD OF THE FLIES*

If the child symbolizes the invincible spirit, the adolescent is an archetypal image of growth in all literature. One of the earliest comments on *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* refers to the universality of the theme of the novel. "The story is a wonderful study of the boy-mind, which inhabits a world quite distinct from that in which he is bodily present with his elders, and in this lies its great charm and its universality, for boy-nature, however human nature varies, is the same everywhere." (Howells 59) We can see parallels to this in R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, though there are also significant differences. All of the three novels have almost become modern myths on this perennial theme in so far as they evoke the eternal child in every one of us encountering the alien world and enact the ritual of initiation into the adult world. The purpose of this paper is to compare the passage of the growth from childhood through adolescence to adulthood in the three novels and see the similarities and differences which confirm the universality in pattern, though the realizations vary according to the cultural types they embody: Southwestern American, South Indian, and European.

Of the three novels, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Swami and*

Friends show the adolescent experiencing anguish and expressing his protest over the tyranny of the adult world symbolized by the school. Tom's struggle with the adult world is brought out in his relationship with Aunt Polly who has to play the dual role of a loving mother and a strict father and she expresses her dilemma:

Every time I let him off, my conscience does hurt me so, and every time I hit him my old heart most breaks. Well-a-well, man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble, as the Scripture says, and I reckon it's so. He'll play hooky this evening, and I'll just be obleeged to make him work, tomorrow, to punish him. It's might hard to make him work Saturdays, when all the boys is having holiday, but he hates work more than he hates anything else, and I've got to do some of my duty by him, or I'll be the ruination of the child. (Tom Sawyer 12)

But the worlds don't seem to converge—because when Tom whitewashes the fence on a Saturday, he finds pleasure not in getting the reward, but in the glory of having tricked Aunt Polly. Louis Rubin's analysis of the first few paragraphs also indicates this: "The role that Tom plays in the very first scene is one in which he will be cast throughout the story— that of a child engaged in an attempt to outwit the adult world." (Rubin 181) On the other hand, the old lady is betrayed by the way she wears her lenses— she does not look through them but over or under them. Right in the beginning, the world of imagination is in conflict with the world of limited perception.

In *Swami and Friends* also the adolescent's aloofness at home is emphasized right in the beginning and, in this case, the father represents the world of tyranny. Swami's main objection is to his

father's insistence on his staying at home on a holiday, and his having to clean the table or to do a sum, and he wants to escape into the freedom of "full being" as opposed to the disciplined social existence. "Since Saturday and Sunday came so rarely, to Swaminathan it seemed absurd to waste at home, gossiping with granny and mother or doing sums. It was his father's definite orders that Swaminathan should not start loafing in the afternoon and that he should stay at home and do school work. But this order was seldom obeyed." (*Swami* 23-24) Again, before the examinations he felt the same: "Staying at home in the evenings was extremely irksome. He sighed at the thought of the sand-banks of Sarayu and Mani's company. But his father had forbidden him to go out till the examinations were over." (56) Even after the examinations when the father insisted on his home study, Swami felt helpless:

"Should I read even when I have no School?"

"Do you think you have passed the B.A.?" father asked.

"I mean, father, when the school is closed, when there is no examination, even then should I read?"

"What a question! You must read" (83)

Later when his father asks him to do a sum, which involves solving a simple problem in simple-proportion, the problem is far from being simple to Swami. He is unable to arrive at the cost of the mangoes because he does not know whether the mangoes are ripe. Earlier when he worked with the atlas, he had similar questions: "How did these map-makers find out what the shape of a country was? "How did those map-makers find out that Europe was like a camel's head? Probably they stood on high towers and copied what they saw below. He wondered if he would be able to see India as it looked in the map, if he stood on the top of the Town

Hall.” (56)

This kind of freshness of perception peculiar to the child’s vision brought him into conflict with the adult’s craving for abstract things. Tom Sawyer also has similar problems with the school, and he trades Bible reading tickets with his classmates, mainly to impress Jeff Thatcher’s niece, and claims the prize given to students who have memorized 2000 verses. But when the judge puts some questions, he is simply exposed.

The sense of self-importance and a craving for self-expression through unconventional channels seem to impel the activities of both Tom and Swami, and in this process both use play-acting and also depend upon their friends. Tom, after leaving the school, dreams of being a pirate and when his friend Joe Harper arrives, they play at being Robin Hood together. Swami finds relief not only in narrating the story of Harischandra but he finds pleasure in miming. He is also anxious to go with his father to the club to watch his father play. “Swaminathan fell into a pleasant state of mind. The very fact that he was allowed to be present there and watch the play gave him a sense of importance. He would have something to say to his friends tomorrow.” (90)

In fact, play becomes the central image as well as the action of the two novels. Tom converts in the beginning all work into play as in his white-wash triumph, but soon playing itself becomes a reality. Leavis Leary’s analysis of the novel reinforces this idea:

The first ten chapters reveal boys engaged in characteristic play, stealing jam, playing hooky, swapping treasured belongings, until finally they visit a graveyard at midnight and there inadvertently witness a murder... the second part, chapters twelve through twenty-one, is divided into two major episodes, the Jack-son Island adventure and the last

day at school. . . the boys are again at play, but no longer at simply play of boys among themselves, for their own ends: it is directed now against adults, as if in revolt against what the world holds for boys who grow, as Tom has grown, beyond simple innocence to knowledge. . . in the last thirteen chapters the boys begin to act tentatively as adults act. . . (Leary 134)

In *Swami and Friends* also, not only does Swami convert everything into play but he displays a great love for games. The most important event in *Swami and Friends* is the cricket match where the boys are brought together under the banner of the MCC with Rajam as their captain and Swami as the Tate. But the very source of unity becomes a source of friction, and the play becomes “reality” itself, and child becomes the father of the man. The incident with the coachman’s son also shows the child’s encounter with evil in its very search for freedom.

In *Tom Sawyer*, when Tom and Huck go off to the local graveyard to perform a magic ritual, they see Dr. Robinson robbing a grave. In the fight that follows the doctor is stabbed, and with this knowledge of evil and being snubbed by Becky, Tom goes to Jackson’s Island with Joe Harper and Huck. But he soon feels homesick and goes home secretly only to overhear Aunt Polly and Mrs. Harper lamenting the supposed deaths of their boys. When he returns to the island, he describes this scene, pretending that he saw it in a dream. Soon Tom is reconciled with Becky and also decides to tell the truth about Injun Joe. He becomes a hero, but still lives in fear of Joe’s return. Then he goes off with Becky on an excursion into a cave—and here again there is shooting when Injun Joe plots to slit the widow Douglas’ nostril. Tom again runs for life, and when he and Becky make their way out of the cave, Judge Thatcher

blocks the entrance and soon they find the criminal dead. The robber's treasure is found and Tom becomes a rich man as he gets his share of the treasure and is adopted by the widow-Douglas.

The passage of Tom's growth is thus mixed with play and violence, but somehow even the violence is converted into a play. In *Swami and Friends*, there is less violence, even though Swami himself resorts to violence both at home, and in the school when he breaks the window panes participating in a political movement. We find him identifying himself with the role he plays, and because it is done in a playful mood, even violence becomes comic. Just as in *Tom Sawyer*, all terrors are converted into child's play.

The theme of role-playing in childhood as a metaphor for growth itself is treated more seriously in *Lord of the Flies*. The children, who are virtually thrown into being, discover themselves by playing roles existentially. But in the process they discover the evil, or the beast, in themselves.

The hunt for the beast has tragic dimensions and the killing of the pig and Piggy as well as Simon is enacted only as play. There is the mock killing following the orgy of true killing, but one cannot really distinguish the two. From the beginning, the games become metaphors for social conventions and bonds. The children in this novel do not escape from the ordinary world into an Eden, but find only the ordinary world in Eden itself, and though there are Edenic descriptions, they find only evil ingrained as an inescapable fact of life and growth.

This novel portrays growth as a dialectic of individuation and socialization and shows that the very impulse towards social order contains the germs of disruption. Mark Kinkead-Weekes refers to the growth of meaning of the conch as a symbol—from physical noise to a civilizing agency (Kinkead-Weekes 18). More important is the fact that the conch which was a cementing force itself becomes a symbol of disintegration, and the novel subtly shows

how the sense of self-importance in children can become a force of destruction. They need and find a leader, but this play also involves them in a world of competition in which Ralph, the average man symbolizing the social instinct, is pitted against Jack who is responsible for the release of evil. Simon discovers it when he blurts out “The beastie is within us,” and he also encounters it when he confronts the Lord of the Flies—the pig’s head on a stick.

When he sees the dead parachutist, which is another symbol of evil and the adult world, he compassionately releases him from the tangle. According to Golding, the parachutist is History. “History is Evil but history is made evil by men who have not grown out of original sin. Simon realizes this and being more inclusive in vision than the spectacled Piggy, the orderly Ralph or the animal Jack, he pays for it by dying. Men are Evil and the Evil is within. Boys will be Boys and Boys are Evil.” (Mohan 29)

In the ending of the three novels also, there are significant similarities and differences. Swami strays into a forest and the father pursues him with the dread of seeing his son’s dead body among the weeds. To his great relief, when he stooped to put his finger on the wet patch on the rails, he found that it was only water and not blood. Swami is almost lost in the forest, but characteristically, hunger forces him to think of home. But it is very difficult for him even to reach the Trunk road leading to his place. “The strangeness of the hour, so silent indeed that even the drop of a leaf resounded through the place, oppressed him with a sense of inhumanity. Its remoteness gave him a feeling that he was walking into a world of horrors, subhuman and supernatural. He collapsed like an empty bag, and wept bitterly (*Swami* 160). This is very much like Ralph’s weeping at the end of *Lord of the Flies* for “the end of innocence, for the darkness of man’s heart and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend Piggy.” (248) Swami also thinks of his friends, Rajam and Mani, though the whole thing is

brought out in comic terms. Finally, Swami returns home and to civilization, and the novel ends with Swami's staring at the train which takes Rajam, his alter ego, away from him and to whom he has just given a parting present. It is also Swami's farewell to boyhood, even though the novel ends without any hint at Swami's having fully grown up.

In *Tom Sawyer*, we see the symbolic absorption of evil when Tom and Huck come home triumphant after the death of the criminal, and Tom becomes a rich man. The mock funeral is also only symbolic of the death of childhood, but the children reassert themselves when they reappear in the middle of the services. "Tom grows up. Mark Twain recognizes the importance of his having done so in his epilogue, in which he remarks that 'it being strictly a history of a boy, it must stop here; the story could not go on much further without becoming the history of a man'." (Rubin 185) In *Lord of the Flies*, as we have already said, Ralph's dream world of fear is dissolved in its very intensity. He cries for mercy and is greeted by the naval officer, symbolizing the adult world, and the trim cruiser in the distance waits to take them home.

All three of the novels thus show the child to be the father of the man, though in slightly different senses. In Narayan and Twain, the spirit of freedom in the child is celebrated, and the children acquire a moral sense through adventure, whereas in Golding the child becomes an archetype of the sinful nature of man. But even that is brought out only as a kind of play. Fantasy plays a crucial role in all three novels. The authors almost identify themselves with the world of children who find fulfillment through fantasies but the structure provided by fantasies is in tune with the ritualistic dimension of the theme of initiation and thereby enhances their universality. Of these, Swami and Tom are as much cultural archetypes as they are universal symbols: Swami is more home-bound than the others and Tom's search for adventure is as much

southwest American as universal. Ralph represents the child-man or the child as the sinner more in relation to post-war Europe, though he is less culture-bound than the other two.

The structure in all these novels is characterized by parallelism, repetition, and cyclical movement. All of the novels exploit similar images—playground, treasure island, the river and the forest. In all this, the novels come closer to popular tales of all cultures in their infancy. They have the clarity and the incoherent coherence of vision which creates verbal equivalents of ritualistic events, and, ultimately, they acquire the complex simplicity of great myths. It was Frank Kermode who said “Golding’s novels are simple in so far as they deal in the primordial patterns of human experience and in so far as they have skeletons of parable. On these simple bones the flesh of narrative can take extremely complex forms. This makes for difficulty that attends the expression of what is profoundly simple.” (378, 381) This is certainly true of *Lord of the Flies*, and if *Tom Sawyer* and *Swami and Friends* are less complex, it is because their consciousness of evils is less intense, but probably they are closer to the spirit of childhood in all cultures.

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BEYOND THE FAULT LINE: THE MYTH OF CALIFORNIA

Your idea of what California is may be along the lines of an ad in the *San Francisco Examiner*: “Premium cultured white fur Christmas trees. Any size.” Whatever your idea of California is, even if you live there, you probably have derived it from film, TV, journals, and road signs. California is both the source and the subject of most of those myth-making media.

My argument is that California is our greatest invention. That idea of California as the land beyond the fault line is the dominant center of American culture. It creates, markets, and exports itself, subsuming all our “places.” Phillip Marlowe’s Laurel Canyon is more real to me than the town I live in. So are North Beach, Monterrey, and Bel Air. The California in our minds is the supreme land of illusion and the ultimate land of desire, America’s—and the world’s—best dream.

California is paradise, the meeting place of all that is good, a land without death, a plentiful garden hanging with fruits; but it is a place of irony as well. It is a paradise, yes, but also a place to retire to and die, a garden in which to die of hard-to-identify hungers. *The Day of the Locust* spelled it out.

The Garden of Eden lies beyond the fault line, a myth; the dream of Eden—a real dream—flows in all our veins. The dream of California as paradise goes wherever Hollywood has reached. Through Hollywood California is the chief producer of our dreams, and we have become used to seeing bits of California representing places specifically NOT California. Elliot Lewis in *Bennett’s World* (1982): “The setting was a small town in New England, somewhere in Maine or Vermont or New Hampshire, although,

inexplicably, whenever the camera moved one way or the other, palm trees could be seen behind the actors.” Always, we are aware, the stage set (or the California location) is more real than the “real” place that is represented. Walker Percy, in *The Moviegoer*, showed us too that a movie star walking down our neighborhood street makes our own place seem more real. Hollywood lends authenticity to the places moviegoers live.

We cannot say that Hollywood tricked us into illusion. Hollywood is ostentatiously fake. It was the 19th century “realistic” novel that taught us not to notice that its “reality” was faked. When Deanna Durbin goes to a small brownstone house for dinner, and is led to sing—and is instantly surrounded by a symphony orchestra and 40 tuxedo-clad dancers—we know that the stage set is what is real, not the brownstone house that is represented.

Who created the myth of California? Thomas Pynchon in *The Crying of Lot 49* showed us aspects of it. Oedipa Maas, an ordinary bright woman from California, her psychiatrist at the ready, becomes obsessed with interpretation: creating meaning where it didn’t exist. She notices coincidences, evidence builds, as she sees it, that she has stumbled onto a centuries-old political organization called Trystero. It is an underground mail system. Its acronym is W.A.S.T.E. Once clued in, she finds evidence everywhere, disguised as trashcans. Her supreme evidence she finds in a corrupt text in a Jacobean tragedy (reminding us that literary interpretation is the supreme autoerotic activity). Her detection is flawless. Pynchon has caught the obsession to know and understand that is particularly strong in California. Oedipa Maas, the supreme interpreter, reaches the detective’s ultimate epiphany: she has understood, well,—anything? Meaning is the perfect illusion, and California hungers for it more than anybody. English and sociology professors, Sam Spade, Shirley MacLean, Nancy Reagan’s astrologer—none is more indicative of things as they really are than

the next.

Through its famed detectives, California is the homeplace of interpretation. Academics all live in a California of the mind; we have learned to hunger for problems so simplified that they have elegant solutions, like detective stories.

The Italian novelist Italo Calvino explains us to ourselves in *Mr. Palomar*. Like the California observatory he is named for, Mr. Palomar is an observer/interpreter. Calvino brings him toward the end of the novel to look at a great pyramid in Mexico, where his anthropologist guide explains every symbol to him, every detail standing for something. Quetzalcoatl legends come alive to him as his guide explains. As they walk around, they cross paths with a group of local Boy Scouts following a native guide, who points out the same serpents and skulls, always ending “But we do not know what they mean.” The two guides engage in a duel over interpretation. The native guide explains to the Boy Scouts: “This is the Wall of the Serpents. Each serpent has a skull in its mouth. We don’t know what they mean.” Mr. Palomar’s friend cannot contain himself: “Yes we do!” he shouts. “It’s the continuity of life and death; the serpents are life, the skulls are death. Life is life because it bears death with it, and death is death because there is no life without death....” Sound familiar?

We are all, especially academics, hardboiled detectives. It is no blind chance that academics’ favored casual reading is detective stories. They give us a chance to flex our interpretative muscles—without reference to the untidy reality around us.

California is the natural home of the hardboiled detective story. Juxtapose Dorothy Sayers to Raymond Chandler to see why. In Sayers’ *Murder Must Advertise* the murderer is driven to crime by being sent to an inferior public school. He is finally helped to do the right thing (a face-saving suicide) by Lord Peter Wimsey, who went to the right school. Sayers’ solutions are politically

elegant.

In contrast, Raymond Chandler's Phillip Marlowe in *The Long Goodbye* works out of a sleazy office but has a finer set of values than his rich clients. Terry and Marlowe seemed to become friends; they would meet for drinks. At the end Terry comes back to Marlowe in a disguise as a Mexican, trying to pay his friend off with money and apologize for making Marlowe like him and care, when he wasn't worth it:

"You bought a lot of me, Terry," Marlowe tells him in disgust, "for a smile and a nod and a wave of the hand and a few quiet drinks in a quiet bar here and there. It was nice while it lasted. So long, amigo. I won't say goodbye. I said it to you when it meant something. I said it when it was sad and lonely and final."

Marlowe speaks from a set of personal values at that moment of epiphany. His values do not derive from social class distinctions; they subvert them. We should note that Chandler's is a tale of buddies, a genre that has its roots in the old West. It is a tale of men, between men, and essentially for men. Women readers who enjoy it will have to read it somewhat detached from themselves—"reading like a man." This all-male cast (writer, characters, reader-role) is an essential part of California literature.

Even more a man's detective writer is Arthur Lyons' *The Killing Floor*. It begins: "Vernon stinks. It always stinks," and proceeds to its title setting, the killing floor of a slaughter house. But it is a California story: Jacob Asch, Lyons' detective, seems to eat little but salads.

Joseph Hansen, whose detective Brandstetter is middle aged and gay, carries the male detective story further than Jacob Asch's salads. Ironically, Hansen's gay-detective novels wrench the reader less than most; Hansen does not require the reader to do gymnastics to find a way into the story. Readers are not forced to read like a gay male to empathize with the detective; Hansen's

readers are left “in character.” He does not require cross-dressing of the reader. Kate Green, a Minnesota writer, shows in her two detective novels how strong California is in the American genre. Both, written in Minnesota, are set in California. But her detachment lets her de-sex the genre; her detectives are women.

In the California detective novel the obsession to know, to understand, is a stronger desire than sex. California is the land of desire, we all know, and its desire is to know, to understand. It rejects the traditional limitation to rational ways of knowing; Nancy Reagan is one of many Californians who have astrologers. In paradise we can let ourselves want to know what it all means, by any method.

The land of desire is also the object of desire. Another major kind of California narrative is the pilgrimage to the promised land. Steinbeck’s *Joads* model the journey, and the arrival. When they get to paradise, the fruitful orchards are there, but they can only look at them from outside the guarded fence. Nevertheless they have succeeded. Though they cannot grasp the paradise they dreamed of, they have found it. They have succeeded in their goal because they have seen the dream face to face, as have we who see it only in the movies. The dream of desire is the object of desire. If reality threatens the dream, we reject it in favor of preserving the dream of paradise. Americans saw through the New Tough George Bush in our recent campaign, and they liked to accept the illusion knowingly. California has taught us to like the knowing illusion. We have grown to like seeing the palm tree sway just behind the Congregational Church.

We have mentioned a few of those who developed the myth of California for us; we could mention a thousand, but will mention a few briefly. Frank Norris’ novel *The Octopus* was essential because it gave us the octopus image. The octopus is a map of California showing the tentacles of the railroad reaching out into

the frontier corners. The octopus image is a central part of the California myth. Joan Didion's *Maria* in *Play it as it Lays* spends her days driving the freeways: to the end and back, to another end and back to another end of the octopus tentacles. Think of the distant places Hollywood has reached.

Steinbeck has created a large part of the California landscape in our minds. It is a male landscape. His stories are told by males to males. Few of the questions a woman might ask are answered. Robinson Jeffers, writing in nearby Carmel, is a useful antidote to Steinbeck. Jeffers' landscape is not maternal, his women are no more objects than his men are.

When I taught Nabokov's *Lolita* this fall I had trouble convincing my class Nabokov didn't invent (and enjoy) nymphets. Only when I passed around copies of *LA Style* magazine—with its underaged females, its women surrounded by leather motifs, their shoes being kissed by subservient males, the women being devoured males—did I convince them that Nabokov found *Lolita* in our California-formed culture. He did not invent *Lolita*; he found her, and her home is in California, where aging and death are kicked out of paradise. Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* is the sharpest satire yet on the denial of death that California has taught us. California has given us the knowing illusion, by which we live.

Where would we be if we didn't have the illusion of California to live in? Douglas Fairbanks made suntans chic to hide his Jewish-looking complexion. Ronald Reagan married Jane Wyman in Forest Lawn Memorial Park. For \$119, you could buy a bondage starter kit in Anaheim in 1983. The real-life model for Gidget was a Jewish girl who now likes to make matzo-ball soup. A widow left \$7 million to care for the needy in Marin County, but they have not been able to find any. One-fifth of all American bank robberies occur in Los Angeles branch banks because of the easy access to the octopus of freeways for escape. "High School Honor Student by

Day, Hollywood Hooker by Night” goes a movie ad. If you don’t want to see the Rose Bowl parade, you can see Pasadena’s nearby spoof. One year it featured the Texas Chainsaw Massacre Drool Team (the leader wore a necklace of real chicken legs); or the Toro!Toro!Toro! flying wedge of lawnmowers (they also did “rake dancing”). The parade’s feature is a special squad of 30 news photographers—who mass around the professional photographers and photograph them photographing. That’s California: disregard all previous states.

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JAZZ IN POPULAR CULTURE: A FILM ASSIST BY CLINT EASTWOOD

According to David Meeker's *Jazz in the Movies*, there are more than two thousand films that feature jazz musicians, or have some sort of jazz background, connection, or storyline. (1) But even the most ardent fan would be hard pressed to name a dozen such films. Despite this apparent affinity—both artforms are about the same age, both endured the same struggles, and both received significant support from Europe—there was until recently, relatively little achievement in the jazz and Hollywood meeting.

The exceptions are the documentary films, of which there are many, and the more recent trend of simply video taping live performances. But for the purposes of this discussion, I will confine examples to the fictional or semi-fictional jazz film.

For jazz to receive such a boost from the unexpected and, at first glance, surprising persona of actor-director-producer Clint Eastwood, whose Dirty Harry screen image has become a popular culture icon, was a surprise to both fans and the jazz establishment. This pale rider with a fistful of dollars, box office clout, and an immense dedication and love for jazz—a well kept secret, although “Play Misty For Me” was a strong clue—has produced and directed the film biography of the legendary bebop saxophonist Charlie Parker. Putting aside the Dirty Harry persona, forsaking a .44 Magnum for a saxophone, car crashes and shootouts for bebop solos and jam sessions on New York's 52nd Street, Eastwood moved to the forefront of jazz film making with *Bird*.“

“It is,” [Bird] as one jazz critic and Eastwood himself said, “the first film about jazz by somebody who likes jazz” (2). To fully appreciate the impact and excellence of *Bird*, a brief review of

earlier jazz films seems very much in order.

Until recently, the cinematic treatment of jazz has resulted in for the most part, unremarkable, sometimes amusing, but mostly fictional movies. *Young Man With A Horn*, *The Benny Goodman Story*, *The Gene Krupa Story*, and the abysmal *Lady Sings The Blues* are but a few examples.(3) It was not until a 1985 film, *The Gig*, a small budget, carefully crafted picture by jazz buff and writer Frank Gilroy that any attempt was made to capture the essence of the music or its musicians. Although jazz and film began life at approximately the same time, jazz was suffered the worse fate. A 1941 article in *Down Beat* magazine called Hollywood, "Jazz's deadliest enemy."(4) Distorted facts, exaggerated truths and little regard for the music were the rule, and until recently, little has changed. While Hollywood flourished, "jazz," as another critic observed, "lived on the outskirts of town." Jazz on film is a history with a checkered past.

The Jazz Singer, (1927), a vehicle for Al Jolson, featured jazz of a sort. It was remade twice, the second time in the 1970s with the same name but with pop singer Neil Diamond in the leading role. This version had nothing to do with jazz and probably did more to confuse the jazz buying public about the music than did the later *All That Jazz*, a semi-biography of choreographer Bob Fosse. Sound tracks to both these films are, unfortunately, often found in the jazz bins of record stores.

Paul Whitman, the self-proclaimed King of Jazz, made a film of the same name in 1930. Grossly misnamed, *King of Jazz* contained at the most about ten minutes of jazz and totally ignored black musicians roles to the point that they were conspicuous by their absence. Hollywood, however, was quick to capitalize on the words *jazz* and *swing* in bringing audiences to theatres, and titled a number of films in this manner.

The forties and fifties film link with jazz was generally a crime theme or a horribly miscast, mistold story. In 1949, Dorothy

Baker's novel *Young Man With A Horn*, loosely based on the life of Bix Beiderbecke, was adapted to the screen with Kirk Douglas loosely cast as Bix and his playing loosely imitated by Harry James. Most musicians hated the book and the film. "Bix would have hated it," says friend and saxophonist Bud Freeman. So did Eastwood. He remembers seeing the film, noting the breathing was off, the dubbing [Harry James's trumpet] and the plot impossible. Even then, it seems, Eastwood knew about jazz movies.

The film's only saving grace was the role of the older black mentor to white musician Douglas and Hoagy Carmichael as his piano playing sidekick. It was a role Louis Armstrong would reprise in several subsequent films with jazz themes.

Young Man With A Horn was followed in 1951 by *The Strip*, with Mickey Rooney cast as a drummer (playing his own drums) in trouble with the mob. *Pete Kelley's Blues*, in 1955, a Jack Webb production, cast the stoic Webb in the title role as a band leader who runs afoul of gangsters during the 1920s. The film at least included Peggy Lee and Ella Fitzgerald in the cast. In *Man With The Golden Arm*, Frank Sinatra is more convincing as a drug addict than as a jazz drummer. Elmer Bernstein's score, however, is effective although the composer disclaimed it as a jazz score.

A far superior film for its use of jazz was *I Want To Live*, a 1958 film starring Susan Hayward. Critic John Tynan called it a "significant contribution to the elevation of the status of jazz in film."⁽⁵⁾ Barbara Graham, the film's heroine, was a devoted jazz buff, and besides Johnny Mandel's score, the film featured on screen performances by musicians Art Farmer, Gerry Mulligan, Shelly Manne, and Bud Shank. Also notable for its use of musicians was *The Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), which had Martin Milner as a guitarist with Chico Hamilton's quintet, and the object of Burt Lancaster's vendetta. The Lancaster character liked jazz musicians but didn't want his sister to marry one.

It was not until the fifties that jazz was used , however

unsuccessfully, to accompany action on film or attempt to chronicle the lives of musicians. *The Glenn Miller Story* (1953) featured Jimmy Stewart as the trombonist, but the music was slowed down slightly so it didn't swing. *The Benny Goodman Story* (1955) had Steve Allen portraying the clarinetist. Allen at least is a fine musician in his own right and both films did feature recreations of the Miller and Goodman arrangements.

Danny Kaye starred in *The Five Pennies* (1959), another of those loosely based biographies, this time of cornetist Red Nichols. The same year saw Sal Mineo, a drummer himself, doing an admirable job of synchronizing his movements with the soundtrack star in *The Gene Krupa Story*. There were a number of inaccuracies, most notably Krupa's arrest for narcotics possession, which was blown all out of proportion, but again the film featured some fine music and musicians, even if the lives and events were somewhat misrepresented.

Fictional jazz musicians fared far worse. *The Rat Race* (1960) had Tony Curtis as an aspiring jazz saxophonist who, when he gets his big chance, gets all his horns stolen. *Too Late Blues*, featured Bobby Darin as a misunderstood pianist, and *Paris Blues*, (1961) saw Paul Newman and Sidney Portier as expatriates on the Left Bank pursuing Joanne Woodward and Diahann Carroll, respectively, almost as much as the music. There was somewhat of an attempt to portray the jazz life, but it was overshadowed by the love story. Again, Louis Armstrong, in his now obligatory role as the black mentor, elder statesman of jazz added to the brief, but good, cave jazz club scenes.

The 1977 film *New York, New York*, featured Robert DeNiro in a remarkable performance as a swing musician, but despite its hype, the jazz was little more than background for an unremarkable love story between DeNiro and Liza Minelli. All things considered, the portrayal of jazz musicians whether fictional or not has always suffered when it comes to approaching anything like the

reality of the jazz life. Despite the richness of the jazz life, it's never quite enough for Hollywood.

The worst example is the attempt to chronicle the life of singer Billie Holiday in *Lady Sings The Blues* (1972). Despite Diana Ross in the title role, the inaccuracies and total fabrications destroyed what might have been a fine film. This was unfortunately an all too common practice brought about largely because the musicians themselves had little input into such projects.

In 1959, saxophonist-arranger Benny Carter played and scored two film biographies: *The Five Pennies* and *The Gene Krupa Story*. Carter also conducted the music for a Sammy Davis Jr. film, *A Man Called Adam*. Once again, Louis Armstrong was featured in his now standard role of confidant and advisor to, this time, Frank Sinatra Jr. and a soundtrack that featured a wealth of jazzmen. The picture's principal character, played by Davis, and purportedly based somehow on Miles Davis, left musicians puzzled and fans confused.

Despite the excellence of the soundtrack, musicians, and Carter's score, when asked to comment on the film, Carter said, "It might be representative of some jazzman's life, no jazzman I ever knew, but maybe someone Sammy Davis or the writer of the script knew." (6)

The 1984 film *Cotton Club* was no better with Richard Gere cast as a trumpeter. Little of the Cotton Club's significance in jazz history was explored, and only passing reference was given to Duke Ellington. Some of the music and dance sequences, however, displayed a representative taste of the period. In the end, the film proved only that big budgets and big name stars and directors—Gere and Francis Ford Coppola—guarantee nothing.

A major breakthrough occurred with a much smaller film, *The Gig* (1985), a labor of love by Pulitzer Prize winning playwright and jazz aficionado Frank Gilroy. (7) A film that went largely unnoticed, with a terribly small budget—Gilroy managed to get actors Wayne

Rogers and Cleavon Little to work for scale—*The Gig* tells the story of an amateur jazz band that finally gets a paying job. “Farewell mere existence, hello jazz,” says one of the characters. A real musician, trumpeter Warren Vachée, played one of the principal roles and served as the film’s musical director. Much was said about amateur and professional musicians as well as jazz.(8)

Round Midnight, however, changed everything. This 1986 film depicted the plight of expatriate jazz musicians in 1960s Paris, and from the outset, the film makers put the music upfront. It did, however, take a French director—the French have always adored jazz—Bertrand Tavernier to mold a story with a character that was part Bud Powell, part Lester Young, and all jazz musician.

For the title role, Tavernier chose saxophonist Dexter Gordon, who had himself been an exile in Europe for fourteen years. Herbie Hancock was hired to write the score and a handful of musicians were cast to portray the community of black American artists in exile. On screen, the music and performances were recorded simultaneously, avoiding what mars many films showing musicians playing: the often, shockingly out of synch on screen action with the soundtrack and a continual source of annoyance for musicians and devoted fans of the music.

Gordon’s performance garnered him a best actor nomination, a first for jazz musicians, and the film was warmly received by the jazz establishment. Commercial success for this decidedly European film was another story, but whatever support it received came again from Eastwood, who urged the studio to make the film and stayed behind the scenes with both influence and financial backing. By this time, *Bird* was already in the planning stages.

With *Round Midnight* jazz on film attained a new dimension. With accurate storylines that encompassed major facets of jazz history and actors in principal roles, the music was finally accorded the cinematic respect deserving of America’s only original art form.

Bird however, is the crown jewel of jazz films and one that perhaps could not have been made without the box office clout of a Clint Eastwood. Fortunately, and unbeknownst to most, Eastwood has a long history with the music and treated the subject matter according.

Originally a Richard Pryor property, Eastwood obtained the rights and immediately cast largely unknown actors in the principal roles. Eastwood's first concern was for the music. Working from a script by Joel Oliansky, which is based on the unpublished *Life in E Flat* by Chan Parker, one of Bird's four wives, Lennie Niehaus was hired to score the film. The first problem was how to recreate the Parker solos. There are a number of alto saxophonists who could fill the bill more than adequately. Charles MacPherson and Frank Morgan come to mind immediately, but the answer, finally, was that it could not be done, at least not to Eastwood's satisfaction. (9)

Instead, Eastwood chose to use the original recorded Parker solos and superimpose them over the new score. The result is a newly recorded rhythm section with Parker's original playing. This is a detail only someone with Eastwood's love for the music would allow.

A pianist who once played clubs in Oakland, Eastwood has considerable experience with music. He had collaborated on the themes for several of his own films including *Tightrope* and *Pale Rider*. With *Bird*, he becomes something of a jazz director. Duke Ellington and Miles Davis, two who often refused multiple takes on recordings, both knew that perfect is often lifeless. Spontaneous improvisation is at the heart of jazz and Eastwood seemingly takes the same approach to directing. "What I try to do," Eastwood says, "is get the actors in the mood and then rehearse on film." It's a technique that seems to have worked. Forest Whitaker's portrayal of the brilliant but self-destructive Charlie Parker was uncanny in its accuracy, and Diane Venora's Chan Parker was an equally

riveting performance.

If there is a theme to *Bird* beyond the life of Parker, the struggling artist, it is the loner fighting against the system, a role Eastwood has made famous with the Dirty Harry character. Charlie Parker would certainly have been part of that.

For historical accuracy, Eastwood consulted with trumpeter Red Rodney, a musical companion and close friend of Parker. Rodney is given a significant role in the film as is Dizzy Gillespie, who along with Parker, forged new directions in modern jazz. The set of 52nd Street, the site of many Parker triumphs was also meticulously re-created from old photographs. (10)

There is no better or more effective medium in popular culture than film or television to communicate to the public a trend, a mode of dress, a phrase, or a style of music. Already a winner of two awards at the Cannes Film Festival, *Bird* promises to bring jazz to its largest audience thus far and finally fulfill that role.

In addition, *Bird* comes at a time when jazz is experiencing a significant boost from several fronts that include politicians as well as popular culture. Yves Saint Laurent has a new fragrance called "Jazz." Drummer Max Roach, one of the innovators of bebop recently received a MacArthur Foundation grant of \$375,000. Congressman John Conyers of Michigan succeeded in proposing and seeing passed legislation that will make jazz officially a national treasure.(11)

Bird's opening epigram, chosen by scriptwriter O'Liainsky comes from F. Scott Fitzgerald: "There are no second acts in American lives." In the nights and weeks following Parker's death at age 34, at the home of Baroness Nica De Koenigswarter, "*Bird Lives!*" began appearing scrawled on the walls and streets of Greenwich Village. *Bird*, the film, promises to fulfill that phrase better than anyone could have dreamed.

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Endnotes

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5. Ibid.
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El Dorado and Silverado: Gold and Silver Rushes in the Old West

Chemically designated as *Au*, this barest description says nothing of the romance connected with the quest for and possession of gold. Yet few material possessions have captured the hearts and imaginations of humans in both hemispheres more than gold. From earliest times gold symbolized wealth, power, and the epitome of opulence. At first, utility was the least important of its qualities—these would be known only later and entered into space technology as well as medicine. Yet still, today, two thirds of gold is used in jewelry, and whenever wealth is to be flaunted, gold is its agent-servant.

Ancient Chinese used gold flakes and paints to gild precious statues and objects of art. In the times of the pyramids, Egyptians, who believed that gold originally was taken from the sun by the gods and given to man, hammered death masks of their pharaohs out of gold, so malleable that one ounce could be hammered into nearly one hundred square feet. In India, Hindus consider gold as sacred, and no matter how poor the person otherwise, nearly every Hindu owns some gold. Gold leaf adorns church domes in the western world, symbolically offering man's most precious possession to the Almighty.

Greek myths tell several tales of gold and its allurement, among them the stories of King Midas and Jason's Quest for the Golden Fleece. Every myth entails a fiction grounded in a truth and these are no exceptions. The Midas one warns us of avarice and hubris, while also revealing that gold is to be found in streams, since it was in the river Pactolus that Midas cleansed his body of gold. The myth of Jason likewise tells us that gold can be procured from

rivers by seining it through lamb's wool—the golden fleece. In our own time, John Huston's award-winning movie, *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, echoed this danger of greed and how gold corrupts most of us. In this tale of human nature and morality, the chief actor, Humphrey Bogart, was at his finest as the crazed, paranoid miner.

Through the ages, gold always signified what humans held dearest. For this reason, it is listed among the gifts of the Magi to Jesus at the stable. Not surprising is the fact that gold is mentioned some four hundred times in the Bible.

Gold, then, was a kingly gift and the gift of kings, because for the most part, it was their prerogative and theirs alone. The common man, because he was common, could not own this uncommon treasure. Enough was never enough for those who possessed the precious metal, as they themselves became possessed by it. Gold was a constant mistress in the foreground of the thought, passions and desires of the lover. One must have it at all costs and dangers, sometimes at the cost of life itself. Even ascetic medieval philosophers dreamed of winning the power to transform all base metals into gold through use of the "philosopher's stone."

Our very language also betrays this admiration, passion, and obsession for the metal. We speak of being given a "golden" opportunity, meaning the chance of a lifetime. We refer to the halcyon times past as "golden" days. Men have always prized women with "golden" curls and women who sought to exploit all they could from a man were called "gold" diggers.

Gold is the superlative to which all other precious things are the comparative and thus the wealth of meaning in the name of an opera by Puccini set in the burgeoning America, *The Girl of the Golden West*. For it was in the West—the new world West of America that brought such a harvest of the precious metal, the likes of which the world heretofore had never seen. The scarcity of the metal, rather than discourage a search for it, only increased man's

desire for it. Rumors of its presence sent men to the four corners of the globe. Among them were Marco Polo, Columbus, Pizarro, Cortez, De Soto, Coronado, and even the favorite of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Francis Drake. Yet thousands of unknowns also took part in the search, for a treasure house of gold, whether belonging to a nation or an individual, meant power, and for power, men would sell their souls.

When the Spanish conquistadors came to the Americas, they looked for their own “El Dorado” or “Gilded One,” who supposedly left the remnants of gold smeared over his body in a lake. Cortez, Pizarro, De Soto, and the great Coronado took part in the search, the latter looking for the Seven Cities of Cibola, but found there only poor natives subsisting on frijoles, squash and maize. The soldier/explorer cursed Fray Marcos de Niza, who told Coronado that he personally had seen the cities and that they were paved with gold.

Travelling farther north and east the Spanish explorer found only strange “hump-backed cows”—the American bison. But the Spanish had some gold, taken from the Inca and Aztec Indians, but true to form, enough was never enough.

Coronado returned to Mexico with a heavy heart because he could not add to the treasures of his beloved Spain, for Spain had a world to conquer and Christianize, and to do so required war chests of gold. But more gold was not immediately forthcoming and Spain turned its energies elsewhere.

Both metaphorically and literally, the world came to realize that the quest for gold had its peaks and valleys. The metal could be found in the high mountains and below sea level. The rumor of its existence some place, no matter how remote or difficult to get to, always served to buoy up the already optimistic nature of its seeker. Miners were the same everywhere, no matter from which country they hailed. Essentially, they were a camaraderie of gamblers and

staunch believers in Lady Luck. A grub stake was all they asked for, and they would generously share half of their claim for it. This fit Americans especially well, for to them, gambling was as American as homemade apple pie. Didn't this country begin on a gamble, breaking away from a powerful England? Wasn't gambling the hallmark of the capitalistic system of the nation? Could America ever have produced Astors, Rockefellers, Vanderbilts and Gettys unless it believed in gambling? Gold was in the Americas then and it got into the blood of these gamblers, almost put there as a challenge and crucible to form the American character.

One man, who was not an American, but a German/Swiss by birth in 1803, felt that same gambling urge and restlessness as he grew up. His name was John Augustus Sutter and he fled the beauty but regimentation of his native land. A would-be entrepreneur, he also fled his many creditors there. At age 34, the spirit of the American adventure got hold of him and, eventually, he was attracted to the Sacramento Valley in central Mexican California, where the only inhabitants were Indians. An affable man and a great talker, some characterized Sutter as a "con man," but if he was, it was part of his nature. He talked the Mexican governor into granting him fifty thousand acres, built a fort and called it New Helvetia. Of course, he also needed tools and materials to build the fort and this time he conned the Russians at Fort Ross to supply them on credit. He never paid them.

In 1848, when California joined the United States, Sutter was delighted and now became an American citizen. In an expansionist mood himself, Sutter saw that to progress, he would have to build stores, houses, and hotels for the coming American migrations. For that, he needed a sawmill near a stream and accessible trees. Wood was scarce around New Helvetia, for the trees had been used for furnishing the fort. Accordingly, he contracted with another wanderer, James Marshall, who drifted down from the north.

Marshall was a skilled carpenter and all-around millwright who located for the cutting a heavily wooded area next to a fork of the American River, some forty miles away from Sutter's Fort—present-day Coloma. He set up a mill there and on January 24, 1848 made a casual inspection of the millrace flowage ditch. There he discovered a yellow nugget and then another in the stream bed and brought them to Sutter, riding through a beating rain to announce their good fortune. Sutter actually greeted the find with mixed emotions, for if there was gold in quantity, his valley of the Sacramento would be tranquil no longer and his lands would be overrun by trespassers seeking the treasure. Although word leaked out immediately, because of the find's remoteness, the East did not learn of the event to shape the nation until August of 1848.

Besides the local Sandwich Islanders, Mormons, Indians and farmers filtering on down from Oregonland to search for gold, sailors now caught the news and responded to it as catching a mighty wind in their sails. They ran before it, leaving their vessels as ghost ships in the harbor at Yerba Buena, later to be called San Francisco. By the middle of June, the great port city itself was a ghost town. There was little hyperbole in the observation that "The farmers have thrown aside their plows, the lawyers their briefs, the doctors their pills, the priests their prayer books, and all are now digging gold." (1) Just as the dumbest farmers were said to grow the biggest potatoes, with respect to gold, "the veriest greenhorn was as likely to uncover the richest mine on the gulch as was the wisest ex-Professor of geology." (2)

The California strike was a true "bonanza," not a "borrasca" (the former in Spanish, refers to "sunny skies," the latter to "barren rock" or a "bust"). Here was a rich mother lode that extended some one hundred and twenty miles long and whose width was from six to eight miles, and it all lay between the reasonable altitudes of two to three thousand feet. Virtually all the rivers touching the area, the

Feather, the Stanislaus, and the American showed flakes, grains and nuggets of the Midas metal. From the Mexican settlement of Mariposa on the south to Downieville on the north, the gold was there for the taking. Exuberant anticipation filled the air, affecting all classes, wellborn and workers, as the gold rush of the '49ers established its own brand of egalitarianism in a nation less than one hundred years old. There can be no question that "a deep relationship [exists] between the search for gold in America and the impact of that search on the American character."(3) But it was strength, absolute brute force, which was required to win the gold of the placers."(4)

Never had the world seen such a gathering of minorities, and although there were moments of contention, most got along as comrades in the quest for gold.

Where miners went and stayed even momentarily to try their hands at the diggings, towns sprang up in tandem. Soon there were saloons, brothels, public houses, trading posts and sundry buildings, and it wasn't long before the tradespeople were mining the miners. Chinese, who generally were allowed to dig for gold only after an area was abandoned, served as cooks and launderers. But they were not to be denied their gold. The cooks inspected the gizzard of every chicken they cooked, for some were found to contain small precious nuggets of gold. The launderers also found their share of gold dust and grains in the creasing of the clothes they washed. Industrious workers, they were penny pinchers, yet loved to gamble. Bret Harte's poem of the "Heathen Chinees" paints a colorful picture of this immigrant group.

Inflation set in and prices of products were determined by "pinches of gold dust." "Big-thumbed bartenders" were much in demand, but often were careless in spilling a few grains on the floor. They were watched by the eagle eye of a waitress, who willingly swept the floor with a hitherto unknown zeal. Town names

changed as quickly as their fortunes. Dry Diggings became Placer-ville and later was known as Hangtown! Men's names changed in the same way. One example was:

Pat Quinn
C. Patrick Quinn
Colonel Patrick Quinn
Col. C.P. Quinn
Patrick Quinn
Pat Quinn
Old Quinn(5)

Early in the California Gold Rush, most gold taken was known as placer gold taken from the river beds by the time-honored technique of panning. Nineteen times heavier than water and four times heavy as sand, gold rested on a stream bar or sank to the lowest point in a river. Accessible to all, no bulky technology other than pick, shovel and pan was needed to get it. But one had to be willing to work in bone-chilling water. As the saying has it, "Gold is where you find it" and it was just as well for the Americans who, though experts in many skills, did not count mining among them.

Besides gold being found in grains, flakes, and veins, occasionally a gold nugget of varying size would be found, often in isolated spots apart from other diggings. One such huge nugget, weighing 195 troy ounces, was found in Calaveras County in California. (The world's largest nugget was discovered in Australia, weighing a whopping 472 pounds and was pure gold, i.e., 24 carats. It rests comfortably in a display case in a Las Vegas casino, named appropriately enough, The Golden Nugget.) Although the California Motherlode gradually was exhausted in a decade and the diggings were abandoned, truly the California experience was unique in the annals of world history. It was a once in a nation's lifetime event, and, somehow, those who participated in it fully

sensed its glory and excitement. It also was a rewarding one from a variety of viewpoints. From "1851 to 1855 [the U.S] contributed nearly 45 per cent of the world's output of gold."(6) The most productive year was 1852 when some 81 million dollars in gold was produced. By 1860, this output was reduced to forty-four million. During this general period, the highest wage averaged some \$20 a day.(7) "At least a quarter of a million men came to California during the five years that constituted the gold rush proper, and . . . these men dug more than \$200 million in gold. Nothing in any way so rich had even before been encountered in any part of the world." (8) Finally, one can say that truly "The California Gold Rush was a national experience rarely matched in American history—in the nineteenth century only the Civil War surpassed its import." (9)

But miners were like quicksilver itself, which was used to amalgamate with the gold, separating it from its carrier materials. They now moved elsewhere seeking a new mother lode, whether nearby, across the continent, or around the world. Thus spread a new kind of "Yellow Fever."

Those in California who saw the gold largess running out, now drifted eastward to the Washoe Mountains in what was to become western Nevada Territory. They were looking for gold, but so often as in other situations, one does not find what one is seeking, but perhaps something else equally or more valuable. Around 1859 miners headed toward the Carson River and Mt. Davidson area in present-day Nevada. They discovered the outcroppings of what they thought were two quartz veins containing both gold and silver. Unbeknown to the discoverers, these were not two separate veins, but both part of one and the same. The first discovered was in the area called Gold Canyon; the other, Six Mile Canyon. Subsequent digging found they were part of another big Motherlode, five miles long and nearly a mile in width. Eventually this lode produced some 300 million dollars worth of precious gold and silver. Its

richest area was known as the Comstock Lode.

The area had been known for years to miners who did some spotty placer mining there, but they never recognized the silver content of the materials, since unlike gold, silver is difficult to distinguish from its carrier host. However, a wizened miner from Virginia, James Finny, affectionately known as “Old Virginny,” made a great and rich ore find there. The time was January of 1859, but though he knew what he saw, he couldn’t convince others of the lucky strike until two additional miners hit the vein elsewhere in June of that year. Their mine became known as the Ophir, named after a mythical Biblical city of riches.

These latter two were surprised to have another man visit them while working their claim, accusing them of being “jumpers” and arguing that he had established his claim there long ago. The intruder’s name was Henry Comstock who had a reputation for being more of a talker than a worker in the several years he spent in the area. Subsequently, the miners and Comstock compromised and made a bargain to split the claim four ways among them and another, a friend of Comstock.

Shortly after working the project together, they found their mix of gold and silver ore assayed at an astounding \$3,876 a ton. The call for venture capital went out then and it was answered by a number of wealthy men, one of whom would become as famous as the mine itself. He was George Hearst, father of the newspaper magnate, William Randolph Hearst.

In March of 1861, the Territory of Nevada was created and this included Virginia City within its bounds. The man appointed Secretary of the Territory was no less than Mark Twain’s brother, Orion Clemens. We can understand Mark Twain’s interest in the West then, and he knew first hand of what he wrote in *Roughing It* and other pieces of literature of that period. For a time, Twain served as editor of the Virginia City newspaper and plied his wit and

observations for a grateful townspeople, calling a mine as a “hole in the ground owned by a liar.”.

The mines were being developed rapidly and miners who formerly worked independently for what they could find, now worked for wages under the direction of others. The wages were good, though, and with the “highgrading” (*i.e.*, stealing of ore), the miners were content. The mine was a rich one—how rich, Comstock never dreamed, for as seems typical, Comstock sold out his share of the mine for a paltry \$11,000 or thereabouts. If he had held it, it would eventually have brought him some eighty million dollars.(10) It is ironic that, like Marshall who discovered the California gold, both men died penniless—Comstock even a suicide.

The Comstock was not an easy mine to work and the increasing depths of its shafts made new and difficult demands on the miners and on machinery and mining techniques. Fortunately, many of the Comstock miners were Cornish (11), known as “Cousin Jacks,” and they had generations of mining experience behind them. They even had their own special protection in the mines, a kind of guardian angels, called “tommyknockers.” These elf-like creatures in whom the miners believed, were always on the spot ready to warn the men of impending disaster, the “tommyknockers” forbidding the mines to flood or cave-in until the men were safely outside. The Cornish even made effigies of these and took them into the mine to stand guard. As one miner swore who narrowly escaped death from a chute clearing blast, “I was sure that I owed my life to the tommyknockers, those unseen, wee, small folks who came over with the Cousin Jacks, to tap on the rocks and warn mining stiffs, when there is some serious underground danger, as they had warned me when I had spit the fuse.”(12)

Because silver ore was soft, cave-ins were a constant worry at the Comstock. This problem was solved however through the use

of special jiggered shoring techniques known as Diedesheimer square-sets, which became a standard for mines everywhere.

This problem solved, another immediately took its place. As the shafts went deeper and deeper, some to 2600 feet, the air grew hotter, often exceeding 120 degrees. The stale air was barely breathable and so denuded of oxygen was it that the candles at that depth burned only with a flickering blue glow, instead of a bright orange. The miners could work but fifteen minutes out of every hour in that intense heat. Ice continually was transported to them in the shafts and each miner used up about 95 pounds of the ice/water mix in a shift. Despite the use of fans, ventilation was extremely poor, and the conditions wrought havoc on the men.

Dangers were everywhere and the work was gruelling. Fires were commonplace, since so much timber was in the mines and explosions from black powder (later, dynamite, blasting caps, and low voltage detonators) crippled many. The tamping of the powder and the crimping of the blasting caps were moments of severest hazard. Moreover, over a period of time, the numerous blasts produced severe hearing impairment.

Flooding was frequent as new tunnels were dug. Also, men were commonly scalded by sudden, steaming, hot-water springs breaking through the walls. Hernias were common and many wore the popular bulb belt to hold them in, especially in the case of the muckers, men who loaded and pushed the ore carts out of the mine. Their usual quota was 16 cars loaded and pushed out each eight-hour shift.

Those who chiselled and drilled in hard-rock mining, sometimes granite, gave the world the memorable phrase, "Deep Enough!" It came to refer not only to the hole drilled, but meant, in effect, "That's as far as I go," or, "I've had it for now," or "I've reached my limit—any more and you can shove it!" Eventually, heavy, compressed-air drills replaced much of the hand work required by

the manual drilling of “single jacking” or “double jacking.” However, most miners were unhappy with these labor-saving devices, for they saved manual labor at the expense of the miners’ health. The new drills produced a fine dust that got caught in the miner’s lungs and produced an irritating condition termed, silicosis. This was not only disabling but often life-threatening as well. Aptly, the drills were named, “widow makers.”

As indicated earlier, ventilation in the mines was bad and sanitation little better, for the mines usually were “90 by 90,” a reference to prevailing heat and humidity. Everywhere was the dank smell of rotting timbers and black powder smoke, combining with the stench of urine and human excrement. Toilet cars were few and far between as they didn’t bring in payloads of ore.(13)

Conditions were especially bad at the deep Comstock and a German engineer named Adolf Sutro proposed to the owners that a separate air and ore track tunnel be built providing drainage and needed ventilation. The tunnel would be built on a gravity slant, loaded ore cars could be run downhill. The proposal was for a five mile tunnel, the biggest such tunnel in the West. Mine owners balked at the proposal, for from their point of view, they had no need to make the miner’s life easier. But eventually Sutro won out and the tunnel was started. However, the tunnel was taking so much time that while it was yet being completed, the mine’s silver resources were near to being exhausted. Realizing this himself, Sutro sold his shares for a handsome profit and then completed the tunnel. A thirteen-year project, it served only a declining business. Himself a millionaire by now, Sutro turned to politics, becoming the Mayor of San Francisco.

After the riches of the Comstock ran out, other places in Nevada yielded the precious gold and silver. Among these were Tonapah, south of Carson City and, later, the big “Jumbo” mine at Goldfield, now areas of secret military operations. But the time had

come for miners to move farther east for richer diggings and it was Montana's turn to give up its own mother lodes. There, at Alder Gulch, Bannack, Virginia City, and Last Chance Gulch, they found another genuine bonanza. By the end of 1863, some 10,000 miners were working the streams and some ten million dollars in gold dust was shipped from there. After flirting with Bannack as the capitol, the title was transferred to Virginia City located about one hundred miles northwest of Yellowstone National Park. Today, it is a ghost town preserved as a national historical site. Finally, Last Chance Gulch, some eighty miles north, struck it rich, renamed itself Helena, and became the permanent capital.

Where gold is easily won, however, it is just as easily lost and Virginia City and its environs were no exception. Organized thieves plagued the area as men sought gold without working for it. In response and in order to protect themselves, the miners and the merchants organized one of the most famous and effective vigilante organizations in the West. The law thereabouts had been so corrupt that the sheriff, Henry Plummer, himself headed up the gang of thieves. The vigilantes struck quickly, and, within a few weeks, there were "twenty-two men dead . . . and dozens of others scared out of the country because they saw the handwriting on the wall."(14)

When the East heard of this Montana strike, their miners came in droves but had to come by a new route developed along the east side of the mighty Big Horn Mountains by John Bozeman and John Jacobs. It was to be known as the Bozeman Trail, or better known as the Bloody Bozeman, since it went through the Powder River country, favorite hunting ground of two Sioux Chieftains, Red Cloud and Crazy Horse. Most of the action of the Indian Wars of the sixties and seventies took place along that route to the goldfields by Virginia City. But that is another story.

Through the sixties, then, not only had El Dorado been found,

but Silverado was there right next to it, and the Silver Kings who profited some three hundred million dollars from the precious metal, built San Francisco into one of the most cosmopolitan yet wild west towns in the world. The *nouveau riche* were having a field day, while wildness was turning inexorably toward civilized ways.

Prospectors now made new discoveries not only in gold and silver, but, equally important, in copper. The age of electricity was being born and copper would hurry it along. Gold and silver were found then in Utah and in Arizona. In the latter, a prospector named Ed Schieffelen, searched what appeared to be the barren desert and was told by others that the only thing he would find would be his tombstone. In a way, he proved them right, for he struck it rich there and the town of Tombstone came into being, as a testimonial to his persistence. Eventually, the area would give up eighty million dollars in silver.

Gold had been discovered and exploited in the far West, but few thought that rich finds would be found elsewhere. However, as early as 1849, the year of Sutter's find in California, some Cherokee Indians who were heading toward California, panned for and discovered some gold in the Platte river. The area was not far from where the river split into two forks, the north one moving toward Ft. Laramie, the south one toward the Colorado Rockies and in the direction of Pike's Peak. Not much was made of this, but, in subsequent years, Colorado would share its glory in gold with the rest of the world. Sporadically, gold was discovered on Cherry Creek, a tributary of the South Platte River. and then at Auraria. Although Pike's Peak was some sixty-five miles south, its name was used to indicate the rush and the rallying call was for "Pike's Peak or Bust." An economically depressed East heeded the message and gathered up a full head of steam, some 50,000 men and their families heading west. Most were disappointed and quickly

returned to the world they knew but with a different message on their wagon canvas. This time it read, "Busted by God!"(15)

But gold and silver were in the "fourteeners" of the Colorado Rockies, and they showed up in Clear Creek, Gregory Gulch, and areas around Blackhawk, Central City and Idaho Springs, and Fairplay. Nonetheless, during the first ten years of Colorado mining, the territory produced only five per cent of the riches produced by California in its first decade of gold discovery.

Miners necessarily are movers and their rambling now took them about one hundred and twenty miles southwest of Denver, by the present town of Leadville, at over ten thousand feet, the highest city in the nation. The date was April of 1860 and gold was struck near there at a site called Oro, but known to the locals as California Gulch. In a short time, some five thousand miners were working its placers, but within three years the gold was gone. The city, small as it was, remained, however, and one of its later shopkeepers and its postmaster was a man by the name of H.A.W. Tabor. Originally hailing from Vermont, he and his wife, Augusta, tried homesteading in the West, but quit when he got fired up with enthusiasm in the Pike's Peak rush. He had been prospecting unsuccessfully for over a decade but by 1878, was fairly settled down. Few visited the place, since its gold had been worked out, but occasionally some optimistic souls would come around to rework the tailings, looking like dogs for scraps from a sumptuous meal. Two such men entered Tabor's store, seeking a grubstake in supplies in return for part ownership in any paying claim they made. Tabor obliged, as he was wont to do, for despite his more sedentary life now, his heart still was with the miners. His own search for a glory hole was a disappointed dream, but perhaps he could share in that dream kept alive in others younger than he.

Within a short time, his debtors discovered a rich vein of quartz and silver and the kind of blackish sand discovered around

the old Comstock, which proved to be a sign of rich silver carbonate. They named the mine "Little Pittsburg" and Tabor's grubstake share of \$17 to \$64 turned into profits of one half million dollars before he sold his part of the claim for one million dollars.(16) Mining was tough at an altitude of over 10,000 feet and one had to become acclimated to it to do any kind of day's work but the the rewards were worth the tribulations.

With his own profits earned from Little Pittsburg, Tabor now came into possession of the Midas touch and he bought other mines, parlaying his winnings. His luck was so great that some con men sold him a worthless mine they had salted with gold dust, only to find after Tabor bought it, that a few feet of further diggings brought him another bonanza.

This was the silver boom of Colorado, and much of it occurred directly on sites where gold had petered out. The general area became the great city of Leadville, and it was Horace Tabor who put in on the map as each investment brought him bigger profits and the town greater fame. Unfortunately, his wife, Augusta, who, as keeper of a boarding house, had to be penurious for so many years, could not change her old ways. This no longer befit the wealth of Tabor, who now belonged to the *nouveau riche* and he put her aside by manipulating both civil and ecclesiastical law. He then married a Catholic divorcee, who in her own way was to become as famous as he. She was the vivacious Elizabeth McCourt Doe, better known as Baby Doe. Unlike Augusta, she knew how to spend money and did. A woman of lavish tastes, she bought sets of stagecoaches and horses, both of whose colors and decorations matched what she was wearing on any given day. Tabor loved her spendthrift habits and himself spread the cause of culture by building two opera houses, one in Leadville and one in Denver. The former, "at the time was the most magnificent structure between St. Louis and San Francisco."(17), was built in a record one hundred days at a nearly equal

cost in thousands of dollars. It seated some 800 patrons and opened in 1879. Among its performers was no less a personage than Oscar Wilde. With money came power and influence and Tabor served as Lieutenant Governor of the newly created State of Colorado. His second marriage was attended by President Chester Arthur.

Yet the old story of “easy come, easy go” held true for Tabor’s money as it did for the wealth of many others. The money he spent now was in excess of income, for silver dropped drastically in price because of the repeal in 1883 of the supportive Sherman Silver Act, and, eventually, Tabor died a pauper in 1899. On his deathbed, he told Baby Doe that whatever she sold, she should hang on to their Matchless Mine, for he believed it would yield more riches once again. She did hang on to it and lived there in a shack during the hard mountain winters and the hail-driven summers, coming out only to get groceries and other bare necessities. In purchasing these necessities, she always told the merchants to charge it to her account, much as she did in her days of wealth. Out of compassion and remembrance of her spendthrift days, the merchants played the game as though nothing had changed. Her life followed this pattern for years until finally at the age of 73 in 1935 she was found frozen to death at the Matchless shack. So ended the era of Leadville and the Colorado silver bonanza. All in all, it was luckier than most, for it had two lives, one in gold and one in silver. Who could ask for more?

There would be one more great bonanza in Colorado and that took place around the end of the 19th century. It is a story of Cripple Creek—a story of Robert Womack, a cowboy, a story of luck, riches, and labor violence, but it merits separate treatment elsewhere.(18)

The gold era was short-lived, much like that of other western ventures, and with its passing, we are left only with a sense of nostalgia. To the workers, the mines were not simply holes in the

ground, but personal things, as the names of mines indicated. Those names ring with a sense of love and authenticity as is evidenced in “Emma,” “Lucky Cuss,” “Independence,” “Molly Brown,” “Matchless,” “Rough and Ready,” and “Vulture.” Each has its own story to tell about the human condition. The nineteenth century gold era is gone, but while it lived, it made its presence known and, in so doing, shaped America and the people who dwelt within her borders.

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Endnotes

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7. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.
8. Howard R. Lamar (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the American West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, c. 1977), p. 449.
9. Gold and Silver, 28.
10. Jay Monaghan (ed.), *The Book of the American West* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), p. 239.
11. For a history of the Cornish miners, see A. L. Rouse, *The Cousin Jacks: The Cornish in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

12. Frank Crampton, *Deep Enough* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, c. 1956), p. 71.
13. See Arthur W. Thurner, "The Western Federation of Miners in Two Copper Camps," *Montana*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring, 1983), pp. 38-42.
14. Dorothy M. Johnson, *The Bloody Bozeman* (New York: McGraw-Hill, c. 1971), p. 100.
15. *Gold and Silver*, 55.
16. *Book of the West*, 169. Stephen M. Voynic opts for the slightly larger sum. See his "The Tabor Opera House," in *True West*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (June, 1987), p. 22. The entire article on the Opera house is interesting and informative.
17. *Gold and Silver*, 234.
18. See Gerald F. Kreyche, *Visions of the American West* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

