



POPULAR
CULTURE
REVIEW

Volume 19 No 1, Winter 2008

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.

Thank you all,
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Volume 19, no. 1
Winter 2008

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From the Editor's Desk

Last week as I filled out my "Diversity" form for UNLV, it struck me once more how inclusive of "diversity" popular culture study has always been. While I haven't gone back to check, I believe that every issue of *Popular Culture Review* has contained articles increasing our understanding of the complex relationships between race, gender, nationality, age, and popular culture, whether in film, music, comic strips, literature, advertising, or any of the other elements that make up the sea of popular culture in which we swim. This issue, as you will see, is no exception.

Although *PCR* is 19 years old this year, its parent organization, Far West Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association, is celebrating its 20th anniversary (it took us an extra year to get the journal off the ground). Had someone told me 20 years ago that I'd still be putting on conferences in 2008, I'd have told them they were crazy. Yet here I am, and this conference boasts a healthy 150-person registration with topics as diverse as the participants, who this year come from all over the United States, Canada, Mexico, and even Saudi Arabia.

On another note entirely, frequent journal contributor and conference participant Armand Singer died this year at the age of 92. A few weeks before his death, although ill and in the hospital, he called me both to chat and to make certain that his article, "'Filthy' Lewker Takes on Assorted Mountaineering Miscreants," had reached me. It had, and runs in this issue. Like Armand himself, it's funny, scholarly, and adventure-filled, proof that his intellectual capacities never diminished. For those of you interested in learning more about him, a blog called "Where's Armand" (http://uechi.typepad.com/wheres_armand/) celebrates his life, and what a life it was! After the conference last year, with ribs cracked from a bathtub fall, he flew to Patagonia, because, as he told me, "I've never seen those mountains and I'd better get on it."

Armand was living proof that you don't have to be young to understand popular culture. Although he was a traditional scholar, he was as up on Harry Potter and all forms of adventure as he was on pop music and jazz.

He had a knack for calling me out of the blue when I was feeling down to regale me with a recent exploit such as a tandem parachute jump made in his late 80s, yet another descent into the Grand Canyon, or a whirlwind drive across the United States behind the wheel of his fast car, always preceded or ended with a limerick made up on the spot. (Some of you may remember his propensity for reeling off limericks. Of special note was his limerick presentation at last year's conference, where he had the entire audience in stitches.) When he finished, I always felt much better, and much younger. Rock on, Armand, wherever you are!

On a happier note, universal genius H. Peter Steeves is gifting our 20th Anniversary Meeting with a multimedia keynote presentation we guarantee you won't forget.

Finally, as always, we solicit your manuscripts for *PCR*.

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The Persistence of a Nuclear Threat: *Testament* (1983) and *Red Dawn* (1984) as Cultural Narratives of the Reagan Years

In his 1985 State of the Union address, President Ronald Wilson Reagan, basking in the glow of his electoral landslide victory over Democratic challenger Walter Mondale, claimed a mandate for his vision for a Second American Revolution. The Presidential oratory envisioned

... a revolution carrying us to new heights of progress by pushing back frontiers of knowledge and space, a revolution of spirit that taps the soul of America; enabling us to summon greater strength than we have ever known; and a revolution that carries beyond our shores the golden promise of human freedom in a world at peace.¹

Much of the popular support accorded the Reagan presidency was due to the administration's skillful manipulation of a domestic agenda which championed tax cuts, government deregulation, dismantling the welfare state, and providing market solutions to the nation's economic concerns. On the other hand, the expansionist rhetoric of Reagan's 1985 State of the Union message indicated that the so-called Reagan revolution assumed an activist foreign policy in which American perceptions of democracy and market solutions would be aggressively pursued and imposed upon the world stage.

The foreign policy of the Reagan administration echoed the rhetoric of President Woodrow Wilson, from whom Reagan derived his middle name. Wilsonian idealism extolled with missionary zeal America's duty to make the world safe for democracy and American investments.² What Reagan proposed was to renew the nation's sense of mission and American exceptionalism exemplified in Wilsonian rhetoric and the Puritan legacy of America as "a city upon a hill." International developments in the 1960s and 1970s undermined much of the nation's self confidence which Reagan sought to restore. The national malaise attributed to Reagan's presidential predecessor, Jimmy Carter, was a product of numerous overlapping factors, including: the American experience in Vietnam; Watergate and the erosion of faith in government and leaders; an Arab oil embargo exposed the nation's oil dependency, contributing to higher energy prices and inflation; the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran and taking of hostages by Iranian students; a military mission which failed to rescue the American hostages in Tehran; civil wars in Central America provoked anxiety that pro-Castro and anti-American forces, such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, posed a threat to American interests; and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan reinvigorated the Cold War.

President Reagan exploited these insecurities and provided a sense of purpose for Americans on the international stage by rekindling Cold War fears of a monolithic communist movement centered in Moscow. Describing the Soviet Union as the “evil empire” responsible for threats to American interests and democracy in Western Europe, Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and Central America, the Reagan administration won Congressional approval for a \$1.2 trillion increase in defense spending.

Thus, Reagan successfully exploited simplistic Hollywood conceptions of the good-guy white hats opposed to the evil figures in black hats and outfits. Indeed, historians have noted the extent to which the public policies of the Reagan White House were shaped by the former actor’s Hollywood experiences both on and off the screen. In Ronald Reagan’s Hollywood, Stephen Vaughn argues that during the 1940s and 1950s, the nation’s film capital was divided over many of the same issues which dominated American political debate in the 1980s:

matters involving communism, liberalism, welfare, the revival of patriotism, national defense, the role of Judeo-Christianity in entertainment and politics, women and the family, sexual behavior, anti-Semitism and ethnicity, racism and civil rights, the use of history, and freedom of expression to name a few.³

While his film past certainly exerted considerable influence, the President also employed contemporary Hollywood symbols from the popular *Star Wars* series to denigrate the Soviet Union and celebrate his Strategic Defense Initiative.

The role played by popular culture, notwithstanding, scholarly interpretations vary regarding the impact of Reagan’s defense build-up and targeting of the Soviet Union. Reagan partisans credited the President with ending the Cold War and ushering in the collapse of Soviet totalitarianism. Critics of the Reagan administration, on the other hand, found the military spending and bellicose rhetoric dangerous, crediting the avoidance of a wider conflict to Reagan’s luck and policies of his Soviet counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev. In *The Unfinished Journey*, William Chafe asserts that the spirit of negotiation and compromise which marked the final years of the Reagan was “above all a gift of Gorbachev, who for his reasons had entered into the world stage with a commitment to radical change.”⁴

The pivotal nuclear discourse of the 1980s was hardly limited to traditional venues of political debate as the popular culture art medium of the feature motion picture sought to both influence and reflect the national conversation. In *The Films of the Eighties*, William J. Palmer maintains that popular film, placed within historical and cultural context, comprises insightful social history texts. Palmer writes, “The importance of film history lies not in the images or themes of individual films but in the emplotted metaphors and motifs shared by groups of films that together portray, approach, and even comment upon a specific historical event or sociohistorical trend.” In a similar vein, Robert Burgoyne

argues that perceptions of national identity are articulated and debated in cinematic representations of the American past, extolling “film’s ability to hold up to scrutiny and drive home the emotional meaning of the imagined community of nation and its bruising inadequacies.”⁵

The film texts of the 1980s suggest a meaningful societal discourse on the nature of nuclear war and the Cold War. Two of the most fascinating nuclear war texts of the 1980s are *Testament* (1983) and *Red Dawn* (1984); polar-extreme films which introduce a feminist and adolescent male perspective, respectively, on the crucial topic of World War III and a nuclear holocaust. The Hollywood discourse on nuclear disaster during the Reagan era, however, began in 1979 with *The China Syndrome* examining questions of safety in the nation’s nuclear power plants. Box office receipts for *The China Syndrome* were strong as, in a case of life imitating art, the film benefited from the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania. This commercial success was followed by the documentary *The Atomic Cafe* (1982), in which filmmakers Joyce Loader along with Pierce and Kevin Rafferty construct an amusing tale of how the atomic bomb was packaged to the American people during the early years of the Cold War. In *WarGames* (1983), director John Badham fashioned a modern fable in which a young man played by Matthew Broderick brings the world to the edge of disaster by playing a game with a military computer. The film concludes that it is better never to play.

Film texts addressing the Cold War in the early 1980s from a more conservative perspective included *Firefox* (1982), featuring Clint Eastwood; *The Osterman Weekend* (1983); and even George Lucas’s *Return of the Jedi* (1983). In a perceptive review of *Return of the Jedi*, which was the number one film at the box office in 1983, critic Robin Wood argues that viewers were attracted to the childish irresponsibility of the *Star Wars* saga where the patriarchal values of an earlier America could be reclaimed. Wood concludes, “Thus the purpose of the *Star Wars* films and related works is to put everyone back in his/her place, construct us as dependent children, and reassure us that it would all come out right in the end: trust Father.”⁶

Enter Ronald Reagan as the avuncular figure who would restore America and the patriarchy to its rightful place. The chaos and confusion of the 1970s is redefined in more simplistic terms as the evil empire, Darth Vader and the Soviet Union, versus the forces of freedom—America, Luke Skywalker and Han Solo, the Contras in Nicaragua, Islamic rebels in Afghanistan, and other freedom fighters from around the world and across the galaxy. Reagan, like filmmaker Lucas, was an astute barometer for American values. After the ideological confusion wrought by the Vietnam War, Reagan sought to reassure Americans with the more comforting and apparently less complex solutions of the 1950s. In reinvigorating the Cold War, Reagan tapped the sense of nostalgia for a simpler past/future so prevalent in the Lucas films. And Reagan did not forget the special effects, referring to his Strategic Defense Initiative of 1985 as the *Star*

Wars program, employing satellites and lasers to guarantee that the United States would never be vulnerable to assault by nuclear warheads.

Those in the nuclear freeze movement who were opposed to Reagan's vision were galvanized by Jonathan Schell's best-selling *The Fate of the Earth*, denouncing the deterrence doctrine as suicidal. From the halls of Congress to New England town meetings and streets of major American and Western European cities, activists, citizens, and politicians opposed expanding the nuclear stockpile and installing American missiles in Europe. These critics perceived the Cold War rhetoric and policies of the Reagan administration as dangerous and reckless, raising the specter of nuclear war and planetary destruction.⁷

Following in the wake of Schell's book and the burgeoning nuclear freeze movement, political controversy and media hoopla greeted the November 20, 1983, ABC television production *The Day After*, depicting the impact of nuclear war upon the inhabitants of Lawrence, Kansas. Even before the film's airing, conservative critics such as Reverend Jerry Falwell were calling upon advertisers to withdraw their support for a film characterized by the political right as supporting unilateral disarmament. Responding to these allegations, ABC executives championed *The Day After* as a medium for an intelligent exchange of opinions on the arms race, scheduling pundits from various political perspectives for a post show synopsis entitled "Viewpoint." The film aired to approximately 100 million viewers, raking second to the record 106 million people screening the final episode of *M*A*S*H* on CBS. However, due to the squeamishness of many advertisers, ABC earned more prestige than profit.⁸

In many ways *The Day After* was simply another disaster epic to which Americans had become accustomed because of past Hollywood films such as *The Poseidon Adventure*, *The Towering Inferno*, *Airport*, *Earthquake*, and *Meteor*. The formulaic approach of *The Day After*, pioneered by producer Irwin Allen in the disaster genre, was challenged by a more sophisticated depiction of nuclear holocaust in *Testament*. The film was directed by documentary filmmaker Lynn Littman and written by John Sacret Young based on a short story by Carol Amen in *Ms. Magazine*. The film was originally made for public television's American Playhouse, but Paramount picked up the film for a limited theatrical release. While hardly a blockbuster, *Testament*, which was made on a small television budget of \$500,000, earned \$1,500,000 in its theatrical release. Its star Jane Alexander was also honored with an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress.⁹

The film pares down the subject of nuclear war to its impact upon one suburban community and family. Carol Wetherly (Jane Alexander) and her family live in the small northern California community of Hamlin. Carol's husband Tom (William Devane) is in San Francisco on a business trip when the bombs begin to fall. The responsibility of caring for their children, Brad (Ross Harris), Mary Liz (Roxana Zal), and Scottie (Lukas Haas), in the aftermath of the nuclear catastrophe falls upon Carol. Hamlin is not a target for the attack,

and the film includes no footage of nuclear devastation, but as radiation poisoning begins to take its toll upon the family, Carol and the citizens of Hamlin seek to maintain some shreds of dignity as they go about their daily routine, preparing for death but retaining a sense of love and compassion.

The critical response to *Testament* was mixed. Some reviewers found the film to be overly sentimental and understated in comparison with *The Day After*. David Sterritt of the *Christian Science Monitor* believed filmmaker Littman to be full of good intentions, but the critic concluded that *Testament* was “superficial and a disservice to its own worthy cause.” Sterritt modified his opinion somewhat in a second review as *Testament* began to gain an audience. Nevertheless, he still found the efforts of Carol and her fellow citizens to try and deal with such daily concerns as garbage collection to be “dangerously sanguine.” But Sterritt failed to consider what other choices those confronted with death and destruction have other than to try and hang on to family and what remains of their disrupted lives. Sterritt concluded that the melodrama of *Testament* paled in comparison with the visual images of *The Day After*, asserting

On a more purely cinematic level, I was also struck by *The Day After* scenes of missiles rising and mushroom clouds billowing over real landscapes with real people in the foreground. Incredibly, nothing quite like these images has appeared before now in the American mass media . . .¹⁰

David Denby of *New York* echoed the opinions expressed by Sterritt. Writing in a sarcastic voice, Denby asserted

The point about nuclear holocaust is precisely that it defeats the significance of any individual’s death. To insist on the opposite by reducing the apocalypse to the destruction of a single, loving family is simply to avoid the staggering difficulties of saying anything interesting about an unprecedented human situation. *Testament* spares us the horror of disintegrating flesh or mass panic. The movie is so tasteful, so discreet, so noble that it makes you want to scream with boredom and irritation.

In conclusion, Denby condemns Carol for not committing suicide and, instead, seeking to maintain the dignity of her family as she copes with the death of her daughter and youngest son.¹¹

In finding fault with Carol’s desire to retain her family’s dignity in the midst of crisis, Denby and Sterritt, both males, fail to understand the feminist subtext of this film astutely noted by Karen Valenzuela in a piece for *Film Quarterly*. Echoing the feminist refrain that the personal is political, Valenzuela argues, “*Testament*’s content is wholly emotional and personal, the politics of nuclear war deriving from the human response to its occurrence—while *The*

Day After is presented within a framework of international political events leading up a major nuclear exchange, the human response to which seems more afterthought than the point of the story."¹²

In dedicating the film to her family and in production notes, Littman makes it clear that *Testament* is told from the perspective of a mother. Littman acknowledges that her life changed after the birth of a child. While men discuss the politics of nuclear war, mothers and women assert "this simply cannot be allowed to happen." Accordingly, in *Testament* there is no explanation given for the nuclear onslaught. After burying her youngest son, Carol pounds the earth, cursing those responsible for the fate of the earth. Scottie is equally dead whether the Soviets or the Americans launched the first weapon. The geopolitical considerations of the Reagan administration regarding Soviet expansionism in Afghanistan or Central America have no relevance for Carol when her daughter asks what sex is like; for the young woman will never enjoy the opportunity of such physical intimacy with someone she loves. And in a desperate attempt to maintain this human touch, Carol kisses the priest Father Hollis (Philip Anglim). In describing Carol's motivation in this scene as "lustful," reviewer John Coleman cynically misses the entire point of the film. For war always takes its toll on the women and children who are left to fend for themselves while the men are away at war. It is the mother who has to hold the family together, like Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*, during times of crisis. It is the impact of war upon family which makes *Testament* such a powerful text. As Sheila Johnston notes in *The Monthly Film Bulletin*, "*Testament's* effect is devastating because it plumbs the potent emotional wellsprings of soap opera, it is as much 'about' the nuclear family as it is the atomic bomb."¹³

The feminist subtext of the film is apparent in the first third of the film which depicts the domestic life of the Wetherly family. It becomes apparent that Tom is often an absent father, and that the primary responsibilities of raising the family are deposited upon Carol well before the advent of the nuclear holocaust. Tom has the time to take a morning bicycle ride with his son Brad, but when Carol asks him to carry out the garbage Tom rushes off to work. Carol is left to handle such domestic routines in addition to preparing the children for school and pursuing her own career. When Carol is awake late at night writing in her journal, Tom does not want to engage in conversation. Instead, he sees this as an opportunity to engage in sex rather than discuss Carol's needs. And even the father-son bicycle ride reveals a selfish patriarchal aspect of Tom's personality. Brad is unable to pedal to the top of a steep hill, so his father completes the ride alone, explaining to his son that someday he will be a man who can navigate the climb. Thus, the son is initiated into the competitive patriarchal world of capitalism.

Yet, when his father is absent and apparently killed in San Francisco, Brad steps up and assumes the responsibility of supporting his mother, siblings, and community. Rather than the arbitrary ascent of a steep incline, Brad rides his bicycle throughout the community seeking to help others. When community

leader Henry Abhart (Leon Ames) lacks the energy to employ his short-wave radio, Brad assumes the task. Brad learns that being a man is really about assuming responsibility for others, something his father failed to teach him. Yet, Carol loves Tom, and she spends time screening home movies of an idyllic suburban family life torn asunder, even if the reality of that life as revealed in the first third of the film had its shortcomings.

Testament is also about children and what the world owes them. The children of Hamlin, California are putting on a play version of *The Pied Piper*. Although the world is collapsing around them, the children persist in completing and performing the play. The film's message is quite apparent in the play's final line that the children will return when the world deserves them. The character of the mentally challenged Japanese boy Hiroshi (Gerry Murillo) is perhaps overdone in reminding viewers of what happened to the children of Hiroshima. But it is difficult to understand how the disturbing scenes of Carol caring for the dying Scottie can be interpreted as being banal or overly sentimental. Carol's sense of helplessness to save her child comes across poignantly as she attempts to bathe Scottie in a wash basin, but before she can even complete the bathing process, Scottie, suffering from radiation sickness, fouls the water with diarrhea. This inability to save one's child is every parent's nightmare and not simply limited to the white suburban community depicted in *Testament*.

But in the final analysis *Testament* refuses to engage in despair. Shunning the suicide solution, Carol and Brad celebrate what will undoubtedly be his last birthday. Even when confronted with the harsh realities of a nuclear holocaust, Carol and Brad demonstrate the perseverance of the human spirit. In agreement with the more feminist reading of this film text, Rex Reed of the *New York Post* praised the performance of Jane Alexander as Carol Wetherly, writing, "Terrified, stubborn, refusing to give up on civilization, finally robotized by the truth, she never lets the candle of hope burn out in her eyes. In a performance that can truly be described as devastating, she shows, with her primal love for her children, the best reason of all why we must never allow nuclear war to happen." Reed concluded his positive review by proclaiming, "*Testament* must be seen by every person alive who still has a conscience, and if this were a sane world it would be required viewing in Washington and Moscow. It is a shattering accomplishment that will haunt you long after you leave the theater."¹⁴ Texts such as *Testament* marked the high watermark of the nuclear freeze and antiwar movement in the early 1980s, for nuclear political and film discourses were unable to alter the course of American foreign policy. The Reagan administration's bellicose attitude toward the Soviets remained unabated. On September 1, 1983, a Korean Air Lines civilian jet, flying off course over Sakhalin Island, was destroyed by Soviet planes. Despite intelligence reports which indicated that the tragedy was the result of incompetence and confusion, the President seized upon the situation to label the Soviets as "inhuman, barbarous, and uncivilized." The accompanying belief that the United States needed to counter Soviet influence by assuming a larger

military presence in the world resulted in the death of over 200 marines at the hands of suicide bombers in Lebanon. The disaster in Lebanon and subsequent military withdrawal from that nation was followed by an American invasion of Grenada in the Caribbean, ostensibly to protect American medical students from a Marxist dictatorship. American forces quickly prevailed, preventing the construction of an airfield by Cuban laborers and soldiers. President Reagan proclaimed that American valor checked Castro's expansionism, and the misjudgments of military intervention in Lebanon were lost in the glow of victory in the island nation of Grenada. As William Chafe observes in *The Unfinished Journey*, Reagan "appeared to the American public as a hero rebuilding America's vaunted strength and dominance in the world."¹⁵ These images were crucial in explaining Reagan's 1984 re-election.

The militaristic values and anti-Soviet paranoia extolled by the Reagan administration found cinematic representation in director John Milius's popular adolescent fantasy *Red Dawn*. A talented screenwriter, Milius penned the scripts for such notable films as *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972), *Magnum Force* (1974), and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). In fact, he is credited with the infamous Clint Eastwood line, "Go ahead. Make my day." As a director, Milius made well received films such as *Dillinger* (1974); *The Wind and the Lion* (1975)—featuring his historical hero Theodore Roosevelt—and *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), which introduced Arnold Schwarzenegger to American audiences. The conservative Milius celebrates men who eschew compromise and are willing to fight for their ideas. An avid hunter, he has served on the board of directors for the National Rifle Association, and in his films Milius often equates manhood with hunting and survival in the wilderness, describing his political philosophy as either "zen-fascism" or "zen-anarchism." *Red Dawn* proved a perfect vehicle for Milius to pursue his ideological agenda.¹⁶

The implausible plot line of *Red Dawn* embraces the domino theory of communist expansionism. The film begins with Soviet and Cuban troops parachuting into the school grounds of a rural high school in Calumet, Colorado. No explanation is ever offered as to why these forces would have any interest in this small town or target the high school for an assault. As the paratroopers descend upon the school, a black teacher is lecturing the students on Genghis Khan and the violent Asiatic hordes—perhaps establishing a connection for the audience between the Soviets and the Mongols while denying the more civilized European origins of the Russian people. The teacher peacefully approaches the soldiers and is immediately shot. These modern day barbarians require no motivation to become mindless killing machines, as they begin to gun down teachers and students in an indiscriminant manner (It is interesting to note that these scenes were filmed before the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School.). Led by brothers Jed and Matt Eckert (Patrick Swayze and Charlie Sheen), members of the school football team, whose mascot is the Wolverines, escape the assault by hiding in the mountains. When the boys discover that their parents are killed or imprisoned at the local drive-in, which serves as a concentration

camp and re-education center, the Wolverines become guerilla warriors and a major thorn in the sides of the invaders, who, in typical war film propaganda style, appear to be both lethal and incompetent.

Milius wastes little time in describing the scenario which led to the outbreak of hostilities. Some brief introductory credits and the testimony of a downed American pilot, Andy Tanner (Powers Boothe) tell viewers that the Soviets are desperate due to poor grain harvests and unrest in Poland. In a slap against environmentalism and European pacifism, the Green Party assumes power in Germany while Western Europe, with the exception of Great Britain, decides, in the words of Tanner, "to sit this one out." Meanwhile, revolution breaks out in Mexico, while Cubans and Sandinistas from Nicaragua infiltrate America's borders, sabotaging the nation's defense. Limited nuclear war then destroys the nation's largest cities, with the war degenerating or progressing into the individual manly combat glorified by Milius. America stands alone, and patriots rally to her defense.

The Milius scenario for World War III is also an indictment of American liberalism, an ideology of weakness which the director perceives as threatening national security. Parallel to the McCarthyism of the 1950s, *Red Dawn* attempts to link liberalism with communism. If not outright reds, liberals are soft on communism and their pacifism places America at risk. For example, liberal immigration policies allow Cubans and Nicaraguans to indiscriminately cross the American border with Mexico, paving the way for an even more massive invasion. In the white, paternalistic America embraced by Milius, Latinos are suspect.

Gun control advocates are also a danger to American liberties. One of the first actions taken by Cuban commander Bella (Ron O'Neal) is to have his subordinates seize gun store purchase records of law-abiding Americans who acquired their weapons under misguided liberal gun control legislation. Supporters of the National Rifle Association must have felt vindicated by the shot of an invasion victim's body lying under a bumper sticker reading, "They can take my gun when they pry it from my dead cold fingers." Perhaps if the dead man was armed it would not have been so easy to shoot him down in the streets.

Revisionist historians also draw the wrath of Milius. One of the film's opening shots focuses upon a statue of Teddy Roosevelt, celebrating his role in winning the West and raising his troop of cowboys known as the Rough Riders who saw action in the Spanish-American War (Milius's admiration for Roosevelt was also made apparent in his made-for-television film *Rough Riders* extolling the future President as a hero of the Spanish-American War.). When the Soviets occupy the area, however, they erect their own monument commemorating the peasant Indian groups who struggled against the subjugation of Anglo capitalists and imperialists. Milius seems to equate telling Western history from the perspective of Native Americans with communism.

The iconography of the film is complete with a final shot of a statue erected to the Wolverines for their patriotic service during the Third World War.

The political ideology of Milius also celebrates the values of manhood which apparently can only be realized through combat. Thus, Jed and Matt are football players, warriors, and hunters, who celebrate the killing of a deer by drinking the blood of their prey. Liberals are politicians who make their living through words and compromise—they are not men of action. Thus, Daryl's (Darren Dalton) father who is the mayor becomes a collaborator with the communists, even forcing his son to swallow a tracking device which almost allows the Soviets and Cubans to capture the Wolverines. Fearing another betrayal, the Wolverines have no choice but to execute Daryl, who, after all, served as the school's student body president. Like Ronald Reagan running against the Washington establishment, Milius displays little use for politicians.

But the values for which the Wolverines are fighting are unclear. After the execution of Daryl, Matt asks how they are any different than the Soviets and Cubans. The best that the rather inarticulate Jed can come up with is the banal reply, "Because we live here." Rather than celebrating patriotism they appear to be more motivated by the command of Mr. Eckert (Harry Dean Stanton) that his sons avenge him. When Daryl suggests that the boys take a vote about continuing their resistance, Jed physically overpowers the smaller boy, making it clear that there will be no elections. It is somewhat of a fascist community in which no electoral consent is needed because Jed is a natural leader who embodies the values of the rebel community and demonstrates a willingness to use force against those who resist him, in addition to being the strongest. And, of course, he was also the quarterback of the football team. Jed appears to be the fascist dictator or man on horseback, and, indeed, in several scenes he does appear on horseback leading the group.

Issues of gender add further confusion to the muddled political ideology of *Red Dawn*. Wolverine sympathizer Mason (Ben Johnson) turns his "treasures," granddaughters Toni (Jennifer Grey) and Erica (Lea Thompson), over to the boys in order to protect the girls from sexual assault by the communists. The women resent being assigned tasks such as washing the dishes for the group, and they eventually become full-fledged fighting members of the Wolverines. But there is no sexual interest expressed by the boys. Instead, when the older American pilot Tanner demonstrates some attraction to Toni, Matt calls them "queers" for not joining the rest of the group in a violent game of tackle football.

While finding a respectable audience with right-wing ideologues and adolescent boys, *Red Dawn* was soundly condemned by the nation's film critics for making World War III look like fun. While acknowledging Milius's cinematic talents, Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* observed that *Red Dawn*

... provides an unusual glimpse into the mind of a certain kind of contemporary archconservative. It's not, heaven knows, the intellectual kind of arch conservative. Rather, it

exposes for all to see the cockeyed nightmares of those on the lunatic fringe, the self-styled patriots who might even embarrass the members of the John Birch Society.

The ideological implications of *Red Dawn* also concerned other critics. Writing in *New York* magazine, David Denby asserted, "Ever since *Dirty Harry*, the American right hasn't had a movie-poster icon it could call its own, but this movie may provide a few." Denby noted the irony of idolizing young partisan heroes fighting against a powerful and well armed adversary. Such heroic images, however, were usually drawn from the international left of World War II, as brave partisans (often communists) fought the Nazi occupiers in Yugoslavia, Greece, and France. In addition, the only sympathetic enemy figure in the film is the Cuban, Bella, who appears to be a Che Guevara-type figure. Such subtlety, however, was probably lost upon most film audiences and some politicians.¹⁷

Perhaps Lenny Rubenstein, writing in *Cineaste*, best conveys the extent to which American images of the cowboy and heroic warrior, celebrated by Milius, influenced the political environment of the mid-1980s. Rubenstein concluded that in *Red Dawn*, "The squinty-eyed toughness of the cowboy is melded to the nightmare image of invading Cubans and the rigors of wilderness pioneering to portray the slaughter of the last unarmed Russian soldier for the audience that has never shed a drop of blood, heard a shot fired in anger, or ever heard the whine of falling shells. Milius is playing the worst possible politics in a darkened hall from behind a screen. Even more horrifying is the possibility that his Panavision and Metrocolor feature is a pleasant dream to those in high places."¹⁸

Red Dawn, which earned nearly \$36 million in its U.S. release, and the re-election campaign of 1984 symbolized and marked the ascendancy of the Reagan administration's efforts to displace the legacy of defeat in Vietnam with a potent and vigorous foreign policy, restoring American greatness and manhood.¹⁹ However, the President's second term lacked the stridency of the early Reagan years. The unfolding Iran-Contra scandal exposed the impotency of much Reagan saber-rattling as well as the ideological inconsistencies of the administration's foreign policy.²⁰ And on the Soviet front; the peace offensive of Gorbachev led to the summits in Iceland, Geneva, and Moscow. Perhaps the anti-nuclear discourse of the early 1980s was having a residual effect as President Reagan and his new Soviet friend negotiated reductions to nuclear stockpiles. The bellicose rhetoric of the early Reagan years failed to fit with the international realities of the late 1980s as Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika failed to prevent the collapse of the Soviet empire and state.

Hollywood, nevertheless, continued to sign on with the Cold War. Noting the political and cultural context of Reagan ascendancy and impressed with box office receipts of films such as *Red Dawn*, in comparison with an antiwar film like *Testament*, Hollywood features of the late 1980s embraced a conservative Cold War ideology with such features as *Iron Eagle* (1985), *Rocky IV* (1985),

Rambo II (1986), and *Rambo III* (1988). In the last of the 1980s Cold War films, Hollywood returned to Los Alamos where the last blast of World War II and first flames of the Cold War were concocted. In *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989), director Roland Joffe laments how the military in the person of General Leslie Groves (Paul Newman) was able to gain control of the atomic bomb from the scientific community represented by Robert Oppenheimer (Dwight Schultz).²¹ While the film played loose with many of the facts surrounding the development of the bomb, the conclusion of *Fat Man and Little Boy* with the Alamogordo testing of the atomic bomb suggests that, unfortunately, the weapon is here to stay. There is a note of reluctant acceptance and resignation.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, nuclear discourse disappeared from Hollywood and American politics during the 1990s. The issue, however, reemerged after 9/11 with concerns that terrorists might gain control of nuclear weapons in addition to issues of nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea. In confronting these contemporary issues, the administration of President George W. Bush made claim to the Reagan legacy by cutting taxes, supporting deregulation, abandoning the Kyoto Accords, denouncing terrorism and asserting that one is either with the terrorists or the United States, and pursuing an aggressive foreign policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea, and Iran. Meanwhile, Islamic radicals have replaced communists as Hollywood villains. Although failure to embrace the invasion of Iraq or the war on terror leads to accusations that one does not support the troops or care about the security of the American people, Hollywood is beginning a discourse on American foreign policy and the national security state with such films as *Syriana* (2005) and *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005). But the most important area of concern for the age of terror remains the impact of this conflict upon individuals—regardless of nationality or religion. Accordingly, we are in need of another *Testament* to provide a framework in which to place contemporary concerns with war, family, and liberty. One would like to think that we put the adolescent war fantasies of *Red Dawn* behind us, but news reports that the military mission to capture Saddam Hussein was named “Red Dawn” with operations aimed against locations entitled “Wolverine One” and “Wolverine Two” are disturbing.²² If we are to move beyond the simplistic militaristic solutions proposed by President Reagan and the current administration for the issues of our time, let us hope that Hollywood and popular culture discourse will offer us more *Testaments* and fewer *Red Dawns*.

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Notes

¹ Ronald Reagan, “The Second American Revolution,” State of the Union Address, January 1985, cited in William H. Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff, eds., *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 441-446.

² For an interpretation of Wilsonian diplomacy which emphasizes how democratic rhetoric was employed in the defense of American economic interests, see Arno J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

³ For Ronald Reagan and Hollywood see Stephen Vaughn, *Ronald Reagan in Hollywood: Movies and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xi; Garry Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1987); Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); and Michael Paul Rogin, *Ronald Reagan: The Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁴ For accounts celebrating Reagan's leadership and statecraft for ending the Cold War see D. Erik Felton, ed., *A Shining City: The Legacy of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); and Dinesh D'Souza, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* (New York: Free Press, 1997). For more critical appraisals see William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 489–492; and Rogin, *Reagan: The Movie*; and Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

⁵ William J. Palmer, *The Films of the Eighties: A Social History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 6; and Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U. S. History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 6–7).

⁶ For a critical reading expressing misgivings regarding the popular frenzy surrounding the *Star Wars* saga see Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 164–174.

⁷ Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Samuel McCracken, "Fate of the Earth," *National Review*, 34 (July 23, 1982), 904; and Kai Erikson, *New York Times Book Review*, April 11, 1982, 3.

⁸ "TV as Rallying Force," *New York Times*, November 21, 1983, A1 and 35; and Robert McFadden, "Atomic War Film Provokes Nationwide Discussion," *New York Times*, November 22, 1983, A3; Anthony Lewis, "The Question After," *New York Times*, November 21, 1983, A21; George H. W. Bush, "Preserving Peace Through Deterrence," *New York Times*, November 21, 1983, A21; and Palmer, *The Films of the Eighties*, 194–200.

⁹ International Movie Data Base, "Testament," www.imdb.com/ (June 20, 2006).

¹⁰ David Sterritt, "Testament," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 25, 1983, 43; and David Sterritt, "Testament," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 29, 1983, 19.

¹¹ David Denby, "Testament," *New York*, November 14, 1983, 117.

¹² Karen Valenzuela, "Testament," *Film Quarterly* (Spring 1984), 47.

¹³ Sheila Johnston, "Testament," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1984, 89; and John Coleman, "Testament," *New Statesman*, March 9, 1984, 29.

¹⁴ Rex Reed, "Testament," *New York Post*, November 4, 1983, 49.

¹⁵ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Target Is Destroyed: What Really Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew About It* (New York: Random House, 1986); and Chafe, *Unfinished Journey*, 477–478.

¹⁶ Gale Reference Group, "John Milius," *Contemporary Authors* (Detroit, Michigan: Thomson Gale, 2004).

¹⁷ Vincent Canby, "Cockeyed at Red Dawn," *New York Times*, September 16, 1984, B19; and David Denby, "Red Dawn," *New York*, August 20, 1984, 90.

¹⁸ Lenny Rubenstein, "Red Dawn," *Cineaste*, 13 (Fall 1984), 41.

¹⁹ International Movie Data Base, "Red Dawn," www.imdb.com (June 20, 2006); and Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

²⁰ Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991).

²¹ Mark C. Carnes, "Fat Man and Little Boy," in Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995).

²² News24.com, "Code Name from '84 Movie," http://www.news24.com/News24v2/Components/Generic/News24v2_Print_PopUp_Articl. (June 23, 2006).

“Filthy” Lewker Takes on Assorted Mountaineering Miscreants

Meet Sir Abercrombie Lewker (“Filthy” to his long-suffering, ex-Follies girl/wife and a few special friends—the “Sir” came later): Shakespearian actor and manager of his own highly regarded company, consulting detective extraordinaire, former British secret-service operative during WWII, and, for all his portly (not to say fat) physique, no slouch as a mountain climber.

With this lengthy verbal introduction inscribed, you must let me back up a bit. There are 15 novels (1951–69) devoted to Lewker’s exploits, all published by the London firm of Geoffrey Bles (at least two also appearing under a U.S. imprint). Said exploits materialize in France, Switzerland, Austria, Majorca, Norway, even the Himalayas, but a good half of them are set closer to home in the author’s beloved Wales. Who might this author be? Well, something of a cult figure among mountaineering aficionados, by name Showell Styles, wearing one of his many hats, compiler of the ever popular *Mountaineer’s Week-End Book* (London: Seeley, [1950], rev. 1962), among another 20 or so accounts of climbing and its craft. He also wrote children’s fare, some light poetry, assorted articles, historical seafaring novels (he himself served in the British navy), and a detective novel, *Traitor’s Mountain*, set in Wales, introducing secret-service agent Lewker (disguised as a tramp). One source gives the author credit for over 150 works, of which 15 (under the nom de plume Glyn Carr) are devoted to Lewker, detective-actor-climber. Someone joked, a few years ago, that every time Angela Lansbury, in her role as Jessica Fletcher, heroine of TV’s *Murder She Wrote*, took a vacation, she bumped into a corpse. Lewker was allotted the same fate.

What makes these stories such fine reads is multiple. Styles knew his mountains, as well he should, having climbed in all the locales he employed in his writing. His work reveals a literate style far beyond that of most detective fiction writers, and he was a great story spinner. He had a good ear for native dialects to help sell his often picturesque, invariably credible characters. Descriptions of peak and vale, their rock, snow, or verdant covers, the creatures they shelter all ring true. He has, in short, a great ekphrastic eye, one of the last since the ubiquitous camera has usurped its skills. As an added bonus (as befits a Shakespearian actor): Lewker quotes the Bard aptly, endlessly, given the slightest excuse or none at all. Add a generous dollop of literary references, fine literary style, stage lore and the like, and we must admit that here are 15 delightful offerings tailor-made for us literary types. If Lewker knows his mountains, he is equally at home in Avon.

Lewker seemingly exhibits the author’s own preferences: honesty, morality, decency—no hard-drinking, wenching, noir-film cynic here—his being most thoroughly British aside, he could have played the role of patriarch of 1950

America's Cleaver family. Lewker's creator seems to have spent the same blameless days haunting his beloved Welsh peaks, occasionally venturing abroad, and dispensing the rest of his love on those sesquicentenary volumes. Just one striking difference: Styles was trim and lean, living to an active almost 97 (1908–2005); his alter ego was, *au contraire*, “bald and bulbous nosed . . . , five-foot eight and broad out of proportion,” but with a voice, booming, filling the room “like the music of a double bass” (*Matterhorn* 7). He's pompous in manner as befits his lofty Shakespearean status, and yet a kindly, all-around fine specimen of the upper-crust Brit.

Printings of mystery story books are rarely huge (Agatha Christie's works not included in this rule, however); once read, the reader knows the solution and waits for next year's sequel. Hence most crime writers, even the most popular, tend to write a lot of them. Carr's are out of print. You can seek them out on Ebay or in some mystery-story bookshop (they do exist), but the search won't be easy. Recently a few—not all by any means—were electronically listed, priced from \$100–\$750, the latter, unfortunately, for one I needed to finish this paper. I had to resort to the Library of Congress. In short, the Lewker saga has taken on a sort of cult status and deservedly so. Still, researching details remains pretty much virgin territory. There is no mention in Dilys Winn's reasonably compendious *Murder Ink*. MLA's International Bibliography remains blank. There is no biography of Styles himself—perhaps not unexpected in so modest a figure, nor any luck perusing the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. The only existing material is a short account in Wikipedia and another out of a Google search, along with contemporaneous short magazine or newspaper reviews, and that's about it. A researcher-conference-reader's paradise!

Tom and Enid Schantz's nice little Carr tribute (in the *Wikipedia*) describes Carr's schtick as a sort of locked-room mystery (like John Dickson Carr's), only that the “room” had no walls and the sky for a ceiling. If we agree with the Schantzes, did Styles have the other Carr in mind when he coined his own pseudonym? They quote Styles himself noting “how easy it would be to arrange an undetectable murder . . . , and by way of experiment I worked out the system and wove a thinnish plot around it.” Thinnish or not, thus was Lewker launched on his 15-volume climbing-detecting career. Ultimately, Styles ended it in 1969. He had simply run out “of ways [to slaughter] people on steep rock faces.”

Despite my claim for the convincing accounts of characters and climbs, the captious critic may sneer that fat Lewker makes an unlikely candidate for a dexterous, vigorous climber. Well, Lewker needs to avoid crevasses (he did go close to one in the *Corpse in the Crevasse* in Austria, and in the final series volume he assayed a route called *Fat Man's Agony*). Personally I never met a fat climber, but fat people can be dexterously athletic. Consider Sammo Hung's karate feats in the recent TV series *Martial Law*. Carr's Lewker almost has to enjoy a degree of *avoir du pois* if he wants to be credible. Those roles demand a certain heft; Cassius's “lean and hungry look” would have to count as an exception.

Carr has a good sense of humor, which frequently appears in these tales: witness his native Welshmen, provincial of outlook and given to odd speech, yet these accounts are as dark as the usual detective fiction. The genre, of course, is almost anomalous by definition. Detective fiction is more or less considered light reading fare, and yet deals with murder, theft, illicit sex, guilt, envy, greed—the staples of tragedy. Great works like *Les Misérables* or *Crime and Punishment*, for instance, deal with identical problems but aren't even considered in the same circles. The tone of the detective novel can be flat (police procedurals), humorous, blasé, noir, featuring, say, case-hardened cops, the mercenary but somehow moral private eye who's seen it all and survived, but the genre never seems to plumb the depths of despair or enlightenment of serious fiction. The ingredients are present but the product does not quite justify the expense. Still, murder and death are by definition serious. Even the lightest of crime novel protagonists, Christie's Tuppence Beresford, for instance, or her gentle Jane Marple, must face evil. Do they deserve more serious respect and attention? Ruth Rendell pretty much demanded it, calling Christie superficial and preferring to be compared to Patricia Highsmith, another possible candidate for higher awards (*Murderous Ink* 60). Dorothy Sayers at her best is a bit beyond summer vacation pages out of a handbag.

In any event, where does Carr stand vis-à-vis such competition? His puzzles are ingenious if not superb. He can fool us and he isn't given to outrages like Christie's having the narrator himself do it, or the dead victim do it in another case, or everyone do it in her famous *Orient Express*. Further, he has blocked off an area peopled by few rivals. Jill Neate's exhaustive bibliography of mountaineering literature lists 411 works of fiction dealing with mountains (most of them, of course, not involving crime, and many only peripherally connected with mountains as such). Styles, under various interests, counts for at least 10 percent of them. Dorothy Sayers took Peter Wimsey to Scotland's heights in *Five Red Herrings* (1931). Mary Stewart's *Wildfire at Midnight* (1956) uses The Isle of Skye. There's Lionel Davidson's *Rose of Tibet* (1962), or Duff Hart-Davis's *Heights of Rimring* (1980), Steven Voien's *In a High and Lonely Place* (1992), James Ramsey Ullman's *The White Tower* (1945), or Van Wyck Mason's *Himalayan Assignment* (1952), this one even furnished with Colonel North, a sort of detective. Trevanian's *Eiger Sanction* (1972), back in Switzerland, reached a million copies and sired a blockbuster movie featuring Clint Eastwood. We fans of such thrillers are all supposed to know A.E. Mason's *Running Water* (1907) with the spectacular climb on the Brenva Ridge of Mont Blanc. There are a few others, but straight sleuthing on the heights is pretty much Lewker's exclusive territory.

We need to examine in greater detail the 15 forays into mountainous thinner air. Number one in the series is *Death on Milestone Buttress* (1951). We have already met Lewker in *Traitor's Mountain* but as a secret-service agent, not part of this series and brought to life under Styles's real name. Here is the classic examination of places, times, possible speeds in ascent and descent, the breaking

of alibis, and the like. If I tell more, you'll know the guilty party, thus spoiling a good read (the classic conundrum in reviewing mystery stories), but I can say that Carr's enthusiasm for the mountain scene, his knack for peopling the heights with credible characters, nicely described, distinguish the series as a whole, not least with this first assaying.

Murder on the Matterhorn (also 1951) takes Lewker out of the British Isles into the very heart of the Swiss Alps. He's in a small aeroplane:

Ahead . . . the cloud-sea ended, like the lid of a box pushed back. Beyond and above stood a rank of golden snow-peaks, blue-shadowed in the westering sun and lovely as a dream . . . Surely the Matterhorn was whiter than it should be at this season? That great hooked finger of rock ought to be bare and brown in the midst of its white-robed companions. This southerly wind . . . meant bad weather. The Matterhorn was snow-powdered, and probably unclimbable. . . . The bank of giants marched slowly towards them. Beneath the plane black rock and white snow surged up and fell away again. A great trench opened in the earth—the Rhone valley, with a twisted skein of river in its depths . . . the snow peaks seemed to slide down into view. They were enormous now, dazzling in the sun. The incredible shaft of the Matterhorn began to tower above them. Lewker craned his neck to peer at the valley of St. Niklaus, green meadows and dark pines reeling away underneath them (20–21).

And they land. Add sharply observed Swiss dialect and little details of place to tat up the grander scene, and we are all set to enjoy “murder most foul.”

The Corpse in the Crevasse (1952) takes Lewker to the Austrian Tyrol. *Affaires du coeur*, jealousies, etc., etc., may be standard detective fare, but Carr's neat touch is to employ an avalanche to cut off the corpse from all outside police investigation: the roads are blocked and the phone lines down. The survivors are hemmed in with the murderer. Lewker has everything righted by the time snow plows can reopen the road.

Back again in Wales, Lewker investigates *Death under Snowdon* (1954), number five in the series, this one closer to the traditional English country-house mystery, as most of the action is near rather than on Snowdon.

Next, Lewker's biggest adventure, an attack on the fictional Himalayan Mount Chomolu, 24,170 feet high. Maybe the caricature of the expedition leader is a bit too broad and the depiction of the American cameraman Demosthenes Nixon, with his tortured grammar—(“I ain't gonna,” and double negatives, and expressions like “Jeese” [with an “s”])—hint all too strongly at chauvinism. Nixon also dresses in violet and has gangster connections. The novel, *Corpse at Camp Two* (1955), draws from Styles's own experiences on Nepal's 21,890 foot peak Mount Baudha. He was the leading climber and got to 17,200 feet. There

could be sour grapes here! The mountain descriptions are as good as Styles’s best, in any case.

Number seven, *Murder of an Owl* (1956), back in Wales, reflects the author’s skill with younger characters. Not children’s fare, it does involve a junior scout (the “owl” of the title). It also mirrors the problems of the times: post WWII and the concerns of Irish and Welsh nationalism and the fear of Communism, which date the plot to an extent. Killing off a teenager, however, lends an interesting twist, a fate not usually found except in juvenile slicer films.

Next in the series is *The Ice Axe Murders* (1958): the characters are sequestered high on Mount Blanc in a little refuge cabin snowed in by a fierce storm. Our hero is at his best, solving the murder 15,000 feet in thin air.

Swing Away, Climber (1959) brings Lewker back to Wales, and *Holiday with Murder* (1960) soon after is the *Murder She Wrote*-type story, the intended relaxing vacation in Majorca churning up another corpse. Any mountains in Majorca simply aren’t peak-size, but there is a steep rock wall that almost finishes off our detective (luckily not quite). Otherwise, the tone is more Mediterranean travelogue, and the murder involves hyoscyamine tablets versus the expected ice axe, cut rope, or a shove from behind.

Death Finds a Foothold (1961) returns to Snowdonia, with nationalistic problems featured once again, but let us get on to *Lewker in Norway* (1963), perhaps the least convincing of the series. This one deals with politics again, mixed up with that old chestnut: a villain plotting to destroy or conquer the world—in this case, at least half of Europe. Sax Rohmer did it best, with his long series of “Yellow Peril” novels, putting the stalwart British Neyland Smith against the incredibly evil Dr. Fu Manchu. Sapper’s Bulldog Drummond employed the genre much more skillfully, as well. And we all know the ongoing movie chronicle with James Bond, 007, each episode ending with the cataclysmic destruction of the antagonist’s stronghold, followed by an idyllic scene where Bond and his nymphet of the day, cozily sequestered from the prying world, drink and smooch on some desert isle, or the like.

But 007 is bigger than life, not to be taken too seriously. Lewker’s Norway adventure is meant to be the real stuff. Think Agatha Christie’s *The Big Four* (1927), equally atypical territory for her, Poirot’s opponents plotting world domination through murder and worse. Douglas Thomson, *Masters of Mystery* (207), claims Christie intended her story as a burlesque. (I’m not so sure, but in any event, Christie and Poirot lost their way venturing into such entangled groves.) World domination thrillers aren’t Styles’s forte either. He simply isn’t very convincing.

Death of a Weirdy (1965—we would say “weirdo”), brings in postmodern remarks, such as “it creates a mimesis of a dichotomy,” or “if you are sexually inverted like . . .” (11). Though they spring from the mouth of a far-out literary wannabe, they’re too much for Lewker. Carr is obviously parodying a literary type.

Lewker in Tirol (1967) involves Italian-Austrian border politics and whether the murder owes its commission to them. Then comes number 15, *Fat Man's Agony* (1969), back where Lewker belongs, in Wales. He's now 60 (18), feeling his age, and an old flame, the beautiful Olivia (a mere 41), catches his eye once again. He and faithful wife Georgie have the expected words over what could look to be an affair. It isn't, and the reunited aging couple wind up in bed (223–24), about to make love. Well and good, but not really Styles's terrain any more than world domination plots in Norway. Maybe it was fitting because the author felt he had run out of ways to kill folks up in the mountains. The mystery plot, however, is professionally handled if not quite top-notch. Maybe readers want to say "enough," to all those details about climbing, pitons, crampons, ropes, and other gear (even if I not among them). In any event, what a unique 19-year high we have experienced in the fine fresh air of the summits, not in some musty old mansion, hiking and climbing with an expert, absorbing alpine lore, solving all those intricate puzzles!

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From the Wilderness into the Closet: *Brokeback Mountain* and the Lost American Dream

In the film *Brokeback Mountain*, Ennis del Mar (Heath Ledger) tells Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal), “I ain’t queer.” Twist responds, “Me neither.” With these faltering but defiant words begins a personal pilgrimage into a wilderness at least as terrifying, as uncharted, and as destabilizing as the one initiated by early explorers of the American West. Like the medieval quests upon which much of Western literature is based, this particular epic journey in search of self-knowledge ends in paralyzing loss.

Overwhelmingly, film critics have analyzed the challenge to heterosexual norms implicit in the film. While they are correct in doing so, the film succeeds for reasons that are largely unrelated to sexual orientation. It succeeds not only because it challenges preconceptions about gender identity but because it forces us to contend with the fears and limitations that make our being able to choose a richer, more passionate, more imaginative life impossible. The possibility of a rich, restorative, and expressive life spent in the Wyoming wilderness comes to nothing; instead, in the final scene of the film one of the central characters stands silently in the closet of his trailer.

Set in Texas and Wyoming and shot in Alberta, *Brokeback Mountain* is a tale propelled by contradictions, oxymorons, paradoxes, and oppositions. Drawn from Annie Proulx’s short story by the same name, *Brokeback Mountain* juxtaposes the wilderness with settled communities, wild animals with civilized townspeople, the poor with the privileged, the uneducated with the intellectually elite, women with men, rural life with city life, the innocent with the corrupt, and, yes, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals with their heterosexual family members, neighbors, and friends. However, the landscape of *Brokeback Mountain* is endlessly suggestive, and its heteronormativity is but one stop on the journey. Although the text does, in fact, challenge what we think we know about sexual orientation, it more importantly becomes the site of a struggle between what is expected and what is possible, between what we long for and what we actualize, between what we dream and what is.

If considering how we prevent ourselves from achieving what we most desire is not unsettling enough, *Brokeback Mountain* goes beyond even that, suggesting that we have a responsibility to ask ourselves why we make decisions that provide us safety, security, familiarity, and responsibility even when they deprive us of joy. Viewers and readers don’t have to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual in order to recognize the miles that separate life in a dingy kitchen—with clothes left in heaps on the floor, with a sink full of dirty dishes, and with weeping children demanding attention—from joyous fulfillment. In a particularly

powerful scene in the film, Jack and Ennis leave stultifying domesticity behind and leap from a ledge into icy waters, shouting, intimately connected, and fully alive.

Jack fantasizes about a “sweet life” and tells Ennis, “You know, it could be like this—just like this—always.” In this simple statement, the audience is asked to engage universal themes of need and longing and desire. When Ennis responds by saying that there is “no way” two men can live together and then utters the now famous line—“If you can’t fix it, Jack, you’ve got to stand it”—readers and viewers must contend with whether the situation cannot be “fixed” or whether Ennis lacks the will or the template to “fix” it (and whether we lack that will or template, too). That Ennis’s life experience has not prepared him for the possibility of loving a man—that the cultural discourse has not given him language for his desire—makes choosing Jack as his life partner impossible for him to imagine. But the choice is not impossible, joy is not forbidden, and life does not have to end in a trailer on the edge of the dream.

The open, verdant Western landscape of *Brokeback Mountain* stands in stark contrast to the apartments and strip malls and bars of the town in which Ennis and Alma (Michelle Williams) make their life together. Brokeback Mountain looms, mythic, majestic and impenetrable, a 14-hour drive and a universe away from rodeos and a Texas ranch where Jack and Lureen (Anne Hathaway) are raising their son.

The film disturbs and unsettles us, not simply because it suggests that love between two men is as rich and as viable as love between a woman and a man but because it demands that we confront the lives we could have lived if we had crossed the invisible divides that separate us from ecstasy and the fulfillment of our deepest desires. *Brokeback Mountain* demands that we consider the societal paradigms that help us to define ourselves at the same time that they limit, constrain, and immobilize us.

The tragedy of the tale is not that Jack is dead—killed as he changed a tire or murdered by those who despised him for being gay. The tragedy of *Brokeback Mountain* is not death but a long life lived cautiously and guardedly. The tragedy is not having lost one’s life but having wasted it. In fact, although set across the continent from the Long Island Sound, *Brokeback Mountain* evokes thoughts of the “last and greatest of all human dreams” and “the transitory enchanted moment” (182) of *The Great Gatsby*. By doing so, *Brokeback Mountain* becomes reminiscent of classic American narratives about profound and enduring loss.

Inevitably, the film has been analyzed for its portrayal of love and sexual expression between two men; lauded for its cinematic accomplishments; celebrated for the universal themes that it addresses; and analyzed for its vision and revision of the mythology of the West. In fact, all of these critical approaches enrich a study of the lost American dream in *Brokeback Mountain* by reminding us that love and passion are not restricted to heterosexual couples; that a film about two men in love can be compelling and artful; that a text fails

or succeeds because of the emotions it evokes; and that unreliable stereotypes of the vanished West include not only savage Native Americans and kind-hearted prostitutes but cowboys without emotion and without an ability to express themselves through language and through touch. Simply stated, Jack and Ennis stand in sharp contrast to many prevalent stereotypes of the contemporary American cowboys.

The Portrayal of Same-Sex Love

Reviews that followed the release of *Brokeback Mountain* sometimes highlighted the homophobia of journalists and editors. In a statement without support and without context, Sean Smith wrote (in a review published in the March 6, 2006, issue of *Newsweek*) that *Brokeback Mountain* “could get a boost if it wins Sunday night [Oscar night], but for some Americans, it seems a same-sex love story is still too much, no matter how many trophies it wins” (8). And under a photo of Ledger and Gyllenhaal in the January 30, 2006, issue of *Time* magazine is the following phrase: “exactly the type of scene most straight guys usually don’t want to see” (60). What follows the phrase is an analysis of gay themes in *Brokeback Mountain* entitled “How the West Was Won Over.”

Even if we allow for editors who need to find a clever phrase to captivate readers (“How the West Was Won Over”) and if we allow for the straight men in America who might not want to see two straight actors portraying same-sex desire, it still bears asking: Why would one of the nation’s top-selling news magazines suggest that a photo of two men fully dressed and standing close together is “exactly the type of scene” that heterosexual men would find offensive? Why would the editor then add “most straight guys,” as though she or he has conducted a reliable poll? And, finally, why would the editor include the qualifier “usually?” Are there “unusual” times during which straight men might be open to a narrative about same-sex love?

In the phrase “exactly the type of scene most straight guys usually don’t want to see” lies the first topic of importance to this study: Are “straight guys” presumed to be homophobic? Are they expected to be homophobic and therefore considered unlikely to attend *Brokeback Mountain* either alone or with a group of other “straight guys?” Are they both homophobic and *expected* to be homophobic? Is it true that most men who attended the film in the company of women were more open to the idea of same-sex desire, as some critics have suggested? The answer to these questions must be, “We don’t know,” followed immediately with the acknowledgment that *Brokeback Mountain* enjoyed significant box office success and critical acclaim in spite of contemporary stereotypes about gay and heterosexual men.

Certainly, *Brokeback Mountain* is not the only successful and widely distributed “gay film.” *The Crying Game* (1992) netted \$63 million; *Philadelphia* (1993) netted \$77 million and earned Tom Hanks his first Oscar; *The Birdcage* (1996) netted \$124 million. William Hurt won “Best Actor” for his portrayal of a gay prisoner in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985) and Hilary

Swank won her first Academy Award for her portrayal of a transsexual character in *Boys Don't Cry* (1999).

According to *USA Today*, by February 12, 2006, more than 12 million Americans had seen *Brokeback Mountain*, and the film had taken in \$72 million. *Brokeback Mountain* led other films released in 2006 with eight Academy Award nominations and was widely regarded as the favorite to win the Oscars for "Best Picture" and "Best Director." The film also earned more than the other films nominated for "Best Picture" in 2006: During the month before the Academy Awards, *Crash* had earned \$53.4 million; *Munich*, \$45.4 million; *Good Night, and Good Luck*, \$29.3 million; and *Capote*, \$22.1 million (2A).

Certainly, box office and critical successes are not the only measures of a film's impact. Some critics suggest that the import of *Brokeback Mountain* actually will be determined individually—in private living rooms during private screenings. Poignantly enough, one such person is Judy Shepard, mother of murdered college student Matthew Shepard. Shortly before his 1998 death, Matthew gave his mother a copy of the story that inspired the film. She suggested that when viewers could rent *Brokeback Mountain* and view it alone, they would understand its message: "I think they'll see it how I see it," Shepard said, "as a story that's trying to say that you can't help who you fall in love with. If it opens just a few eyes to that, then it's done a good thing" (Bowles 2A). Both the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and the Human Rights Campaign, organizations that advocate equality for all people, seem to agree with her. GLAAD provided an online resource guide to accompany the film, and through press releases and other efforts, the HRC widely encouraged small group discussion of the issues in the film. (The importance of the film to conversations about gay rights is suggested by the fact that director Ang Lee won an "Equality Award" from the HRC in New York in the spring of 2006.)

For some, focusing on the controversy the film was certain to ignite was largely a marketing ploy. In "Backbreaking Bid to Create a Controversy" (December 28, 2005), Neil G. Giuliano, the former mayor of Tempe, Arizona, and the president of GLAAD, argues that Americans are much more open to the idea of same-sex love than stories about the release of *Brokeback Mountain* indicated. In the article published by *The Arizona Republic*, he writes:

Boy, how we love a story that divides. So in addition to the near unanimous acclaim this movie has received, we're encouraged by the nation's leading newspapers and television news outlets to ponder, "Is America ready for this film?"

Was America "ready" for *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* or *Philadelphia*? Why does America need to be ready for any film? It's a movie, not a mandate. If you want to see an original, powerful and emotionally authentic love story, go see it. If not, go shopping.

Whether *Brokeback Mountain* will have lasting impact on attitudes about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in America is impossible to know, of course. In an article published in *USA Today*, Scott Bowles writes:

The film is the punch line of jokes, the subject of Internet parodies and the front-runner for the Oscars on March 5. Oprah plugged the gay-cowboy drama on her show. Howard Stern gave it a thumbs up. "Have you seen *Brokeback?*" has become a dinner-party Rorschach test of gay tolerance.

In addition to Bowles's suggestion that whether one does or does not see the film is a "test of gay tolerance," the subhead of the article—entitled "*Brokeback Mountain: Milestone or Movie of the Moment?*"—is, "Film's success signals shift in attitudes toward gays—or maybe it's just marketing" (1).

But the focus of this study is not whether the film grossed more than other films it competed against or whether it altered the cultural landscape in New York City or Dubuque, Iowa. Instead, this study deals with the fact that one reason a dream can be lost—one reason Ennis was unable to break out of his emotional and intellectual prison—is that the film *Brokeback Mountain* is still a phenomenon; that passionate, sexual love between men is still considered an anomaly; and that sex between two heterosexual actors is treated by at least one editor as "exactly the type of scene most straight guys usually don't want to see."

In "A Picture of Two Americas in 'Brokeback Mountain,'" Stephen Hunter writes, "It's hard to argue that the movie constitutes any kind of threat, or pro-gay propaganda. For one thing, there's too much authentic pain in it, it's too bloody sad." At the same time, though, he argues that Lee speaks "louder with images than most of his ideological opponents do in words." Clearly, the second sentence undercuts the first by suggesting that the film is a loaded love story—a story about genuine affection that serves a political purpose and advances the cause of gay-rights groups and of the LGBT community itself. Although Hunter celebrates being gay by associating it with a river ("It's a great torrent of nature, which cannot be controlled and which provides sustenance, nurture, satisfaction, joy"), he also claims the film is "cruel to family": "It seems to think family is a bourgeois delusion."

The problem with these conflicting contentions is that, of course, the film is not the enemy of heterosexual life in America, anymore than gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people are. In fact, Jack longs to live with Ennis, to be near his mother and father, and to work a ranch, but this desire—rooted in tradition and American family values—is denied to him. The dream Jack loses is one that sustains heterosexual couples who rarely have to think about the privilege of living with one another, of rearing children, of filing taxes jointly, of demonstrating affection toward one another publicly, etc. Hunter is closer to the truth of *Brokeback Mountain* when he says that Jack and Ennis are forced to "genueflect before the stations of the cross of heterosexual culture: marriage,

family, responsibility.” It is not that they don’t want what heterosexual couples take for granted; instead, they are forced to validate a way of life others seek to deny to them.

The film doesn’t ridicule heterosexual privilege by juxtaposing sounds of crying children and unkempt houses with the freedom of the wilderness, but the conflicting images force members of a primarily heterosexual audience to consider the fulfillment implicit in being able to live in a way consistent with who they are and whom they love. While it is true that the images of heterosexual life in *Brokeback Mountain* are “impoverished, constrained, dysfunctional” and that, too often, “family life, home life, breeder life” serve “as a gestalt of impoverishment and stark, comfortless angularity,” as Hunter argues, it is heterosexual life that is considered normal. And it is heterosexuals who often deny to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people the rights they covet, passing state laws that prevent some of their family members, neighbors, co-workers, and others from marrying legally, from adopting children, and from enjoying a relationship sanctioned by law. Jack and Ennis are prevented by both their own decisions and by societal constraints from realizing the full promise of their love for one another. They seek the wilderness because it allows them to express their passion; what they leave behind temporarily are the vestiges of unhappy heterosexual family life.

The Cultural Legacy of the Film

If homophobia and a lack of understanding of marginalized people help to explain adverse reaction to *Brokeback Mountain* and help to prevent Ennis and Jack from pursuing a life together, it is reasonable to argue that the more often sympathetic portrayals exist in popular culture and elsewhere, the more likely that prevailing attitudes about human sexuality will change. “In three-time Oscar winner *Brokeback Mountain*, Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist fall in love in the wide open spaces of Wyoming,” reads the introduction to “The Director’s Cut,” an interview with Lee (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Sense and Sensibility*) published in *Equality: News about GLBT America*. “Their quiet, simple story moved audiences in theaters everywhere and soon exploded into one big cultural conversation” (6).

Part of the reason for the “big cultural conversation” is the talent of the director; the ability of writers Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana; and the understated but intense performance by Ledger (*10 Things I Hate About You*, *The Patriot*, *A Knight’s Tale*, *Lords of Dogtown*, and *Monster’s Ball*), a performance lauded by critics such as Belinda Luscombe in the November 28, 2005, *Time* magazine review entitled “Heath Turns It Around.” Gyllenhaal and Michelle Williams (*Dawson’s Creek*) also received accolades for their roles.

Although *Crash* beat *Brokeback Mountain* for “Best Picture” on Oscar night, *Brokeback Mountain* won “Best Director,” “Best Adapted Screenplay,” and “Best Original Score.” (Other winners that night were Reese Witherspoon [“Best Actress,” *Walk the Line*]; Philip Seymour Hoffman [“Best Actor,” *Capote*]; George Clooney [“Best Supporting Actor,” *Syriana*]; and Rachel

Weisz ["Best Supporting Actress," *The Constant Gardener*]. Although *Brokeback Mountain* did not win in all eight of the categories for which it was nominated, the competition among actors was especially strong.) In addition to its three Academy Awards, *Brokeback Mountain* also garnered seven Golden Globe nominations during a year when 19 million viewers were estimated to have tuned in. In that venue, *Brokeback Mountain* won for "Best Picture," "Best Director," and "Best Screenplay."

And, finally, the talent behind *Brokeback Mountain* suggests that directors and writers may be less concerned about taking on themes that might alienate the public. In addition to Lee, Proulx (*Shipping News*) and McMurtry (*Lonesome Dove*), both winners of Pulitzer Prizes, were involved with the project. Proulx's story "Brokeback Mountain" first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1997. It is included in a collection entitled *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* and has been published as a separate text by Scribner. In addition to *Shipping News*, Proulx is author of four novels including *Postcards* and the short story collections *Heart Songs* and *Bad Dirt*. McMurtry has garnered 26 Oscar nominations for film adaptations of his work—including those for *Hud*, *The Last Picture Show*, and *Terms of Endearment*.

One of the themes addressed by the film is the pain of being disenfranchised and of struggling to remain closeted in order to be a part of a community—in this case a heterosexual community that identifies itself as much by who is excluded as it does by who is accepted within its circle. In "The Director's Cut" (subtitled "*Brokeback's* Ang Lee on Jack, Ennis . . . and Other Outsiders"), Lee explains his commitment to the project and his identification with the central characters by saying, "I think it is very easy for me to identify with outsiders or minorities—that is who I've been all my life. My parents followed the Nationalist Party to Taiwan when their family was executed in China. We were outsiders in Taiwan. Then I came to the States, of course, as an outsider."

The film portrays the two central characters as noble, a characteristic that most assuredly comes from their isolation and the stoic way with which they deal with it. Hired to spend the summer of 1963 on Wyoming's Brokeback Mountain tending sheep, Jack and Ennis are unable to redefine themselves enough to function in the restrictive society in which they have always lived. Both, writes Hunter, are "ranch-bred, horse-proud, sinewy, resourceful, brave, tough, industrious, poorly educated." While this tough cowboy image is certainly one they strive to maintain, the stereotype has its cost: they are stymied as much by their internalized homophobia as they are by the hyper-masculine, heterosexual, family-oriented rural West that surrounds them.

Brokeback Mountain becomes a meta-Western, a film that, in fact, makes viewers reconsider their preconceptions about life in the American West. *Brokeback Mountain* is, as Luscombe writes, an "elegiac western" (66), but it falls into a category far different from the John Wayne classics. Similar to *Midnight Cowboy*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, and *Unforgiven* in its unflinching critique of Western mythologies, *Brokeback Mountain* is a

revisionist film that up-ends the wide open spaces that are as much a part of the Western genre as cattle rustling. It leaves one hero dead and another standing in two closets—first, a closet in his lover’s childhood home and second, a closet in his own trailer.

The film is decidedly a revisionist text, one that forces viewers to question their assumptions about the West, about “real men,” about cowboys and ranchers, about small town life, about sexual orientation, and about family life. “Talk about revisionist westerns!” writes Richard Schickel. “*Brokeback Mountain* is, as far as one can tell, the first movie to trace the course of a homosexual relationship between a pair of saddle tramps, doing so in considerable—if discreetly visualized—detail, from first idyllic rapture to angry rupture some 20 years later” (68). Also, because McMurtry wrote the adaptation, *Brokeback Mountain* “focuses, as some of his fiction does, on the modern, anti-romantic West, a place of trailer parks and honky-tonks, of small, thwarted hopes, wrangling wranglers and sweet dreams betrayed by raw reality” (68). Schickel considers the film flawed but celebrates its “assault on Western mythology, its discovery of a subversive sexual honesty in an unexpected locale” (68).

“Queer Eye for the Big Sky,” the teaser on the cover of the January 13, 2006, issue of *The Chronicle Review*, is both humorous and suggestive. There are, ultimately, no big skies in this fictional Wyoming. Two men who have conquered their environment—surviving bears, storms, poverty, the elements, etc.—are vanquished by their own forbidden desires. “Queer Eye for the Big Sky” introduces an article by Colin R. Johnson entitled “Rural Space: Queer America’s Final Frontier.” While probably not in actuality its “final frontier,” rural America is admittedly for many one of the least likely places for two men to fall in love and seek to build a life and a home together. An assistant professor of gender studies, history, and American studies, Johnson writes:

Especially in the wake of Matthew Shepard’s brutal murder in 1998 in Laramie, Wyo., but also in light of the poignant sadness at the core of other queer landscape films like *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) and *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999), the kind of big-sky rural vistas that Lee captures quite superbly on screen have tended to engender feelings of exposure and vulnerability in lesbians and gay men more than freedom and openness, two symptoms of affective privilege that heterosexual Americans have traditionally felt in connection to the great outdoors though rarely regarded as privilege per se.

Brokeback Mountain refigures that aesthetic association in some important ways. In the story certainly but in the film especially, it is the openness of the landscape that signals a temporary opening in the heteronormative constraints of American masculinity. By contrast, it is the cramped and

claustrophobic domestic spaces of Ennis del Mar's and Jack Twist's marital homes that signal the intrusion of homophobia's stark realities, not to mention a necessary illicitness about same-sex intimacy and desire that comes at the expense of women, namely their wives. Similarly, it's the deafening *silence* that Lee's film associates with open spaces that seems to point to the site where intimacy's potential might be realized. Talk, by contrast, maps its very limitations. (B15)

Both the short story and the film are—at their center—about what Luscombe calls “the circumscription of dreams about how fate and our choices make the life we have much smaller than the one we had hoped for” (70). To some extent, a prohibitive, constraining, traditional society is at fault; to some extent, responsibility lies with human beings who underestimate their own agency. In spite of what may have occurred to Jack Twist and what did most certainly occur to Matthew Shepard, being gay does not necessarily end in death or despair. That Jack can see the potential in his relationship with Ennis and that he has the will to actualize it is both a blessing and a curse. He is blessed with passion and courage, but he loves someone who is immobilized and who cannot imagine a life with his lover.

Proulx's short story highlights the differences between Jack and Ennis, making Jack somewhat of a visionary and Ennis a man afraid of his own desires. “Jack, in his dark camp, saw Ennis as night fire, a red spark on the huge black mass of mountain” (9), writes Proulx. For Jack, Ennis is the “red spark” on the “huge black mass of mountain” that is his life. For Ennis, though, the relationship is not restorative or hopeful, but terrifying: “As they descended the slope Ennis felt he was in a slow-motion, but headlong, irreversible fall” (17). Moving toward one's “red spark” and fearing an “irreversible fall” are decidedly different reactions to falling in love. “I'm stuck with what I got, caught in my own loop” (29), says Ennis. Meanwhile, Jack, rejected and desperate, says:

Tell you what, we could a had a good life together, a fuckin real good life. You wouldn't do it, Ennis, so what we got now is Brokeback Mountain. Everthing built on that. It's all we got, boy, fuckin all, so I hope you know that if you don't never know the rest. . . . You got no fuckin idea how bad it gets. I'm not you. I can't make it on a couple a high-altitude fucks once or twice a year. You're too much for me, Ennis, you son of a whoreson bitch. I wish I knew how to quit you. (42)

That they cannot “quit” one another is both their salvation—a testament to the power of their attachment—and their ultimate damnation.

Although they do not share a vision of their future, the men agree on the mysterious power of their love and desire for one another. In Proulx's story, Ennis tells Jack: “Took me about a year a figure out it was that I shouldn't a let you out a my sights. Too late then by a long, long while” (26). Later, he says,

“But if you can’t fix it you got a stand it. Shit. I been lookin at people on the street. This happen a other people? What the hell do they do?” (30). Jack, too, recognizes the intensity of their draw to one another: “This ain’t no little thing that’s happenin here” (30), he says. And later in the story, Proulx writes, “Jack said he was doing all right but he missed Ennis bad enough sometimes to make him whip babies” (38). The two know that their time together is special and finite: “One thing never changed: the brilliant charge of their infrequent couplings was darkened by the sense of time flying, never enough time, never enough” (39).

Of course, what *Brokeback Mountain* shares with other Western films includes cowboys as central characters, a portrayal of masculinity, a setting in a particular geographic region, etc. However, more importantly, it shares with *Midnight Cowboy*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Unforgiven*, and other Westerns that rely upon *bildungsroman* an understanding of how fated we are, how limited by the places and people we know, how devastated by our own fear. Even so, I would argue that *Brokeback Mountain* may have more in common with *The Great Gatsby* than it does with other film classics of the American West. Like *The Great Gatsby*, *Brokeback Mountain* is about an impossible—or at least unactualized—dream. Richard Corliss calls the film “slow and studied”: “The movie is heartbreaking because it shows the hearts of two strong men—and their women—in the long process of breaking” (62).

The lost and abandoned dream drives the plot, a plot that depends upon internal action and barely uttered emotion. And it is the lost and abandoned dream that places *Brokeback Mountain* in the company of American films about thwarted hopes, whether those films are set in the American West or not. As F. Scott Fitzgerald writes about *Gatsby*, “His dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it.” But the dream eluded *Gatsby*, and Fitzgerald ends his novel with the now famous line: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (182). For Ennis in the final scene of *Brokeback Mountain*, the future is a window looking out onto an empty field. A treasured postcard of the past that is taped to the inside of his closet door reminds us that the possibility of a life lived large under the wide Wyoming sky has ended in isolation and despair.

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Of Superbroads, Rented Men, and Champagne Diets: Hera Lind and the New German Women's Novel

When I mentioned to a German colleague that I was writing about Hera Lind and her bestselling *The Superbroad* (*Das Superweib*, 1994),¹ she laughed and said that although all the women she knew had read the book, few were willing to admit it. This attitude towards Lind's novels seems to be fairly common. In his article on *The Superbroad* Oliver Sill writes of a similar experience in a seminar he gave at a German university. Apparently almost everyone had read Lind's novel, but many were loath to admit it (257). As he observes "only a very few were able to confess freely to having enjoyed the novel" (257).² This reluctance to admit to having read or enjoyed the book is interesting, especially when considering that until 2000 Lind's novels were published as part of Fischer's (a German publishing house) hugely successful and prestigious literary series *Woman in Society* (*Frau in der Gesellschaft*), which, at least in its first 15 years, saw its mission as "the historical reappraisal of the women's movement" (Mues 10–11).³ The 1994 *Superbroad* was certainly published in the series, which published many books by and about women during its 23 odd years of existence.

Sill's female seminar participants and my academic friends may be wise to hide their enthusiasm, however, for despite their huge popularity and the respectability lent them by their inclusion in the "Woman in Society" series, Lind's novels have garnered much criticism. For example in a review for the left-liberal weekly *Freitag*, critic Kornelia Piazena asks how "literature that sketches such a limited view of the world and a reality in which there is no vision"⁴ can attract millions of predominantly female readers. Katharina Rutschky of the more conservative *Die Welt* would like to know what happened to "the political feminism of the seventies, when today, as if to mock its analyses, the Lind books are published in a literary series that still bears the title 'Woman in Society'."⁵ In her 2000 study on emancipatory goals in popular literature, Wiltrud Oelinger concurs, seeing in Lind's books even an anti-emancipatory message. She says of the figures in Lind's novels that they reflect nothing more than a "fashionable adaptation of the traditional woman's role" (158).⁶

Despite the dismissal by many critics as trivial, Lind's novels *A Man for Every Tone* (*Ein Mann für jede Tonart*, 1989—film version, 1993); its sequel *It Doesn't Take Much to Be a Woman* (*Frau zu sein bedarf es wenig*, 1992); *The Superwife* (*Das Superweib*, 1994—film version, 1996); *The Magic Woman* (*Die Zauberfrau*, 1995); *The Nest of Broads* (*Das Weibernest*, 1997—television movie, 2001, sequel to *Das Superweib*); *The Rented Man* (*Der gemietete Mann*,

1999); *High Gloss Broads* (*Hochglanzweiber*, 2001); and her most recent, *The Champagne Diet* (*Die Champagner-Diät*, 2006) have sold millions of copies in the last 15 years,⁷ and Hera Lind is certainly one of if not the best-known female author in Germany today. Are her novels indeed “mocking, satirical books” (14) or “rebellious novels” (15)⁸ and therefore worthy of our respect as implied by Ingeborg Mues, founder and editor of the Fischer series, or are they best described as “sparkling wine-prose”⁹ by critic Allmeier (L12), “lightweight babbling” by columnist Ohland 27,¹⁰ and by Lind herself as “light fare” (MDR Interview)?¹¹ And if Lind herself never reads “books of the type [she] writes, because that would be wasted time for her,”¹² as she confided to Angelika Ohland in an interview with *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* (28), why should anybody else?

In Germany, at least, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of books are bought by women.¹³ Since women drive the sale of literature, it is logical to create a product that appeals to them. As Oelinger points out: “Popular literature by women and for women has been booming since the eighties; this is proof of a strong demand and an indication of the belovedness of the topic in social discourse” (157).¹⁴ Lind appeals to her readership through her protagonists, who at first glance are either *Superweiber* or *Zauberfrauen*. Although they are far from perfect, these women are energetic and positive figures, usually addicted to brisk walking and adept at multi-tasking. They are attractive, but not beautiful. They already have or are about to be saddled with children, who will in no way interfere with their career or love-life. These women also have the uncanny ability to manage several male lovers simultaneously. Despite this, they prefer and seek out the company of other women for any sort of serious conversation or advice. Finally, when their bluff is called and the game is up—which generally happens about two-thirds of the way through the book—Lind’s “Superweiber” emerge from the fracas hale and hearty. As Franka Zis, the thirty-something protagonist of *The Superwife* proudly asserts: “I, lioness with two cubs, I manage by myself. I don’t need any man. At least not for survival” (85).¹⁵ Later she reiterates her earlier claim, maintaining “nobody is negotiating over ME. I make decisions about ME” (119).¹⁶

But of course she does nothing of the sort, and neither do any of the other protagonists in Lind’s novels. According to some critics and at least one academic, this is what appeals to women readers. Not only does Franka Zis not manage by herself (85) or make decisions about herself (119), she is totally reliant on outside help from the first few pages until the very end—and some of that help comes from men. All the major decisions in *The Superwife* are made by others. Any major changes in her circumstances happen by accident or by someone else’s design, and everything, from whom she sleeps with to her overnight success, is unplanned.

Franka—still bearing the rather cumbersome name of Franziska Herr-Großkötter—goes to the beauty salon one day to prepare herself morally and physically to buy a house. Her absent husband has ordered her to buy one

immediately for tax purposes. While Lauro is styling her tresses, she confides her mission to an older woman who happens to be sitting in the next chair. This woman (who returns later as her confidant, Alma Mater) recommends her son, Dr. Enno Winkel, “the best divorce lawyer in the city,” (10)¹⁷ who also happens to dabble in tax breaks, finance, and real estate (13). Franziska runs right over to this jack-of-all-trades and by way of masterful miscommunication and double-speak manages to obtain a divorce instead of a house. By the time she realizes the mistake and the lawyer understands her original intention, she has decided that it might not be such a bad idea after all.

After filing for divorce by mistake, she is advised by her lawyer (who soon becomes the first in a series of lover/admirers) to write down her reasons for wanting a divorce. These pages eventually become a book, which Alma Mater, unbeknownst to Franziska, shows to an editor friend of hers. The book becomes a bestseller, Franziska, now Franka, becomes more famous than her ex-husband (who directs television movies), and with the help and guidance of her two friends, Alma Mater and Paula—who takes care of the two children—and her man of the moment, everyone lives happily ever after.

A Man for Every Tone, Lind’s 1989 first novel, is similar. Its plot centers on a twenty-something choir-soloist who struggles to decide between two men and her beloved singles existence. One of the men—the debonair and slightly older music critic Georg Lalinde—seeks her out, while she meets the other—the bear-like doctor with the cool car—on a train. She vacillates between the two men for a time, unable to decide. Depending on her mood, she accepts dates with one or the other, giving into whatever urge she has at the moment. In general, when she is with the one, she longs for the other. If she is in a trendy restaurant with the doctor, she dreams of the critic and wishes she were with him, sitting in her kitchen “eating mushy noodle casserole” (65).¹⁸ However, when the music critic proposes, she says no, she is still waiting for the man of her dreams (242). Her choice of “waiting” instead of “searching” or even “finding” reflects the passivity of Lind’s characters when it comes to their fates. When she finally becomes pregnant (also by mistake), she also waits for the father of her child to come to her. He finds an apartment, furnishes it, and trades the cool car in for a station wagon—a “gray family Opel, a kind of station wagon, roomy and not especially streamlined”¹⁹—with a baby seat (287).

The plots of Lind’s other novels *The Magic Woman*, *The Nest of Broads*, *The Rented Man*, and *The Champagne Diet* continue in this way, as the “Superweiber” age gracefully with their author.²⁰ The image of the “Superweib” or “Zauberfrau” however, disintegrates fairly quickly if you are paying attention. The strength and indomitable will of Lind’s protagonists is illusory, and the “Superweiber” rarely achieve anything as the result of their own efforts, preferring rather to rely on happenstance. Lind agrees in the Ohland interview, saying at least of her earlier (pre-*Nest of Broads*) protagonists, “the heroines [stumbled] unwittingly to some successes or other, had numerous lovers, and everything was very *easy*” (28).²¹

Is it this effortless success in family, career, and love that draws women to Lind's books? In his article, Sill contends that it is and that women secretly wish for an earlier "conservative-bourgeois life and hierarchy in which the woman, sheltered from the adversities of external existence, had enough time, money, and leisure to devote themselves to the pleasant side of life" (268).²² Lind's novels are comforting because the protagonist's "professional career is not paid for with isolation; sexual self-determination doesn't harm a stable partnership; divorce doesn't lead into the vicious circle of poverty and isolation" (Sill 269).²³ Piazena, in *Freitag*, also warns that the emancipatory message in Lind's books is deceiving, for as she reminds us, Lind's plots do revolve around men, and her protagonists spend an inordinate amount of time (for women who do not need men, that is) looking for the right one.

Does the popularity of books such as these reflect the end of feminism? In her article for *Welt*, "Au revoir, Beauvoir," Gärtner implies just this, drawing an analogy between the feminism of the 70s and "jeans" and today's feminism and "leggings," which she describes as the "universal threads of the outgoing, better yet: already gone feminism." She explains: "The enlightened, completely emancipated, successful woman of the eighties peeled off her old protest jeans and pulled on a pair of leggings,"²⁴ implying that this woman now prefers effortless comfort to the strenuous activity associated with the jeans. Piazena concurs, stating that "determined feminism is out, the unbelievable lightness of being" is in,²⁵ and labeling today's women's movement "feminism light." Lind's novels would seem to reflect this new kind of "feminism." Her protagonists do not have to try very hard to find success in life and love. They certainly do not face the same social challenges as earlier generations of women who fought for recognition and equal rights.

Even in the early 1990s, Angela Praesent, editor of Rowohlt's women's book series *neue frau* (new woman) noted it was as if "for reading women everything that smacked of feminism" was embarrassing (50).²⁶ Tanja Seelbach, an editor for Fischer's *Woman in Society* series, attributes the eventual demise of both the Rowohlt series and Fischer's series in the late 1990s and early 2000s respectively to the absence of a women's movement in Germany of the type that was prevalent in the 1970s. That the Fischer series held on so long—lasting a good six years longer than *neue frau* which was shelved in 1997—may be in part due to founder and editor Ingeborg Mues's embracing the "new German woman's novel" of which Hera Lind is by far the best-known author. As Ohland argues, Lind's first novel, *A Man for Every Tone*, "finally took over from the fighting seventies feminists in the renowned Fischer series 'Women in Society'" (27).²⁷ Mues counters that the *Woman in Society* series was so successful because it was flexible and included a mix of genres (11). She points out that when the female reader changed, the series did too, publishing a new style of literature that reflected the evolving interests and concerns of its audience. According to Mues, today's woman is more self-aware and better-versed in equal rights, which calls for a new style of literature. Writes Mues,

“Complaining, whining, and sighing is passé . . . and a kind of jolly feminism is on the way in” (14).²⁸

Whether today’s women practice “jolly feminism” or “feminism light,” it is clear that women are comfortable with a less aggressive form. This is reflected across the board. Female protagonists in novels by and about women are softer, more feminine, and espouse more traditional values—i.e. they often want to get married and settle down. Although German cinema does not have the equivalent of *Pretty Woman*, the movie was popular in Germany and enjoyed a long run. German women’s glossies have all but given up on emancipatory images, preferring to stick to make-up and weight-loss tips.

The tough-minded, bra-burning German feminism of the 70s and early 80s was one of the first victims of reunification. As Angelika Bammer notes in her article on women’s writing of the 1970s and 80s, after the German unification “gender as an issue of sustained public concern was eclipsed by what were officially perceived to be more pressing issues” (217). Lind, however, has come upon a substitute for the now-defunct women’s-libber—the “Superweib.” She created a formula, marketed a product, and became arguably the best-known author in Germany. Her novels avoid the trivializing term “women’s novel” by defying sales statistics and becoming “women’s bestsellers” or *Frauenbestseller* (Piazena). Like the “women’s literature” of the 70s which sought to educate a predominantly female readership by disseminating critical texts by, for, and about women, today’s “women’s bestsellers” are also by, for, and about women. However, they neither seek to educate nor do they have an explicitly political agenda.

Although I focus on Lind in this paper, she is not the only woman writing frivolous gynocentric novels in Germany. I have even read similar novels in English, and conclude that the end of feminist literature is not merely a German phenomenon. If, as at least one scholar has suggested, the reunification of Germany indirectly killed feminism as a topic in politics and social dialogue by supplanting it with its imminence, then what on earth happened to stifle the discourse in the U.S. and England? For just as in Germany, the heroines of the 60s and 70s—the feminists who burned their bras, fought for abortion, and pushed for equality—have become persona non grata, best forgotten and certainly no longer held up as idols to today’s young girls.

The Citadel

Katya Skow

Notes

¹ Since none of Lind’s novels have been translated into English as far as I can ascertain, I have translated all titles and quotations. The original German is given in the endnote except when the citation is very short. My English translations of secondary materials also appear in the body of the text with the original in the endnote.

² “Zu dem freimütigen Bekenntnis, den Roman gerne und mit Genuss gelesen zu haben, konnten sich nur die wenigsten durchdringen.”

³ “die historische Aufarbeitung der Frauenbewegung” and the publication of

“frauenpolitische Texte.”

⁴ “Literatur, die ein so eingeschränktes Bild von Welt und Wirklichkeit entwirft, in der es keine Visionen gibt.”

⁵ “Was war aus dem schönen politischen Feminismus der Siebziger geworden, wenn heute, wie zum Hohn auf dessen Analysen, die Lind-Bücher in einer Reihe erscheinen, die immer noch den Titel ‘Die Frau in der Gesellschaft’ führt?”

⁶ “eine ‘modische Aufbereitung’ der traditionellen Frauenrolle.”

⁷ *Das Superweib* was the number one bestseller in Germany for almost a year until it moved down to make room for Lind’s *Die Zauberfrau*. By December 2002 *Das Superweib* had sold 2,300,000 copies and *Die Zauberfrau* was not far behind (Sills 258).

⁸ “spöttisch-satirische Bücher[n]” (14); “aufmüpfige[r] Roman[e]” (15)

⁹ “Perlweinprosa”

¹⁰ “witzelnde[s] Geplätscher”

¹¹ “leichte Kost”

¹² “solche Bücher, wie [sie] sie schreib[t], weil das für [sie] totgeschlagene Zeit ist.”

¹³ In a talk entitled “Wie verlegt man junge Autoren?” given to the participants of the *Fulbright German Studies Seminar* in Berlin on June 24, 2005, Gunnar Cynbulk, an editor for the Kiepenheuer publishing house, for example, described today’s average book buyer as female, in her mid-40s, university-educated, and buying 15 books a year.

¹⁴ “Unterhaltungsliteratur von Frauen für Frauen boomt seit den 80er Jahren; sie sind ein Beleg einer starken Nachfrage und ein Indiz für die Beliebtheit des Themas im gesellschaftlichen Diskurs.”

¹⁵ “Ich, Löwenmutter mit zwei Jungen, ich schaffe das ganz allein. Ich brauche überhaupt keinen Mann. Jedenfalls nicht zum Leben.”

¹⁶ “Über MICH verhandeln sie nicht. Über MICH entscheide ich.”

¹⁷ “der beste Scheidungsanwalt der Stadt!”

¹⁸ “matschigen Nudelauflauf essen.”

¹⁹ “grauer Familienopel, so ein Kombigerät, geräumig und nicht besonders windschnittig”

²⁰ In her first novel Lind’s main female figure is in her mid-twenties. In her latest book, *Die Champagner-Diät* (2006), her protagonist is pushing forty.

²¹ “die Heldinnen [stolperten] unbewußt zu irgendwelchen Erfolgen, hatten zahlreiche Liebhaber, und alles war sehr easy.”

²² “konservativ-großbürgerliche[n] Lebens- und Herrschaftszusammenhang[s], in dem die Frau, abgeschirmt von den Widrigkeiten des äußeren Daseins, genügend Zeit, Geld und Muße besitzt, um sich den angenehmen Seiten des Lebens zu widmen.”

²³ “die berufliche Karriere wird nicht mit dem Preis der Vereinsamung bezahlt; die sexuelle Selbstbestimmung geht nicht zu Lasten einer stabilen Partnerschaft; die Scheidung führt nicht in den Teufelskreis aus Verarmung und Vereinsamung.”

²⁴ “universelle[n] Klamotte des ausgehenden, besser: ausgegangenen Feminismus.” “Die aufgeklärte, durchemanzipierte, erfolgreiche Frau der achtziger Jahre schälte sich aus den alten Protestjeans und streifte Leggings über.”

²⁵ “Verbissener Feminismus ist out, die ungeheure Leichtigkeit des Seins”

²⁶ “lesenden Frauen alles, was nach Feminismus, . . . roch, nur noch peinlich [wäre].”

²⁷ “löste in der renommierten Fischer-Reihe ‘Die Frau in der Gesellschaft’ endgültig die kämpfenden Siebziger-Jahre-Feministinnen ab.”

²⁸ “Das Klagen, Jammern und Seufzen sei passe, heißt es, und eine Art fröhlicher Feminismus sei im Kommen.” (14).

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Friedrich Nietzsche and the German Gothic Band “Das Ich”

[V]alues are not discovered by reason and it is fruitless to seek them, to find the truth or the good life. The quest begun by Odysseus and continued over three millennia has come to an end with the observation that there is nothing to seek. This alleged fact was announced by Nietzsche just over a century ago when he said, “God is dead.”

—Allan Bloom 143

In 2002, the German Gothic band Das Ich released its new album with the title *Antichrist*. For those who are familiar with this group and this specific subculture, this reference to Nietzsche’s famous text is not surprising. In their second single, *Die Propheten* (1992), which had made them famous in the Gothic scene, the most important song was “Gott ist tot” (“God is dead”)—a quotation from Nietzsche’s *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (481). This study will examine the band’s reception of Nietzsche’s *Antichrist* (1888) and try to answer the question of what made Nietzsche’s philosophy so relevant for young Germans living during the turn of the last millennium.

In addition to the song “Gott ist tot” in *Die Propheten*, in later CDs Das Ich had adapted many poems of German expressionist poets who had been strongly influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche. They even produced a whole CD referencing Gottfried Benn’s volume of poetry, *Morgue*. As Douglas Kellner pointed out, “Nietzsche attracted the Expressionists because they perceived in him a powerful critique of modern society and call for self-transformation” (9). For exactly the same reasons, both Nietzsche and the expressionists seem to attract Bruno Kramm and Stephan Ackermann, the two members of the group Das Ich. Kellner continues:

Nietzsche’s analysis of the modern era is crucial for understanding the expressionist project and its (often unarticulated) epistemological-metaphysical assumptions. For Nietzsche, the death of God was the decisive fact of the epoch, and deeply affected the totality of life. In his view, religion had declined as a viable philosophical system; consequently, many traditional values were rendered obsolete or threatened by the demise of a Deity who guaranteed value, meaning, and transcendence. (9)

Listening to the songs of Das Ich that refer to Nietzsche, it seems that according to the band’s impression, in the Catholic city of Bayreuth, where both musical

artists grew up and still live, God is still in the process of dying. Although on the one hand the band's young members cannot wait to get rid of him ("Leave me alone, God, Let me be free") (from the song "Keimzeit"), on the other hand, they are in shock about the concomitant loss of values, meaning, and transcendence that accompany his demise. In dark, expressionist images and passionate music, the songs try to articulate their deep confusion and anger in cries for help.

In contrast to its adaptation of expressionist poetry, Das Ich's interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas does not consist in setting parts of his texts to music, but in quoting single words or thoughts and reflecting on them via their lyrics and music. The lyrics of their song "Gott ist tot" from their early single *Die Propheten* read as follows:

God's Death

black spreads out in my swollen head the light of my eyes
disintegrates the heart it cremates in white nothing and
nevertheless life will my body is quarried in rock in the deep
maelstrom of eternity that time passes I missed out on and
nevertheless life will go on God is dead incarcerated in the
forest of madness dark being sowed in my hand dusty thinking
in my skull but life will my mind lacerates the daylight the
burning heat in my throat ends without hold my flesh decays
and nevertheless life will go on God is dead my brain is
becoming a prison a small sting paralyzed me the scream in
me is silent but life will a breath of my soul the lightening
gulps down my sweet blood is rotting in the sand my sense to
live in space and time and nevertheless life will go on the
abyss of the blind words did me once well.¹

Quoting Nietzsche's words "Gott ist tot" ("God is dead"), Das Ich uses expressionist vocabulary relating to decaying bodies and intensely emotional music to describe how it feels to live in a society without a transcendental anchorage to provide values and meaning to life. Six times, Stephan Ackermann's voice mimics the popular saying or parts of it: "life will go on"²—the band's ironic comment on the indifference, of the people around them, to the lack of meaning. A listener from the former GDR where another kind of God—the belief in a classless society—had died with the fall of the Berlin Wall, remembers how he felt in 1991, when he heard this song for the first time: "This expressionist text hit me and it fit my mental situation after the confusions of the turn and the loss of what had been my fatherland"³ (Lexi). In the meantime, Kramm and Ackermann have even more fans in the East than in the West German Gothic scene.

From a thematic point of view, the single *Antichrist* is a return to songs like "Gottes Tod," combining the discussion of God's death with the common loss of meaning and feeling for others. From the point of view of music, *Antichrist* is

more mature. Ice cold electronic sounds contrast with warm atmospheric ones, providing the perfect sound track for Stefan Ackermann’s chilling vocal performance. In some instances, Bruno Kramm sings as a kind of chorus to Ackermann’s voice. Apparently, Das Ich combines in *Antichrist* what Kramm and Ackermann have learned from experimenting over 10 years, producing eight other successful singles during this time. In the following, we will examine *Antichrist*’s 10 tracks in order to find out more specifically what made Nietzsche’s ideas in *Antichrist* so relevant for Bruno Kramm and Stephan Ackermann.

The first track is “Engel” (“Angel”). It sounds like a typical Goth-club dance song. Its minor tones are expected, and the dominant musical theme is uncomplicated with a descending passage from the dominant key through the sub-dominant and finally ending at tonic. The lyrics describe a demonic invitation to dance. This death-dance, according to the lyrics, is considered the last time Das Ich can resist “him,” probably referring to the Christian God. The refrain simply states, “the angels of the earth are deaf, blind, and dumb,” expressing the band’s apocalyptic view of the world. Interestingly, the last few measures of this song sound much like an 1890s cabaret piece with the violin solo and saloon piano-sounding melody. That this orchestration is a reference to Nietzsche’s century is certainly not a coincidence.

The song “Keimzeit” (“Time of Germination”) (track 2) has faint similarity to 17th century European church music. The synthesized instrumentation represents a piano, chimes, strings, and an organ. There is a constant beat throughout the piece which sounds like the snap of a whip. The lyrics mimic this pattern as Stephan Ackermann’s voice cries out: “It drives me crazy that everything is colorful/That all can laugh about nothing.”⁴ While Das Ich, in its former song “Gott ist tot,” commented ironically on the indifference of society by quoting over and over the popular saying “life will go on,”⁵ in “Keimzeit” this irony becomes fury. Furiously, the band complains about the triviality of life around them and seems to confirm Allan Bloom’s observation that in Western society after God’s death “everyone spends his life in frenzied work and frenzied play so as not to face the fact, not to look into the abyss” (143). Towards the end of the song, referring to its title “Keimzeit,” the way of thought changes to a bitter complaint about human beings’ mortality: “I must die, I will be dead.”⁶ However, as pessimistic as this end seems, having to die without the illusion to go to heaven, there is a positive, almost pantheistic touch when Ackermann’s voice states: “Let germinate the tree, afterwards I will be ready/The years counted, soon I will be decayed/Let germinate the tree, I want to be its soil.”⁷ He will die, but nature continues to create life, using the singer’s remains as the means for it. This song is an example of why critics call the band’s philosophy *konstruktiver Nihilismus* (constructive nihilism) (Manegold). We will discuss later why this positive touch fits well in Nietzsche’s line of thought.

Tracks 3 and 4, “Grund der Seele” (“Bottom of the soul”) and “Vater” (“Father”), show clearly that Das Ich’s album *Antichrist* is not merely blasphemous or provocative. Both of these tracks contain a deeply personal discussion of religious issues and how they reverberate in the musical artists’ life. The first has simple syncopation placing most of the emphasis on the weak and/or off beats. The industrial instrumentation includes distorted guitars and vocals. The chorus involves the technique of *Sprechgesang*, a mixture of singing and speaking. The lyrics are directed towards an unspecified *du* (“you”) and are a cry for help. As Bloom showed, for Nietzsche the fact that God died and the consequent relativism meant “an unparalleled catastrophe” (143). Similarly, Ackermann, speaking about the bottom of his soul, where eternity is supposed to lie, finds only pain and fear and, finally, death. The song “Vater”—Kramm pointed out in an interview that the title does not refer to God, but to his real father (Kaschke 2)—is also a cry of desperation, this time about the loss of transcendence that occurs together with the death of God. The song starts with the existential question “What does it matter to eternity that I’m alive?”⁸ It continues with the observation, “When I turn around everything is the same and nothing has a soul,”⁹ and ends with dramatic cries for help, for instance, “Father where are you . . . take me by the hand,”¹⁰ as if the singer’s real father could substitute for the deity who has failed him. In Bb minor, the melody revolves around the tonic and dominant pitches. This concept creates a very hollow, empty sound, which fits with the hollow soul, which the lyrics imply. The musical accompaniment is purely industrial techno. There is a men’s chorus behind the lead vocals during the refrain; it symbolizes universal feelings of loneliness.

Track 5, “Krieg im Paradies” (“War in Paradise”), is about the end of mankind. It is full of synth-pop tones and very similar to the band’s primary Goth club dance hits. Ackermann sings the apocalyptic verses with a demonic-sounding distortion effect on the microphone. The refrain shouts, “It is war in paradise”¹¹ to a diminished triad, beginning with a tri-tone. The tri-tone is certainly placed with a purpose, because for centuries it was known as the devil’s interval. Bruno Kramm was asked in an interview why he and Ackermann chose the name *Antichrist* as the title for their single. Referring to Nietzsche’s protest against the binary logic of true and untrue or good and evil in *Antichrist*, Kramm says:

Nietzsche used the concept of Antichrist as a general criticism of society and, at the same time, as a criticism of religion. We wanted to apply this concept to our contemporary time with its superficial symbolism of “Good” and “Evil.” Interestingly, they always said about Nietzsche that only in one hundred years would people understand him. What he has to say is more relevant today than ever (Kaschke 7).¹²

The specific occasion that triggered the production of the single were the events on September 11, 2001 in the U.S. However, Kramm explains,

What concerned me much more than the attack itself . . . was the new way to make politics worldwide, when the biggest power of the world suddenly speaks of an “axis of evil” and judges the whole world by the position it takes towards the good Christian world and towards “God’s own Country” in the fight against evil (Kaschke 7).¹³

Kramm continues to explain how such thinking in binary oppositions leads to “hatred and angst” (“*Haß and Angst*”) (Kaschke 7) in large parts of the world’s population; only a worldwide war can come out of this. How Ackermann and Kramm envision such a war, the lyrics of “Krieg im Paradies” show in detail; it is an apocalyptic vision that causes goose bumps.

The next track, “Tor zur Hölle” (“Gate to Hell”), is orchestrated with harpsichord, violin, and temple blocks. These instruments represent a time before Nietzsche, perhaps at the height of the Catholic Church’s influence in the Baroque period. The gritty lyrics describe the gates of Hell and how to get there. Thought-provoking and full of catchy metaphors—on the way to hell, the singer has to cross “an ocean full of excrement of the Gods”¹⁴—this song includes reflections on anxiety, murder, blood, desire, vanity, and misanthropy. These reflections, found in the verses, are covered by the loud, raucous accompaniment.

Track 7 is “Garten Eden” (“Garden Eden”): a shrill protest against the instrumentalization of the human mind and body in modern society. Since the attempt “to overcome the rational organization of society in modernity . . . attained its first programmatically consistent formulation in Nietzsche” (Schulte Sasse 112), this song shows how relevant Nietzsche’s philosophy is for this youth subculture. “Nothing is ruining you more deeply than any ‘impersonal’ duty . . . , every sacrifice before the Moloch of abstraction”¹⁵ (177), Nietzsche states in *Antichrist*. Later, he writes, “Christian means hatred against the senses, against the enjoyment of the senses, against happiness altogether”¹⁶ (188). Das Ich translates these thoughts into words, for instance, “In my nerves, a dark master preaches Man don’t laugh.”¹⁷ The music mimics Bach’s counterpoint. The harpsichord is contrapuntal and the drums beat a steady pattern on the first and third beats. The end instrumental section is similar to old-world, dark Gothic church music; it accompanies the desire for harmony in a pre-modern world, expressed in lines such as, “Show me the garden Eden/Lead me to your mead.”¹⁸

“Das dunkle Land” (“The Dark Land”) is a dance song, more pop than Gothic; it gives a certain ease to the single. The instrumentation includes trumpets and bells. The lyrics talk about waking up in a cold grave at midnight because the “Master of Darkness” (“*Herr der Dunkelheit*”) is calling the singer. The words “Today is Walpurgis Night” (“*Heute ist Walpurgisnacht*”) indicate

that it is April 30, the night of the popular European festival in which people for centuries have greeted the arrival of spring by dancing around a bonfire and jumping through the flames. It is a pagan tradition still celebrated today in the Harz Mountain range. After Charles the Great defeated the Saxons, the Church forbade the festival, calling the dance around the fire a *Hexentanz* (dance of the witches). This verdict makes the festival, especially the dance, attractive for the Gothic scene. As is well known, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy interpreted the Walpurgis Night musically in Opus 60: *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* (The First Walpurgis Night), and Johann Wolfgang Goethe made the festival famous in *Faust*. Although Nietzsche does not refer to it specifically, it fits with his theory of Dionysian frenzy that allows us to break down ego-boundaries and set free our dreams, fantasies, and the unconscious. Therefore, it is not surprising that the singer's voice shouts: "Today dark powers shall rule/All my being belongs to the lot,"¹⁹ referring to the group of witches.

The ninth track, "Sodom und Gomorrah," is solely industrial. As D.A. Lopez and Karith A. Meyers showed, "Industrial music . . . emphasizes the theme of responding to living in a de-humanized, subversive society with paranoia and aggression. Goth and Industrial music are often listened to at the same venue, as both share themes of dispossession, alienation, and fear" (79). When the lead vocalist of Das Ich yells, "God is cruel" ("*Gott ist grausam*"), a mob of voices follows the leader with a shout: "Sodom und Gomorrah." The lyrics list examples of cruelty that God shows to humans, for instance, women having to give birth in pain. The melody simply outlines a minor triad. This track is rough and unforgiving. It is the most blasphemous song of the single.

The last track, "Der Achte Tag" ("The Eight Day"), is, in Kramm's words, intended to be a *kontrapunkt* (counterpoint) (Sabotka 2) to the harsh songs that come before. It is primarily an instrumental work that sounds like grandiose film music. In the first section, the string instruments include a string quartet, keyboard, oboe, drums, and sound effects like growling and hissing. It is easy to assume that the theme of this song is the day after creation, when the world is completed and chaos begins. The music starts with very primitive drumming and continues to add sounds, as though it were evolving—a symbol of life! Begin with a rhythm and a growl, add an organ, then a string section, then a wind instrument, then continue the process by adding sound effects from highly developed technology, finally insert language, and you find yourself in a highly advanced culture. However, the band's message seems to be that by striving to improve life, many times these technological improvements simply create more chaos. The second section continues the growl and adds a wind effect, which turns into the sound of a motor revving. This is followed by more rhythmic sound effects. The faint noise of whispers can be slightly detected at first and then increasingly louder and clearer. People's thoughts flood randomly into the forefront. More effects are added, like bombs exploding. It fits well the lyrics that in strong images—the steel masts, for instance, are bending like candles that you put on a stove—describe the end of mankind in a nuclear war. The song

ends with a reference to the Bible: “lightening rays thick like towers celebrated Antichrist/Lucifer fell.”²⁰

In interviews referring to the album *Antichrist*, Bruno Kramm points out the relevance of Friedrich Nietzsche’s theory of perspectivism for the band’s view of the world: “that there is nothing ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ in the absolute, but that everything depends on the point of view”²¹ (Kaschke 7). In another interview, Kramm says: “What our Western nations call good is only their definition of capitalist values. Who participates in the global game and does it according to the rules of the USA is allowed to commit arson and is, then, good”²² (Eck 1). Kramm adds that, unfortunately, the loss of perspectivism in our way of thinking probably will have dire consequences for the future of mankind. Instead of a life-enhancing intercultural exchange as Friedrich Nietzsche had envisioned it, this tenacious new thinking in binary oppositions might result in an apocalyptic disaster as Das Ich describes it shockingly in several songs. These arguments seem to justify the strong nihilism in the band’s *Weltanschauung*. However, as has been mentioned earlier, the band’s nihilism is not absolute. As the text *Antichrist* shows, neither was Nietzsche’s. In fact, Nietzsche’s criticism of Christianity is mainly directed against its nihilism: “God degenerated to a contradiction towards life, instead of being its enhancement and eternal Yes”²³ (*Antichrist* 185). Will Self remarked about the positive aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy:

Nietzsche is the first great punk philosopher. I see him there in the pantheon with a safety pin stuck through his nose and two fingers thrust up in the general direction of the philosophical pantheon. . . . In his most apparent nihilism he seems to me also the most apparently positive of thinkers because he is enjoining people to do it themselves in that way. His philosophy is not a guide that you should think like him, you should think for yourself. (Self)

According to Nietzsche, this kind of thinking should come from the body and its practice of self-transformation, and not from abstract categories. Seeing Stefan Ackermann stage his emotions, with his skinny naked torso painted white, watching his contortions and grimaces and listening to his voice, it becomes clear that the band understands well Nietzsche’s idea that art can turn our feelings of repulsion at the absurdity of modern existence into ideas compatible with life.

Bruno Kramm, commenting on the hope in Das Ich’s songs despite their nihilism, stated that by writing and performing music he can work through his depressive thoughts with the result of becoming a “a content and hopeful person”²⁴ (Kaschke 3). He adds that the yellow press never understands why the theme of death is on so many young people’s minds. It is, he answers,

[B]ecause [death] is an important aspect that is excluded in our world today, with which nobody wants to deal. It doesn’t

belong in this Yuppie-culture, in this thinking of success . . . in our society. Exactly for this reason, there are so many distraught and sick people, because there are no outlets any more to deal with these negative things.)²⁵

As a musician, he concludes, he can help his audience to *kanalisieren* (to channel) (Kaschke 3) their fear and frustration. In other words, the band's art is intended to create a form of reconciliation in the troubled minds of its audience.

To summarize, there are several ideas of Nietzsche's that the members of the German Gothic band Das Ich find attractive and relevant for their own lives. First, with the "Death of God" they seem to have lost their transcendental anchorage that guaranteed meaning. As Nietzsche did, they consider this loss a catastrophe. Second, Das Ich criticizes the rationalism of modern society with its alienating effects on the individual. Third, they highly value Nietzsche's perspectivism and try to deconstruct the binary logic of good and evil, which, given the technological advances of our time, could lead only to nuclear war. Fourth, to escape the agonies of nihilism, they follow Nietzsche's advice to try to create new values through self-expression and self-transformation by means of their art. Allan Bloom commented on Nietzsche's relevance for Western society at the end of the twentieth century: "A value creating man is a plausible substitute for a good man, and some such substitute becomes practically inevitable in pop-relativism, since very few persons can think of themselves as just nothing" (144). His following thought is important for understanding the strength and high self-esteem of the Gothic subculture: "The respectable and accessible nobility of man is to be found not in the quest for or discovery of the good life, but in creating one's own 'life-style.' . . . He who has a 'life-style' is in competition with, and hence inferior to, no one" (144).

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Notes

¹ Gottes Tod

schwarz verbreitet sich in meinem kopf ganz aufgequollen mein
augenlicht zersetzt das herz verbrennt im weissen nichts und doch es
wird mein körper ist in stein gehauen im tiefen sog der ewigkeit dass
zeit vergeht ist mir entgangen und doch es wird es wird schon wieder
weiter geh'n gott ist tot eingesperrt im wald des wahns dunkles sein
gesaecht in meiner hand verstaubtes denken in meinem schaedel und
doch es wird mein Geist zerfleischt das tageslicht die feuersglut in
meinem hals erlischt ganz ohne halt mein fleisch zerfaellt und doch
es wird es wird schon wieder weiter geh'n gott ist tot mein gehirn
zum kerker wird ein kleiner stich hat mich gelaehmt der schrei in mir
unhoerbar schweigt und doch es wird mein seelenhauch der blitz
verschlingt mein suesses blut verfaut im sand mein sinn zum leben

in raum und zeit und doch es wird es wird schon wieder weiter geh'n
der schlund der blinden worte hat mir einmal gutgetan.

² “es wird schon wieder weitergehn”

³ “Dieser expressionistische Text traf mich und passte zu meinem seelischen Zustand nach den Wirren der Wende und dem Verlust dessen, was einmal mein Heimatland war”

⁴ “Es macht mich wahnsinnig dass alles bunt ist/Daß alle lachen können über Nichtigkeit”

⁵ “es wird schon wieder weitergehn”

⁶ “ich muß sterben, ich werde tot sein”

⁷ “Den Baum, laß keimen, danach bin ich bereit/Die Jahre gezählt, bald bin ich verwest/Den Baum, laß keimen, seine Erde will ich sein”

⁸ “Was kümmert es die Ewigkeit, daß ich am Leben bin”

⁹ “Wenn ich mich dreh ist alles Eins und nichts davon trägt eine Seele”

¹⁰ “Vater wo bist du . . . nimm mich an die hand”

¹¹ “Es ist Krieg im Paradies”

¹² Der Begriff Antichrist [wurde] von Nietzsche als generelle Gesellschaftskritik der damaligen Zeit und zugleich als Religionskritik verwendet . . . , die wir auf die heutige Zeit mit ihrer oberflächlichen Symbolik aus “Gut” und “Böse” übertragen wollten. Interessanterweise wurde ja über Nietzsche auch immer gesagt, daß er letztlich erst in einhundert Jahren wirklich verstanden wird—und er ist heute aktueller denn je.

¹³ was mich dabei viel mehr beschäftigt hat als das schreckliche Attentat . . . war vielmehr der neue Duktus, wie Politik weltweit gemacht wird, wenn die größte Macht der Welt plötzlich von einer “Achse des Bösen” spricht und die ganze Welt danach bewertet, wie sie sich im Kampf gegen alles, was “Evil” ist, zur guten christlichen Welt und “God’s Own Country” positioniert

¹⁴ “meer vom Kot der Götter”

¹⁵ “Nichts ruiniert tiefer . . . als jede ‘unpersönliche’ Pflicht, jede Opferung vor dem Moloch der Abstraktion”

¹⁶ “christlich ist der Hass gegen die Sinne, gegen die Freuden der Sinne, gegen die Freude überhaupt”

¹⁷ “In meinen Nerven dunkler Meister predigt Mensch lache nicht”

¹⁸ “Zeige mir den Garten Eden/Führe mich auf deine Au”

¹⁹ “Heute herrsche dunkle Macht Mein ganzes Sein gehört der Brut”

²⁰ “turmdicke Blitze feierten den Antichristen/Luzifer war gefallen”

²¹ “daß es nämlich nichts ‘Gutes’ und ‘Böses’ im absoluten gibt, sondern alles immer nur abhängig ist vom Standpunkt der Betrachtung”

²² “Das was unsere westlichen Nationen als Gut bezeichnen sind nur ihre Definitionen von kapitalistischen Werten. Wer beim globalen Spiel mitmacht und das nach den Regeln der USA darf auch brandschatzen und ist dann gut.”

²³ “Gott [ist] zum Widerspruch des Lebens abgeartet, statt dessen Verklärung und ewiges Ja zu sein”

²⁴ “zufriedener und hoffnungsvoller Mensch”

²⁵ weil es ein ganz wichtiger Aspekt ist, der in unserer Welt heutzutage ausgegliedert wird, mit dem man sich nicht beschäftigen möchte. Der

gehört nicht in diese Yuppie-Kultur, in das Erfolgsdenken . . . unserer Gesellschaft. Genau aus diesem Grund gibt es so viele verstörte und kranke Menschen, weil letztendlich keine Ventile mehr existieren, um sich mit all den negativen Dingen . . . zu befassen.

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Ken Follett's Foray into Film: What Those Old Scripts Can Tell Us

Ken Follett, the author of blockbuster novels from the 1970s and 1980s (such as *Eye of the Needle* and *The Pillars of the Earth*) has long had a complicated relationship with film. Of his more than 27 books, only a few have been adapted for the small or large screen: *The Key to Rebecca*, *On Wings of Eagles*, *Lie Down with Lions*, and *The Third Twin* were turned into television miniseries; only *Eye of the Needle* was produced as a full-length theatrically released movie which appeared in 1981.¹

Ironically, Follett, whose work has been termed “cinematic in conception” (Macdonald 113), developed several projects for film or related media during the earliest stages of his career. Besides writing television scripts, he novelized the 1978 Peter Hyam screenplay for *Capricorn One*, a science fiction film about a faked Mars landing that starred O.J. Simpson, James Brolin, and Sam Waterston. Nearly a decade later, as Follett sought out new directions for his writing, he spent considerable time and effort developing a screenplay adaptation of his 1985 novel *Lie Down With Lions* which, although unproduced, is superior in organization and structure to the script ultimately used for the 1994 television miniseries. Additionally, in his most recent novels, such as *Code to Zero*, a certain screenplay sensibility seems to dominate, with a high ratio of dialogue to concrete description, an emphasis on plot, and a frequent change of location.

The correlation between Follett's training as a journalist and his successful career in fiction has been described at length,² but the influence of his early—and little known—work in film and television has remained unexplored. A better understanding of Follett's work for visual media is now possible due to the acquisition of his archives by Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan. Representing the largest collection of Follett's business and personal correspondence, notes, outlines, drafts, and research materials, the 23 boxes of catalogued materials includes a typescript and galley proofs of *Storm Island* (republished as *Eye of the Needle*) and transcribed interviews with H. Ross Perot and others for the writing of *On Wings of Eagles*, as well as screenplays Follett developed for British television and film production companies.

This article will assess three Follett screenplays written in the 1970s—“Ups and Downs of a Soccer Star” (1976), “Target: Fringe Banking” (1978), and “Numbers Man: Sheik, Rattle and Roll” (1978)—as well as his adaptation of *Lie Down with Lions* (written between 1986 and 1989), and will demonstrate that the script avoided many of the mistakes of the 1994 television production, which Follett has termed “dismal” (“Talk Today”).

By 1976, Follett had achieved some modest success as a writer. After graduating from University College, London in 1970 with a degree in

philosophy, he worked as a trainee-journalist and later as a general reporter. Although already married at age eighteen and with two small children by 1973, he was eager to leave journalism. In 1974, he quickly penned a hard-boiled detective novel under the pseudonym "Symon Myles," selling it as *The Big Needle* to Everest Books, a small London publishing company which he joined that same year. Hoping to create a series hero with the appeal of a James Bond, Follett wrote two more novels in quick succession for Everest Books, using the same hero, Apples Carstairs, and employing similar titles: *The Big Black* and *The Big Hit* (published in 1974 and 1975, respectively). During this same period, Follett was experimenting with different genres and was writing science fiction stories, children's books, and stories of jewel thieves. These books were published under different pen names—one for each genre—but by 1975 Follett was confident enough in his novelistic skills to publish two novels under his own name and to hope for a breakthrough with a new series hero, Piers Roper, in *The Shakeout* (1975) and *The Bear Raid* (1976).

With the exception of Follett's 1978 television proposal "Numbers Man," it was his last attempt at a series hero, and by the time he turned to a new genre—film—with "Ups and Downs of a Soccer Star," he already had nine books to his credit: none of which, as he's pointed out, were a great financial success but all represented professional encouragement (*Tuttle Shokai* 1).

"Ups and Downs of a Soccer Star" is very much in the style of British sex comedies of the 1960s and 1970s. Co-written with John Sealey, it was planned as a sequel to Sealey's 1975 *The Ups and Downs of a Handyman* and continues the story of Bob Roberts, a handyman now employed by a mediocre soccer club in a working class neighborhood. The script calls for an opening shot of "an unimpressive football pitch, with only a decrepit stand to one side. Rows of terraced houses with gardens back onto the other three sides" (1). Before long, the comedy (such as it is) gets underway with a domestic role reversal: a husband who doesn't understand sports terms washes the dishes while his wife reads the sports page out loud and is led to believe that a "new striker" is a trade unionist on strike. There is much running around, with a bevy of buxom beauties chasing Bob Roberts as the most physically capable man on the team, and numerous "naughty" scenes à la *The Benny Hill Show* with clothing caught in desk drawers, sexual escapades, and an orgy on a bus.

Added to this was a great deal of double entendre and an incompetent police constable who terms his second-hand Morris Minor "part of the modern, computerized high-technology police force" (11). The screenplay ends with the possibility of a sequel to the sequel: Bob, whose soccer career has ended with the team's loss, is approached by an agent who offers to make him a pop star. However, neither "Ups and Downs of a Soccer Star" nor the implied "Ups and Downs of a Pop Star" were ever produced, as the idea for a series of "Ups" films was ultimately dropped. Given that the initial film, *Ups and Downs of a Handyman*, has been reviewed as "laughingly bad. . . [and] most remarkable

for the truly appalling attempts at comedy" ("Credits and Comments"), this may have been a prudent decision.

Follett's next foray into film was more successful. "Fringe Banking" was Episode 13 of the BBC television series *Target*, which debuted on September 9, 1977. Follett's teleplay went through three initial drafts; a near final version is dated March 11, 1978, with various scenes subsequently rewritten and dated June 12, 1978. Filming was scheduled for the first two weeks in August of that year, during the time when Follett was already working on "Numbers Man: An Idea for a Series;" "Fringe Banking" was broadcast two months later, on October 13, 1978. These dates are significant: although Follett's breakthrough international bestseller *Eye of the Needle* had been sold to a publisher by early 1978, and Follett was already seeing significant financial rewards, he remained grateful for commissioned work during this same period and remained somewhat cautious about his writing future (Macdonald). As Follett noted years later, "I thought it might be the most money I'd ever make in my life. . . ." (Baker 55), which might explain why he continued to work on television projects even after *Eye of the Needle* had been accepted for publication.

As a television police procedural, "Fringe Banking" continues the exploits of Detective Superintendent Hackett, the tough and ruthless chief of operations for the 13th Regional Crime Squad, a unit dealing with large scale crimes ranging from drug smuggling to homicide to truck hijacking. In this episode, Hackett discovers a scheme to funnel lucrative government contracts to a struggling construction company. Follett's script is briskly paced and competent, if routine, making use of many standard devices of television suspense: a civil servant is caught in a "honey trap" even before the opening credits, piquing the viewer's interest. While the robbers wait in the cab of a crane, one of them rolls a cigarette and drops the tobacco can, startling everyone (100). Later, the robbers think they'll be apprehended when they hear approaching sirens, then are relieved to see three fire trucks pass by (108).

Other formulaic devices include the "parallel editing" of scenes to heighten tension, the climatic chase scene on foot through London streets, and the motif of "the great British public" (126) willfully ignorant of the seamier side of life. In one of the closing scenes, a City gentleman feigns indifference as he walks past a detective making an arrest.

Characterization is equally formulaic, with the cockney gangster's hard-as-nails mum (38), and Hackett's immediate supervisor is predictably officious. "Don't cut things quite so fine next time, Steven," he says after the cliffhanger ending (146). During the two seasons that *Target* aired, the series was much criticized for excessive violence, and the BBC bowed to public pressure by canceling the show after only 18 episodes. However, as Hal Erickson has observed in the *All Movie Guide*, "It has been speculated that *Target* has not been rerun since 1978 because of the dated quality of its scripts rather than its body-and-bullet count" (1).

"Fringe Banking" is of note primarily for what it says about Follett's development as a writer. The suspense writing techniques practiced for a television show—the inter-cutting of scenes or the foot chase down narrow streets—would be made more fully his own in later works such as *On Wings of Eagles* and *The Key to Rebecca*. And as a story of fund manipulation, "Fringe Banking" demonstrates Follett's early interest in writing about banking capers, heists, and financial double-dealings, as evidenced by several books published in the 1970s: *The Bear Raid* (1976), *Paper Money* (1976), and *The Heist of the Century* (1978).³

"Numbers Man," the last project he would attempt with a series hero, is described as "a television series in fifty minute episodes devised by Ken Follett and Gerard Glaister" (1), who at the time was considered a foremost British television producer. The script, while again quite unremarkable, is nonetheless perhaps of more than passing interest, mostly for what it reveals about British social anxieties in the 1970s and ambivalence towards change. "Numbers Man" was to be a series about white collar crime and the adventures of a brilliant financial detective, Richard Liddell, who is termed "superficially . . . , very respectable and conservative in a dark suit" but at home a "relaxed bohemian" (1). This split between establishment and counterculture worlds is underscored by his domestic arrangement: Richard is cynical about the business world and lives with a bright women's editor of a weekly paper (1–2). However, as modern and open-minded as the character (and his writers) might wish to be, the script inadvertently expresses a lingering conflict over new cultural attitudes in the late 1970s. The women's editor, Nutsy, is described as "liberated in an attractive way: braless and self-sufficient rather than tedious and shrill" (2). This ambivalence towards traditional versus progressive attitudes is also reflected in the description of Nutsy's editor, "a likeable bigot in his fifties . . . [who] has little time for students, blacks, hippies, gypsies, socialists or women, but calls himself a liberal" (3).

Other anxieties reflected in the script include a fear over increased Arab financial control in Britain. "For instance," notes one of the characters, "if one of my Arabs wanted to buy into a particular British company, and we had our doubts—you could look into whether they were overvaluing their assets, and so on—" (6).

This passage, along with many others in the script, points to a rather garrulous quality overall. The script seems to contain a great deal of dialogue for a television show, much of it resulting from the need to dramatize conflicting social attitudes: Nutsy is concerned with justice, Richard with legality, and a central ingredient in the proposed series is the ongoing contrast in values expressed through domestic banter. By comparison, Follett's previous effort, "Fringe Banking," seems much more tightly wrought, with a sparseness of dialogue appropriate to a police drama. Although the final draft of "Numbers Man" is somewhat improved, with livelier and fuller scenes between Richard and Nutsy, much of what passes for "witty" repartee in both drafts seems to be a

lackluster and uninspired attempt at one-upmanship, as in the following example:

12 - INT - The Flat - Night

(Richard and Nutsy are preparing to go out. Their clothes are smart-casual, and trendy. Nutsy is putting finishing touches to her make-up in a hand mirror. Richard is filing his nails.)

RICHARD. His Holiness [the sheik] is one of the richest men in the world, and he lives in a tent.

NUTSY. What does he spend his money on?

RICHARD. Middle-aged western women, by all accounts.

NUTSY. Really?

RICHARD. He wouldn't like you, you're too thin.

Anyway . . .

(She throws a cushion at him and he dodges, laughing.)

RICHARD. Anyway, he tried to buy an air force a while back, but no one would sell him one.

(Nutsy has finished her make-up.)

NUTSY. So he wants to buy Britain instead—starting with London Leasing Limited.

RICHARD. . . . It's a very small company to interest a millionaire.

(He has finished his manicure.)

RICHARD. . . . *(Pretending impatience.)* Are you ready, for goodness sake?

NUTSY. *(Taking the bait.)* Am I ready!?

(Then she meets his eyes and realizes she's been had.)

(Revised Screenplay 14–15)

This sort of hip, contemporary relationship, with its carefree banter and casual attitude towards wealth and a night on the town, may have been the ideal for the young writer, but neither the pilot episode of “Numbers Man” nor the series was ever produced. Follett returned to the depiction of a modern relationship, and to a final attempt to write for film, some ten years later. As we shall see, it was a period of new directions, marked by change and a desire to depart radically from the kinds of novels that had brought him fame.

With the success of the novel *Eye of the Needle* in 1978 and the four novels with wartime settings which followed in relatively quick succession—*Triple* in 1979, *The Key to Rebecca* in 1980, *The Man from St. Petersburg* in 1982, and *Lie Down with Lions* in 1985—Follett had established himself as one of the

foremost contemporary writers of international intrigue. But this was also a period of some restiveness for the writer, who moved to the south of France in 1979. The following year, 1980, he told an interviewer that he didn't expect to be writing thrillers for the rest of his life and that he'd been developing a film treatment of *The Key to Rebecca* (Isenberg 5). Then, in 1981, the same year that he returned to England from the south of France, he agreed to write a nonfiction account of a daring rescue mission to Iran, in part because it represented a break from novels (Lauerman 1). The next year, he moved from London to Surrey and became press officer of the local branch of the Labour Party where he met the woman who would become his second wife, Barbara Broer, the widow of a slain South African civil rights activist. Follett continued to search for his next project. He spent much of 1983 working on a thriller titled "Country Risk" about a KGB plot to take over a bank and force a financial crisis, but abandoned it during the time when he was separating from his first wife—a connection noted by an interviewer for *Salon* (7). While living with Broer, Follett started work on *Lie Down with Lions*, a story about two people with a small child escaping over the Himalayas during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and placed a strong female character at the center of the story—one whom Follett has said bears a close resemblance to Broer, or at least the person he first thought she was (Turner 5).

Lie Down with Lions describes a romantic triangle comprised of Jane, a liberal Englishwoman in Paris who wants to help Afghan children; her French admirer, Jean-Pierre; and her American lover, Ellis, who works for the CIA. When Jean-Pierre reveals to Jane that Ellis works for a clandestine organization, she feels betrayed and departs Paris for Afghanistan with Jean-Pierre, who is supposedly an idealistic medical volunteer. Later, in Afghanistan, after bearing a child, Jane feels doubly betrayed when she discovers that Jean-Pierre is aiding the Russians in their struggle against the Afghan resistance. Ellis, who has gone to Afghanistan to support a leader of the rebellion, now helps Jane and her daughter flee both the pursuing Russians and Jean-Pierre in a daring escape from the Peshawar Valley.

As with Follett's other mid-career novels, he began first with a carefully constructed outline, completing it in late 1983 under the preliminary title *Run on Ice*. He then solicited comments from readers at his British and American publishers and from his trusted friend and agent, Al Zuckerman. This had become Follett's standard procedure since *Eye of the Needle*, the first of his books which was carefully outlined and researched, and he sought additional insights and commentary from professionals in the publishing world throughout the stages of writing *Lie Down with Lions*—after second and third draft outlines, and after three drafts of the novel itself.

What was different about *Lie Down with Lions* as a mid-career novel, however, was that for the first time since his earliest flawed novels, Follett had selected a contemporary setting—a change noted by Elaine Koster at New American Library in her response to Follett's first draft outline:

There are two things I miss in the proposal that have become Follett trademarks. One, is a plot that centers around a turning point in history, or at least where the stakes are higher than just the individual fates of the central characters. The other, is historical characters in the story, which is really an off-shoot of the first problem.

Additional off-shoots of the first problem, which was the use of a contemporary setting, would later be encountered by a film production company in its efforts to adapt Follett's novel for the screen.

Lie Down with Lions was published in 1985, the same year that Follett married Broer, and reached the number one spot on the *New York Times* bestseller list by February 1986. Two months later, Follett was in contact with Geoff Reeve Pictures, Ltd. over a proposed film version of the book. Reeve was best known at the time as the producer of the television miniseries *The Far Pavilions* (1984) (based on the novel by M.M. Kaye and also set in the Afghan mountains), and as the producer of the movies *The Shooting Party* (1985) and *Half Moon Street* (1986).

Although clearly a commercial success, *Lie Down with Lions* has been deemed a good example of the critics' main complaints about Follett's novels: that while he is an engaging writer, his work sometimes descends into bathos and manipulation (Macdonald 123). John O'Sullivan, in reviewing *Lie Down with Lions* for the *Wall Street Journal*, thought it highly readable but faulted it for the Afghan characters straight "from central casting" (25). Andrew and Gina Macdonald, writing for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, found Jane's actions to be inconsistent, motivated by sentimentality in some episodes and by pragmatism in others, and leading them to question whether Follett's sense of character had failed him in the novel (123).

Follett, known for his rapid pace of production, uncharacteristically would not publish his next novel for another four years and when he did, it was in an entirely different genre from the thriller form. Looking back at the six books that began with *Eye of the Needle* and ended with *Lie Down with Lions*, he stated that he felt he had "written enough thrillers. I felt the need of a break from that or maybe the need to stop doing thrillers altogether" (Ross 151).

It was in this context that Follett began drafting a screenplay adaptation of *Lie Down with Lions*, a project which occupied him for a 35-month period, from early 1986 through early 1989. Presumably, his attachment to the basic story and to the central characters remained undiminished, at least during the initial months of this project.

In April 1986, Follett received a letter from Geoff Reeve Pictures, Ltd., praising *Lie Down with Lions* and offering some general thoughts on how the book might be adapted for film (Fulcher). The commercial and popular success of the television production *The Far Pavilions* represented a significant breakthrough for Reeve who, as an independent English producer, considered himself fortunate to have gotten the backing of the relatively new Home Box

Office. Following that breakthrough, Reeve was looking for projects of a similar style and theme—the good old-fashioned love story yarn with an international cast—as he described it in a 1984 interview, and had at one time considered adapting another M.M. Kaye novel for the small or large screen (interview with Wolf).

Follett wrote back to Reeve within one day, expressing considerable enthusiasm for the proposal to adapt *Lie Down with Lions*, but also making light of his excitement. Agreeing with the general comments, he noted that he could “think of lots of good ways to implement these new ideas but I had better keep them to myself until I start writing the script, for fear of what might be called literary premature ejaculation.” Although Reeve had years of production experience in television commercials and in film, his company was newly formed in 1985, following the completion of *Half Moon Street*.

Interestingly, it was during this same time period that Follett was attempting another radical departure from his previous books. Fascinated by medieval cathedrals ever since he had written an article on the topic as a journalist, he had developed an outline in 1976 for a story about the building of a medieval cathedral. However, that same year he wrote an outline for what would become *Eye of the Needle*, the novel that charted the direction of his writing for almost a decade (Kirchhoff A25). Archival materials indicate that he returned to the cathedral-building story in the final months of 1985 and the first few months of 1986, when he produced an outline and handwritten notes for the novel he would develop over the next several years, *The Pillars of the Earth*. In other words, the drafting of the two projects—the screenplay for *Lie Down with Lions* and the 1,000-page novel of medieval life—coincided to a large degree.

Almost a year after writing his enthusiastic letter to Geoff Reeve Ltd., Follett was still working on the screenplay. He was able to submit a “revised first draft screenplay” in April 1987, after considering comments from a reader who described the dialogue as flat, verbose, and sentimental; complained that the characters lacked complexity, with the central character, Jane, appearing “stupid,” gullible, and hysterical; and described the ending as “altogether too glib . . . a disappointing and frankly incredible end to a fine action drama” (unsigned notes). As indicated earlier, Follett is known for taking readers’ comments seriously, and his own handwritten note after one of the more melodramatic scenes in the screenplay reads “too much” (36). His valued colleague and agent, Al Zuckerman, also offered comments on the draft. In a letter dated March 20, 1987, Zuckerman observed that the problem in the script is more than just reworking Jane’s dialogue for the screen; as a novelist, Follett is probably too close to the characters and “read[s] into the screenplay personae qualities which you gave them in the novel, but for which you did not fully find equivalencies in the screen treatment. . . .”

Zuckerman went on to suggest that the screenplay should be turned over to a third party for revision, adding “I do not think it would be wise for you personally to do any more work on this screenplay without the active

collaboration of a director who is already under contract to actually film the story." Zuckerman also felt that the project was taking away valuable time from the writing of Follett's next novel and that:

[M]aybe it would be wise for someone else to step in; and then, hopefully, you could reserve the right to review whatever they do before the picture begins shooting. At that point, I think it would make a great deal of sense for you to give the script a final polish; and you would then hopefully feel good about what would be said and done before the cameras.

Zuckerman's advice notwithstanding, Follett continued work on the project, perhaps as a writer's exercise while he developed *The Pillars of the Earth* during that same period of time. In May 1989, two years after completing the revised first draft screenplay, Follett had completed a second draft screenplay of *Lie Down with Lions*, but the delays in the completion of the screenplay and the production of the film can also be attributed in part to the constantly changing political situation in Afghanistan. As noted by Geoff Reeve in a letter to Follett dated March 28, 1989: "... I am so relieved that the Russian withdrawal has meant we can go back to your story without worrying about 'current' events, which were always changing. Maybe Gorbachev read the book!" Reeve made a number of other comments regarding revision of the second draft, but Follett was coming to the end of his involvement in the project. Reeve noted as much in his letter when he stated that it may be "that if you approve my contribution . . . there will not be too much for you to do, since I believe that your script is basically there, and I am so relieved, etc."

In a reply to Reeve dated the same day, Follett offered a "hasty note of my thoughts on revising and shortening the screenplay" and concluded "[t]his is very rough, Geoff, but perhaps better than nothing," implying that final editing of the screenplay would be undertaken by someone else and that he was willing to relinquish control over the screenplay. Interestingly, Follett had completed the final draft of *The Pillars of the Earth* that same month and only a few months later, took up preliminary work on another novel, *Night Over Water*.

Follett's screenplay adaptation of *Lie Down with Lions*, intended for theatrical release, may have taken years to complete and been delayed by ever-changing international events, but by the revised second draft, it did tell the story of love and betrayal in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan in succinct visual terms. There are a number of improvements in the revised second draft, dated June 8, 1989. Shorter than the previous version by some 60 pages, actions from several different scenes in the first draft were compressed into a single scene; dialogue was tightened to allow scenes to end on a dramatic highpoint, and the order of events was sometimes rearranged to create more suspense. For example, in the first draft version Jean-Pierre, the French doctor, prepares to visit Ellis, the CIA operative, and considers giving him an overdose of a drug. In the revised version, Jean-Pierre is in the same room with Ellis and handles the

phial that reads “DANGER: OVERDOSE IS FATAL” (48), thus placing Ellis in immediate danger.

Additional improvements include turning separable scenes into brief flashbacks for a more fluid narrative trajectory and creating new dialogue to enhance scenes, thereby deepening characterization. Stage directions were now more vivid and precise: “JANE comes in carrying MOUSA” in the earlier version (15) became “JANE stumbles in with MOUSA in her arms” in the final draft (6). A handwritten marginal note “Jean-Pierre a charming shit” became a full paragraph analyzing character: “JEAN-PIERRE is a complex, multi-layered character. Superficially, he is attractive and charming. However, we will soon learn that he is dishonest and unreliable. Finally, we will see him as a tragically misguided idealist” (6). In short, during the 35 months that the project involved him, Follett had created a screenplay that, in its final version—and assuming competent acting and directing—should have resulted in a coherent and reasonably entertaining adaptation of the book.

Curiously, when an adaptation of *Lie Down with Lions* was finally produced by Reeve some five years later—in 1994—it was as a television miniseries for Lifetime, with a script by Guy Andrews and Julian Bond. Both Andrews and Bond had worked as actors and television writers. Andrews had been a comedy writer who would go on to write television episodes for *Prime Suspect* and *Poirot*. Bond, whose career had begun in the late 1950’s, had adapted *Love for Lydia* for television and was the screenwriter on the Geoff Reeve production *The Far Pavilions*. It was their first collaboration.

Andrews and Bond made wholesale changes to the setting and storyline of *Lie Down with Lions*: instead of France and Afghanistan, the setting was now Luxembourg and Azerbaijan. Jane was now American, with a name change to Kate, and Jean-Pierre was now Czech and called Peter Husak. Ellis was now Jack Carver, and nominally still American, though played by the Welsh actor Timothy Dalton, who labored to deliver lines such as “Democracy . . . real seductive. . . . If I ever had any ideals, I lost them real quick. . . .” Because an affiliate of Reeve’s company, Reeve & Partners, was based in Luxembourg at this time, some of the changes to the original story may have been influenced by the availability of actors and locales. But the desire to avoid writing about a constantly shifting contemporary situation must also have been a factor in the decision to abandon the Afghan setting entirely.

When Follett began writing the novel *Lie Down with Lions* in 1983, the American government was actively supporting the leaders of resistance to Soviet occupation, and Ronald Reagan called them “Heroes of Freedom” and “Champions of Freedom” in 1985. Follett, in fact, was initially attracted to the Afghan setting because of the lack of moral ambiguity: “I chose Afghanistan because there, at least, most people could identify who were the good guys and who were the bad guys,” he stated to *Publishers Weekly* the year of his book’s publication (Baker 55). A decade later, when the Andrews-Bond television script was being developed, such moral clarity was gone and the depiction of the

Afghan warlords and their followers as heroes and champions of freedom would have been problematic. A civil war had erupted in Kabul in 1993, with warlords and renegade generals establishing their own local dictatorships the following year. By 1995, major cities had fallen to the Taliban, with revenge killings and summary executions ensuing and with new alliances and factions emerging. But other changes to the screenplay adaptation of Follett's book seem driven less by geopolitical considerations and viewer sensitivities than by a desire to fill several nights of television viewing time.

By expanding the television drama, Reeve, as producer, may have been attempting to reprise the success of the six-hour, three-part miniseries *The Far Pavilions*, which was reviewed at the time of its broadcast as a "lush, romantic travelogue leisurely wander[ing] the flowery landscape of Victorian fiction. . . ." (Stengel 70). Looking back on that success, Reeve noted that in working with his screenwriter, Julian Bond, he had always known that the essence of *The Far Pavilions* story—the love story—was about two hours of screen time, but that it could be "pushed out" to six hours for commercial television sale. This approach worked very well and Reeve believed the film was an unprecedented success for both HBO and British television (interview with Wolf). Expanding the core narrative of a story set against the grand tapestry of history to six hours may have had a certain logic for *The Far Pavilions*, which covers some 20 years, but the time frame of *Lie Down with Lions* is much shorter and spans a mere 18 months. Follett's book, in fact, was praised for its "cinematic virtues," including rapid action and a straightforward plot (O'Sullivan 25).

In turning the book into a screenplay, Follett had included brief flashbacks to compress events, but the Andrews-Bond teleplay extended events through lengthy "back story" flashbacks, lessening dramatic tension. Almost all of part one in this four-part miniseries is a flashback, containing, somewhat illogically, a flashback within a flashback. Suspense is the result of random violence rather than the consequence of interrelated events: at one point, Peter/Jean-Pierre (played by Nigel Havers) imagines street thugs in Luxembourg as Russian troops stomping into Czechoslovakia, a scene which has little connection to the central storyline. The usually capable actor also struggles with wooden dialogue: "I just thought it was buried, so deep. All of a sudden, I was a little boy of ten, in Prague. . . . I'll get over it."

In an additional attempt to expand the story to 185 minutes of viewing time, Andrews and Bond included numerous subplots, with little relevance to Follett's novel or to each other. "It's all about oil," the viewer is told in the post-Gulf War television movie. Later, the miniseries develops the side-story of Kate/Jane organizing a street protest in Luxembourg and a "Jules et Jim" ménage à trois. Another side-story, about a Middle-Eastern agent's attempt to raise \$300,000 from Jack/Ellis seems also largely disconnected from Follett's original plot, as does the story thread that "[a]ll of this is about a political assassination, right?"

Follett's basic premise of a modern feminist woman with a lover who is a foreign doctor and a lover who is a CIA operative surfaces from time to time, as

does the Follett formula from *Eye of the Needle* and from his other novels: a strong woman, caring for a child and therefore vulnerable, unknowingly lives with a spy and is in great danger. The television screenplay changes almost everything else, except some of the action/ambush scenes towards the end.

On its release, the television version of *Lie Down with Lions* was panned by *People Weekly* as a “convoluted, uninvolved procession” and a “dreadful, four-hour dud” (Hiltbrand 14). While there are numerous examples of successful television miniseries broadcast over several nights—*Lonesome Dove*, *The Far Pavilions*, the adaptation of Follett’s *The Key to Rebecca*, for that matter—these are all productions that build tension consistently throughout the narrative, both within scenes and across scenes. In such productions, multiple plots serve the larger purpose of advancing the main plot and of building suspense within it. The Andrews-Bond television script of *Lie Down with Lions* was singled out in a *Variety* review as “stupefying, by the numbers,” with the critic commenting that “[t]he project might have looked promising on paper, what with a veteran cast and a story adapted from a Ken Follett novel . . . , but the finished result is flat, uninspired and grueling. . . .” (Loynd). Follett’s assessment of the finished product, as noted earlier, was equally gloomy, and it is difficult to see how the production would not have been aided by Follett’s more structurally solid script; at a minimum, it wouldn’t have made it any worse.

As we have seen, Follett’s various forays into film and television scriptwriting allowed him, early in his career, to experiment with certain types of scenes, formulaic devices, and settings and to develop a screenplay sensibility, all of which he would put to effective use in the crafting and pacing of his mature works. His work for visual media also represents a turning away from the path he had charted for himself, first as an aspiring writer of series thrillers and later as an established author of international bestsellers with wartime settings. This seems especially the case with the drafting of the unproduced adaptation of *Lie Down with Lions*, composed at a time of significant personal and professional change. Although the “cinematic conception” of his novels has meant that at one time or another several other Follett works have been considered for production—*Code to Zero* and *Triple* among them—it is only with the recent announcement by the German television company Network Movie that they would adapt the author’s novels *A Dangerous Fortune* and *Whiteout* as the first episodes in the series *The Ken Follett Collection* that the lingering question of why more of his novels have not been adapted for film or television can be laid to rest. The filmic qualities of his books have always been there; if Follett’s efforts at writing for the small and large screen were only minimally successful, the real benefit to his career is in the cinematic pacing, visualization, and realistic dialogue he could bring to his novels as a consequence of his journeying in film.

Notes

¹ In 2006, the German production company Network Movie acquired the rights to Follett's *A Dangerous Fortune* (1993) and *Whiteout* (2005). The company plans to adapt the two novels for television.

² See Chapter 1 in *Ken Follett: The Transformation of a Writer* (Bowling Green, Ohio: The Popular Press, 1999); also, "'A Most Remarkable Writer': The Symon Myles Mysteries and the Non-Series Hero," *Popular Culture Review* 12.2 (2001): 47–52. Both works are by this author.

³ Follett returned to banking as a subject when he worked on the project "Country Risk" for most of 1983 before abandoning it. His most successful novel about the world of banking and high finance was the much later *A Dangerous Fortune*, published in 1993.

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My Name is My Password: Revision in Authorship and Agency in Nancy Drew

The first Nancy Drew mystery was published in 1930. The adolescent detective series continued publication, and with its success the original, blue-spined 34 were revised and republished beginning in 1959 (Dyer and Romalov 239). Located in this repackaging are textual modifications including the erasure of race and changes in Nancy's age and relationships. Within the textual alterations, cover art changes, and illustration revisions are clues to uncovering what is subversive and pseudo-subversive about stories of a female adolescent detective. While some feminists dismiss *Nancy Drew* books based on "upper-middle-class WASP assumptions," racism, and classism, many cite Nancy as a positive influence as a role model in that "she helped make us [feminists] possible" (Dyer and Romalov 19).

Nancy's feminist virtues are defined by Dyer and Romalov in their book *Rediscovering Nancy Drew*: "Nancy Drew is neither confined to conventional femininity nor considers herself an exception" (19). However, while I find subversive messages of adolescent females' moral authority and agency in the *Nancy Drew* books, Nancy as protagonist and the original author, Mildred Wirt Benson, are both unable to secure that subversive agency. This breakdown is because their agency of authorship is jeopardized by the structure of the signature, especially as figured through material revisions. Derrida describes the signature as the oral presence of the author with the written signature implying the actually non-presence of the signer (Derrida "Signature" 20). Derrida describes the structure of the signature as endlessly deferring its authority and presence to arrive at God in a theological structure. Derrida explains how the "signature" performs: "It opens *for itself* a line of credit, *its* own credit, for itself *to* itself" (Derrida "Declarations" 10). This building of imagined authority gives the signature imagined agency. Foucault interrogates this masking and explains: "The system of signatures reverses the relation of the visible to the invisible" (Foucault 26). Within the resemblance of the signature to what it marks is a call to decipher (Foucault 27). It is by noticing, then, what is the same, recovering what is lost, and discovering what is added in the revision of Nancy Drew's *The Clue in the Old Album* that I will begin my inquiry into the protagonist Nancy Drew's agency and authority focusing on her signature. Retaining this focus on signatures, I will follow with a discussion concerning the agency and authorship of Mildred Wirt Benson and the Stratemeyer Syndicate. And, I will conclude with an abbreviated theory of reading practices.

The *Nancy Drew* series uses the protagonist's name as her password, highlighting the importance of her autonomous individuality and family identity. For example, in both versions of *The Clue in the Old Album*, when a motorcycle policeman motions for Nancy to pull over and shouts, "You know how fast

you're going? . . . We got laws, you know!" Nancy yells that the driver she is chasing is a thief (Keene *Album* [1947] 175, [1977] 140). The police officer questions her authority as they race down the road asking who she is. Nancy can't finish her answer, "Nancy Drew. Carson Drew's daugh . . ." before the officer shot down the road like a rocket to catch that thief (Keene *Album* [1947] 175, [1977] 140). Nancy's name alone is not enough for access to an alternative morality to break the speeding laws and the autonomy to use it. Nancy must lean on the authority her distinguished lawyer father has earned. Her name must pass onto his and derive agency from it. Nancy's name is a password. Her own name passes on to her father's name. In logical turn, her father's signature defers to the authority of his parents and so forth so that the building of moral credit progresses backwards with the movement characteristic to the Natural law, a movement that cannot find an origin outside of God. Nancy's name becomes detached from her individual person to perform that password. Nancy's name is also a password in that it grants her access to alternative, more adult-like spaces, places, information, and moral behavior. There is a different structure between the password and the signature that hinges on this idea of access that shortcuts the signature's hierarchical regression.

The agency Nancy achieves through the access her name-as-password allows is tempered because it must pass onto her father's name. Nonetheless, Nancy is a powerful adolescent. Besides her nearly unrestricted access, Nancy's primary power is derived from her advanced literacy. In order to be a good detective, Nancy must deal with present and absent information to rewrite disparate clues into a coherent narrative. Literacy, the ability to discover, read, interpret, and use "texts" involve turning reading into writing thereby making meaning, particularly in the form of collecting clues and negotiating unknowns to solve secrets. It is within this reading-as-writing that Nancy attempts the agency of authorship. In this endeavor, too, Nancy is constantly informed by adults. Nancy's housekeeper, Hannah Gruen deciphers a hidden message, "Beware," in a blanket Nancy was gifted. Nancy is too close to the cloth to make out the words, and Hannah shows Nancy how to see the message if studying it from a distance. In this reading Nancy needs to be able to see herself as a subject and an object to be critical of her credibility, a form of self-surveillance (Nadel 84). And, she needs to be sanctioned by an adult. However, this adult sponsorship does not prove enough of a policing force. It is helpful now to look to the Nancy Drew revisions to show the deterioration of Nancy's agency or authorship.

After the third book, Harriet Adams, daughter of the Edward Stratemeyer the syndicate owner, took control of the *Nancy Drew* editorship. Among other things, she changed the relationship of Nancy to her housekeeper Hannah Gruen, so that Hannah was not simply a servant, but, as Deborah Felder explains, "like a surrogate mother" (qtd in Johnson 37). An already feminized and more family-oriented Nancy became even more so in later revisions. *The Clue in the Old Album* with the "Beware" blanket scene was first written by

Mildred Wirt Benson in 1947 and was revised by others in 1977. The difference in this scene between the two editions, besides erasing italic font attributes that are used apparently for emphasis, is the last line in the corresponding chapters. After Nancy and Hannah Greun decipher the messages in the blanket hinging on Nancy's confusion between son and sun, the 1947 edition reads: "Well, at long last, the light is beginning to dawn on *me!*" (159). The 1977 edition adds the housekeeper's name and erases Nancy's italicized reference to herself. This edition's exclamation reads: "Hannah, at long last the light is beginning to dawn" (124). Taking Nancy's name out and inserting Hannah's is one example of the deliberate act of rewriting these two characters into a more familial relationship. While in both editions, Nancy must seek Hannah's interpretive advice, the second edition clearly downplays Nancy's own agency toward authorship as her literacy discoveries must pass through Hannah's name. If Hannah Gruen is the housekeeper in the "Beware" blanket scene, literacy requires adult hermeneutic guidance but allows Nancy ownership of the interpretation in the emphasized "me." If Hannah Gruen is a surrogate mother in that scene, then literacy is about familial permissions and bringing literacy education within the domestic sphere.

This constant interruption by adults, especially those that tie her to family and gendered norms, keeps Nancy from being too independent and thus too controversial, especially as an adolescent girl. Nancy's name-as-password is revised into her name-as-signature granting her less agency by limiting her access to adult behavior and spaces.

It is Nancy Drew's first ghostwriter, Mildred Wirt Benson, who sought to create an adventurous Nancy. Wirt Benson's authorship of the texts maintained a spunky, independent Nancy yet her fluctuating agency in the syndicate system allowed Nancy's character to be revised making her more conservatively feminine, less bold and self-reliant. Wirt Benson would be given an outline and wrote her narrative from that framework. In an article for the 1995 *Rediscovering Nancy Drew* book, she admits concentrating her attention on Nancy by "trying to make her a departure from the stereotyped heroine commonly encountered in series books of the day" (Benson 61). After creating the first book, Wirt Benson recalls that Edward Stratemeyer, the owner and chief executive of the Stratemeyer Syndicate who produced these and other series books, did not think the Nancy character was appropriate. She claims that he called her "too flip . . . too vivacious"—that "[Nancy] was not the namby-pamby type of heroine that had been dominating series books for many, many years" (qtd in Johnson 36). Stratemeyer sent the manuscript to the publisher anyway and an unknown reader at Grosset & Dunlap publishing was enthusiastic, thus the *Nancy Drew* books began their run (Johnson 36).

Although the original outlines that Wirt Benson worked from were fairly thorough, often being 2,000 words, Diedre Johnson argues in her study of the writing process of book three, *The Bungalow Mystery*, that Wirt Benson showed independence as a creative writer (Johnson "Transitions" 8). For this particular

Nancy Drew book, Johnson shows how Wirt Benson deviates from the syndicate's given outline, changing chapter breaks and inserting clues to develop Nancy's character as impulsive and inquisitive (Johnson "Transitions" 10). Wirt Benson's freedom with character development, dramatizing, dialogue, chapter breaks, and detail invention and selection become more and more limited after Harriet Adams took over the syndicate. Adams and Wirt Benson had different ideas. At times Adams would rewrite Benson's manuscript (Johnson "Writing" 36). Benson explained:

Mrs. Adams was an entirely different person [than me]; she was more cultured and more refined. I was probably a rough and tumble newspaper person who had to earn a living, and I was out in the world. That was my type of Nancy. Nancy was making her way in life and trying to compete and have fun along the way. We just had two different kinds of Nancys (qtd in Johnson 36–7).

Largely because of this conflict, Benson only occasionally wrote for the series and the new ghostwriters produced a more feminized Nancy in accordance with Adams's designs.

When the rewritings of the first 34 books began in 1959, it is difficult to know who directed and wrote those revisions. The syndicate employed staff writers who more than likely contributed, yet, in an interview Johnson explains that "Harriet Adams said she wrote them, but it's hard to know how much was wishful thinking and how much really happened" (Johnson et. al. "History" 48). While researcher Ernie Kelly states that it's not unusual for five or more people to be simultaneously working on a series draft, Johnson maintains that: "So far only the syndicate knows" (Johnson "Writing" 37, Johnson et. al. "History" 50). And who or what is this personified syndicate? The regression of authorial agency from Wirt Benson to Edward Stratemeyer then to Harriet Adams to unnamed drafters, editors, publishers, illustrators—workers in a corporate system endlessly defers authority and agency.

The circumstances that make Wirt Benson for so long (until the 1990s) unable to disclose her own involvement writing the series—she had signed a release form—withdraw from the syndicate, and lose her version of Nancy Drew is the structure of authorship that denies her agency. Wirt Benson's name is never a password; it is always a part of the structure of the signature only recognizable through the name Carolyn Keene. Of course, Carolyn Keene, the authorial name on all the *Nancy Drew* books, is a pseudonym. It is a pen name. It is the name of a pen; it is the name of a mechanical tool whose users are ghosts, ghostwriters. The pseudonym denies inquiry into modes of production and denies Wirt Benson and even Harriet Adams any individual agency. No one wrote the *Nancy Drew* books. Mildred Wirt Benson did not write them. No one at the Stratemeyer Syndicate wrote them. They were collectively authored by dozens of writers and editors who keep secret the pseudonym as "a special

cultural responsibility akin to safeguarding family heirlooms” (Dyer and Romalov 28).

What the secret keepers are afraid of shattering is the myth of authorship that gives the imaginary Carolyn Keene a cult following. When Harriet Adams claimed to be the sole writer behind the pseudonym her excuse was that she would have had “to mention a cast of thousands, and besides, she was protecting the children” (Johnson “History” 51). Perhaps so, but what is being protected is a marketing device that allows consistency to the extremely popular Nancy Drew books. To read *Nancy Drew* is to believe in Carolyn Keene and, more than that, to believe in Nancy. A, not surprisingly, anonymous ghostwriter, signing his/her essay as Carolyn Keene, writes of his/her childhood experience reading *Nancy Drew* as characterized by an adoration and identification with the protagonist (Keene “Writing” 73). S/he related the consistency and popularity of *Nancy Drew* through the diverse company of writers and editors to “the power of Nancy herself” (74). This “Carolyn Keene” thinks Nancy has not changed too much over the years, although I argue that those changes are significant to her subversive potential. And, s/he finds the character Nancy the perfect girl:

She goes where she likes, when she likes, and is always surrounded by good friends. She’s friendly, popular, generous with her time and energy, always ready to help those in need, and able to solve most any problem. The girl gets results. She’s basically no one, and therefore everyone, and when we are Nancy (inside that place that is Nancy Drew) we’re in very good shape (Keene “Writing” 77).

As the young reader forms an identification with Nancy Drew and works out his/her mysteries with her, the reader also reads as Carolyn Keene, as author. The reader has the advantage of reading the narrative in its third person point of view, being able to open and close the book, peek ahead, and otherwise learn more than Nancy might. The young reader then gets to play God in both author and protagonist signature systems. Reading as protagonist and author, playing God in two subject positions, is a powerful imaginative practice for young readers.

As critical adult readers we can see how this reader subjectivity defers and decays, how, through revisions, Wirt Benson’s work and her bold protagonist both break down. As Wirt Benson loses her rough and tumble Nancy and the revisions reinforce the new characterization, Nancy’s subversive adolescent agency and advanced literacy become contained in the nuclear family. As the syndicate’s pseudonym as family secret is discovered and recovered, the pseudonym’s signature breaks down. The endless deferring continues to decay but can find no resting place thus transforming a theological structure that lets young readers play God into a counter-theological structure that could potentially alienate them. It is this fear of alienation that drives Adams’s notion of protecting the children by maintaining the myth of an individual author.

For first generation *Nancy Drew* readers, Carolyn Keene and Nancy Drew were and are especially powerful, inspirational role models. Perhaps they, in some sense, needed the hope that these two powerful women figures, albeit problematically fictional, provided even with the sacrifice that loses the labor of production to deny other women their agency if not their existence, such as Mildred Wirt Benson. If not the recognition of labor revealed in the modes of syndicate production, surely the sacrifice of a more subversive, powerful Nancy warrants the historical uncovering of the signature and revision networks.

Witnessing the counter-theological upshot of the structure of the signature means understanding how Nancy is revised into gendered and familial containment and Wirt Benson's revised out of creative agency. To recover Nancy's original published character, the girl that "neither confined to conventional femininity nor considers herself an exception," I support republishing the first editions, in line with Phil Zuckerman's Applewood reprints project (Dyer and Romalov 19, Zuckerman 45). His project has already republished a handful of Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew original editions (Zuckerman 45). While his reprints are targeted to a nostalgic adult market, he hopes these books will be read to children (Zuckerman 43). When asked in an interview about potential criticism for bringing back "racist books," Zuckerman emphasizes talking with children about the books' historical specificity in portrayals of race and challenges his adult audience to consider how the present also presents conversation pieces for children, especially with respect to portrayals of violence (Johnson "History" 49). He also, incidentally, points out that adults and children do actually prefer the older versions according to tests conducted with blind procedures and interviews (Zuckerman 44). I think that the process of republishing and reading these original texts holds the promise for sustaining subversive messages for today's young *Nancy Drew* readers.

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Big Love: Rewriting the Modern Man

In March 2006, HBO premiered *Big Love*, a controversial series inviting the audience to follow the trials of a fictitious polygamous family living in suburban Utah. With three wives and seven children, Bill Henrickson faces a constant battle to maintain his place in the family and in society. Although Bill is an atypical man with an atypical family, he can be seen as representing every man's struggle to find equilibrium between his own masculinity and the stereotype of the masculine ideal. By taking Bill, the main character of this series, as an exaggerated case-study of the modern man, one can see how the threats to his masculinity destabilize the stereotypical ideal and, in comparing that instability to the ideal, it becomes possible to redefine what constitutes masculinity.

Stereotypes are generally viewed as inherently negative constructs, a means of establishing a prejudice against a person or group, but they are often based on observable behaviors. In the article "Stereotypes as Dynamic Constructs: Women and Men of the Past, Present, and Future," Amanda Diekman and Alice Eagly explain: "In general, a group's stereotypic characteristics are congruent with the activities required by its typical social roles. . . . Gender stereotypes are thus emergent from role-bound activities, and the characteristics favored by these roles become stereotypic of each sex and facilitate its typical activities" (1171-2). If one agrees that gender stereotypes are based on behaviors typically performed by a specific sex, it then becomes possible to measure an individual's actions against those ideally expected to occur among members of that sex group. To oversimplify the idea, the actions of a sexual male should ideally conform to the gender stereotypes associated with men by completing the actions found to be typical of the male. However, this is not a stable means of evaluating masculinity, because some men do not participate in these actions, or are at certain times or places seen to "fail" at them, and because some women perform these same actions, typically thought to be masculine. Does this mean that stereotypes are useless in the study of masculinity? Perhaps not. It is conceivable that it is not the stereotypes themselves that need to be altered but rather the interpretation of their meaning. If it is impossible to avoid being evaluated against a gender stereotype, then conceivably the system of perceptions used in the evaluation of stereotypes can be skewed to eventually render the stereotype obsolete. If the category within which a stereotype exists (and persists) can be altered to acknowledge the dominance of an unstable character over a stable one, the stereotype would be annulled by the acceptance of a variable definition of itself, as opposed to the existing fixed definition.

Sexual virility, financial stability, authoritarian hierarchy, and the male as defender combine to establish the popular definition of the contemporary masculine ideal, but the polygamous protagonist of *Big Love* serves as the successful antithesis of this static, oversimplified definition of masculinity.

While the popular definition of the masculine ideal is an external social phenomenon, the series amplifies the existing conditions on an internal level and thus highlights the importance of reexamining the social constructs surrounding masculinity. Because it is impossible to disregard the stereotypes surrounding masculinity, the expropriation of the stereotypical ideal allows for a framework within which masculinity itself can be examined.

In the opening sequence of the series, Bill Henrickson and his three wives—Barb, Nicki, and Margene—ice skate serenely over the frozen waters of a lake, hands clasped forming a seemingly unbreakable circle, when suddenly the ice cracks beneath them and they are sent spiraling in four different directions. Their polygamous lifestyle leaves them literally skating on thin ice, and the same can be said of Bill's masculinity which is forever threatened, not only from the outside, but also from the inside of his family unit. By deconstructing the masculine ideal, albeit a popularized, stereotypical notion, it becomes feasible to redefine masculinity through the valorization of its own instability and the revalorization of the stereotype itself, leading to an eventual nullification of the stereotypical ideal. Through the examination of the four categories mentioned previously (sexual virility, financial stability, authoritarian hierarchy, and the male as defender), one can track the ways in which Bill Henrickson's masculinity is threatened when compared to the established masculine ideal. In addition, this examination will reveal the ways in which these threats redefine masculinity as a whole rather than simply that of the character.

Stereotypically speaking, there is a correlative relationship between sexual virility and masculinity, the assumption being that the more sexually virile the man, and in turn, potent and prolific, the more masculine he will be. Sexual virility, the ability to copulate and procreate, is perhaps the most easily identifiable characteristic of the masculine ideal and thus must be considered in the redefinition of the stereotype. In Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *Masculine Domination*, he writes, "Manliness, virility, in its ethical aspect . . . remains indissociable, tacitly at least, from physical virility, in particular through the attestations of sexual potency—deflowering the bride, abundant male offspring, etc.—which are expected of a 'real' man" (12). Three aspects associated with this category are female sexual satisfaction, freedom in choosing/seducing sexual partners, and male sexual performance. While the typical marriage threatens the freedom of this category, the polygamous union poses an interesting set of problems and possibilities to the categorization of sexual virility as a measure of masculinity; areas of particular importance in *Big Love* are sexual inadequacy and wifely dissatisfaction.

Within the category of sexual virility, female sexual satisfaction plays a key role because, with a marital ratio of three women to one man, Bill is constantly forced to leave two of his wives sexually dissatisfied at any one time, creating a tug of war for his affections and, ultimately, three sexually frustrated wives. Unfortunately, the cyclic nature of the arrangement (Bill never spends two

consecutive nights in the same marital bed), annuls the possibility of relieving the pressure which continues to build among the wives. In the pilot episode of the series, Margene, the third wife, goads Bill to admit that his love is not equally divided, but he must deny her this pleasure to maintain equality between the three wives:

MARGENE: I missed you so much. Sometimes three days can feel like such an eternity. And I hate it when family dinner falls on our night. Do you think I'm dirty-minded 'cause I think of you so much?

BILL: Honey, I miss you too. If I don't say so, it's 'cause I don't want Nicki and Barb to feel like I miss them any less.

MARGENE: So does that mean you miss me more?

BILL: Officially, I miss you guys all the same. ("Pilot")

The act of satisfying one wife is in itself depriving the other two wives of this same satisfaction. In this case, the creation of the stereotype depends upon the observed behavior of the female to establish the male's placement, vis-à-vis the masculine ideal, with the assumption that the most masculine man will leave his wife with the highest level of satisfaction. Bill, being put in the impossible situation of trying to satisfy three women, can never truly satisfy any of them. This failure can be seen as being symptomatic of the man who is portrayed as lacking masculinity, but in fact, current observable behavior (the increase in divorce, the hesitation to marry, the recent boon in female sexual freedom) demonstrates that there are far more men in modern society who fall well short of the ideal than there are men who embody it. According to the "Global Better Sex Survey" conducted by Pfizer, "only fifty percent of both men and women are 'very satisfied'" with their sex lives and "one third indicate they are having 'less than the right amount of sex'" (menshealth.com). It is therefore possible that if stereotypes were based in current rather than in past behavior (if one is to believe that women of the past were sexually satisfied and not simply silent), Bill's inability to satisfy his wives would be far more representative of the male group than the persistent masculine ideal concerning virility.

Freedom of choice also plays an important role in sexual virility because it establishes the man as the conqueror of his female subjects. A means of establishing domination through the sexual act, historically, it is the male who chooses a female with whom he wishes to mate. Today, it is still generally the man who asks the woman to marry him, and certainly in the history of polygamy, it was the man who approached a woman and sought to join her to himself and his other wives. Bourdieu relates the idea of virility to domination, and conquest:

On top or underneath, active or passive—these parallel alternatives describe the sexual act as a relation of

domination. . . . The manifestations of virility, whether legitimate or illegitimate, belong to the logic of prowess, the exploit, which confers honour. And although the extreme gravity of the slightest sexual transgression forbids open expression of this, the indirect challenge to the masculinity of other men that is implied in every assertion of virility contains the principle of the agonistic vision of male sexuality. . . . (Bourdieu 19)

Not only can the man penetrate the woman, but he can choose which woman he will penetrate. The modern polygamous system, as it is represented in the series, does not allow for this freedom of choice. The wives agree on a cyclical schedule, without consulting the husband, which will allow each woman to spend every third night with him. This contract can only be breached at the discretion of the wives, as a wife must agree to sacrifice or trade her night, but the husband can never unilaterally choose to disregard the established schedule. In one episode, the wives trade nights, and Bill runs from one house to another wrapped in only a blanket and finally resorts to spending the night on the couch. Bill's lack of choice is equated with a lack of power through emasculation by the females. On another level, Bill's lack of choice would be in opposition to the popular icon of the "player," or the historic one of the Casanova, who acquires sexual capital by choosing and then seducing a variety of different women. At first glance, the polygamous system would seem to be just another example of the man acquiring sexual capital through the taking of multiple wives, but within the series, the polygamous system is more a denial of this freedom than an elevation of it. Even when taking a new wife, the husband must seek the approval of all of his wives and attain a unanimous vote before bringing a new woman into the union. Seemingly then, the choice of polygamy is, in and of itself, a sort of castration, and therefore to bind oneself to three women in a polygamous union, like that represented in *Big Love*, is the utter destruction of free choice and, in turn, masculine virility.

These situations only aggravate the problem that makes up the final aspect of the category of sexual virility: Bill's inability to perform. Impotence is seen as a shameful failure of male masculinity, because it is the loss of sexual power over the female, in the inability to penetrate. It is thus the representation of Bourdieu's conception of *Masculine Domination* in reverse. Bourdieu's direct link between sexual virility and the masculine male is maintained through the turbulent reaction of Bill's masculinity to his inability to perform.

The impotent man can no longer dominate or satisfy his partner without pharmaceutical aids, and this leads to a destruction of the male ego in that he cannot live up to the mark that the societal ideal has convinced him that he should. Having three wives only increases the demands on Bill's virility and therefore his inability to perform is focused upon because of the tension it creates amongst the wives. Each wife expects sexual favors on her night with

her husband, but this means that Bill's sexual virility is being put to the test on a daily basis. As a result, he resorts to overdosing on a Viagra-like medication ordered over the internet. This act is both the trial and the confirmation of the category of sexual virility as a measure of masculinity, because not only does Bill feel pressured to perform, but he also feels shame at being forced to seek help and thus purchases these pills from an internet source rather than seeing his own doctor. He cannot allow anyone to know that he has "failed" the masculine ideal, and Bill's inability to cope with the pressure placed on sexual performance is a physical manifestation of his endangered masculinity. The need to perform, to please the other, validates sexual performance as a category by which masculinity can be evaluated, but when this need cannot be met, the failure weighs heavily on not only the man's self-image but on his social one as well. According to the website for the Sexual Medicine Society of North America, "fifty percent of men experience some form of sexual dysfunction" which proves that Bill is not actually in the minority and that this issue, while currently more publicized than in the past, is still too shameful for men to discuss openly.

While the sexual relationship in the Henrickson home could be seen as a system of exchange, a second category associated with the stereotype of the masculine ideal, that of financial stability, is equally important to the deconstruction of this stereotype. Historically, the man of the house acted as the family's provider while the woman stayed at home and raised children, and this male role served to bolster his masculinity, which would be seen as lacking if he were to fail to attain and maintain financial security. While the "average man" has a single wife and, generally, a small number of children to support, Bill is attempting to support three wives and seven children while carrying three mortgages, four car loans, and an expanding business. Due to the legal issues of his multiple marriages, not to mention the possibility of social censure, money is the only symbol of masculinity that Bill can fully expose to the outside world; therefore, it serves as a representation of the phallus to the exterior sphere. Monetary matters are that much more important in the polygamous context, not only because there is a larger family to support, but also because financial primacy and responsibility is the only legal way that the man can publicly demonstrate his masculinity in the public eye. Debt creates a dangerous threat to the male's masculinity, because he risks losing his autonomy and losing face publicly. The debt accrued in *Big Love* can be divided into two categories: the acceptable debt acquired in the process of providing for the family unit and the deplorable debt acquired in selfish pursuits by one of Bill's wives.

The first category, acceptable debt, includes all of the money owed for the essentials of family life (including car, home, and business loans), but while this debt is generally the least threatening to Bill's masculinity, one loan in this category must be separated out from the rest. When he opened his own business, a large home-improvement store, Bill was forced to borrow money from one of

his fathers-in-law, Roman Grant, also known as the Prophet. Head of the fundamentalist compound from which Bill was expelled during his adolescence, Roman wields a great deal of power and uses his influence to threaten Bill's financial security. Despite Bill's having repaid the original loan, Roman insists that their agreement entitles him to a percentage of the profits of all future stores. Of the loans, Bill explains, "Barb, if I didn't keep constantly moving the ball forward, we would sink under our bills" ("Barbecue"). These loans are the modern day equivalent of a skeleton in the closet for Bill in that if anyone outside the family unit were to see the perilous arrangement of his finances and his dependence on outside sources of money, he would be seen as failing at providing for his family. If the public were to discover that Bill has three homes or that he is financially tied to Roman Grant, his name would automatically be associated with polygamy, and he would risk losing a great deal of business at his stores.

The second category, deplorable debt, is equally telling in the definition of Bill's masculinity, because it was accrued in secret by his second wife, Nicki. A compulsive shopper, she has spent over \$60,000 using various credit cards, all behind Bill's back, and is being hounded by creditors, inviting investigation of her financial affairs. Nicki also borrows money from her father, Roman, to pay off part of her debt without asking Bill's permission and therefore endangers the family by strengthening the ties between the Henricksons and the Prophet. Even after this indiscretion has been revealed, Nicki continues to spend, knowing that if Bill were to disown her, he would be damaging his own reputation and, in turn, his masculinity. Bill's responsibility to repay this debt siphons resources from family funds and threatens his financial stability, just as it siphons away at his masculinity, taking him further and further away from the ideal.

The tandem siphoning of masculinity and money proves that the two are intrinsically linked in the social construction of masculinity, and though Bill must appear to maintain a stable financial state, he is in fact gradually becoming an empty shell. He appears to be the same Bill Henrickson, but the exterior stability no longer matches the interior turmoil that would betray his "failure" to perform the masculine ideal. The average American family apparently struggles with this same issue of exterior stability as a mask for interior financial disarray. According to recent statistics, approximately 43 percent of American families spend more money than they earn, and the average household carries \$8,000 in credit card debt (Khan). Thus, while Bill's financial woes are certainly exaggerated in comparison to those of the average man, he is still in the company of many men in terms of financial instability. While the average man's masculinity is determined by his financial autonomy, Bill is utterly dependent on others (his wife and father-in-law) to define him, though he must never appear to be, or he would risk losing the facade that positions him as a "real" man.

The man-as-provider is directly related to the third part of the stereotype being examined: the categorization of the man as the center of authority. As the

breadwinner, the man is expected to maintain a level of control over his family, just as he hypothetically does over his money. Male hegemony has led to the stereotype that the family unit is led by the man: he makes the decisions, he controls the purse strings, and he has the final word concerning the actions of his children. It is, however, necessary to acknowledge the hierarchy of authority that reigns in the polygamous union, because the power structure of plural marriage allows the first wife the most power and each subsequent wife markedly less. In actuality, this system deprives the husband of a certain level of authority, as he is not only outnumbered but also stripped of certain rights, and also creates tension between the wives with respect to their own identity. By examining the roles of Bill's three wives individually, and the reaction of the children to his authority, Bill's failure to live up to the masculine ideal of authority figure becomes evident.

Barb, Bill's first wife, is the most powerful woman in the household, because she has the authority to both question her husband's decisions and to make decisions concerning the other wives. She is presumably the gatekeeper of all family behavior, including that of the members of all three houses, not just her own; coincidentally, Barb seemingly fulfills the most masculine role of the three women. She determines the schedules and distributes the monthly stipends to the other two wives. She also works outside the home and brings in additional money for the family. On a biological level though, there is a far more interesting aspect to Barb's identity. Having had a hysterectomy due to a bout of cancer, Barb can no longer have children, and being deprived of this womanly right, her femininity has been diminished. Assuming masculine traits, even by default, Barb therefore succeeds in entrenching her prime position above the other wives in the family hierarchy. Consequently, this female masculinization elevates Barb to a position equal to that of Bill in the household and raises questions concerning authority. The deferral of authority from Bill to Barb leads the other members of the household to question who is actually the authoritarian, and thus this process further detracts from and destabilizes Bill's own masculinity.

Nicki, the second wife (aspiring to be the first), demonstrates her desire to take Barb's place by enacting what would be considered typically masculine behaviors in the three households. She is described by other characters as not being "warm," she takes a defensive role against outsiders, and acts as the family repairman. The other women's dependence on her for her mechanical skills gives her more power than she would have otherwise in a system that allows power to only one wife. She also questions Barb's authority at every opportunity but is never able to sway the power structure away from the first wife on any meaningful level despite her almost constant attempts. The power struggle is a way for Nicki to inflict her masculinity on the family unit and differs from Barb's behavior in its facultative nature. While Barb submits to the duties established by an exterior system, Nicki chooses to enact masculine

behaviors in order to elevate herself in the family hierarchy, and as she establishes herself in this role, she diminishes Bill's role by making her own more valuable. If she were to submit to the exterior system and play her role as second, and thus subordinate, wife, Nicki would reinforce Bill's masculinity, but instead she chooses to challenge it almost constantly: by using masculine behaviors, overspending, and over-stepping her duties as second wife.

Margene, the third wife, is almost devoid of masculinity and correspondingly shows no desire to lead the family or to overtly destabilize the authoritative hierarchy. She is overly emotional, needy, and can use her femininity to get what she wants from Bill, but in terms of the family unit, she is essentially powerless. It is Margene who is constantly asked to sacrifice and to yield to the masculinity of the others. She watches the children, lends her car to visiting family, and has the most sparsely furnished house of the three women. Most importantly perhaps, she is never fully aware of what is going on in the other houses and is treated almost as another child by her sister-wives. Margene's role is deceptively important though, because she has come to plural marriage from the outside. Her surprise, misunderstanding, and frustration reflect the reaction of the non-polygamous audience into the series itself. Margene's ability to draw the outside world, the viewer, into the family unit is her own power. Not only does she engage the spectator, she calls attention to the family by associating with neighbors and, in so doing, threatens the safety of the family unit. When Margene becomes pregnant toward the end of the season, the possibility of suspicion falling on the family is increased, because this young, unwed, seemingly uninvolved woman will have to justify her condition to the outside world. Her exaggerated femininity is a threat to Bill's ability to control and safeguard his family, because she demonstrates that his desire to please her, and to reinforce his masculinity in so doing, makes his masculinity vulnerable to her femininity.

Bill's masculinity is obviously threatened by the actions Barb and Nicki take to replace the man of the house, but it is also threatened by the relationship that these women form without him. The women consider themselves married to each other as well as to Bill so, when it comes time to choose sides in family disputes, loyalties are often torn between several different partners. For example, Barb learns of Nicki's credit card debt but agrees not to tell Bill, allowing Nicki to tell him herself, but when Bill asks how she could have kept such a secret from him, Barb responds by explaining that she is married to Nicki too:

BILL: I'm your husband, aren't I?

BARB: Yes, but I'm married to two other people. You seem to forget that sometimes. ("Barbecue")

The relationship that excludes Bill demonstrates his inadequacy in the family unit. He is too easily replaced by the others for comfort, and the masculinity of

the other women diminishes his own masculinity. As with the average man, the relationships between women are a means of demoting masculinity, because a bond is formed which has no bearing on him and into which he is often unable to penetrate.

Bill's inability to control his older children is also representative of his failing masculinity, because they are rebelling against his influence as a role model and his control over their behavior. Sarah and Ben, the two eldest children, are the primary concern, because they are each attempting to forge their own path to adulthood. Ben loses his virginity after prohibitive discussions with his father, and his desire to repent following the act shows his torment surrounding the fact that he cannot undo what he has done. Sarah, on the other hand, does not act in opposition to Bill's teachings but instead has a negative attitude toward the institution of plural marriage. She can still remember the period preceding her father's return to polygamy, during which her family was his only family, and questions her mother's choice to follow him back into polygamous practices. These two children, being the oldest and most socially aware, are a mirror to society's view of their family and of their father. After not inviting her father to the father-daughter pancake breakfast, Sarah admits to Bill that she doesn't like to see him lying about his identity and their family. She tells him:

SARAH: I lied to you before.

BILL: About what?

SARAH: The pancake breakfast. I didn't tell you about it because I didn't want you to go. You would have introduced yourself to all the other dads as Bill Henrickson, father of three, with one wife, with one house. It hurts to see you lie, Dad. I hate that about this life—watching you and Mom hide, all of us having to hide. ("Barbecue")

In criticizing their polygamous lifestyle, Sarah attacks Bill's masculinity because she reveals his weakness as a role model. She watches him hide his lifestyle from the outside world and panics at the possibility of being found out. Bill's vulnerability as a role model is representative of his failing masculinity and of the façade that the entire family, but especially Bill, must present to the outside world. But just as Bill must lie to the outside world about his polygamous lifestyle, the representation of his masculinity is also a lie because he is constantly forced to hide his "failings" if he is to maintain what is considered the masculine ideal. There is a very tenuous relationship between falsity and actuality in the representation of Bill's masculinity, just as there is always a discrepancy between what he is and what he wants others to see.

Bill's inability to control the family unit is a rupture in his own vision of himself as a man. He feels his power, or at least the illusion of power, slipping

through his fingers, and he strives to get it back. The fact that the children cannot avoid interacting with the outside world, because of their schooling, puts them in a position to reflect upon the interaction of the family with society. They force Bill to question his own masculinity through the recognition of his differences as compared to other men. Their outside interests also expose them to influences which threaten the authority of the father-figure and thus detract from his power and, in turn, his masculinity. When taking into consideration other contemporary television series that revolve around family life, such as *Roseanne* (which aired during the late 1980s and early 1990s), it is evident that "the man of the house" has lost much of his stature as compared to the man of 1950s television. The transformation of the man—from authority figure to a man subjugated to his wife—may be seen as a reflection of the rebalancing of power in the American household.

As the man loses his place as authoritarian, his role as defender is also brought into question. The final failure of Bill's masculinity is his inability to defend his family from the dangers of the outside world. The primary danger from the exterior is that of being revealed as polygamists, and despite the precautions taken to ensure their security, in the last episode of the first season, the Henrickson's secret is publicly betrayed, and they are forced to admit that they are in fact practicing polygamists. There is also a danger of physical violence which Bill must keep at bay if he is to match the ideal, because any injury to his wives or children would be a direct hit to his masculinity.

Throughout the first season, more and more outsiders become aware of the Henrickson's polygamous union. Sarah befriends a coworker who is supportive of her family situation, Bill is forced to hire a security company to outfit all of the houses with an elaborate alarm system, the family lawyer must prepare wills for all three of Bill's wives, and a nosy secretary comes to her own realizations about their arrangement, but the most dangerous complication results when Barb is nominated for Utah's Mother of the Year award. As a finalist for the award, she is invited to a ceremony given by the First Lady of the state, and it is here that the secret of the family is revealed. Bill's father-in-law, Roman Grant, tips off officials that Barb is a practicing polygamist, and she is forced to admit that it is true, disqualifying her from the competition and shaming her publicly. Panic ensues within the family, and Bill is left with no possibility of protecting his family from the legal and physical dangers that now threaten them. His masculinity is overshadowed in the last moments of the season, because he can no longer provide a safe haven for his wives and children. The masculine ideal to which he compares himself is shattered by the dangers that invade his households. And, in the last scene, the audience sees the three wives sitting together, comforting each other, no longer seeking Bill's comfort.

In this category of masculinity, the ideal construct is a man capable of protecting his family from any outside danger; but in reality, the threats from the outside have become much more subtle and subversive than they were when the

ideal was created. The internet, e-mail, and cell phones allow danger to enter the American home through the backdoor, undetected. Not only can the male no longer protect the weak from danger, he is often unaware of its entry into his home. Bill's inability to protect his family is symptomatic of the danger that penetrates into a supposedly safe space and also of a coming to terms with the lack in masculinity when compared to what is stereotypically considered ideal.

If, as established in the introduction, Bill can serve as a test case for the modern man despite the exaggerated level of threat to his ideal masculinity, it becomes possible to see the failure, not of Bill's masculinity, but of the masculine ideal. The contrast between the placid exterior image of masculinity and the interior turmoil reveals that what has been considered ideal is actually an inherently false reflection of the past that does not take into consideration the equalizing pressures that are de-sexing gender roles. The symbolic castration represented through the threats to Bill's masculinity is actually a liberation from the stereotype, because the distribution of masculinity between the two sexes allows for a lessening of the responsibilities faced by the man. Through the male-driven, hegemonic system of polygamy, the creators of *Big Love* reveal that just as this paragon of masculinity has kowtowed to the egalitarianism of modern day gender roles, the "average man" can no longer expect to attain the sexually dominant, financially stable, all-controlling, defender role associated with the masculine ideal. Bill, like the ideal, is dynamic and constantly changing; so while he seems utterly different from the average male, with his three wives and his seven children, he is actually the epitome of the modern man with his masculinity in constant flux, if tenuously still intact.

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Heroic Teachers, Rescued Students, and the Cinematic Discourse on Education

Not too long ago I mentioned to my students that I didn't like Hallmark Theater's made-for-television movie *The Ron Clark Story* (2006), which starred Matthew Perry as Ron Clark, a white elementary school teacher from North Carolina who took over a group of Harlem sixth-grade students with test scores at the bottom of the entire New York City School District and turned them into a motivated class of high achievers that out-performed every class in the school—including the honor's class—on the state's standardized basic skills test. Perry's performance earned him a Golden Globe nomination for a Best Actor award. The sophomore literature students of mine who also saw the movie could not for the life of them understand what objections I could possibly have to it. What's not to like about such an inspirational story about a successful teacher?

What's wrong with *The Ron Clark Story* is, at least from an experienced teacher's perspective, the same thing that's wrong with most of the cinematic narratives offered for public consumption which dramatize the success of teachers in challenging circumstances: they portray teachers as having, literally, the power to become their students' saviors, presenting an education fantasy which, in its denial of the true nature and complexity of the problems real teachers in real classrooms face, is probably doing more harm than good for America's education system—and for the students it is supposed to serve.

I will illustrate my objections to this particular cinematic portrayal of teachers by focusing on four films about extraordinary teachers: *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *The Ron Clark Story* (2006), and *Freedom Writers* (2007). I have already summarized the basic plot of *The Ron Clark Story*. The other three tell essentially the same tale. *Stand and Deliver* chronicles the efforts of an East Los Angeles computer expert-turned-math-teacher (Jaime Escalante) to teach calculus to high school students from the barrio who are seriously under-prepared for it. *Dangerous Minds* dramatizes the struggle of a female ex-marine (Luanne Johnson) to engage an unruly mob of high school students, mostly minorities, in basic English education. *Freedom Writers* chronicles the success of a novice high school English teacher (Erin Gruwell) faced with a classroom full of minority students whose lives outside the classroom are full of hatred, violence, and death.

The teachers in these movies face students who have the kinds of problems most educators realize can be, and usually are, significant obstacles to student success. Their students have been largely marginalized by the system, so they are seriously under-prepared for the level of work they are supposed to be doing. They are poor and have all the problems usually associated with poverty. Many come from broken homes, and several of the female students, even the ones with fathers, have no time for study and homework because they must take care of

siblings while their mothers work to help support the family. Because of their poverty, a number of students are more concerned about making whatever money they can now instead of working toward an imaginary, larger paycheck in a difficult-to-visualize future. And it doesn't matter much how they earn it. One student struggles to resist the lure of a good-paying job now as an auto mechanic for the vagaries of what he could earn with a college degree years later. Another fences stolen goods on the street, and another, at age 12 or so, is already a bookie.

Perhaps the worst problem many of these cinematic students face is the violence that pervades their lives outside the classroom. Violence lurks just below the surface of the lives of the students in *Dangerous Minds*, and Luanne Johnson, the hero of this film, eventually loses one student to street violence. "You could get blasted anytime you walk out your door," one student in Erin Gruwell's class says. Another tells her that he's lucky to have made it to 18. "We're in war," he says. "We graduating every day we live because we ain't afraid to die protecting our own." The racial divisions and gang violence in the community flow into her classroom. When Gruwell asks her students how many have been shot at, all but the class's one white student raise their hand. More than half the students have lost three friends to gang violence.

Also a significant obstacle to teaching in challenging environments is the influence of value systems inimical to mainstream—or as Robert C. Bulman argues, "middle-class"—ideas about education.¹ The mother of one of Jaime Escalante's students is not sure it's a good idea that her daughter study calculus: "Boys don't like you if you're too smart," she warns. The father of another Escalante student insists that his daughter, who wants to be a physician, doesn't need higher education because she will work in the family restaurant after graduation. When two African-American brothers stop attending Johnson's class, she visits their home to find a grandmother who sees no value in "poetry and shit." When Johnson asks, don't you want them to graduate from high school? the grandmother replies that education is not in their future. "They've got more important things to worry about," she huffs, adding, "I ain't raising no doctors and lawyers here. They got bills to pay."

Gruwell's students adhere to codes of conduct that fuel and sustain gang violence. One of her students, whose father was wrongly convicted of shooting a black man, witnessed a shooting in a convenience store and identified a black student as the shooter, even though the gunman was a friend of hers. Her code of conduct required that she "protect our own," even if it meant letting a killer go free.

As discouraging to teachers as these real-life obstacles may be, the movies suggest that the worst problem is the attitudes students have toward education, which range from indifference to outright hostility. These students have no respect for teachers, the system, or education. Until he puts his foot down and demands to be addressed as "sir," Clark's students refer to him as "fool," "dog,"

“man,” and the like. They are cavalier about their assignments. Escalante’s students address him as “man” and “esse,” and they, too, refuse to answer questions in class. Johnson’s students call her “white bread” and refuse to listen to her. Their lack of respect for the system becomes apparent when she announces that she will be taking them to an amusement park, and the Board of Education is paying for the trip. Emilio pronounces the statement “bullshit.” “Since when’s the Board of Education done anything for us,” he asks. Another adds, “Yeah, man, we can barely get lunch.”

Escalante’s students are merely rowdy and uninterested. The attitudes of Clark’s and Johnson’s students are much worse. Clark’s students, according to their principal, have problems with learning, discipline, and social skills: deficits apparent on his first day. When he enters the classroom, he finds a gaggle of noisy, socializing students, many of whom are sitting on their desks rather than at them. They ignore him, and when he finally gets their attention, one girl says of another: “Yo, Shemeka’s feeling sick today.” “Yeah,” Shemeka adds, “Sick of damn teachers.” A few minutes later Shemeka, who is only 12 years old, mocks Clark’s authority by intentionally dropping a textbook to the floor. Clark asks her not to do that again. She drops another. “Shemeka,” he warns, “Don’t do that.” “Or what?” she screams back at him. “What are you going to do, suspend me? Go ahead, suspend me! I want to leave.” We are not surprised to hear that last year Clark’s class went through six teachers before Christmas.

Johnson’s students are worse yet. She is assigned an “academy” class, whose students are, according to an assistant principal, “special kids”: challenging, energetic, passionate. A colleague interprets the vice principal’s language: These are students with no educational skills and “what we politely call ‘social problems’.” When Johnson enters the classroom for the first time, she confronts an unruly mob. Groups of students are dancing and grooving to hip hop music. Those that aren’t are talking in groups. She asks one female student what happened to the last teacher, a Ms. Shepherd.

“Trifling ass Ms. Shepherd,” the student says contemptuously. She jumps on a chair. “Yo! Yo! Yo!” she says, getting the class’s attention. “White bread wanna know what happened to Ms. Shepherd.” “We killed the bitch,” one student replies. Another student sidles up to Johnson in a sexually suggestive manner and tells her that the last teacher was too ugly to eat. “I wouldn’t even feed her to my dog,” he says. “But I’ll eat you.” The class goes wild with raucous hooting, hollering, and banging on desks.

The encounter is so disconcerting that Johnson rushes from the room and drags her friend and colleague out of his nearby classroom: “Who are these kids,” she demands. “Rejects from hell?” So far Johnson’s class has used up one regular faculty member and three substitutes.

Gruwell’s students are worst of all. In one early scene Gruwell erroneously thinks she can spark their interest in poetry by linking it with the rhymes of hip-

hop artist Tupac Shakur. The well-intentioned but lame effort reveals how the students really feel about her and being in school.

A student named Eva, who soon admits that she hates Gruwell merely because she's white, shouts, "You don't know nothing. You got us in here teaching us this grammar shit, and then we got to go out there again. . . . What are you doing in here that makes a goddamn difference in my life?" A black student also criticizes her. "You don't know nothing, home girl." When she asks him to explain things to her, he replies angrily, "I ain't explaining shit to you." Eventually he tells her to "stop acting like you're trying to understand our situation and do your little baby-sitting up there."

Despite their students' family circumstances, educational deficits, and negative attitudes toward education, these teachers are able to motivate their students to perform beyond all reasonable expectations. Clark's students turn out to be the best in the school. Escalante's students do so well on the AP calculus exam that ETS accuses them of cheating, but they are vindicated when they duplicate their performance. Johnson's students learn to analyze college-level poetry intelligently and perceptively. Gruwell's students become her family and end up writing the book that was the basis for the film.

The teachers in these movies are able to succeed where others fail because they understand something about the students that the administrators and unsuccessful teachers fail to understand: the bad attitudes and the resistance to learning these attitudes generate are not the consequence of their socioeconomic status but of attending schools where they are not respected by the faculty or administrators.

Clark's principal is part of the problem. He refers to his new teacher's students as the "bottom of the barrel," and at one point Clark insists to his principal: "All they want is your respect." A vice principal at Escalante's school also refers to the students as "little bastards," and the math department chair calls them "illiterates." The principal at Johnson's school, judging by his insistence on students' absolute conformity to the most minor of rules, thinks of them almost as cattle. Gruwell's department chair, a Mrs. Campbell, seems to think of the school's minority students as dogs. "The best you can do [as a teacher]," she tells Gruwell, "is try to get them to obey, to learn discipline. That would be a tremendous accomplishment for them."

It is because of this lack of respect that faculty and administrators do not attribute ability or potential to students, and thus they expect little or nothing from them. The math students at Escalante's school are behind other high schools in math because the administration accepts the math department chair's opinion that it is in the students' best interest NOT to teach them higher level math: "Our kids can't handle calculus," she says. "Students will rise to the level of expectations," Escalante counters. "What if they try and fail?" she worries, adding "You'll shatter whatever self-confidence they have. And these aren't the type to bounce back."

Clark, too, is aware of the effect that low expectations has on student performance. Clark objects to the principal's description of them as the "the bottom of the barrel" and argues that the problem is not with them or their abilities. "The problem is what you expect them to achieve." In all these movies, the administrators (and by implication the regular faculty) have such low expectations of students that nothing is demanded of them.

When Gruwell tries to use district literary texts that are just sitting on the shelves in the school's storeroom, the department chair refuses to let her. Their reading scores are too low so they won't be able to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, she says, adding that the books will disappear or be returned damaged. When Gruwell thinks they might enjoy *Romeo and Juliet* because it is a great gang story, Mrs. Campbell holds up a "condensed" version: "This is what we give them." "They know they get these books because no one thinks they are smart enough for real books," Gruwell replies, then asks if she needs to buy the books for her students. She is told to go ahead but the insinuation is that it will be a waste of money.

The protagonists of these films are able to understand students in a way that administrators cannot because they are outsiders "who offer salvation to students lost in a culture of poverty and despair."² Escalante left the corporate environment to teach; Johnson lacks her supervised student teaching; Clark is an experienced and successful teacher, but he is an alien in Harlem. Gruwell is teaching her first class. While the lack of experience and training might well be considered a deficit by professionals, these films depict it as an asset: their attitudes and goals as teachers have not been compromised by the pernicious resignation that permeates the system. Their hearts remain "pure," and there are no inner restraints preventing their use of unorthodox teaching methods which turn out to be far more effective than orthodox ones.

Because they understand that the attitudes preventing the students from learning are rooted in a lack of mutual respect and low expectations, they also know that if they are to be successful, they must first earn the respect of their students, and the plots of these films dramatize their struggles to earn that respect. The teachers thus find themselves battling on two fronts. On one, they must combat institutional problems. Both Escalante's and Johnson's schools lack the resources they need. Garfield High School lacks the texts for the higher level math Escalante's students need if they are to study calculus (The movie doesn't explain where he ended up getting them.). And the facilities they must use are less than ideal. Johnson's school has no money for basic supplies. We have no paper and no pencils, but plenty of students, her colleague tells her. Gruwell's district has books, but the English department chair won't let the students have them because, in her view, they don't show the books proper respect.

On the other side, they are battling a more insidious problem: the low expectations faculty and administrators have for their low-achievers. The new

teachers realize the effect that low expectations are having. Some, like Escalante's colleagues, believe that there is a link between low socioeconomic status and students' low academic performance. This link is made explicit by the chair of Escalante's math department. "If you want higher test scores," she tells the principal, "start by changing the economic level of this community."

Clark makes a similar point about the detrimental effect of low expectations on student performance. Clark objects to the principal's description of them as the "the bottom of the barrel" and argues that the problem is not with them or their abilities: "The problem is what you expect them to achieve."

The "outsider" teachers, unhampered as they are by preconceived and negative attitudes toward their students, are able to earn their respect because, it becomes clear, these teachers really believe they demonstrate their concern by putting the students at the center of their own lives. All Clark's time outside work is devoted to helping his students. At one point he even cooks dinner for a student's siblings so she can work on her essay. He spends large amounts of money on them, going so far as to reward his students, and some parents, with tickets to an evening Broadway performance of *The Phantom of the Opera*. He is even willing to sacrifice himself. Five weeks before the day of the big test, Clark contracts pneumonia. Ignoring doctor's orders for a month of bed rest he shows up in class and collapses. Recognizing that he cannot conduct class in person, he has a friend videotape four hours of lessons daily at home which are shown to his students.

Johnson, who is getting divorced, also puts her students at the center of her personal life. As one student says, she has plenty of time to be "always in everybody's else's life." She tries, unsuccessfully, to save one student from a death in the streets by having him spend a night at her house, a gesture which, in the real world, would almost certainly lead to a teacher's criminal indictment. But not so in the cinematic glow of *Dangerous Minds*. Here, Johnson spends her money on classroom supplies and candy bars which she uses to bribe her students. She holds an academic contest, and the winning team earns a dinner with her at an expensive restaurant on her credit card. The rest get consolation prizes—which she bought.

Escalante has a wife and children, but his students also come first. During a Christmas dinner his wife, Fabiola, complains about his neglect of the family. The meal is on the table, and Fabiola, has to order him to come to the table: he's on the phone talking to a parent concerned about a child's performance at school. During dinner, she complains to the children sitting around the table: "Your father teaches 60 hours a week, and then he volunteers to teach night school for free, and now he is visiting junior high schools in his spare time." She doesn't want any teaching during the holiday, a demand to which he accedes. When his youngest son asks for help with a math problem while at the table, Fabiola loses it: "You see what I mean? His own son has problems with math!" The doorbell rings: it is a student he dropped from his calculus class earlier for

being late one too many times. The student had taken his grandmother to the hospital. The student's grandmother is with him, and the two are invited to stay for Christmas dinner.

Like Clark, Escalante is willing to sacrifice himself to help students. He drives himself so hard that two weeks before the students are to take the AP exam, he has a heart attack. Despite the fact the doctor orders "no job-related activity for at least a month," he's back in class two days later. Gruwell takes two part-time jobs so that she can purchase materials and activities her Long Beach district won't pay for, and her commitment ends up costing her her marriage. Through their total devotion to the needs of the students, these self-sacrificing teachers are able to convince the students that they really do care, and this is all it takes to change their attitudes and motivate them to learn.

If these movies only entertained their audiences, there would be no problem with them, but the danger is that they do more: they offer a "rhetorical vision," which critics define as "a view of how things have been, are, or will be that structure[s] our sense of reality in areas that we cannot experience directly, but can only know by symbolic reproduction."³ Steven R. Thomsen reminds us that the repetition of negative messages about teachers and teaching in the mass media contributes to or reinforces "what people believe is actually true regarding teachers and the profession."⁴ If cinematic images can contribute to or reinforce negative images, it can just as easily contribute and reinforce positive ones, however unrealistic. And it is hard to believe that the rhetorical vision offered by these films is not enhanced by viewers' knowledge that the experiences of real teachers are being portrayed on the screen.

The rhetorical vision of "teacher-as-savior" offered by these films is comforting and inspiring, but it is also dangerous because these films attribute the perceived poor quality of education offered by America's schools solely to the teachers. They suggest that whether or not a student learns is entirely up to the teacher, which ignores that fact that a teacher cannot teach anything; the student has to learn it, and little can be done by the teacher for the student who flat refuses to do so. Teachers cannot, except perhaps in rare cases, make those obstacles to learning created by poverty, family problems, gang violence and street influences vanish. Teachers cannot routinely undo the psychological damage done by prolonged exposure to unqualified or under-qualified teachers. Teachers cannot make the obstacles to learning created by inadequate funding, large class sizes, poor political and pedagogical leadership disappear through the sole act of caring.

But the rhetorical vision of these films urges viewers to believe that teachers can overcome any and all obstacles to learning—if they just care enough about their students, and convince those students that they are worth caring about. What America's education system really needs, this rhetorical vision argues, is not more money for schools, not smaller class sizes, and not higher teacher salaries; it is not more parents participating in their children's

education; not a restructuring of the school system; not strong pedagogical and political leadership. What America's ailing education system really needs is more teachers like Ron Clark, Jaime Escalante, Luanne Johnson and Erin Gruwell; teachers too focused on their students to worry about salaries, working conditions, stifling bureaucracies, poor leadership, and the like. The subtext seems to be that teachers who are concerned with these things and who refuse to take sole responsibility for student failure are not *real* teachers. If teachers *really* cared about their students, this rhetorical vision asserts, they would sacrifice as much as the teachers in these movies do, and those teachers who are not willing to do so are depicted as uncaring and unconcerned. Thus this rhetorical vision defines what a "real" teacher is. (The movies raise no questions about the psychological motivations of people who make students the center of their lives regardless of the personal cost.) How many teachers with families, mortgages, and bills can make the sacrifices these cinematic teacher-heroes make? How many would want to?

It is also significant that the films put valid complaints about the current state of education into the mouths of characters the audience doesn't like, which deftly discredits these criticisms by making them seem to be the products of self-interested teachers and administrators. Mrs. Campbell is a good example. One of the reasons she does not want Gruwell to give district books to the students is that the books will disappear or, if they do get returned, will be too damaged to use. "I don't have the budget to buy new books every year," she says. Inadequate funding of education's mission is a legitimate complaint, but by having Mrs. Campbell utter it, it sounds as though it is a stupid problem created by a teacher resentful of Gruwell's enthusiasm.

If there were only one or two of these films, perhaps the danger would be less, but many movies, and in fact, the vast majority of films about education, make the same invalid points as those addressed here. *To Sir, With Love* (1967), *Conrack* (1974), *Teachers* (1984), *Summer School* (1987), *Lean on Me* (1989), and *Coach Carter* (2005) are a few that come immediately to mind. As a point of interest, *Conrack*, *Lean on Me*, and *Coach Carter* also portray the experiences of real educators. The persuasive power of the rhetorical vision in these films makes it difficult to conduct a public discussion about the actual obstacles to both student and teacher success in the current state of education. This in turn makes it difficult to consider effective, less simplistic, and perhaps more costly solutions that are really needed. Thus these films enable, perhaps even encourage, viewers—be they parents or legislators—to believe that all the system needs to fix its problems are "real" teachers, not people like the ones standing in front of classrooms today.

Notes

¹ Robert C. Bulman, "Teachers in the 'Hood: Hollywood's Middle-Class Fantasy," *The Urban Review* 34 (3), 2002: 255.

² Bulman, "Teachers in the 'Hood," 257.

³ Steven R. Thomsen, "The Worm in the Apple: Hollywood's Influence on the Public Perception of Teachers," a paper presented at the joint meeting of the Southern States Communication Association and the Central States Communication Association, 15 April 1993: 23.

⁴ Steven R. Thomsen, "Reaching for the 'Power': A Media Campaign to Recruit New Teachers," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern States Communication Association, 11 April 1992. Quoted in Thomsen, "The Worm in the Apple," 22.

BOOK REVIEWS

From Lowbrow to Nobrow

Peter Swirski

McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005

Written for both academic and general readership, Peter Swirski's recent bestseller will enlighten any reader who is fond of popular literature and culture. As an associate professor and head of American Studies, University of Hong Kong, Swirski proposes that both highbrow and lowbrow literary cultures have been interpenetrating each other from at least early in the 20th century, i.e., decades before what John Seabrook proposes in *Nobrow* (2000). Swirski's is an interesting and eye-opening must-read about popular literature as art, and is the best study to date of the rise of that novel literary-cultural formation, "nobrow."

Swirski begins with some groundbreaking questions about the nature of popular fiction, outlining and defending an innovative way of looking at it as "artertainment." He takes a critical view of the still widespread assumption that popular literature, though the dominant art in our times, cannot be art (if it was, it would not be so popular). This makes me recall the memory of when *Forrest Gump*, starring Tom Hanks, caused much debate in 1994 after winning six Oscars. Perhaps through the eyes of the "highbrow" critics, it is popular fare that should not have won Academy awards. It may be a stereotype that only dramas or other "highbrow" movies can receive Oscars. Swirski argues that in many cases, far from thoughtless pulp, "popular literature expresses and reflects the aesthetic and social values of its readers" (p. 6).

Swirski moves on to present some recent statistical data about the history of popular fiction publishing and an insightful analysis of "nobrow aesthetics." Such numerical engagement with aesthetic problems is extremely rare, to say the least, and all the more praiseworthy. Both chapters open the reader's eyes to a full picture of the rapid expansion and culturally dominating role of popular fiction. In leading his readers to explore the nature of nobrow aesthetics in chapter two, Swirski methodically examines the four major types of critiques of popular fiction, including the negative character of popular culture and its negative effects on literary culture, readership, and society. With his sound arguments, in-depth coverage, and colourful illustrations with literary case studies, Swirski brings readers to a new insight into the stereotypes of popular culture, and innovatively establishes a significant range of aesthetic qualities of popular culture.

In a typical moment, he provides compelling arguments and evidence against the third criticism of popular culture, namely that it has a negative effect on readership, "produc[es] emotionally and cognitively harmful [effects]" (p. 42). If we turn to Chinese popular culture, the popular fictions written in the Ming dynasty, such as *Jin Ping Mei* (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*), play a significant part in ancient Chinese literary art. Though having plots based on love and sexual desire or even detailed projection of feminine body, *Jin Ping*

Mei is a widely recognised popular novel that has been included in most literary programmes of academic institutions. Though there has been criticism towards *Jin Ping Mei* for its sexual component, this novel has no doubt brought worldwide attention to an art that is appreciated by everyday people not only in the Ming dynasty but over the centuries until now.

What is a work of art has been fiercely debated over decades. Swirski offers an original look at popular culture, which has long been criticized for being deficient in artistry, and proves that, in some cases at least, it is anything but. In pursuit of examples of nobrow literary culture, from chapter four onwards, Swirski examines three semi-forgotten 20th-century novels to demonstrate how their mix of popular and highbrow aesthetics may have been responsible for this neglect. Writing about Karel Capek's *War with the Newts*, Raymond Chandler's *Playback* and Stanislaw Lem's *Chain of Chance*, Swirski demonstrates impressively his ability to entice even readers who have little familiarity with these works to develop a passion for reading them.

I would like to focus more on Karel Capek's *War with the Newts*. The story centers on the discovery of the "newts" (small lizard-like animals) by the master of a steamer, Captain van Toch. Backed up by provocative arguments, Swirski demonstrates that as a satirical science fiction novel, Capek touches the issues of humanity, intellectualism, nationalism, and so on. If we consider *War with the Newts* as science fiction for a leisurely afternoon, it works fine, no doubt. But is this all Capek meant to achieve? Having read Swirski's book, I believe not. A thought-provoking book written in 1936, Capek's searching and pessimistic view of the fate of humanity is revealed in *War with the Newts*. Even now, when we turn to action pictures or popular novels, the message of war with the newts still resonates. Or even when we turn to environmental problems such as global warming and pollution, we cannot deny the possibility of the end of man. Such original mix of soul-searching and thought-provoking in a *popular* thriller fully represents the aesthetics of nobrow culture, as argued by Swirski, by being "simple enough to delight a dilettante, deep enough to drown a philosopher, playful and ironic enough to reward even the most discriminating and cultivate reader" (p. 100).

Swirski writes clearly, quotes intelligently, and approaches his theme with great originality. Reflecting on his portrait of nobrow culture, all I can say is, if you enjoy discovery and aesthetic satisfaction, you will enjoy *From Lowbrow to Nobrow*.

Lisa Cheung, University of Hong Kong

Willing Suspension of Disbelief: Poetic Faith in Film

Anthony J. Ferri
Lexington Books, 2007

We've all heard the phrase, many of us have even used the phrase, but do we know where it came from and what experience it was describing? Anthony J. Ferri, author of *Willing Suspension of Disbelief* provides his readers with a thorough study of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge's phrase "willing suspension of disbelief." This writer studies the repeated modern application of the phrase to the context of film: a medium with which Coleridge had no experience as film was developed nearly eighty years after he passed away in 1817. Ferri asks how a "nineteenth century term" applies to the film viewing experience in a "twenty-first-century world." He notes that this famous phrase has been studied, and the experience it describes has been discussed by many throughout history, but none has captured the heart of the poetic experience as Coleridge did. Ferri rightfully asserts that these four words remain the "quintessential phrase identifying the heart of the viewing process."

This book is a fascinating and important study of how films are viewed and the psychology that takes place during the viewing process. This process allows movie viewers to transport themselves beyond time and physical constraints into the world created by the filmmaker. This work is further enriched by Ferri's ability to bring together his study of Coleridge's philosophies and modern theory on audience reception. First, the author approaches his study by describing the historical and experiential background of Samuel Coleridge; he then moves on to clarifying the phrase in terms of "its context and author" for his readers.

Ferri goes on to outline audience reception theory and the difficulties researchers experience when attempting to assess what happens cognitively as individuals view films. Assessing the phenomena while not interrupting the viewing process in order to allow the experience to overtake the viewer's senses, is difficult to say the least. Audience behavior study is outlined back to its inception with the provision of anecdotal reports of audience reaction to early films, including industry research conducted to assess the success of movies by motion picture companies.

The author himself conducted research, an "exploratory field project" during a two-year period whereby he intercepted and surveyed exiting movie patrons. He outlines the data he collected and discusses the challenges he encountered in attempting to "empirically map the willing suspension of disbelief." While he provides empirical evidence of what occurs during the

viewing process, he also concedes that “it cannot be claimed that the willing suspension of disbelief is some agreed-upon phenomenon or law.”

Admitting to the difficulty in quantifying the experience of viewing a film, Ferri discusses several specific contemporary films in terms of their ability to engage viewers and transport them cognitively into the film’s environment. He additionally theorizes that “some films engage the viewer more effectively than others,” and in fact some films appear to require a conscious willing suspension of disbelief as they “jolt and rattle our beliefs and emotional sensibilities.” In other words, some films utilize while others “violate the willing suspension of disbelief.” Ferri also poses a provocative question as to whether or not advancing technologies, such as digital media and virtual reality, will “detract or enhance the willing suspension of disbelief” as some theorized the word processor would impact literature.

In conclusion, Anthony Ferri notes that this famous phrase, taken out of the context of a reader’s preparation to read and applied to audience experience in general, is indeed “the heart of the motion picture audience process” as it was an “early attempt at cognitive audience analysis.” Ferri’s scholarly examination of this concept provides an in-depth analysis of both a phrase and an experience which have intrigued those interested in film, literature, and poetry alike for many years. After reading this book, one can indeed appreciate a nineteenth-century poet’s uncanny ability to put into words the phenomena nearly every modern moviegoer has experienced.

Warren D. Cobb, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Moose Crossing:
Portland to Portland on the Theodore
Roosevelt International Highway**

Max J. Skidmore
Hamilton Books, 2007

Max Skidmore, professor of political science and former dean at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, has written a fascinating account of the 4,000-plus mile journey from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon on the Theodore Roosevelt International Highway (TRIH). But this is much more than a “road book.” The title stems from a road sign in New Hampshire along the TRIH warning motorists to be aware of moose crossings on the highway. And it reminds us of Roosevelt’s unsuccessful bid to reclaim the presidency in his “Bull Moose campaign” under the banner of the Progressive Party in 1912.

The TRIH was not a new single highway, but a connected system of primarily two lane roads running across twelve states in largely rural areas. Its origins began in 1919 with a group of motoring enthusiasts in Duluth, Minnesota, who planned the route. The international component consists of a Canadian link from Niagara, Ontario, on to Hamilton, and then back into the U.S. at Detroit. Regrettably, there are few markers along the route today that indicate its significance.

Skidmore is to be congratulated for *Moose Crossing* for several reasons. First, he seized the welcome opportunity to write on a topic that is seemingly unrelated to his own scholarly focus. Most academics I know harbor ambitions to be more creative in planning a new venture that is dear to them, to craft a jargon-free book on a new subject of popular rather than parochial interest. Second, Skidmore continually portrays an interesting and rich history of the generally small towns that adjoin the TRIH. He notes the local culture, economic development, political landscape, and significant, but often lost, events from the past that help to define areas. Third, Skidmore's history of the TRIH and what one encounters along its coast-to-coast path includes the coming of age of the automobile in the 20th century. Fourth, the chapters, done state by state, are steeped in local lore (ghosts in some historic mansions) and specific details (location of the world's largest maple candy factory) such that one can decide where to stay that evening or what restaurant to avoid if replicating the journey. This is a scaled down version of the Alaska *Milepost*. Fifth, Skidmore reminds us on every page of the importance of local libraries, small town newspaper archives, county museums, and old timers who have stories to tell about life thirty-fifty-eighty years earlier. The author talked with what seems to be a treasure trove of individuals in the various towns and burgs where he stopped along the route in his borrowed pickup truck. More often than not the locals know little about the significance of their highway that is part of the TRIH.

Not surprisingly, one finds an interesting history stemming from the 1920s when opinions about civil rights, women's rights, worker's rights, and the plight of the common person were argued in town halls, bars, and other public venues. Some of the debate is quite progressive; and then there are the remarks of some that make one wonder if the popular vote should have been extended to everyone. Small town America, like its urban counterparts, is a *mélange* of different views and customs.

Skidmore travels on some of the roads noted in William Least Heat Moon's *Blue Highways*. Skidmore's narrative is much more satisfying. *Moose Crossing* is also reminiscent of Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*. Again, Skidmore's exploration into the past makes this a much richer and more substantive account.

A short appendix is included that summarizes Theodore Roosevelt's personal and public life. For most of us who know of him only through paragraphs in American political science and history textbooks, this is a

welcome refresher course about a truly impressive national leader. Skidmore calls for Congress to rededicate the TRIH as a tribute to Roosevelt's accomplishments, much in the manner that the interstate system carries President Eisenhower's name.

The one criticism I have of *Moose Crossing* is directed at the publisher, not the author. There is an annoying one-page map that jams the route of the TRIH through the states and Ontario into an unreadable mess that made it almost impossible to pinpoint the places Skidmore describes on his journey. How nice it would have been to be able to easily refer to a two-page, face-to-face map done with clarity. That aside, this book should appeal to a wide audience.

John Culver, California Polytechnic State University

**Shakespeare and
Elizabethan Popular Culture**
Edited by Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes
Arden Shakespeare, 2006
and
**The Cambridge Companion to
Shakespeare and Popular Culture**
Edited by Robert Shaughnessy
Cambridge University Press, 2007

In the "Introduction" to *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture*, editors Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes differentiate between "cultural products created *for* the people," and those that are "*of* the people, which," they write, "is an older meaning of the term 'popular'. Older forms of popular culture were for the most part not specifically commercial activities, and may be understood as the cultural expressions of the people themselves" (1). During the time of Shakespeare, such cultural expressions took the form of "the dramatic enactment of Bible stories, the festive rituals associated with holidays, clowning, old romances told around a winter's fire and other products of oral tradition such as proverbs, ballads and songs" (1). Gillespie and Rhodes later note that Shakespeare "has been a classic for so long that our sense of his being part of popular culture has been largely obscured" (2). Nevertheless, their work "is not . . . a book about modern popular culture and the modern media. It is about the popular culture of the sixteenth century and the influences that shaped Shakespeare's drama then" (3). After commenting on the extent and diversity of previous studies of their subject, Gillespie and Rhodes contend that "What has

not emerged is any single work that attempts to address the full range of popular cultural and literary forms available to Shakespeare, and the impact they had on him" (4). Therefore, they intend *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* to fill this gap in scholarly inquiry.

The roster of chapter-length essays in *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* includes: Helen Cooper's "Shakespeare and the Mystery Plays," Leah S. Marcus's "Shakespeare and Popular Festivity," Alex Davis's "Shakespeare's Clowns," Helen Moore's "Shakespeare and Popular Romance," David Margolies "Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Fiction," Diane Purkiss's "Shakespeare, Ghosts and Popular Folklore," Neil Rhodes's "Shakespeare's Sayings," Stuart Gillespie's "Shakespeare and Popular Song," and Bruce R. Smith's "Shakespeare's Residuals: The Circulation of Ballads in Cultural Memory." Each of these smoothly written and highly accessible pieces offers students, critics, and readers alike broad, yet specific insights into the subjects they treat individually and collectively. Many also include a complement of black-and-white illustration reproductions from the early modern period. "Endnotes" and a "Select Bibliography" aid further, more in-depth study, while an adequate, though not extensive, "Index" rounds out this gorgeously produced volume.

Meanwhile, Robert Shaughnessy, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, reveals that, recently, "the study of the past and present relationships between Shakespeare and popular culture has been transformed: from an occasional, ephemeral, and anecdotal field of research, which, if registered at all, was generally considered peripheral to the core concerns of scholarship and pedagogy," into "one which is making an increasingly significant contribution to our understanding of how Shakespeare's works came into being, and of how and why they continue to exercise the imaginations of readers, theatergoers, viewers, and scholars worldwide" (1). Furthermore, current ongoing "research and pedagogy in the field of Shakespeare and popular culture is concerned with the Shakespearean theatre and drama's immersion within the festivities and folk customs, entertainment industries, and traditions of playing of its own time," as well as "in the reinvention, adaptation, citation, and appropriation of the plays (and, to a lesser extent, the poems), and the myths and histories that circulate around them, across a wide range of media in subsequent periods and cultures" (1). Shaughnessy, in some respects both echoing and expanding upon Gillespie and Rhodes, later comments that the notion of the "'popular' is itself hardly a singular or uncontested term or frame of reference: seen from some angles, it denotes community, shared values, democratic participation, accessibility, and fun;" while "from others, the mass-produced commodity, the lowest common denominator, the reductive or the simplified, or the shoddy, the coarse, and the meretricious" (2). Thus, in circumstances in which "the transmission and appropriation of Shakespeare are at stake, considerations of taste and aesthetic

value are also bound up with inevitably vexed questions of cultural ownership, educational attainment and class, and with issues of who the desired and actual consumers of 'popular' Shakespeare may be, who these hope to include, and who they don't" (2). Such remarks allow for the understanding that the field of inquiry concerned with Shakespeare and popular culture encompasses a great deal of energy, excitement, and contention.

Shaughnessy proceeds to explain that, while "many recent studies of popular Shakespeare have tended to focus upon its contemporary manifestations, this volume aims at broader historical coverage. It addresses the ways in which Shakespeare has been consumed and reinvented, allowing for interface between cultural, literary, performance, and cinema studies, by means of focused and localized case studies" and "through the mapping of larger cultural logics of Shakespeare-making" (2). Discrete and learned chapter-length essays follow. Diana E. Henderson's "From Popular Entertainment to Literature" traces "Shakespeare's transformation from popular entertainer to literary lion" (6). Peter Holland's "Shakespeare Abbreviated" is a study of abridged productions—theatrical and cinematic—of the plays, all of which were truncated by their respective producers in order to appeal to a "popular" audience composed of individuals who were presumed to be totally uninterested in (if not incapable of) sitting through full-length versions of the dramas. Barbara Hogdon's "Shakespearean Stars: Stagings of Desire" is a look at famous Shakespearean actors from the sixteenth through the twenty-first centuries, such as Richard Burbage, David Garrick, Laurence Olivier, Ian McKellen, and Kenneth Branagh, as well as commentary on the modern creation of the "star" performer. Stephen Orgel's "Shakespeare Illustrated" discusses artistic depictions of Shakespearean scenes, characters, costumes, and plays, all crafted in a variety of media, from drawings to frontispieces, paintings, lithographs, prints, engravings, woodcuts and, lastly, cinema. Douglas Lanier's "Shakespeare™: Myth and Biographical Fiction" surveys Shakespeare's transformation from English Renaissance playwright into a "brand identity" that adorns an astonishing number of items, including: "beer, crockery, fishing tackle, book publishing, cigars, pubs, and breath mints, to name a few" (93), and the fictional biographical persona of "Shakespeare" who finds his way into myriad books, stories, plays, television programs, and films, despite the fact that this composite character has nothing to do with—or stands as a gross exaggeration of—the historical Shakespeare. Laurie Osborne's "Narration and Staging in *Hamlet* and its Afternovels" focuses critical attention on *Hamlet*'s appropriation into popular genre fiction such as mysteries and ghost stories.

Additional pieces in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* include: Emma Smith's "Shakespeare Serialized: *An Age of Kings*," Stephen M. Buhler's "Musical Shakespeares: Attending to Ophelia, Juliet, and Desdemona," Susanne Greenhalgh's "Shakespeare Overheard: Performances, Adaptations, and Citations on Radio," Nicola J. Watson's

“Shakespeare on the Tourist Trail,” W.B. Worthen’s “Performing Shakespeare in Digital Culture,” and Carol Chillington Rutter’s “Shakespeare’s Popular Face: From the Playbill to the Poster.” Many of the chapters in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* feature pertinent illustrations, while all of them present notes at the end of each entry, rather than their being collected into a whole at the back of the text. A bibliography of further reading (broken into the categories “Shakespeare and Cultural History,” “Appropriations and Adaptations,” “Theatre and Performance,” “Film, Television, and Radio,” and “Music and the Visual Arts”) and an extensive index usefully complement Shaughnessy’s volume.

Without question, when such venerable publishing entities as Arden Shakespeare and Cambridge University Press offer titles like *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* and *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, scholars of Shakespeare and popular culture ought to take notice. These indispensable volumes more than suggest the cachet and respect this expansive and inviting field of inquiry continues to acquire in the 21st century. By themselves, and as a pair, these texts provide a phenomenal introduction to, as well as a broad overview of, the field of Shakespeare and popular culture studies. Indeed, both are recommended highly not only for Shakespeareans, but also historians of popular culture in all disciplines.

Anthony Guy Patricia, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

William Le Queux: Master of Mystery

Chris Patrick and Stephen Baister

Privately published by the authors, 2006

In *William Le Queux: Master of Mystery*, Chris Patrick and Stephen Baister have produced an impressively researched and highly informative account of almost certainly the most prolific mystery and spy-story writer of the first thirty years of the twentieth century. The authors list well over 200 novels and short story collections published between 1899 and his death in 1927, not to mention dozens of uncollected short stories and journalistic and other periodical writings, and in 1917 alone a prodigious 14 novels. Many of his works were best-sellers and went through numerous reprintings. One of them sold over a million copies and was translated into 27 languages. Not for nothing did William Le Queux’s only biographer describe him as “the master of mystery.” And as the authors note, in *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), Graham Greene has one of his characters observe that “the world has been remade by William Le Queux.” All the more remarkable, then, aside from one or two passing references, Le Queux has been largely overlooked in the more recent scholarship in the crime and mystery

fiction fields. *William Le Queux: Master of Mystery* should go a long way toward correcting the oversight.

As the authors put it, Le Queux was always a writer “skilled in sensing and exploiting the public mood” (51). In Britain, during the final decade of the nineteenth century and the early 1900s, the public mood was increasingly taken up with the danger posed by foreign spy sleeper-cells and the fear of invasion (often by perfidious Germany, sometimes by the equally dastardly French and Russians). Out of this anxiously xenophobic climate was reawakened the fashion for an already long-established literary phenomenon: the invasion novel, the modern take in which Le Queux occupied a prominent position, with novels like *The Great War in England in 1897* (published in 1894) and *The Invasion of 1910* (1906), in which the Germans land at Lowestoft, march on London, and are finally crushed by a popular resistance. Interestingly, as the authors note, the book sold well in Germany, doubtless due to the fact that the *denouement* had been changed to allow Germany to win. These were hugely popular novels, made all the more credible by Le Queux’s clever use of pseudo-documentary materials and newspaper reportage. And, as the authors demonstrate, the novels also contain a wealth of insights into Edwardian attitudes towards Empire, the evolving national self-image, the foreign Other, war-preparedness (or rather, unpreparedness), the political left, class anxieties, and the rising influence of the urban poor; a broad picture, in effect, of a nation under considerable strains from inside as well as out.

If Le Queux’s involvement in the invasion novel *genre* was topical rather than innovative, then his contribution to the *espionage* theme certainly seems to have had more claim to originality. Le Queux “was one of the first writers of popular fiction to recognize the importance of espionage to modern warfare and to exploit and develop the figure of the spy or secret agent in his writings” (47). To pin down his contribution even more precisely, with his Duckworth Drew of the British Secret Service (in *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, published in 1903), Le Queux initiated the tradition of the gentlemanly secret agent in the popular British spy novel. In chapter five (“Spies and Dodgy Dossiers”) the authors present an intriguing account of Le Queux’s own contact (he claimed to be a British Secret Service agent) with the world of espionage, spy networking, secret missions, and undercover intrigue. However, the authors conclude that he seems to have had only a Walter Mitty-style connection at most. But, in any case, a large part of Le Queux’s fascinating story as spy and mystery novelist lies in his tendency to self-dramatize and fantasize, to merge his own personality into those of his character creations, and to blend contemporary social and political concerns into futuristic narrative.

William Le Queux: Master of Mystery is written in brisk and jargon-free style, with an extensive bibliography and some examples of Le Queux’s shorter work included in appendices. Meticulously detailed and documented, the book is a lot more than just a straightforward account of the biography. Chapters on

“The Age of Technology,” “The Detective and Detective Writer,” and “Women in Life and Fiction” all help to round out the various social and cultural contexts in which Le Queux lived and wrote. This includes his contribution to the “war in the air” genre; for example, his use of technological themes (x-ray weapons, laser guns, and germ warfare), and an interesting early feminist interest in capable and courageous women protagonists. *William Le Queux: Master of Mystery* makes an important addition to the mystery and spy-novel field, but will also appeal to those interested more widely in the development of popular print culture during the Edwardian period.

Kenneth Payne, Kuwait University

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Parks and Wreck: Amusement and Anxiety at Turn-of-the-Century Coney Island

*This article was originally published in **Popular Culture Review** 18, no. 2 (Summer 2007). When originally published, the author's name was misspelled several times throughout that issue. The correct spelling is "Chris Kamerbeek." We reprint the article here with our apologies to Mr. Kamerbeek.*

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, it occurred to a number of members of the medical and social scientific communities, as well as urban planners and entrepreneurs, that Americans weren't having enough fun. In 1869, the neurologist George Miller Beard diagnosed the culture at large with what he called neurasthenia or nervous exhaustion, a condition brought on by the body's inability to accommodate the accelerated pace of modern life. Beard posited a sort of nervous economy in which the demands of daily industrial life were depleting the over-stimulated and over-stressed neurasthenic's finite reserve of nervous energy. With the urban industrial environment thus pathologized, recreational spaces became sites for the rehabilitation of the enervated body and spirit, a chance to literally re-create oneself by replenishing the vital forces sapped by the work day and the general tumult of the urban experience. In New York City, Frederick Law Olmstead's Central Park interrupted the cityscape with a pastoral sanctuary equipped with the curative powers of nature. However, as the turn of the century approached, New Yorkers began to eschew the centrality of Central Park for the more kinetic and tawdry charms of a new breed of park emerging out on the margins of the metropole in Coney Island. As an alternative to the comparatively sober practices of recreational retreat, the immediate sensory feast of the amusement park sought not to elide the challenges of a modernizing world but to collide with them.

This does not mean, however, that the amusement park abandoned the project of recuperating the nervous subject. Coney impresario George Tilyou actively promoted his enterprise's restorative potential. In an advertisement designed to attract patrons to the park, Tilyou claims that "those who desire and need rest from the cares and anxieties of their daily avocations can here derive a great benefit."¹ In keeping with the medical language surrounding the discourses of recreation and amusement, this paper proposes that a visit to Coney Island was tantamount to an inoculation against the threat posed to the modern body. Following Walter Benjamin's suggestion that "[modern] man's need to expose himself to shock effects is his adjustment to the dangers threatening him,"² we

can see what we might call the work of play in the age of mechanical reproduction as operating precisely on these terms. An investigation into the buffet of amusements offered up at Coney Island reveals the degree to which the amusement park approaches a kind of cultural orientation through disorientation and stages the dangers of an increasingly technologized environment in a contained space in order to mollify its nervous patrons and assure them that will get home safely.

As Robert Snow and David Wright point out, Coney Island represented "America's first and . . . most symbolic commitment to mechanized leisure,"³ and a crucial component of the cultural work of the amusement park was to mediate the increasingly anxious relationship between the human and the mechanical. If the daily transactions with the machine mandated by industrial labor threatened to "mechanicalize the workman," as Henry Potter contended in *The North American Review* in 1897,⁴ the turn to mechanized leisure could potentially further erode the boundaries between work and play as well as between man and machine. Indeed, for some later cultural theorists, leisure time and leisure space become mere extensions of work time and work space; work essentially devours play. According to Benjamin, "what the Fun Fair achieves with its Dodgem cars and other similar amusements is nothing but a taste of the drill to which the unskilled laborer is subjected in the factory."⁵ For Horkheimer and Adorno as well, "amusement . . . is the prolongation of work . . . what happens at work, in the factory, or in the office can only be escaped from by approximation to it in one's leisure time."⁶

In service of rescuing the worker from the gloomier implications of these theoretical trajectories, we might attempt to salvage the more liberatory effects of play in order to locate an "amused" agent whose engagement with park technology renders the industrial world more readily navigable. After all, the fundamental mode of the amusement park is a sort of comic relief via disorientation, as contraptions that appear functional prove dysfunctional and technologies ostensibly speeding out of control are very much in it. In the words of one fin de siècle journalist, "Coney Island is only another name for Topsy-Turvydom,"⁷ its anarchic veneer offers the fantasy of inverted relations and "fluid new possibilities." The amusement park was littered with trick chairs and trick benches that in John Kasson's words "mocked the world of productive devices by being intentionally counterproductive, systematically frustrating those who would expect them to fulfill their apparent functions."⁸ A certain degree of counterproductivity is embedded in the very logic of the "ride" as well; having arrived at precisely the same spot from which she departed, the rider gains nothing beyond the raw sensory experience of the ride. If amusement is doomed to repeat the rhythms of mechanized labor, perhaps it is repetition with a difference, or even, as Kasson suggests, a transformative "parody of urban experience." The injection of mechanization into recreation is homeopathic rather than toxic, a dose of industrial grade hair of the dog.

In the popular contemporary discourse surrounding the initial decades of Coney Island, however, the threat posed to the park patrons' abstract humanity was superseded by the more immediate and legible threat to his nervous well-being and general corporeal integrity. The attendant ironies of a weekend getaway to Coney Island were not lost on Rollin Lynde Hartt, whose caustic critique of the amusement park in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1907 asks,

what more ludicrous and what more sad than the spectacle of vast hordes of people rushing to the Oceanside, to escape the city's din and crowds and nervous strain, and . . . courting worse din, denser crowds, and an infinitely more devastating nervous strain inside an enclosure whence the ocean cannot possibly be seen? . . . "Never tell me again the Americans are a nervous people!" They are, though, and yonder amazing institution proves it. Manhattanitis, with its numerous congeners, isn't merely a disease, it's an obsession. It doesn't ask relief, it only asks aggravation. The sole treatment that it welcomes is the counter-irritant—powerful, drastic, and like in kind to itself. ("The Amusement Park" 677)

Hartt rightly recognizes the amusement-seeker's willingness to subject himself to the pseudo-perils of what he calls Coney Island's "whirling death-traps" and "mad cyclonic bugaboos" as the very symptom of nervousness rather than the absence of it. However, he is not able to appreciate how this specific type of aggravation paradoxically provides relief. Hartt quotes a park patron who claims that

if a man suffered in a trolley car what ten thousand New Yorkers pay ten cents to have done to them at Coney Island, he would go to a hospital for a month, call himself a nervous wreck for the rest of his days, and sue the trolley company for \$20,000 damages. (674)

Maybe so, but what Coney Island consumers consume is the peculiar alchemy that turns trauma into thrill and thrill into reassurance.

The most conspicuous example of how the amusement park works on the turn of the century body is the roller coaster. Developed by LaMarcus Thompson and debuted at Coney in 1884, the roller coaster, along with that other prominent icon of the amusement park landscape, the Ferris Wheel, was first and foremost a rideable feat of engineering. If the screams of riders of early roller coasters (such as the aptly named "Gravity Pleasure Railway") signaled the simultaneously frightening and titillating kinetic chaos engendered by technological innovation, the visible sturdiness of the machine's manifold mechanisms, the soothing aural ebbs that follow the manic aural flows of the gears, and the quotidian monotony of waiting in line, all assure the anxious

spectator of the triumph of American ingenuity over the chaos. But once on the coaster, the rider tenders her body to the disorienting effects of the ride. As Bill Brown argues, the function of what he calls “the pleasure machine” is to “reduce the self to an agentless sensorium” and produce “the dehumanized, fully embodied subject, the subject that is all body.”⁹ The roller coaster distills the locus of the train passenger’s neurasthenic anxieties and repackages it, in Brown’s terms, as a “post-panoramic,” “non-linear,” and “repetitive” means of “intensifying yet framing the time-space compression of modernity” (47).

In this way, the pleasure machine dramatizes the sensory experience of bodily abandon and impending collision minus the mortal consequences of impact. In the words of one nineteenth century rider, it offers “all the sensations of being carried away by a cyclone, without the attendant sacrifice of life and limb” (quoted in Brown 46). The more morbid elements of the pleasure derived from the machine seem inextricably bound to turn of the century popular culture’s curious appetite for staged disaster, as evidenced by W.G. Crush’s county fair demonstrations of head-on train collisions and Edison’s 1904 film *The Railroad Smashup*. In fact, one of the earliest incarnations of the roller coaster, the “Leap-Frog Railway,” made its kinship to such entertainments quite explicit. The ride sent two cars “each filled with as many as forty people, toward one another on the same set of tracks,” only to send one car up a set of curved rails over the roof of the other car at the last second.¹⁰ The roller coaster operates in a manner that resonates with Benjamin’s discussion of the work of film (and notably the amusement park was a venue for the screening of early films), as “technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training” wherein “perception in the form of shocks [is] established as a formal principle.”¹¹ Having simulated the effects of technology gone haywire, amusement as recreation reconstitutes the modern subject as adequately conditioned to confront the commotion of modernity.

The roller coaster did not have sole dominion over the amusement park’s fascination with disaster, which also materialized in the staging of live reenactments of a number of natural catastrophes, including the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, Pennsylvania’s Johnstown Flood, and even a spectacle called “Fire and Flames,” for which a four-story building was set ablaze and actors playing building residents leapt out of windows into safety nets. As Kasson points out, the staging of these events activates “a horrible delight in the apprehension that devastating tragedy had both historically and contemporaneously intruded suddenly in daily affairs, even in modern technological America” (72). In juxtaposing natural and mechanical disasters and christening coasters with names like “The Cyclone,” Coney Island effaces the border between nature and the machine within its walls. In so doing, the amusement park arguably “naturalizes” technological failure and asserts its inevitability while simultaneously assuaging the fear of its implications by granting park patrons “the inestimable advantage of allowing them to emerge

from the performance unharmed" (Kasson 72). For Brown, "disaster [becomes] the privileged mode for effecting the recreational sublime," as "the serial reproduction of disastrous destruction marks the moment when the amusement industry routinizes the aleatory" (118). In situating the pleasure machine next to Vesuvius, the amusement park constructs a historical narrative of catastrophe that reminds the amused subject that disaster and contingency are nothing new and that although mechanical catastrophe is ever-present as possibility, it is nothing to be nervous about.

As suggested by Coney Island's provocative nickname, "Sodom by the Sea," the park could promise the recuperation of the enervated body by way of a calculated sexual coding which infused amusement with a carnival spirit and disaster (as the biblical allusion indicates) with a sort of eschatological glee. As the buckles burst on Victorian decorum, recreational space became increasingly sexually charged. As Kasson contends, "the amusement center suspended conventional situational proprieties" (41). Certain attractions—such as a pavilion floor equipped with air jets under a metal grating designed propel women's skirts upward and the Love Nest, which sent a cart-built-for-two through a series of unlit and publicly private tunnels—overtly appealed to patrons' more prurient interests. For the purposes of this paper, however, the roller coaster again stands as the most compelling example, as it aimed to convert nervous energy into sexual energy. An advertisement for the Cannon Coaster, which appeared in 1900, invited the prospective rider to "imagine . . . the excitement, the wild thrill of delight, that you will experience when you are shot from the cannon's mouth on to the slide beyond: Will she throw her arms around your neck and yell? Well, I guess, yes!"¹² The roller coaster refigures the threat of collision as the promise of a more agreeable collision or even the threat of death with the promise of a "little death." Under the auspices of amusement, these "fully embodied subjects" can eagerly abandon themselves to the kinetic force of the pleasure machines; technological contingency has been imbued with erotic and restorative potential.

In his 1905 article "Human Need of Coney Island," Richard La Gallienne claims that Coney Island

not only knows itself a fake, but . . . it makes so little bones about the matter. It knows that you know, and it expects you to pretend to be taken in, as it pretends to think that it is taking you in . . . I wonder, if perhaps Coney Island . . . does not regard the public as a big baby in need of a noisy, electric-lighted rattle.¹³

Perhaps what the price of admission bought was a set of comforting fictions about mechanized living in the new century—that it was escapable, resistible, manageable, pleasurable, or even somehow "natural." Perhaps, in a somewhat Foucauldian sense, the amusement park was in service of producing pliant and

“docile bodies” rendered all the more efficient and usable upon their return to work Monday morning. But for its proponents and detractors, its buyers and sellers alike, turn-of-the-century Coney Island was a social crucible in which a nervous culture tested the limits of the body in the shadow of the machine. At a time when Americans began to take play seriously and charge recreation with the responsibility of remedying the deleterious effects of modern life, amusement park patrons ignored Beard’s prescription that the neurasthenic seek “rest and change” in favor of undergoing Coney’s radical new “shock therapy.”

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Notes

¹ Quoted in Pilat and Ranson, *Sodom by the Sea*, 133.

² “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” 250.

³ “Coney Island: A Case Study in Popular Culture and Technical Change” *Journal of Popular Culture* 33:2.

⁴ “Man and Machine.”

⁵ “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” 176.

⁶ “The Culture Industry” 137.

⁷ Huneker *New Metropolis* 162.

⁸ *Amusing the Million* 72.

⁹ *Material Unconscious* 46.

¹⁰ Kasson 78.

¹¹ “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” 175.

¹² Quoted in Pilat and Ranson 214.

¹³ *Cosmopolitan* 39 July 1905.

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Popular Culture Review

Popular Culture Review, the refereed journal of the Far West Popular and American Culture Associations (sponsored by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas) is published twice yearly. It is indexed in the MLA Bibliography and the Modern Humanities Research Association's Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature. Members of the FWPCA/FWACA receive each issue as part of membership. Single copies may be purchased for \$10.00 domestic and \$15.00 international. Yearly subscriptions for institutions and libraries are \$25.00. Requests for back issues should be submitted to the editor.

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Popular Culture Review gratefully acknowledges the contributions made to this journal by the UNLV College of Liberal Arts and the UNLV Department of English.

Articles published do not necessarily represent the opinions of and are not the legal responsibility of *Popular Culture Review*.

ISSN 1060-8125

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Studies in Popular Culture, the journal of the Popular Culture Association in the South and the American Culture Association in the South, publishes articles on popular culture and American culture however mediated: through film, literature, radio, television, music, graphics, print, practices, conditions of life. Its contributors from the United States, Canada, France, Israel, and Australia include distinguished anthropologists, sociologists, cultural geographers, ethnomusicologists, historians, and scholars in mass communications, philosophy, literature, and religion.

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