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Welcome to the Funhouse

Pete Wetherbee

The Funhouse Mirror: Reflections on Prison

by Robert Ellis Gordon.

Washington State University Press, 2000.
110 pages, Softcover, \$14.95.

In "The Shawshank Redemption" the wise old con, Morgan Freeman, gives new inmate Tim Robbins a lesson about prison life: "the first thing you got to realize is that every man in here is innocent."

For most of us, that probably registers as a sardonic comment on jailhouse lawyers, or the incorrigible criminal mind. But it is really a hard truth about the vital role of fantasy in the life of somebody serving a long sentence for a violent crime. I don't mean the yuppie Tom Sawyer fantasy of the film. A real-life Morgan Freeman would be talking about the kind of fantasy that enables you to keep believing that you have a right to exist; a little dignity and value; significant relationships; a sex life; something to hope for. Without the ability to believe these things you are going to become uncontrollably angry or unbearably depressed, and the same thing will happen if you believe in them too much, and so set yourself up to be blindsided by some shocking act of violence or injustice.

There is a middle ground, and those who are able to maintain themselves there are important to know about. They have a degree of civilization, and a sense of the value of civilization, that most of us never attain, probably because the only way to get there is by having to deal with real barbarism on its own terms. The men Robert Ellis Gordon writes about in *The Funhouse Mirror*, students in writing workshops he conducted over several years at various prisons in the Washington State system, are civilized men, though armed robbery is the mildest of the crimes for which they are doing time.

They all began prison life, in the words of one of them, TJ Granack, as "men pronounced dead on arrival, men who aren't sure if the struggle back to life is possible or even worthwhile." Granack gives an annotated list of the rules they had to learn, such as: never avoid a fight and always fight dirty; be known to possess a serious, hard-core porn collection; never make eye contact; learn to masturbate fast. They encounter violence every day.

Michael Collins, arrested six weeks out of high school and very good-looking, reports the good news that he got through his first day in prison without being raped, then adds as an afterthought, "it is true that a dude a few cells down cut off his testicles with a razor blade and threw them out onto the tier," but as he quickly learned, that sort of thing comes with the territory.

Collins's short memoir, "Epiphany," is what I mean by "civilization." He begins by recalling the pleasure he once took in beating up rapists (sex offenders are the lowest of the low in any prison), while a crowd of fellow inmates cheered him on. "Never in my life had it felt so terrible to hit someone, and never

had it felt so good." He then describes being visited in the night by a flashback, uncontrollable and utterly vivid, to his robbery of a convenience-store. He remembered how, as the cashier was emptying the register, he had spun and pointed his gun at the face of a woman emerging unexpectedly from the rest room. She had fallen to the floor "as if I'd struck her," trembling and begging for mercy. Now, nine years later, he realizes what he did to this woman, that in all likelihood "she can never again feel that she inhabits a safe and secure world." Without touching her, he committed rape.

The lesson may seem obvious, but the odds against Collins's learning it were high. He had to find his way out of a cycle of brutality in which he was constantly fighting, to prove his

manhood at the expense of hapless sex offenders, or defend his chastity against other predators. His memory had to find its way back through layers of denial to refocus on a person (and a woman at that) who had once seemed threatening, and see her without jealousy or hatred as simply a person, somebody who "had probably lived a regular life, maybe even a happy one." And then he had to acknowledge his desperate ignorance and need, and what they had done to this person.

Something had to come back to life in Michael Collins to enable him to tell this story, and the good feeling it gives us to see that happen can blind us to how risky it can be for the prisoner himself. Gordon learned this the hard way. He recalls giving an early workshop the writerly advice to "look inward and

pay particular attention to painful memories," and how one student reacted: "'You're asking me to wake up,' he said. 'Do you know what will happen if I wake up? I'm in here for life. Do you understand?'"

Gordon admits that he didn't understand, but advised the student "to do whatever he had to do to keep from 'waking up'." The student went ahead and produced a painful story which was well received by the class, but the following day he lay curled up on his bunk in fetal position, refusing to leave his cell, and was eventually put on suicide watch.

This is the sort of thing the real-life Morgan Freeman character would have been talking about. Honesty and self-knowledge can be ter-



Jack Sherman

continued on page 10

Insults

"When Charles VII was Dauphin he was insulted by the Burgundian guard as he passed through Azay. Instant reprisals followed. The town was seized and burned and the captain and his 350 soldiers were executed."

— Michelin Guide to the Loire

What did that fool of a guard say?
It might have been only,
"Your feet are dirty,"
or something dreadful, like,
"You sodomizer of dead goats,"
or maybe something true
and terrible, like,
"You filthy coward of a murderer,
more interested in whores
than fighting the English."

But I make light of the incident;
men died at Azay
that trembling morning:
stabbed, hanged, burned,

the town a smoking slaughterhouse.
Nothing less could satisfy the Dauphin:
soon to be Charles VII of France,
Joan of Arc's treacherous pet.

Perilous, to possess
the easily bruised skin of a prince,
I think, as I skim the guidebook
while we sit in the town park,
the small chateau splendid,
its reflection shimmering in the Loire.

Still, I know all too well
it doesn't take a man soon to be king
to feel slights in the droppings
of nightingales. I want to ask
forgiveness for all the times
I allowed a small word
harmlessly meant, to prick me
into taking regal offense.

—Robert Cooperman

Letter

Dear Sir:

While Barbara Regenspan makes an impressive case for building overdevelopment ("Targeting in Ithaca"), she has fallen into the trap of prefacing her remarks with a reference to Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil," which was meant as a description of Adolf Eichmann in her book about his trial in Jerusalem. Regenspan then goes on to say that commercial promotion of land is not actually evil, only bad. But why does she bring up Arendt's phrase in the first place?

Too many people, angered by the behavior

of others tend more and more to refer to those they dislike as Nazis, while too many murders are referred to as a Holocaust. In this way, the horror and the grief engendered by one of the most shameful incidents in human history become trivialized. Isn't it about time we understood that deplorable insults or dangerous actions can never be equated with the Hitler years?

Yours truly,
Mildred C. Kuner
Ithaca, New York
November 10, 2000

Automatic

Crossword by Adam Perl

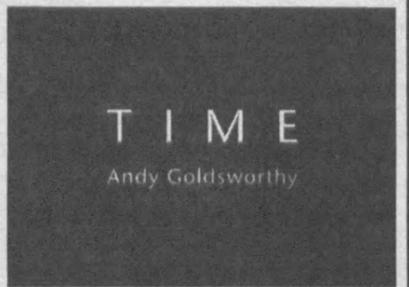
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72							73				74			
75							76				77			

Solution on page 8

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"Movement, change, light, growth, and decay are the life-blood of nature, the energies that I try to tap through my work."
— Andy Goldsworthy

TIME

Andy Goldsworthy

Includes The Fall Creek Project

"Goldsworthy is the rare artist who can describe what he does in simple, concrete terms that nonetheless reveal his larger vision. Time is a very satisfying collection of 500 photographs, nearly all taken by him, that document the creation and subsequent mutations of his work. These evocative images are illuminated by excerpts from the diaries he kept as he created five projects in Europe and North America in the '90s. He discusses what it's like to explore an unfamiliar landscape, assess how the elements will work for and against him, and perform what are essentially a set of experiments. Success means making work that is, as he writes, "completely welded to its site."

— Cathy Curtis, Los Angeles Times
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Answers to "Automatic"

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ACRE	CRIB	EVILS												
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- Sinclair competitor
 - Zounds!
 - Peaks
 - Jazz or Blues
 - Face
 - Pageant sight
 - It's a plot!
 - Pony
 - Iniquities
 - Nissan buyer's need?
 - Inauspicious day
 - Nurse, in a way
 - Impassive
 - Down
 - ___diem
 - Dodger
 - They may not be invited to the wedding
 - Bit
 - Charm
 - La Scala's locale
 - Charlotte's creation
 - One at ___
 - Like some furniture
 - Film of 1949 & 1988
 - "___ turn"
 - Victorian house features
 - Clear
 - Recipe amt.
 - Holds
 - Highest
 - Med. school course
 - Feminist van?
 - Satchel Paige's real name
 - Hurt
 - "___ Hai"
 - Jacques, for one
 - ___ colada
 - Title role for Leslie Caron
 - All in ___ work
 - Pill
 - Part of a roll
 - Down
 - Airport stats
 - Sunni or Shiite
 - First name in desserts
 - Signs
 - Got off
 - Old Beatles song
 - Ta-ta
 - Campaign event
 - Put away
 - Tax on a Honda?
 - Hotel's employee
 - Perry's creator
 - Lip
 - Popular code
 - PBS program
 - "___ poor wayfaring stranger"
 - Highway sight
 - Letting go
 - Street on old TV?
 - Less than rare
 - Prufrock's creator
 - Uncle ___
 - Swedish saga?
 - King or Queen
 - U. of Maryland athlete
 - Egyptian flower?
 - Hope, cherished by many
 - Giant star
 - Horn and Hardart
 - Trounces
 - "Silk" ingredient
 - Rustic
 - Cellist Casals
 - ___ Romeo
 - Geek
 - Popular code
 - Soave, e.g.
 - Net
 - Cosmopolitan rival
 - "How the Other Half Lives" author
 - 80's rock band

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Porto Alegre—A City Worth Watching

William W. Goldsmith and
Carlos B. Vainer

On Sunday, October 29, left-wing parties elected mayors in 29 of the 62 most important cities in Brazil, including giant São Paulo with a 61 percent majority. They won 775 municipal elections in all, taking 14 percent of Brazil's cities and towns, with 30 percent of the total vote. The strongest left-wing party, the Workers' Party (in Portuguese, the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*—PT), held on to the five city halls it won in the 1996 election and added 12 more. The remarkable case of Porto Alegre, where the PT has just won its fourth consecutive four-year term of office with 66 percent of the vote, may have been the example that spurred people to vote for change elsewhere.

Traditionally, municipal governments in Brazil have been lax, in fact often corrupt. New municipal administrations bring new expectations, but they inherit mistrust of bureaucrats and politicians. Also, they confront the dismal fiscal prospects of low tax receipts, weak federal transfers, and minimal household incomes. For decades, city residents have confronted poverty, poor housing, inadequate health care, rampant crime, and deficient schools, compounded by poorly planned and deficient infrastructure and service systems. They have now voted for reform, and for the PT especially, because of its reputation for honesty and transparency.

Throughout Latin America, cities face a crucial issue in the maldistribution of services. The ordinary operation of urban land markets produces extremely segregated neighborhoods, leaving vast areas of poor households without access to basic services. Against this dismal reality, the new city governments in Brazil hope to universalize services, bypassing traditional top-down methods, giving residents an actual vote. These left-wing governments may reinvent local democracy and invigorate politics, significantly altering the distribution of political and symbolic resources.

Porto Alegre is the capital of Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul. There, as in some other cities, a popular front headed by the PT introduced "participatory budgeting." Thousands of residents participate each year in public meetings to allocate about half the city budget, thus taking major responsibility for governing their own community. Neighbors decide on practical nearby matters, such as the location of street improvements or a park, as well as difficult citywide issues. Through the process, the PT claims, people become conscious of other opportunities to challenge the poverty and inequality that make their lives so difficult. In 1999, 40,000 residents in Porto Alegre took part.

Are these experiences with municipal reform, participatory democracy, and democratic land use planning idiosyncratic and unlikely to be replicated? Or do local innovations promise further improvement in Brazilian politics, as they build expectations and improve the structure of government? The Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) proposes replication of participatory budgeting throughout Latin America. Do they overestimate the practical economic achievements? Can city administrations override constraints of international markets and national policy? The IDB recommends formal and procedural aspects of participation. Do they underestimate the symbolic dimensions of radical democracy?

The Process of Participatory Budgeting

Since 1989, Porto Alegre has been governed by three mayors from a progressive coalition headed by the PT, with a fourth just elected. The central reform in Porto Alegre (as in other cities) brings citizens into municipal decision making through participatory budgeting. This reform symbolizes a broad range of municipal changes posing an alternative to both authoritarian centralism and neoliberal pragmatism.



Downtown scene — Porto Alegre

Kenneth Reardon

Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre begins with the government's formal accounting for the previous year and its investment and expenditure plan for the current year. Elected delegates in each of 16 district assemblies meet throughout the year to determine the fiscal responsibilities of city departments. They produce two sets of rankings: one for twelve major in-district or neighborhood "themes," such as street paving, school construction, parks, or water and sewer lines, and the other for "cross-cutting" efforts that affect the entire city, such as transit-line location, spending for beach clean-up, or programs for assisting the homeless. To encourage participation, rules set the number of delegates roughly proportional to the number of neighbors attending the election meeting.

Allocation of the investment budget among districts follows "weights" determined by popular debate: in 1999, weights were assigned to population, poverty, shortages (e.g., lack of pavement), and citywide priorities. Tension between city hall and citizens has led to expanded popular involvement, with participatory budgeting each year taking a larger share of the city's total budget, now about half. Priorities have shifted in ways unanticipated by the mayors or their staffs.

As one index of success, the number of participants in Porto Alegre grew rapidly, from fewer than a thousand in 1990 to 16,000 in 1998 and 40,000 in 1999. (In Belém, the capital of the Amazonian state of Pará, after only four years of reform government, more than 10,000 residents participated. Belém, like Porto Alegre, has a population of about 1.3 million.) Participants include members of the governing party, some professionals, technocrats, and middle-class citizens, and disproportionate numbers of the working poor (but few of the very poor). This process brings into political action many who do not support the governing party, instead of the traditional patronage approach that uses city budgets as a way to pay off supporters.

Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre is succeeding in the midst of considerable hostility from a conservative city council and constant assault from right-wing local newspapers and television programs, all of them challenging participation and extolling unregulated markets. The municipal government depends for its support on the participants and their neighbors, on radio broadcasting, and on many who resisted two decades of military dictatorship. In electing four administrations, a majority of the population has managed to pressure a hostile city council to vote in favor of the mayor's budget proposals, keeping the progressive agenda intact. (To note an historical oddity, Rio Grande do Sul has also been the birthplace of many Brazilian military dictators and political *caudillos*.)

Material Conditions

In 1989, despite comparatively high life expectancy and literacy rates, conditions in

Porto Alegre mirrored the inequality and income segregation of other Brazilian cities. A third of the population lived in poorly serviced slums on the urban periphery, isolated and distant from the wealthy city center. Against this background, PT innovations have improved conditions moderately for some of the poorest citizens. For example, between 1988 and 1997, water connections in Porto Alegre went from 75 percent to 98 percent of all residences. The number of schools has quadrupled since 1986. New public housing units, which sheltered only 1,700 new residents in 1986, housed an additional 27,000 in 1989.

The city government itself follows a progressive wage policy, making increases every two months (as of late 1999) to compensate for inflation, a perpetual Brazilian problem. Porto Alegre municipal workers are among the best paid in the country, and their high and frequently adjusted wages also serve as a model for other local workers and unions.

Rejecting the ideology of the "competitive city," Porto Alegre has used its participatory solidarity to make some unusual decisions about local economic development. For example, in spite of promises of new employment and the usual kinds of ideological pressures from the Ford Motor Company, the city turned down a proposed new auto plant, arguing that the required subsidies would be better applied against other city needs. (A state investigation in August 2000 found the mayor, now governor, not "at fault" for losing the Ford investment.) The city also turned down a five-star hotel investment on the site of a disused power plant, preferring to use the well-situated promontory as a public park, convention hall, and symbol of the city. And, faced with a proposal to clear slums to make room for a large supermarket, the city imposed stiff and costly household relocation requirements, which the supermarket is meeting.

Nevertheless, daunting constraints in the broader Brazilian economic and political environment limit the gains in material conditions—in economic growth, demand for labor, and quality of jobs. The national government adheres to the "Washington Consensus," which imposes International Monetary Fund (IMF) orthodoxy, requiring such "structural adjustment" imperatives as free trade, privatization, strict limits to public expenditures, and high rates of interest, thus worsening the conditions of the poor.

Full data on the state, metropolitan region, and city are beyond the scope of this article, but basic indicators of Gross Domestic Product, GDP per capita, and changes in rates of employment and unemployment suggest that local political change has little affected overall material conditions. Comparing Porto Alegre (and Rio Grande do Sul) with other nearby capital cities and states during the years 1985–1986 and 1995–2000, one finds few sharp contrasts. Generally, GDP stagnated in this period, and per capita GDP declined. Unemployment rose and labor-force participation and formal employment both fell.

The Promotion of Democracy

Given this lack of overall economic improvement, how can we account for the sense of optimism and achievement that pervades Porto Alegre? The city is clearly developing a successful experience with local government, one that reinforces participatory democracy. What explains not only four terms of electoral victory for the left-wing PT city government, but also the extension of this PT success to the state government and several surrounding municipalities in the metropolitan area, not to mention the broader ramifications across Brazil?

We believe the answer lies in the way participants in Porto Alegre are redefining power, with increasing numbers of citizens acting as both initiator and recipient, so they can simultaneously govern and benefit. This reconfiguration is immediately discernible in the procedures, methods, and behavior of local government, as exhibited in the experience with participatory budgeting, and it appears more broadly, as well.

After 12 years, Porto Alegre has changed not just the way of doing things, but the things themselves; not just the way of governing the city, but the city itself. Such a claim is clearly significant, suggesting that Porto Alegre offers an authentic alternative experience—one that rejects not only the centralist, technocratic, authoritarian planning model of the military dictatorship, but also the competitive, pragmatic, neoliberal model of the Washington Consensus. The Porto Alegre case thus poses further questions: What are the possible transformations from a local experience? What are the limits? What is the strength of local power?

Porto Alegre, like cities everywhere, reflects the overriding national system in its pattern of land use and its allocation of political power. The larger social structure of Brazil employs sophisticated mechanisms to assure that the city continues to reproduce itself following the same rules, norms, and logic that organize the entire society. In the simplest terms, Porto Alegre, like its counterparts, is unjust and unequal because Brazilian society is unjust and unequal. Thus, in spite of PT intentions of a profound transformation, the city must constantly administer to the effects of economic decay.

At the same time, no city is a pure reflection, localized and reduced, of the national social structure. Any city brings about and reproduces inequality and injustice itself. The relation between the city and the social structure is not passive. The city reflects the national culture and social structure, of course, but at the same time it creates elements and stimulates a dynamic of social and economic relations.

To the extent that the city itself, and especially its government, determines events, then, the effect can be positive as well as negative. It is not written in any segment of the Brazilian social code, for example, that only the streets of the neighborhoods inhabited by the upper and middle classes will be paved, nor is it specified that water supply will reach only to some more privileged corners of the city. Most Brazilian cities distribute facilities and allocate services with obvious bias, neglecting poor neighborhoods. However, in Porto Alegre, through changes in service provision and land use patterns, the reconfiguration of power is beginning to reduce spatial inequalities. It can be hoped that the effect will be felt in the formal structures of the city and eventually in other cities and in Brazilian society in general. (As is often the case, disparities between the city and its suburbs may be growing.)

A city is a powerful mechanism for generating and appropriating private wealth. Once again, local as well as national conditions have influence. Real estate developers sometimes capture immense profits, for example, thanks to investments by municipal governments that could instead have been dedicated to the reduction of inequalities.

continued on page 12

Why I Am Not a Cultural Anthropologist

Nicholas Nicasro

It is this kind of hostility that scientists who are aware of it find most enigmatic. There is something medieval about it, in spite of the hypermodern language in which it is nowadays couched. It seems to mock the idea that, on the whole, a civilization is capable of progressing from ignorance to insight, notwithstanding the benightedness of some of its members. We have the sense, encountering such attitudes, that irrationality is courted and proclaimed with pride. All the more shocking is the fact that the challenge comes from a quarter that views itself as fearlessly progressive—the veritable cutting edge of the cultural future.

—from *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*, by Paul Gross & Norman Leavitt

Consider two incidents of anthropological interest from last year:

- The Cornell University administration consulted with the Anthropology Department over whether it was best classified as a “social science” or as a “humanity.” The alternative presented more than a terminological nicety: there are significant differences in the ways social science and humanities departments are treated at Cornell. That is to say, real resources were at stake. While there was no groundswell of support for categorizing the department along with creative writing and comparative literature, the bulk of the anthropology faculty hardly identifies with fields like sociology, psychology, and economics either. There was some suggestion that the phrase “human science” fits better (and renders all other varieties “inhuman sciences,” one assumes). The final result was a compromise: the university now construes anthropology as both a humanity and a science...or perhaps neither.

- Around the same time, Terence Turner, Professor of Anthropology at Cornell, along with the University of Hawaii’s Leslie Sponsel, sent a supposedly confidential e-mail to Louise Lamphere, president of the Anthropological Association of America, and to Don Brenneis, the president-elect. In the message they express a wish “to inform you of an impending scandal that will affect the [AAA]...and arouse intense indignation and calls for action among members of the Association.” The scandal was to be prompted by the fall publication of the book *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon*, by Patrick Tierney. According to Turner and Sponsel, the book “presents convincing evidence,” “well-documented,” of a string of crimes “...in its scale, ramifications, and sheer criminality and corruption [that is] unparalleled in the history of Anthropology.” Among other things, Tierney charges that a number of scientists, including the noted geneticist James V. Neel and the anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon, were responsible for eugenics-inspired biological experimentation upon the Yanomamö people of Venezuela that killed “hundreds, perhaps thousands,” as well as the fabrication of data and the fomenting of intervillage conflicts in cynical support of Chagnon’s “sociobiological” views of human evolution. “This nightmarish story,” Turner and Sponsel continue breathlessly, “—a real anthropological heart of darkness beyond the imagining of even a Josef Conrad (though not, perhaps, a Josef Mengele)—will be seen (rightly in our view) by the public, as well as anthropologists, as putting the whole discipline on trial.”

The common theme in both these incidents—one prosaic, one sensational—is the relationship between anthropology and science. To be sure, the current cachet of the word “science” makes it so widely and loose-

ly applied it is truly a matter of debate what it really means. But the state of the field pioneered in this country by Lewis Henry Morgan, Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber et al. is arguably in even deeper existential crisis. Just what has anthropology become, anyway? What is this “human science”?

The Cult of Culture

As a willing border-crosser from the doctoral program in anthropology to psychology, I offer here a perspective on these questions as they stand at Cornell. It also bears noting that Cornell’s Anthropology Department, whose scholarly heritage includes such distinguished past figures as C.F. Hockett and Turner (Victor, that is), is hardly unique. Much of what follows more or less applies to departments elsewhere.

What the Cornell administration almost belatedly found out last year is that anthropology long ago ceased to be a science. By “science,” I take to mean a project of systematic inquiry that not only observes and describes, but makes comparisons, generates theories, and tests predictions. Admittedly, this state of affairs is hardly a matter of regret to many academic anthropologists. Nor should it necessarily be; there are other ways to apprehend reality than science. But it does represent a profound break with the discipline’s own history, which long integrated more or less scientific approaches to its subject.

That subject, as traditionally understood, was people. The purview was deliberately broad. The venerable but now endangered Boasian conception of the discipline is that it was composed of four subfields: linguistics, physical anthropology, archaeology, and sociocultural studies. The subfields cumulatively encompass much of what constitutes the experience of our species, both synchronically and diachronically, from language to practice, from the forms of human bodies to the patterns of human material lives. The practical consequence was to equip students to go out into “the field” and make ethnographic reports of other peoples—reports that competently treat of everything from the minutiae of a native verb system to the broad themes of kinship to the techniques of craft and beyond. This data became the material, in turn, for ethnological theorizing, including the comparison of cultures.

Some departments, such as at the University of Michigan and Arizona, reportedly still train their graduate students in the four fields approach. In most others, however, the old model of anthropology has devolved into something far more modest. There are a few reasons for this. The development and professionalization of linguistics, for one, has made it impractical for most anthropologists to acquire more than a basic knowledge of that subject. Something similar has occurred in archaeology, leading to semi-autonomous sub-departments in many cases. Perhaps most importantly, both the need and the taste for totalizing descriptions of colonial “others” no longer exists. Indeed, the ethnographic project itself is lately in diminished repute, suffering as it inevitably does from observer bias and a lingering whiff of objectivizing arrogance redolent of the field’s imperialist origins.

What counts as anthropology in many university departments now is just cultural anthropology. To put it another way, the subject of anthropology is no longer people, but culture. It would be difficult to overestimate the fundamental importance of this single concept to the modern discipline. Indeed, there are very few explicatory notions in any academic discipline that so fully seem to dominate a field as this—plate tectonics, for instance, is of momentous importance to modern geology, but we hardly can define geology as “the study of crustal plates.” Nor have we (yet) to see any departments of Evolution or Deconstruction or Reception Theory instead

of Biology, English or Art History, respectively. Yet anthropology has become, in effect, *culturology*.

The appeal of the culture concept might be better understood by considering its very first use in the modern sense. Marshall Sahlins, one of the leading lights in the field, has characterized both it and its antithesis, *civilization*:

...‘culture’ of the modern anthropological persuasion originated in Germany...in the late eighteenth century, but precisely in defiance of the global pretensions of Anglo-French ‘civilization’...For the German bourgeois intellectuals...bereft of power or even political unity, cultural differences became essential. Defending a national *Kultur* at once against the rationalism of the philosophes and a Francophile Prussian court, Herder (most notably) opposed ways of life to stages of development and a social mind to natural reason...Unlike “civilization”, which is transferable between peoples...culture was what truly identified and differentiated a people...Culture came in kinds, not degrees...²

It is certainly ironic that *Kultur* could be so useful both to German intellectuals rationalizing their woeful lack of colonies, and to post-colonialist anthropologists desperate to disavow their field’s roots in the imperialist experience. Indeed, the political climate in anthropology being what it is today, the discrimination of societies by any sort of would-be objective metric, by any sense of “degree” not kind, carries an unmistakable taint of rationalist “civilization,” and therefore of Western triumphalism. Even at the outset, then, the culture concept had (and has) a powerful political valence. Useful or not, fruitful or misleading, it is impossible to practice anthropology in the current context without it.

One reason cultural anthropology is not a science, then, is that the culture concept *a la mode* originated in a revolt against rationalism. Essential activities of science, for example, are comparison, abstraction, explanation. To engage in cultural comparison, though, is at best to pointlessly compare apples and oranges. To abstract cross-cultural descriptors or (egad!) descriptive principles is, as cultural anthropologist Nancy Jay wrote of the term *sacrifice*, “...more like doing sacrifice than understanding it...The victim has indeed been brought under a kind of analytic control, but in the process it has been killed.”³ To engage in explanation or the positing of universals is to miss the essential point that culture thrives in the details, or as Clifford Geertz has argued, that it is “in the cultural particularities of people—in their oddities—that some of the most instructive revelations of what it is to be generically human are to be found...” The analysis of culture, Geertz has influentially written (albeit not to universal agreement), is “...not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”⁴ One “explains” a culture no more than one “explains” a poem or a painting. There’s always been something cultish, if not downright occult, about the prevailing notion of culture.

The rationale, if not the rationality, of modern cultural anthropology also has a vital historical impetus. Colonialism—as well as other recent instances of disastrously abused genetic and biological scientisms, such as fascist racial “anthropology”—has understandably left many within the discipline with an almost visceral reaction against all the modes of reductionist explanation. Such modes now go under the generalized pejoratives *reductionism*, *evolutionism*, *structural-functionalism* et. al., and are excluded from the current mainstream of “progressive” sociocultural discourse through the application of values “proper” to the study of humankind. As they affirm the importance of particularism, collaboration and mutual respect, these values also

assure that the field never seems to sort, classify, interrogate, integrate, reduce—that is, never seems to *explain*—its cultural objects. This is because, as Derrida and Bourdieu have argued in their own ways, to *explain* is to presume to encompass, to posit a fictional, higher externality where the view is clearer. The implicit orthodoxy (it is never discussed, and therefore never questioned) is that humans are a blank slate written on by culture only. They have no essential nature—or, none worth thinking much about. In fact, to suggest otherwise is to flirt with racism.

But the flight from colonialist and fascist bogeys begs a number of significant questions. Is it possible to conduct scholarly inquiry that is entirely “nonmanipulative” and “non-violent,” yet is also *free* to answer all of the questions that are constitutive of anthropology itself? Can or should we be satisfied with conclusions reached in scholarship overdetermined by a well-meaning consensus? Is it really fair to say that an anthropology that takes *knowledge* as its primary value will necessarily produce results that are “repressive”? Finally, doesn’t a *tabula rasa* view of human nature likewise lead to an ethical deadfall? Bolsheviks, for instance, firmly believed and acted upon what they regarded (to paraphrase George Orwell) as the infinite malleability of human nature.

What we appear to be left with, then, is a discipline content with celebrations of cultural difference that amounts to a form of professional stamp collecting. Discourse is dominated by tissues of bootless speculation rooted in personal anecdote, post hoc rationalization, and the secular equivalent of liberation theology. Indeed, as the evolutionary psychologists Leda Cosmides and John Tooby have suggested (and year after year of Cornell’s Friday colloquia attendees can attest) discourse in the modern field can seem like

some nightmarish story Borges might have written, where [social] scientists are condemned by their unexamined assumptions to study the nature of mirrors only by cataloguing and investigating everything that mirrors can reflect. It is an endless process that never makes progress, that never reaches closure, that generates endless debate between those who have seen different reflected images, and whose enduring product is voluminous descriptions of particular phenomena.⁵

But of course, the point isn’t “closure” at all. Instead, it is a program of circumlocution that builds up a rich loam of half-digested verbiage in which scholarship sprouts, toadstool like. The compost is salted by buzzwords and phrases (“globalization,” “identity,” “habitus,” “big lack,” “intersubjective spacetime extension”) imported from economics, psychology, and *au courant* lit-crit, each deployed as if to swell debate but rarely to clarify it. In a particularly ubiquitous terminological mannerism, cultural phenomena are invariably “dynamic,” “dialectical,” “structured,” or “constructed”—opposed, one assumes, to a discarded view of culture that is “unitary,” “linear,” or “substantive.” Indeed, it is all reminiscent of the ontological musings of the pre-Socratic Greeks, who were divided between those who saw reality as monistic and unchangeable, and those who imagined everything was “flux.” Such arguments, then and now, seem based not so much on descriptive utility but on highly selective attention to the evidence.

The prevailing hostility to systematic empirical approaches to understanding human behavior takes many forms. The requirements for a graduate education, for instance, include no training at all in quantitative methods, such as statistics. Considering that most modern ethnographies contain more interpretation of cultural “texts” than tables of numbers, there

continued on page 8

Human Science, Pseudo-Science, and Anthropological Ethics in the Yanomami Controversy

Terence Turner

The Editor of *The Bookpress* has asked me to respond to Nicholas Nicastro's polemic. I have reluctantly agreed, primarily because I think that it is important to confront the reductionist attacks of Neo-Darwinist ideologues like Nicastro on both humanistic and social-scientific modes of understanding. I shall also take the opportunity to reply to Nicastro's consistently erroneous and intermittently scurrilous comments on my interventions in the controversy over abuses of the Yanomami Indians by anthropologists and others that was set off by Patrick Tierney's book, *Darkness in El Dorado*, which I reviewed in these pages in October 2000.

I. "Science," science and anti-science

Nicastro constructs his tirade around the master trope of a Manichaeic struggle between what he calls "science" and the forces of irrationalism, which he identifies with "cultural anthropology." The latter he describes as a discipline that has abandoned its former commitment to empirical research (ethnography), systematic theory, classification, explanation, generalization and comparison, and has settled for mere "stamp collecting" or the aimless cataloguing of cultural differences.

Nicastro frames his outburst in terms of a supposed parallelism between two recent events which he interprets (wrongly, in both cases) as manifestations of anti-scientific biases on the part of cultural anthropologists. The first is the insistence of the Cornell Department of Anthropology that it should not be classified exclusively as a "social science" or as a "humanity," but as a combination of both. Anthropology's stand against the university's proposed classification of departments into *either* humanities *or* social sciences—it was the only department to take such a position—was of course an explicit affirmation of its identity as a social science as well as its humanistic commitment to interpreting the intentions, values and meanings of actors and their cultural representations. That science and interpretation should be complementary, not contradictory, aspects of the project of a "human science" is the most fundamental and distinctive proposition of modern anthropology. It is indicative of the limitations of Nicastro's grasp of anthropology (not to mention plain English) that he twists the Cornell department's affirmation of its commitment to this principle into "a revelation to the Cornell Administration that anthropology had long since ceased to be a science." Here as elsewhere Nicastro's ability to comprehend what contemporary anthropology is about is limited by his own axiomatic assumption that "science" and "culture" are mutually incompatible, from which it follows (for him) that any assertion to the contrary is *prima facie* proof of anti-scientificity. As a result of this and other basic misunderstandings, Nicastro's account of anthropology as practiced and taught at Cornell and elsewhere bears little resemblance to reality. It is hard to believe that he actually spent a year as a graduate student in the archaeology program of the Cornell Department of Anthropology not long ago.

If he had kept his eyes and ears open and paid more attention at those Friday seminars, he would have learned that contemporary anthropologists at Cornell and elsewhere (archaeologists and biological anthropologists excepted) refer to and think of themselves not as "cultural anthropologists" but as "socio-cultural anthropologists." Over the past thirty years, American anthropology has been heavily influenced by social anthropology as developed in the U.K. and France, as well as

by political economy, Weberian sociology, Marxism, and linguistic pragmatics. Increasing concerns with practical ("applied") work and advocacy for human rights, indigenous peoples' struggles, ecological dimensions, and post-colonial situations have all contributed to the relative importance of sociological and materialist perspectives. Various forms of "practice theory," concerned with how the subjectivity, agency, cultural orientations and personal identity of social actors are produced in interaction with the social and natural environment currently occupy many theorists. Practice theory has become one of the most important areas where social anthropology has engaged with, and attempted to integrate elements from, idealist cultural-logical approaches derived from the Herderian and hermeneutic traditions as well as some post-modernist ideas. Some of the latter are avowedly anti-sociological, anti-empiricist, anti-systematic and anti-scientific, but they are far from dominant in contemporary socio-cultural anthropology, and even farther from constituting the whole theoretical capital of the discipline, as Nicastro asserts.

How did Nicastro manage to miss all this? Tim Ingold, Professor of Anthropology at Manchester (U.K.), recently wrote a succinct comment on the fallacies and limitations of contemporary Neo-Darwinist positions such as sociobiology and "evolutionary psychology," to which Nicastro appears to subscribe. He notes that these "selectionists," as he collectively calls them,

are unaware of these significant developments in social and cultural theory [i.e., essentially those I have listed in the preceding paragraph—T.T.] They have not read the relevant literature, nor do they feel the need to do so, especially because they think they're ahead of everybody else.¹

Selectionists, Ingold says, treat individual and social behavior as "the mechanical output of interaction between pre-replicated instructions (whether genetic or cultural) and prespecified environmental conditions,"² rather than the life-long process through which people adapt and appropriate their endowments of biological and psychological capacities in interaction with their social and natural surroundings, as anthropologists understand it. Selectionism, he says, is

bad science...full of shoddy thinking, [such as the characteristic proclivity] for using natural selection as a logical device to turn description into explanation. In effect, what selectionists habitually do is to redescribe the phenomena under investigation in their terms, and then use the metaphor of selection as a trick which appears to convert a description of what is going on into an explanation for it. The fact that most advocates of selectionist models have allowed themselves to be mystified by their own procedures does not make them any more defensible.³

The lecture by biological anthropologist Peter Rodman and my response to it that Nicastro cites as an instance of my bad "judgement in matters biological" offers a perfect example of Ingold's critique, as well as of Nicastro's bad judgement in matters scientific. Rodman, as Nicastro recounts, lectured on the evolution of human-like features of mating systems, notably the avoidance of mating with close kin, among the great apes. The development of incest avoidance among chimpanzees and other apes, he asserted, was driven by the selective advantages of avoiding inbreeding. In the question period following the lecture, I pointed out that this explanation rested on the logical fallacy of making effects

into their own causes: in other words, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. The evolutionary advantages of avoiding inbreeding could not be the motives of apes in choosing their sexual partners, so Rodman's explanation begged the question. As Nicastro recounts, "the audience [of] faculty and students interested in issues of primate behavior and evolution, was stunned," and Rodman himself was "momentarily thrown by the question." He never did answer it properly. What Nicastro calls his "recovery" by an "appeal to the Westermarck effect" (itself another instance of the description of an effect—the sexual indifference of close kin who have grown up together to one another—representing itself as a cause), merely avoided the essential question, which was the logical unviability of appealing to an evolutionary effect as a cause of the behavior that produces it.

The relevance of this event in the present context is not only the consternation my simple logical point caused in the ranks of the selectionist speaker and audience, but more specifically Nicastro's continuing failure to understand the point at issue. He attempts to dismiss my question as depending on the proposition that "organisms need to know the consequences of their behaviors in order for the laws of natural selection to apply." Not at all: that is exactly the implication of Rodman's explanation to which I objected. In a grudgingly magnanimous mode, he continues,

In Turner's defense, perhaps he had in mind some Tinbergen-esque partitioning of behavioral explanation into proximate and ultimate causations. It didn't really sound that way, but perhaps. Still, he is not the first first-rate cultural anthropologist [sic! socio-cultural anthropologist, please—T.T.] to puzzle over how natural selection works.

Nicastro still doesn't get it. His "defense" of me is inappropriate and unnecessary. The essential point at issue is not the partitioning between proximal and ultimate *causations*, but that natural selection cannot be considered an "ultimate causation" of the behaviors upon which it operates. This is precisely the fallacy identified by Ingold as central to selectionist pseudo-science in the passage just quoted ("using the metaphor of selection to convert a description of what is going on into an explanation for it"). Nicastro, then, is not the first selectionist to puzzle over how natural selection works...and get it wrong.

The underlying issue is oddly congruent with the principle behind the Cornell Anthropology Department's insistence that not only objective description and analysis ("social science") but interpretation of subjective intentionality ("humanistic" understanding) is essential to a scientific account of human (or even sub-human primate) social interaction, which Nicastro deprecates as a typical specimen of cultural anti-science. The need to coordinate the contradictory behavioral patterns of long-continued dependency with the development of autonomy and assertive dominance, is a fundamental determinant of the affective patterns that condition sexual avoidance and attraction common, in varying degrees, to humans and the higher primates. The resulting patterns of subjective motivations and intentional dispositions enter as "proximal causes" into the conditioning of behavior that has cumulative selective implications for Darwinian evolutionary science. The two are not antithetical but complementary—precisely the point that Neo-Darwinian enthusiasts like Nicastro seem unable to grasp.

"Science" is an effort to understand and explain the total system of determinants of reality, and where the reality in question is the activity of organisms, especially complex

ones like human beings and other primates, this includes subjective factors such as affective dispositions, intentionality, and (in humans) value orientations. Any approach to human behavior that rules out such factors as irrelevant to "science" violates the first principle of science, which is to be open, and faithful to, the empirical data in question. Good science cannot be grounded in bad logic, or in the exclusion of whole classes of relevant empirical data, or still less in the dismissal or misrepresentation of pertinent theoretical perspectives. Selectionist ideologues seem impervious to these fundamental points, and thus fail to understand that the opposition of most anthropologists, including many biological anthropologists, to their simplistic views is not opposition to "science" per se but scientifically principled critical opposition to bad science. As Ingold remarks,

Part of the problem, perhaps, lies in the sheer hubris with which selectionists advance their claims. Not for them the ramblings of woolly-minded humanists when Darwin and hard science point the way! Why bother to read or engage with the work of generations of social and cultural theorists when it is perfectly obvious that human beings are hard-wired memereplicating machines? All this stuff about agency and structure, about how persons come into being within fields of social relationships, about culture as process rather than transferable content, is as much froth. Humanists can only deal with proximate realities; neo-Darwinian human science reveals the ultimate causes of things.⁴

II. The Yanomami controversy

Nicastro's second example of supposed anthropological "anti-science" is the confidential memo that I and my colleague Leslie Sponsel, of the Department of Anthropology of The University of Hawaii, sent to the President of the American Anthropological Association warning of the grave allegations made by Patrick Tierney in his book, *Darkness in El Dorado*, then not yet published, and the public scandal they would cause.⁵ This too Nicastro interprets as a manifestation of cultural-anthropological "anti-science." It is no such thing (for the record, both Sponsel—an ecologically-oriented anthropologist with a strong biological background—and myself consider ourselves to be social scientists, and exponents of systematic theory as well as defenders of ethnographic realism, as opposed to irrationalist cultural stamp collecting). Our memo was primarily concerned with matters of ethics and human rights—specifically, the harmful effects on the Yanomami Indians of Venezuela and Brazil of a series of encounters with anthropologists, geneticists, film-crews, miners, corrupt Venezuelan and Brazilian politicians, and others—not with issues of science or anti-science.

The most harmful encounter described by Tierney in the galley proofs of his book, which Sponsel and I were sent for our comments by the publishers, was a vaccination campaign using a vaccine known to cause extreme reactions in immune-depressed people (which the Yanomami were known to be at that time), which Tierney suggests may have caused an epidemic of measles that killed hundreds of Yanomami. Tierney further suggests that this may have been done deliberately as an experiment. An epidemic of measles did in fact break out in synch with the vaccinations. Tierney implied that it had been started by the vaccine. Sponsel and I, in our memo, treated this and the many other abuses described in the book as violations of anthropological ethics and Yanomami human rights,

continued on page 9

Think Again

J. Robert Lennon

Grasshopper

by Barbara Vine

Harmony, 2000.

392 pages, \$24.00

I would be very much surprised to find that there was someone else alive on this earth writing mysteries as good as Ruth Rendell's. I realize that this kind of pronouncement causes readers to sharpen their claws, as they prepare to do battle in defense of Sue Grafton, or Sara Paretsky, or whomever, but I feel pretty comfortable standing behind it: Rendell is not hip, but she is steadfast, and ambitious, and is even getting better. At seventy, she has achieved almost everything there is to achieve as a mystery writer: she has won every award, every accolade, and has written something like fifty books, just about all of them worth reading. She has three distinctive modes of writing, and it has been said that she is, in fact, three novelists. Two of them are called Ruth Rendell, and the third is called Barbara Vine.

Early in her career, Rendell became known for the first two of these modes. She wrote slim, deft crime novels, and short stories of the "twist" variety, à la O. Henry, albeit with a more overt kind of darkness. She also inaugurated, in 1965, a detective series, featuring the perennially middle-aged, always ugly, sometimes fat and sometimes thin Chief Inspector Reginald Wexford, and his right-hand man Inspector Mike Burden, a vain (though less so, lately) and conservative (also less so nowadays: Burden's transformations are a motif that runs through the series) man of thirty-odd years. It is with the Wexford books that Rendell seems to have honed her plotting and characterization skills; they started out (in *From Doon with Death*) as unremarkable, if unusually compelling, British-style mysteries (Rendell is English), and have grown into masterpieces of psychological complexity, inventive plotting, and authorial subterfuge.

This last has become a Rendell trademark, especially with the Wexford series. If you were to read all her books in chronological order, you would notice a gradual change: the early books, while far from formulaic, do not bear excessive scrutiny on the reader's part; it is possible, at some distance, to see where she is going. But Rendell has gotten trickier. Her books have grown longer, and thick with loose ends; plots have become more tangled, and in some cases, plot lines that appear inextricably connected prove to have nothing to do with one another. A late innovation in the Rendell oeuvre could be called postmodern: she lures the reader into believing he has figured her out, and then (generally within ten pages) shows him to be mistaken. In other words, she plays on the reader's confidence, allows him to believe that he is smarter than she is. He isn't. She'll do this half a dozen times in one book. Ah, you think, now I've got her, and you're wrong, again and again.

Rendell's characters are equally susceptible to this trap; all of them, particularly Wexford, think they've got the thing solved at least once before they are proven wrong. What maddens and excites the reader is how plausible these false solutions are—any of them would do in a pinch as the ending of a less skillful mystery, and seem acceptably convincing. It isn't until the real answer is revealed that we recognize the flaws of the fake ones, and are more than a bit embarrassed at our inferior deductive powers. A great scene comes at the end of *The Veiled One*, a terrific Wexford book that documents a murder in a shopping mall parking garage, in which Wexford runs through all the fake endings during a car ride with his detectives; each one seems like the true ending, until the next is described.

As for Rendell's killers, they are convincing and human: no monsters, no evil geniuses, no calculating predators cribbed from Hollywood. Rendell has no truck with cop-taunting serialists who prey on detectives' fears and vanities. The puzzles the killers present are authentically inadvertent; these bad guys do not dangle rosetta

stones. And in most cases, one body is plenty for Rendell, and even that body is sometimes in question: in one wonderful Wexford book, the only death turns out to have been accidental; in another, the identity of the victim is never discovered. She has no interest in propping up our curiosity with gimmicks.

So what is she interested in? Houses. Most of the Vine books have a house at the center of them, a house someone loves, or hates, or where something terrible has happened or is about to happen. Gardens. People are buried in them, make love in them, fall from a great height into them. In my favorite Wexford book (I won't tell you which), a flower is the clue that solves the crime. Class. Rendell's characters are snobs; this is often their downfall, or a good part of it. Rendell loves the class system, loves to write about it, loves to point up its ridiculousness and make her players succumb to it. If I had to identify a fault of Rendell, it is her aggressive misanthropy; she has a tendency to make characters say and do vain and stupid things, apparently for the sole purpose of showing what fools they are. But vanity and stupidity indeed lead to crime, which is what these books are about.

Rendell also puts a lot of faith in the power of sexual obsession. I don't really buy it: sex is a powerful motivator, but not a very interesting one. As Vine, she tends to make sex work in tandem with other details of character (*The House of Stairs* is a good example); as Rendell, she sometimes falters (the unconvincing *The Bridesmaid*). This card does play fairly well in the Wexford books, in the form of Burden: his passionate emotions are forever in conflict with his puritan ethics (check out *Some Lie and Some Die*).

But about Barbara Vine. In 1986, the first of (to date) nine Vine novels was published, *A Fatal Inversion*. It's a good book. It is about families, about lineage and marriage and long-held secrets and, of course, class conflict; a bit of Brontë blood runs through it. It probably contains the best actual sentences this writer has written, and all the usual suspenseful Rendell fun. The eight that have followed have all been good as well (including the new one).

Why the alias? The answer may lie in *The House of Stairs*, whose narrator is (a rare thing, in Rendell/Vine) a writer, a hack who pens adventure stories. She chalks her lack of ambition up to the fact that she may or may not have Huntington's disease, which runs in her family:

I was right to produce twenty-five sexy, romantic, sensational adventure books in seventeen years, so that I could live those years in comfort. I was right not to struggle half-starved and alone in a rented room creating the literature I knew I could have created and on the dream of its being published one day in the sweet or paralyzed-by-and-by. (Though in fact the gain was never as great as at first I anticipated, I never made a fortune, or achieved great success or fame, as perhaps writers don't, even the purveyors of adventure and passion and crime, unless they write from the heart.)

We can assume that Rendell has no life-threatening disease hanging over her head (or perhaps she did, until 1986: who knows?), and so: Barbara Vine, the literary Ruth Rendell.

I'm not sure about this ploy. Is Rendell simply trying to delineate one style of work from another? Or is she suggesting that her other stuff, the stuff she publishes under her real name, is inferior to this, her "real" "literary" work? If the latter is true, one cannot help wonder why she didn't let all her work be as good as her "best" work, instead of inaugurating an entirely new writer. And indeed, this is more or less what has happened. Since the advent of Vine, almost all of Rendell's work has improved; she is presently producing a book a year, in a Suspense-Wexford-Vine pattern, and there haven't been any stinkers for a decade, at least. That said, the Vine project seems to have swerved from its original intent; none of the later Vine books are as well-written as the first, while the Rendell books have gotten bet-

ter. The worst thing you could say about Rendell is that her writing is essentially styleless—it is elegant and supports the plot and characters in the way that, say, a nice place setting supports a good meal. Rendell's sentences are not the featured performers: her astonishing puzzle-master's mind is the only star. It would seem that, since discovering that she could produce a very well-written novel, Rendell decided that it wasn't what interested her. This is fine by me; as I said, she can still write circles around any popular suspense novelist of our time.

The new book, *Grasshopper*, is plotted in typical Vine fashion. A grown woman, expressing herself in the first person, is looking back on a tragic, mysterious past: two pasts, actually. In the first past is an incident that occurred when the narrator, Clodagh, was sixteen; we know early on that somebody died, and that this death involved a pylon, the kind that supports high-tension power lines. "They sent me here because of what happened on the pylon," the book begins, and continues for six pages in a breathless, melodramatic style, until, at the beginning of chapter two, we read, "I was nineteen when I wrote that." There: the first authorial subterfuge. The real narrator, the adult Clodagh, takes over from here and reveals that the teenage Clodagh was responsible for the death of her best friend and lover, Daniel; he followed her as she climbed a pylon and was electrocuted on the wires. The adult Clodagh, now an electrician (!) still feels guilty about this. We learn that the teen Clodagh was a claustrophobe, that she loved to climb, that her parents sent her away to school to put the tragedy behind them.

The bulk of the book takes place in this middle past, the past of the nineteen- and twenty-year-old Clodagh, as related by the adult one. She goes to live with distant relatives in London, a couple who put her up for free but in the basement, which of course her claustrophobia renders intolerable. They treat her poorly, and each other even worse. As she watches their relationship deteriorate, she discovers a boy named Michael Silverman, called Silver, who lives on the sixth floor of a neighboring house owned, but rarely occupied, by his parents. Silver saves Clodagh from a panic attack she has in a pedestrian tunnel, and they begin to fall in love.

Silver's apartment, it turns out, is a kind of semi-commune for a number of young people whose only commonality is that they love to climb across the roofs of London. Clodagh finds herself begging off school to spend her time with them: Wim is a childlike, Buddha-esque Dane who lives for the roofs; Jonny is a common criminal who uses the roofs for access to the possessions of the rich; Liv is an ex-nanny whose ignominious escape from her employers has rendered her too paranoid to go out onto the street. She is also Jonny's lover and slave, and is not-so-secretly in love with Wim. There are others, but these are the major players, and their defining traits—Wim's confidence, Silver's generosity, Jonny's heartlessness and Liv's fear—drive the events of the book.

These involve a murder, two thousand stolen pounds, and a kidnapping. The kidnapping is the main thing. A white couple, at first seemingly unrelated to the book's main characters, have adopted an eight-year-old Indian boy, and the government has decided to take him away, believing that he should be with parents of his own race. But the couple has fallen for the boy, and they run off with him. The story dominates the papers, and false sightings (or are they?) of the trio become increasingly common as the book unfolds. The central events of *Grasshopper* are set in motion when Silver and Clodagh decide to find the fugitive family, and help them escape the country. We can guess—we are all but told—that things are not going to work out quite right.

These disparate elements are sewn together by psychology, and as in all of Vine's books, the psychology is basically airtight. Everyone is perfectly motivated to do surprising and risky things, and these motivations, usually consisting of prior incidents, are active mysteries, not just character details. Silver, for example, was kidnapped once as a child, and mysteriously found on a beach

three days later. He has only vague memories of the three days. This event does compel him to help the fleeing family, with whom he identifies powerfully, but it is also a loose end that is—surprisingly—tied up before the book's end. Every character in *Grasshopper* does double duty in this way; there are hidden layers of event and emotion that cause the plot to twist and ripple. The dynamic among the many characters in Silver's apartment is also of great importance; this is a place where Rendell/Vine always shines, in these tiny societies of the young, with their byzantine rules and circumscriptions. Such groups of characters create the kind of insular, seeming inextricable circumstances that a great mystery needs; a reader finds himself begging the characters not to do what he knows they must do because of who they are and how they feel about one another.

The book, like all of Vine's, tugs at you from every direction; there are never fewer than five little mysteries going on at a time. Who kidnapped the young Silver? Where did Wim come from? Where has Liv hid the two thousand pounds? Where is the missing family? Who killed the woman found by the river? There are times when it would be a relief not to have to think of them, but Vine doesn't let you rest; she reminds you constantly of the complexity of her own book. If that isn't enough, she also seasons the text with flash-forwards, hints that Clodagh drops about what is to come. "For a while I had a feeling of hope, of optimism, but it was the last I was to have for a long time," we are told. "I was dissatisfied with my hiding place and I considered moving it. On Sunday, two days away, I was to wish I had." This seasoning can get a bit too strong at times: at one point the adult Clodagh is talking to Liv, whom she has discovered living in a mansion years after the book's major events:

She sat down opposite me, showing knees that were smooth and rounded yet with that sharp angle at the patella that defines perfect legs. I realized, amused, that I'd seldom seen her legs before, not counting the night they were splashed all over with blood.

Plenty of nice touches embellish *Grasshopper*. Vine writes strikingly about London as seen from the rooftops, about the pleasures of being an electrician, about people's tics and vanities and foibles. Her layers of narrative intrigue, but never confound; at one point, the twenty-year-old Clodagh is telling Silver the story of the sixteen-year-old Clodagh, and all this is being told by the adult Clodagh, who is the creation of Barbara Vine, who is actually Ruth Rendell. Vine delights in this kind of play, and it is a hallmark of her books. Themes from other Vine novels return here; even the gigantic dollhouse from *Anna's Book* (my favorite Vine, I think) appears here, and is rewired by Clodagh.

The ending is a mixed bag, but largely satisfying. Not all the answers convinced me—or, rather, they were all too convincing, too much what the less refined portions of my imagination wanted them to be. And the resolution of Clodagh's and Silver's affair, which has its ups and downs throughout the book, strikes me as a bit cute. But there is always something of a let-down at the end of a mystery as complicated as this one; the pleasure is not in knowing the answers but in anticipating knowing them.

In the end, every novel is a suspense novel. We read because we want to know what will happen, and which words will be used to tell us, and how they will make us feel. Good mysteries—and Vine's books are good mysteries indeed—force the imagination to extend itself logically and psychologically. Herein lies the legitimacy of the form, and a good reason not to be ashamed of loving it. God knows I gave up feeling funny about loving Ruth Rendell long ago; it seems that Rendell has given up feeling funny about being Ruth Rendell, too. Her recent books show it: they are confident, thrilling, and provocative, the way literature ought to be.

J. Robert Lennon is the author of two novels, *The Light of Falling Stars* and *The Funnies*.

On Writing About Music

Kiko Nobusawa

In the introduction to his recently published essay collection, *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New* (Harvard University Press, 2000), Charles Rosen discusses the difficulty of writing substantively yet accessibly about music. Where the literary critic "can easily quote something from the work in question," and "the art historian can display photographs," printed musical excerpts will likely "scare away almost all readers except for a few professional musicians."



The layperson's fear of a musical score is, however, as much a reflection of the sad state of musical literacy in general. It seems that we are simply reverting to, or perhaps rediscovering—depending on which paradigm one subscribes to—an aural-oral music culture, but one that relies heavily on an instantly gratifying mode of amplified digital transmission. Thus, Rosen concedes that "even experienced musicians do not call up all the details of a score in their imagination by looking at it with the ease of the reader of a poem," and speculates that "the day may be coming when music criticism will be easily and routinely accompanied by an audible illustration of the subject in hand."

CD-rom technology already makes that day possible. In fact, there are many "click-n-hear" programs available on the educational and entertainment markets, including self-administered aural skills tutorials, music notation and playback software, and "CD-plus-core" recordings which enable interactive access to the musical score on screen (Beethoven Piano Sonatas Op. 22, 26, 53, by Maurizio Pollini on DG, 1998). But Rosen is certainly not advocating the type of sound-byte aesthetic into which such potentially instructive innovations often degenerate—for the essence of a musical composition, like that of a poem or any other interpretive genre, exists off the page and requires an active audience willing to engage beyond a "mac-reading." Ideally, then, the expectation held by a serious music critic—and one who is, furthermore, a practicing concert artist like Rosen—is that the reader would have enough interest and know-how to play through the printed musical examples for him or herself, and to consult the complete score for overall context.

If being expected to play or otherwise recreate a musical illustration for oneself seems like a tall order, something only trained professionals do, consider this: that the development of popular music journalism, along with the field of musicology, paralleled the unprecedented growth and democratization of musical literacy in nineteenth-century Europe. Influential critics such as Francois Fétis, Schumann, Berlioz, and George Bernard Shaw, and even the more theoretically-oriented like Donald Tovey and Heinrich Schenker, wrote during a time when virtually every middle-class household had a piano and, presumably, one or more family pianists accomplished enough to read through solo works, songs, operatic airs, and four-hand arrangements. In this pre-phonograph era, the parlor piano and pianist served as the primary means of musical realization and dissemination, and the fashionable amateur would have kept up on the music scene by reading popular sheet

music as well as reviews and journals (and also attending public concerts and the opera). So the sort of analytical music commentary with printed excerpts, which now strikes us as highly specialized, originated in a cultural milieu where broader and more immediate familiarity with the musical language lent immediacy to such discussions.

The marked proliferation of vernacular and pop music journalism in recent years presents a comparable situation. Among mainstream magazines, for instance, classical music commentary has dwindled down to a single imported publication (the *British Gramophone*, almost solely a CD-review rag, and with no printed music excerpts, by the way) while *Rolling Stone* forges ahead, followed by a raucous entourage that includes *Down Beat*, *Rhythm*, *Blues Access*, *Guitar Player* (which does print notated musical examples, interestingly enough), *Dirty Linen*, etc. This pervasive vernacularism has even managed to infiltrate musicological academia, making rock-n-roll a veritable growth industry: new volumes of documentary and critical writings about jazz, rock, and pop folk—many put out by tony university presses—appear almost weekly, and this fall's American Musicological Society/Society for Music Theory conference in Toronto features presentations on James Brown, the Police, and the Pet Shop Boys (with Schenkerian and neo-Riemannian sessions the morning after, of course).

The allure of this pop criticism lies ostensibly in its relevance to contemporary interests, but depends largely on simple accessibility to the object itself—that is to say, we can easily recall or imagine the musical examples discussed because our memories of them are recent, based on repeated hearings and/or active singing, usually associated with memorable words (lyrics), and bolstered by collective familiarity with the idiom. Our aural frame of reference is, therefore, readily available when analyses mention "pulsating back beats," "jangling chords," "wailing guitar bends", and ask "how does it feel?" We don't need notated details to recreate the sound in our mind, perhaps even accompanied by visuals, and neither does the music itself nor the critic. But in another 50 to 100 years, when digital technology becomes obsolete and aural memory grows dim—CDs and Bjork as the 78s and Puccini of the 21st-century—where will this mode of music commentary be without the immediacy of its context? It seems that the once freely, exuberantly accessible vernacular is falling victim to its own canonization.

But it is, after all, the very elusiveness of music which constantly drives us to read and write about it, hoping somehow to encapsulate, document, preserve the memory of a mercilessly temporal aesthetic experience. Whether we listen to, perform, or compose music, we are always grappling with its immaterial yet viscerally powerful nature, and thus we often try to assign some kind of tangibility to our association with it. We seek form, meaning, validation; we consider the music's relation to the composer, to the recipient, and to the structural elements within itself:

below the delicate line of the violin-part, slender but robust, compact and commanding, he had suddenly become aware of the mass of the piano-part beginning to surge upward in plashing waves of sound, multiform but indivisible, smooth yet restless, like the deep blue tumult of the sea, silvered and charmed into a minor key by the moonlight. . . He could

picture to himself [the piece's] extent, its symmetrical arrangement, its notation, its expressive value; he had before him something that was no longer pure music, but rather design, architecture, thought, and which allowed the actual music to be recalled.¹

This quote is from a celebrated example of writing about music (authors and sources will be revealed below; feel free to play puzzler or mystery date in the meantime). Without referring to printed music or using technical terminology, except for "minor key" which is metaphorically evoked in any case by "silvered" and "moonlight," the writer conjures forth a vivid, specific image of the music and captures the psychological and intellectual state of the listener. The passage uses sensuous, physically-based qualities to characterize the music, and does so to great poetic effect by avoiding flatly representational comparisons.

Representational considerations of music, though often the most easily written and read, generally yield naive and limiting interpretations. Sometimes the results have exceptional kitsch value, especially when related to composer biography.

[The E minor prelude depicts] one of the paroxysms to which Chopin was subject on account of his weak chest. In the left hand we hear his heavy breathing, and in the right hand the tones of suffering wrung from his breast. At the twelfth measure he seeks relief by turning on the other side; but his oppression increases momentarily. At the stretto he groans, his pulse redoubles its beat, he is near death; but toward the end he breathes more quietly (the chords must be breathed rather than played).²

Injecting "meaning" into music by texting an untexted composition, and preferably with some tidbit from the composer's life, is an ingrained habit nonetheless. It makes for a lot of unfortunate musical biography, even if the parenthetical directive above to the performer is potentially useful (we needn't encourage aspiring young pianists to smoke, however).

How about the private lives of compositions themselves, then? Here is an oddly endearing way to think of Brahms's first piano concerto:

One cannot separate architecturally the astonishing nonconformity of its opening measures—the triadic expostulation of B-flat major as the opening of a D-minor work and the confirmation of its chromatic stubbornness by that mysterious A-flat in the third measure—one cannot disassociate all this from the exigencies of formal symphonic behavior to which it ultimately does conform: the poker-faced, absolutely verbatim recapitulation of the secondary thematic group, for instance.³

This anthropomorphic analysis brings the concerto first movement to life as a stubborn, nonconformist poker-player who is ultimately a gentleman. But the writer, addressing an educated though general readership, presumes a working familiarity with the tonal and formal conventions of Western classical music.

From here on it becomes an increasingly specialized world of printed musical excerpts, and the words used to explain them.

[In Chopin's etude, Op.10 No.1,] subtle opposition between two principal melodic motives—a turning figure

around E (bars 1-9, 9-16, 15-24, 49-57 and 57-69) and either chromatic or diatonic linear descents (bars 25-36, 37-44 and 69-76)—generates tremendous momentum over and above the waves of arpeggios that provide the Etude's technical *raison d'être*. The insistent focus on E in the treble is broken only in the middle section, where two circle-of-fifths progressions accompany a twenty-bar linear descent . . . and in bars 69ff., where the chromatic descent from G to B in the top voice overcomes the turning figure's reiteration of E once and for all, reaching the tonic pitch in the melody and thereby achieving definitive closure for the first time in the piece.⁴

This is well-respected, mainstream, academic musicology. It assumes ability to read a score, knowledge of terms, and understanding of harmonic conventions. The only concession the writer makes to the extra-musical is in describing the arpeggios as "waves"—not unlike Proust, incidentally—and maybe in suggesting that the etude has a *raison d'être*.

And, finally, something for the specialist's specialist:

This is where Siegmund 'looks into the eyes of the Valkyrie,' as Brünnhilde puts it later on. The subinterval 3 of the FATE network $2=(-1)+3$ now becomes the overall interval of the FATE' network $3=(-1)+4$; (-1) remains a subinterval of FATE'. The pitch class A of FATE' is bereft of its FATE-partner B, just as Siegmund will be lonely in Valhalla, bereft of his sister/wife.⁵

The complete analysis is required reading for all those glib commentators who always insist on the music-and-math connection. This particular quote is especially interesting in that the pitch manipulations mirror the psychological state of the opera characters, and yet the extreme objectification of the musical material disassociates it from both composer and listener, allowing for sharp focus on the internal aspects of the work alone.

Now that you have glimpsed the range and extremes faced by readers and writers about music, who is your ideal music critic?

1) If you settled immediately on mystery date number one, Marcel Proust (from *Swann's Way*, p.227-8 in volume 1 of Moncreiff's translation—the Franck violin sonata may have been the model), you have distinguished taste. May your love be requited.

2) The second is an unusually gothic choice. The writer is Hans von Bülow (as quoted by Harold Schonberg in *The Great Pianists*, Simon and Schuster, 1963) who was a highly respected, late 19th-century pianist and conductor. He wrote such programs for all 24 preludes in the set. Beware: von Bülow was married to Cosima Liszt, until she left him for Wagner.

3) Expect only a midnight-to-dawn phone date with this critic, Glenn Gould ("*N'aimez-vous pas Brahms?*", in *The Glenn Gould Reader*, Random House, 1984). The legendary pianist was as fond of his collie dog as he was of sonata structure, probably.

4) If you liked example four (John Rink, "Tonal Architecture in the Early Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, Cambridge University Press, 1992), you should consider graduate school in musicology.

5) Those who chose the last author, Harvard music theory professor David Lewin

Artists' Books: The

Destiny Kinal

From the one-of-a-kind artist's book, completely handwrought, to limited editions brought out by leading presses, to the explosion of university-based programs, the field of book arts is in the process of defining itself. As Johanna Drucker writes in *The Century of Artists' Books* (Granary Books, 1995),

It would be hard to find a moment in time when there was more interest in the field or more artists contributing their own work and vision to its development.

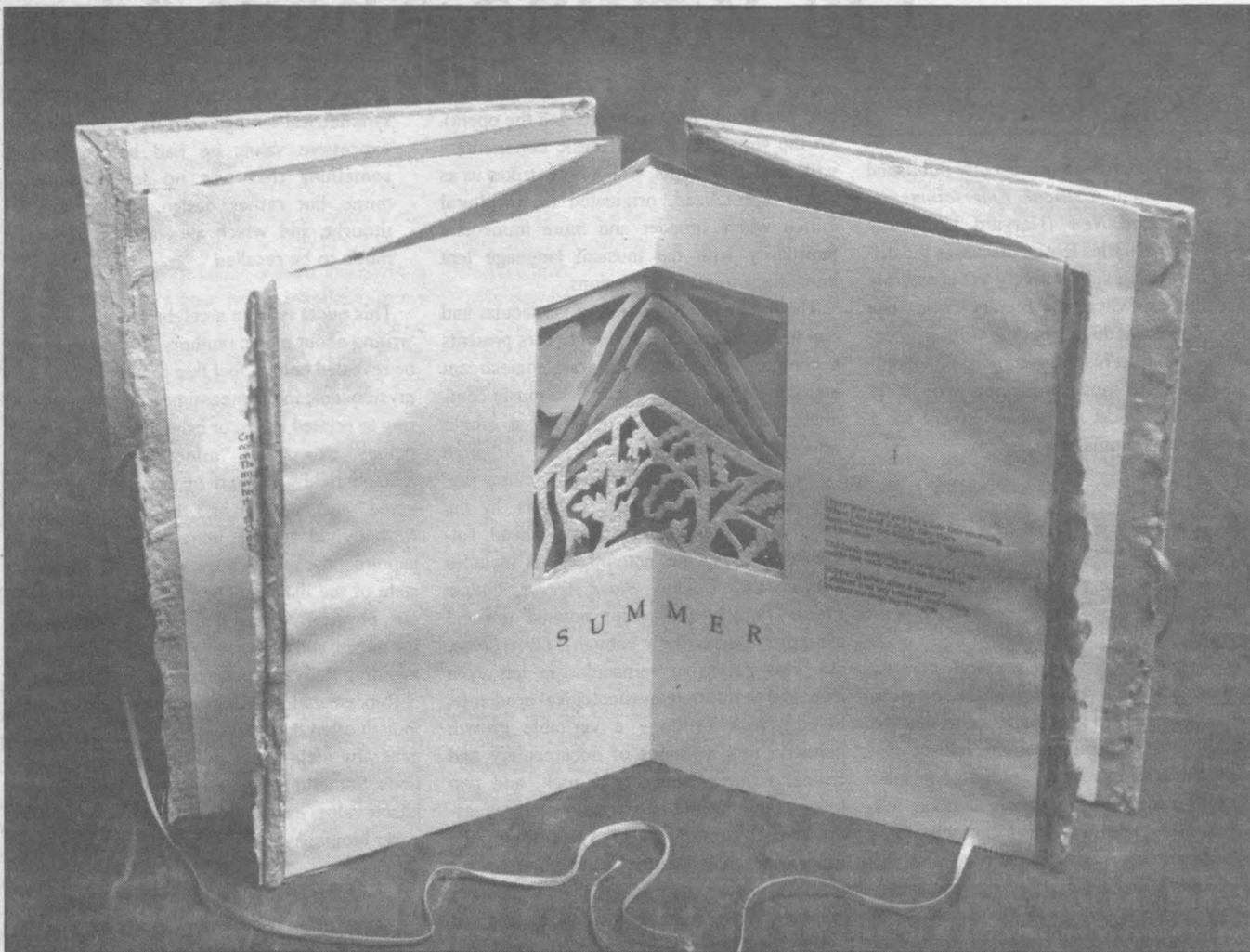
At the Wells College Book Arts Center, we found two old collaborators, Terry Chouinard, the director/fellow (following the recent departure of Jocelyn Webb for a fellowship in printmaking in Santa Barbara), and Brad Benedict, cooling his heels until he can get his press set up again in new digs at Midline and Irish Settlement Road. These two go back to a shared past in Alabama's book arts program.

Terry's press, *The Wing and the Wheel*, which he started seven years ago as a vehicle for his own illustrations, has gained a historical purpose, capturing and printing interviews with the "geezers" of the book arts Terry venerates: seasoned book workers of every stripe, printers, papermakers, typesetters, binders.

Brad tells us that he's hauled a backlog of manuscripts east with him, mostly poetry. His new press, as yet unnamed, will carry on the tradition established by his earlier press, *Angorfa*, for publishing editions interesting on several levels, not the least of them his technical proficiency.

When Brad visited Ithaca a year ago, checking out the scene before moving here, I bought *You Can Eat*, a multicolored minibook (Brad sought to brush it off as a graduate school exercise, but seeing is believing) drawing on ingredients from southern, largely pork-based food labels. For \$4, I bought two, and sent one to Dorothy Allison author of *Bastard out of Carolina*. When I ran into her at the Bay Area Book Reviewers annual awards, I asked, "Did you like it?" She grinned: "love it!" Who wouldn't? *You Can Eat* is a demonstration of every technique one might use in the printing trade, multicolored, the soul of wit, and a giveaway. Brad told me that he wants his books to be read, passed along. "I never wanted to make books for collectors," the other end of the spectrum from Carole Schwartzott's small handcrafted artists' books, which sell in the low four-figure range to collectors from South Africa to Texas, largely out of Joshua Heller's gallery in Washington, D.C.

Carol's new studio is on the Greater Ithaca



Goat Island Journal. Artist book by Carol Schwartzott.

Art Trail map, at Midline and Irish Settlement Road in Dryden. Soon after he moved into the schoolhouse in Dryden which serves as his home and press, Brad saw the star on the Arts Trail map and did a double take. "We (he and his girlfriend and colleague Amy Stecher) haven't even closed on the house, and already I'm on the map?" Schwartzott and Benedict's studios will be within shouting distance of each other. "I've been collaborating with my brother-in-law in Buffalo, master typographer/graphic designer Norton Schwartzott," Carol tells us. (I'm visiting her accompanied by Leslie Kramer, the Sayre/Cape Cod printmaker who heads up the program at Elmira College.) "It's a dream I had, a press down the street and fine letterpress printer to work with." Carol makes it sound like she materialized Brad, and maybe she did. The alchemy of creative collaboration is strange territory.

A long running vein of artists' gold for Schwartzott, artists' books about artists, began at the University of Buffalo with a lush pastiche titled *Savage*, on Gauguin's years in Oceania. Soon after, her entry into a Center for Book Arts competition, a Ted Hughes poem, "That Morning," captured the eye of

Joshua Heller, who sold it to Jack Ginsburg, the collector from South Africa, for just under a cool grand. Books on Matisse and Joseph Cornell followed, each exquisitely packaged. Schwartzott's mock-ups, painstakingly crafted, qualify as fine art. She is working now on *The Old Bamboo Hower*, a predecessor to *The Tale of Genji*, arguably the world's first novel.

"The books I make are also beautiful objects to be cherished," Schwartzott told us, stroking the lid of an inlaid box she and Don Taylor, a binder from Toronto, had collaborated on for the Joseph Cornell book, *A Dossier of Sorts*. She opened a hidden compartment in the bottom to reveal a confetti of stamps, bits of embossed ribbon, miniature watercolors of birds, detritus from the scrap pile of creative frenzy. "I sent these to Taylor to see what he might want to incorporate. Do you see how he picked up on Cornell? Each boxed book has a little collection of these"—she picks them up in her hands and sifts through them—"just loose in this compartment in the bottom of the box."

As we were leaving, Carol mentioned that she hopes to spend time with Barbara Kretzmann of Cutleaf Bindery in Ithaca,

"learning more about binding."

My own brainchild, the Waverly School of the Living Arts, is a collaboration of fellow artists and writers, in Montolieu, France's book village near the Pyrenees.

Last July, I invited Mollie Favour, a landscape "colorist" with a national reputation, and Carole Maso, the leading avant-garde writer and (then) director of Brown's creative writing program. Their assignment: to fan the fires of fellow writers and artists in peer workshops, and in Carole's case, to midwife a text for our book *Between Two Rivers/Entre Deux Rivieres*.

Each year's book has been written and produced in place, a challenge that electrified the writers, unused to having such fresh work published. Carole Maso's exercise for us fit the bill accordingly. Spend three to four hours in one place. Don't move. Notice everything that hap-



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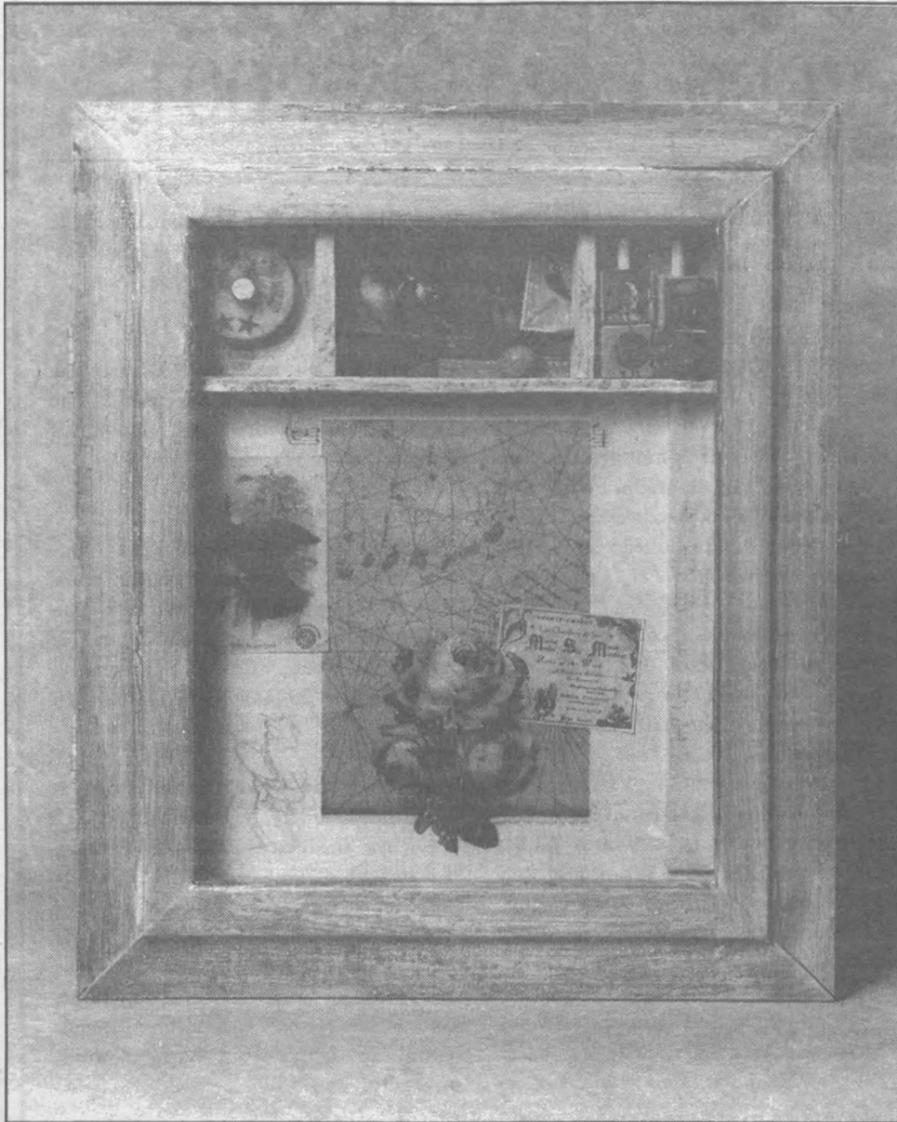
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Kiss on the Page



Cornell: A Dossier

Denise Wood

that happens. After a while, strange things will begin to happen; your sensibilities will become deranged. Start to write when that stage begins.

The cover paper would be a scarlet Japanese paper with golden desiccated leaves embedded in its long mulberry fibers. The interior paper Rives: Rivers. (Montolieu is also literally between two rivers, the Alzeau and the Dure.) We made our own paper, used cover stock from Brousse, the water-powered papermill in the next village with its ancient bell watermark. As editor, I had to face reducing writers' texts to fragments that held together with our theme. Setting type, letter by letter, with less than a week from manuscript to bound book, sets its own constraints.

With our edition of thirty copies in hand we all agreed that peripatetic collaboration-in-place works so well—Why not Ithaca, the Bay Area, Rosendale, any place we could recreate the compression/explosion of writers and artists collaborating to produce a book themed in one place, at one time.

Fernando Llosa is:
 an artist
 a writer
 a photographer
 a whirlwind
 an essayist
 a book producer
 a philosophical provocateur.

Llosa was trained as a sociologist. He's lived in Paris and Belgium, spent eighteen years in Peru and Uruguay working in urban and rural development with the Peace Corps and YMCA International. He's been in Ithaca for thirteen years. He and his friend Kim Schrag have a pact: that they continue to confront the difficult questions of life on a regular basis, and continue to make a record of their dialogue. Theirs is not a closed universe. Llosa actively seeks out musicians, writers, scientists, philosophers, and artists whose work calls up an answering tug in the two artists. The best art, they feel, will come from people with hard facts about who we are, without illusion. This process—asking the questions, then grappling with them in artistic



Jocelyn Webb and Mollie Favour at Atelier du Livre in Montolieu, France.

Kinal

media—is “full of vitality.”

Llosa produces his books on his computer, prints them that way too. He pastes in original paintings, creates covers from stone, wood, metal. He doesn't get the “kiss of the type on the page” thing; he only wants to get the words and images out.

Yet according to Carol Schwartzott, “People who collect books want letterpress. Why? Yes, there's the kiss on the page, the bite of the impress, it's the oldest form.” Traditional? Yes, but it's more than that. “The limited edition,” Carol continues, “is a logical ground for collaboration.”

And further. “It's hard for artists to meet people they can work with.” In the letterpress studio, they can meet at any hour, “start to feed off each other, get juices going. Learn how other people think, study their creative process.”

Consider this description Jocelyn Webb gave me of the last book she produced at Wells Book Arts Center before joining WEAV in France and from there to Santa Barbara:

Duty-Free Desiderata: Prose Poems by Stratis Haviaras (founder and editor of the Harvard Review.) Relief drawings by Jocelyn Webb. Sierras Press. Aurora, NY 2000. Binding designed by Jocelyn Webb. Executed by Peter Verheyen. Book is 10” x 11” closed. Bound in Oakdale flax paper over boards with calf vellum spine. Title of book printed on paper underneath the vellum. Title page calligraphy by New York book designer Jerry Kelly.

The five prose poems are printed in five inch square plate marks, with the images printed in plate marks opposite them. The images began as monotypes using static electricity to help manipulate the ink, then were made into magnesium plates and printed letterpress. The last step painted hot beeswax onto parts of each image, making that area of the image and paper transparent. 45 books in the edition. 30 for sale. \$625.

Fernando Llosa recently produced an homage to Henry David Thoreau, illustrated with his nature photographs. Ten copies of *Life Without Principle*. Thoreau begins with a promise he will break almost immediately: “I will not talk about people a thousand miles off, but come as near home as I can.”

I've made the same promise in this article, purporting to unpeel some of the collaboration happening around book arts in our region, and held to it as well as Thoreau did in 1863. Even then, what was happening in France and on the Pacific impinged on life in Concord.

“I will leave out all flattery and retain all the criticism. Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives.”

Destiny Kinal is an artist and writer.

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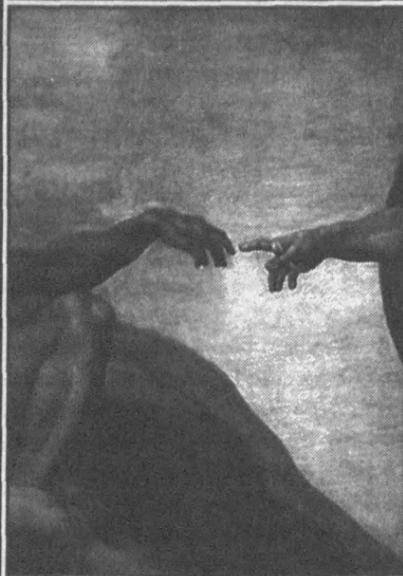
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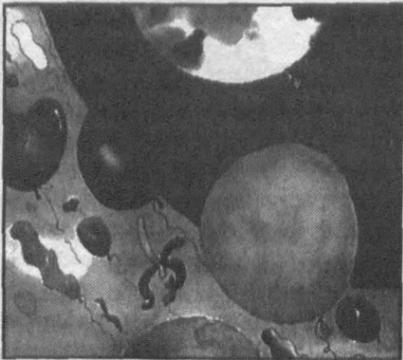
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Calendar of Arts Events in the Ithaca Area DECEMBER 2000/JANUARY 2001

Information about arts events provided by The Constance Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts. To have your event listed, please contact Lee-Ellen Marvin at 277-4933

Gallery Night of Ithaca when six downtown galleries of Ithaca open their latest exhibits. Start at Clinton House Artspace, 116 N. Cayuga St. 277-4933. Dec. 1, 5-8 pm.

Ithaca Artists Show 2000 at The Upstairs Gallery, DeWitt Building, 215 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca. 272-8614. Dec. 1-30; Tues-Sat, 11 am-3 pm.

Semi-Annual Art Exhibition by Twenty Regional Artists and Gallery members State of the Art Gallery, 120 W. State St., Ithaca. 277-1626. Dec 1-31; Thurs, 12-6 pm; Fri, 12-8 pm; Weekends, 12-5 pm.

100 Woodblock Illustrations of The Divine Comedy by Salvador Dali at Sola Art Gallery, DeWitt Building, 215 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca. 272-6552. Dec. 1-31 Mon-Sat, 10:30 am-5:30 pm.

Watercolors and print by Susan Titus & African art of Mali at Titus Gallery, 222 The Commons, Ithaca. 277-2649. Dec. 1-Jan 30; Tues-Sat, 10 am-6 pm.

Crossing: Paintings by Syau-Cheng Lai at Clinton House Artspace, 116 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca. 273-5072. Dec. 1-23; Mon-Sat, 10 am-5:30 pm.

Annual Open Show by Local Artists at the Community School of Music and Arts, 330 E. State St., Ithaca. 272-1474. Dec. 1-30; 9 am-5 pm.

Associates members show, ongoing at The Ink Shop Printmaking Center/Olive Branch Press Gallery, 120 Brindley St., Ithaca. 277-3884. Tues-Fri, 12-6 pm; Thurs, 12-8 pm; weekends by appointment.

"Sparkle" Annual Holiday Exhibit at West End Gallery, 12 W. Market St., Corning. 936-2011. Dec. 2-Jan 20; Mon-Wed, 10 am-5:30 pm; Thurs-Fri, 10 am-8 pm; Sat, 10 am-4 pm; Sun, 12-5 pm.

Watercolors by Patrick O'Connor at Littlestone Gallery, 407 Old Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca. 277-5119. Dec. 8-31; Opening on Dec. 8 at 5:30 pm; Wed-Fri, 10 am-6 pm; Sat, 10 am-4 pm.

From Drawings to Sculptures: Drawing as a Means to Another End, Featuring Bill Galt and Rob Licht at Dowd Fine Arts Gallery, Dowd Arts Center, at corner of Graham and Prospect Sts., State University

College at Cortland. 753-4216. Runs until Dec. 8; Tues-Sat, 11 am-4 pm.

Holiday Sale at the Studio of The Corning Museum of Glass, Downtown Corning. 937-5371. Dec. 9-Dec. 13; Daily, 9 am-5 pm.

American Scene: photographs by Berenice Abbott of American People and Places in the 1920s at Handwerker Gallery, Gannett Center, Ithaca College. 274-3018. Runs until Dec. 10; Mon-Fri 11 am-5 pm.

Watercolors by Students of Mart Poole at 171 Cedar Arts Center, 171 Cedar St., Corning. 936-4647. Dec. 12-Jan 30; Opening on Dec. 12 at 5:30 pm; Mon-Fri, 10 am-8 pm; Sat, 10 am-2 pm.

Fingerlakes Perspectives: Landscape Paintings by Pamela Drix, Andrew Gillis, Harry Orlyk, and John Whiting at Red Newt Cellars, 3675 Tichenor Road, Hector. 546-4100. Gallery@rednewt.com. Runs until Dec. 17; Thurs-Sun, 10 am-5 pm.

Art by Children at the Community School of Music and Arts, 330 E. State St., Ithaca. 272-1474. Opens early Jan; 9 am-5 pm.

Cardboard Quilts by Peter Rush at Clinton House Artspace, 116 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca. 273-5072. Jan 1-27; Mon-Sat, 10 am-5:30 pm.

Invitational Regional Art Show State of the Art Gallery, 120 W. State St., Ithaca. 277-1626. Jan 4-28; Thurs, 12-6 pm; Fri, 12-8 pm; Weekends, 12-5 pm.

Cornell Art Faculty Show at The Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Central & University Aves., Cornell University. 254-4563. Runs until Jan 7; Tues-Sun, 10 am-5 pm.

19th Annual Quilts=Art=Quilts with Quilts+Clothing=Art at Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, 205 Genesee St., Auburn. 315-255-1553. Runs until Jan 7; Mon-Sat, 10 am-5 pm; Sun, 1-5 pm.

Prints of the Renaissance Body at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Central & University Aves., Cornell University. 254-4563. Runs until Jan 7; Tues-Sun, 10 am-5 pm.

"Art from the Heart" annual show of art by members of the Lakeview Mental Health Services and Skylight Club at The Upstairs Gallery, DeWitt Building, 215 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca. 272-8614. January 9-20; Tues-Sat, 11 am-3 pm.

Fifteen Centuries of Korean Ceramics at

The Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Central & University Aves., Cornell University. 254-4563. Jan 13-Mar 4; Tues-Sun, 10 am-5 pm.

Art and Design in Italian Glass: The Steinberg Foundation Collection at The Corning Museum of Glass, downtown Corning. 937-5371. Runs until Jan 14; Daily, 9 am-5 pm.

Friends of the Cold Season: Pine, Plum and Bamboo. Images of winter from Chinese, Japanese & Korean art. The Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Central & University Aves., Cornell University. 254-4563. Jan 20-Mar 18; Tues-Sun, 10 am-5 pm.

Prints from the Olive Branch Press at The Upstairs Gallery, DeWitt Building, 215 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca. 272-8614. January 23-February 4; Tues-Sat, 11 am-3 pm.

Dreams, Myths, and Realities: A Vincent Smith Retrospective. Works by a contemporary African-American painter and printmaker at The Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Central & University Aves., Cornell University. 254-4563. Jan 27-Mar 18; Tues-Sun, 10 am-5 pm.

Architectural Drawings of Julius Schweinfurth at Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, 205 Genesee St., Auburn. 315-255-1553. Opens January 28; Tues-Sat, 10 am-5 pm; Sun, 1-5 pm.

Annual Faculty Show at Handwerker Gallery, Gannett Center, Ithaca College. 274-3018. Opens late January; Mon-Fri 11 am-5 pm.

The Color of Light, Photographs by Dede Hatch at Lamoreaux Landing Wine Cellars, 9224 Route 414, Lodi. 582-6011. Runs until Feb; Mon-Sat, 10 am-5 pm; Sun, 12-5 pm.

Everson Ceramic National 2000 at Everson Museum of Art, 401 Harrison St., Syracuse. 315-474-6064. Runs until Feb 4; Tues-Fri, 12-5 pm; Sat, 10 am-5 pm; Sun, 12-5 pm.

Still Lifes from the Permanent Collection at Everson Museum of Art, 401 Harrison St., Syracuse. 315-474-6064. Runs until Feb 18; Tues-Fri, 12-5 pm; Sat, 10 am-5 pm; Sun, 12-5 pm.

Work by Local Artists from the Leidenfrost Collection at Leidenfrost Winery, 5677 Route 414, Hector. 546-2800. Runs through April; 10-5 pm, 7 days a week.

On Writing About Music

continued from page A1

(*Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations*, Yale University Press, 1987), should probably get out more and try to hear a live concert now and then.

Charles Rosen "began writing about music . . . largely to keep someone else's nonsense off my record jackets." Indeed, nonsense does abound in the stew of fantasy, wishful projection, conviction, and innocent misinformation

that often serves as the basis for our passions. Even a composer's commentary on her or his own work can be misleading, limiting, or, yes, sheer nonsense. "The best writing on music can make a small difference, but we must not overestimate it," advises Rosen.

During a rehearsal documented in the film *Straight, No Chaser*, about jazz pianist Thelonius Monk, the sax-player squints over Monk's manuscript score (always a great

learning moment for dispelling the myth that jazz greats never read music) and asks whether he should play C or C-sharp in a certain measure. Monk replies, "just blow whatever you feel like, man." After all is written and read, we can only do likewise.

Kiko Nobusawa is a writer living in Ithaca. Her next article will consider the difficulty of musical biography.

Sentences and Sensibilities

Paul Cody

Each Tuesday night for the last six months, I've driven with several friends, about 40 miles north from Ithaca, New York, to Auburn Prison. The prison is massive and forbidding—has thirty and forty foot walls, concertina wire, guard towers where marksmen with high-powered rifles sit and watch things down below, carefully. Very carefully.

To get in we are searched, go through a metal detector, then get spread-eagled and scanned with an electronic wand. Our left hands are stamped with invisible ink, which can only be seen under ultraviolet light. We then go through seven sets of heavily locked gates and checkpoints—up stairs, down halls, into a box where one heavy barred door closes, and the man behind bulletproof glass counts us before opening the door on the other side. Then we're outside again, the cellblocks looming high on each side of us.

We see high walls, bars on all the windows, and inside the bars, tier upon tier of cellblocks, galleries of cells piled on top of each other like stacked cages. We hear hoots, screams. We hear motherfucker, cocksucker, asshole, fag-got, fucker, rapo. Long keening cries.

Then one more gate, and we cross the big empty main yard, on our way to the back of the prison. Three more checkpoints and we're in the classroom. Bare tables, mismatched chairs—almost nothing else.

Then a loud bell rings, and the inmates come down a long hallway, and into the class. They are more black than white, wear prison-green pants and jackets, tee shirts. Many have scars—long-healed cuts on the neck or face or arms. One man is missing part of an ear. We get up, shake hands, say welcome, say good to see you. We give the prison hug, shoulder pressed

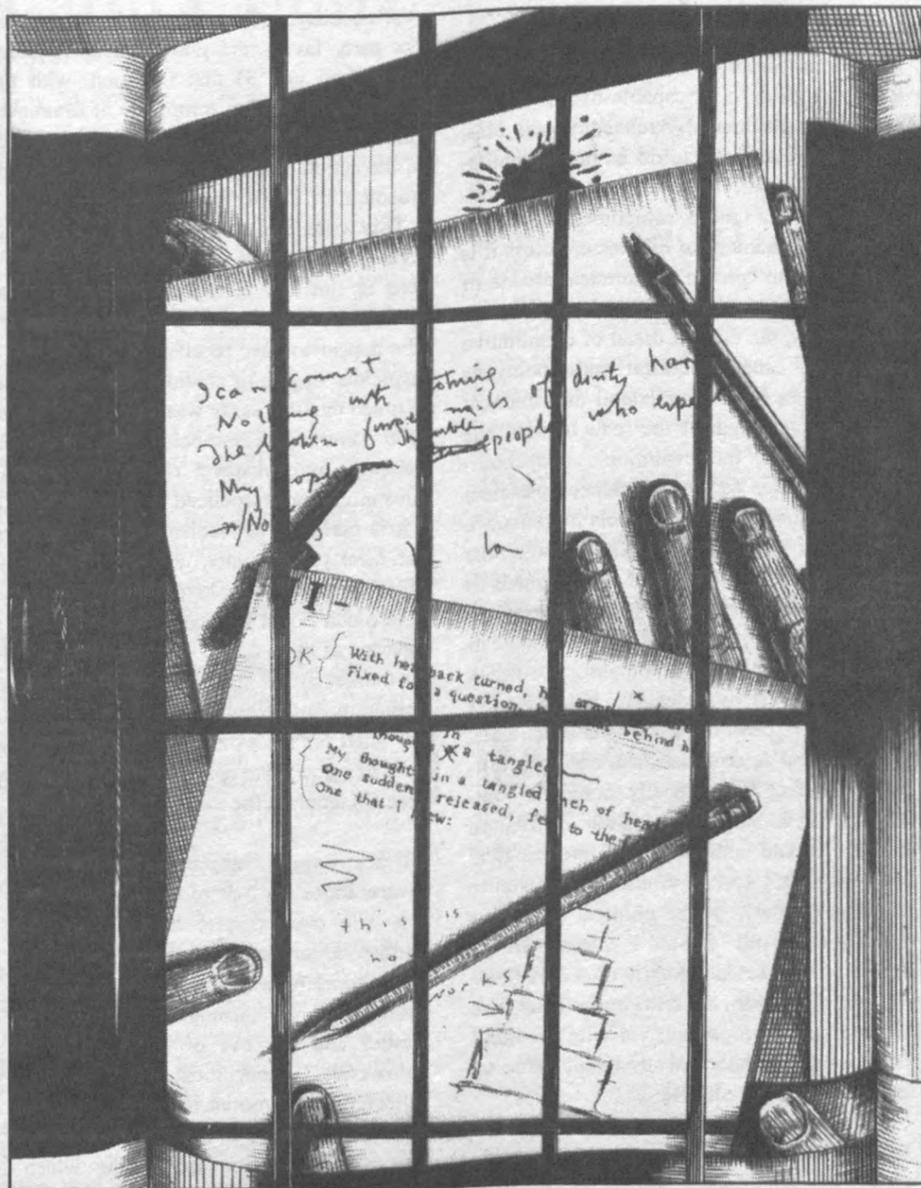
to shoulder, and you realize if you haven't already seen it, how many of these guys work out with weights, how many are ripped.

The men hold you by the shoulder, look you in the eye, say, Thanks for coming in.

Then we sit down at a table, these felons and I. These dread-locked killers and armed robbers, these holders up of armored cars, these crack-selling, gang-banging kids from bad or no families and mean streets and roach and rat-infested housing projects—and we read the poetry of William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Langston Hughes, stories of Chekhov, Kate Chopin, Hemingway, Raymond Carver, essay fragments from August Wilson, Jerome Washington, Thoreau—and we read and talk and read and talk—over and under and around and through the various texts—until we are talking about love and death, loss and longing, and how hard it is to achieve anything like redemption and grace anywhere in the world, not just in a maximum security prison.

I look up from my text, and the guys with scars, the guys with bad tattoos, the guy who's only 24 and won't have a parole hearing until 2026—they're all reading and re-reading and underlining the Hemingway story. And I wonder if my college students have ever brought a fraction of this attention and fervor to their reading, have ever had this kind of hunger to learn. No, I think, because their lives, their dignity, their very humanity has never depended on learning. For an inmate, this link to the world, to books, to learning—can alter a life. It can be—it sometimes is—everything.

Paul Cody is Assistant Professor of Writing at Ithaca College, a journalist, and has published three novels, most recently, *So Far Gone* (Picador USA). He has been teaching in the CLEP program at Auburn Prison since March 2000.



Don Karr

A Modest Proposal

Joe Miceli

Since rehabilitation has been completely abandoned in New York State penitentiaries, and the sole purpose for prison expansion seems to be to garner votes by pumping billions of dollars into the economy, I've come up with an idea. After endless nights tossing and turning in my bunk, and countless days contemplating various options, I decided to draw up this presentation for you, Commissioner Goord.

Although I am a prisoner, and you may at first be somewhat skeptical of my intentions, I hope you will put your feelings aside and give my proposal a fair hearing. For your information—I assume you do not have my folder in front of you to evaluate my credibility—I have 20 years experience behind the walls. Who is more familiar with the treacheries of life in the penitentiary? That's why I am particularly concerned that New York State officials—you, Senator Nozzolio, Governor Pataki—receive my recommendations (and perhaps help me regain parole in return), but I think my plan could benefit corrections systems everywhere.

Before I begin, let me assure you that recent program cuts in the Department of Corrections would undoubtedly make available the necessary funds for this project. And once it's underway, education, drug addiction counseling, job skills, or the need to worry about inmates' transitions back to the street will all be irrelevant. In addition I suggest you abolish wages for prison jobs; convicts will be more than happy to work for free to get out of their cells for a few hours. You could also appropriate a portion of the \$25 million a year the state generates from inmate phone calls, jack up the prices in the vending machines in the visiting rooms, and make prisoners pay for room and board. But perhaps it's presumptuous of me to assume all your associates know precisely what goes on in our penal institutions. So with your permission, allow me to enlighten them

on the bitter reality of prison life.

Today the widespread availability of heroin in our penitentiaries and the increasing use of all sorts of drugs are the source of most violent episodes. There seems to be no end to the number of men who are victimized by drug dealers they can't afford to pay. In addition to attacks related to narcotics consumption, it is not unusual for petty differences to escalate into unbelievable acts of brutality. One reason for this is that men are forced to house together in double-bunk cells. Case in point: Two inmates at Upstate's special housing unit clashed in their cell in May. Not surprisingly the battle was over something as meaningless as a fluorescent light. The Associated Press reported that one prisoner liked to sleep late and stay up at night to read, while the other was an early riser who liked to go to sleep early. The dispute ended when the larger and stronger combatant used his hands and feet to pummel his cellmate to death.

Every day COs (correctional officers) risk their lives when they enter correctional facilities. If a riot breaks out they risk being raped or killed. They can surely attest to how dangerous jails are, and how often inmates brutalize each other. It is this that makes a program like mine necessary.

The inspiration for my idea occurred to me one night after skimming through an old *Gallery* magazine. Inside was a story about Ultimate Fighting Championships in New York. Several photos depicted musclebound contestants engaged in bloody hand-to-hand combat within octagonal cages. The bouts were described as "The hottest pay-per-view sport on television." According to the article, men fight in no-holds-barred matches until one either gives up or is knocked out. I immediately saw striking similarities between UFC competitions and the violence in our facilities. Soon I realized that people all over the world are dying to see this type of entertainment.

While convicts are constantly being killed, assaulted, burned with hot cooking oil,

stabbed, bludgeoned, disfigured, raped, and slashed to ribbons, in what can only be described as a lost opportunity, few if any of these battles are recorded. If hidden video cameras were to be installed in correctional facilities, could anyone doubt the huge potential audience? Compared to this kind of reality TV, programs like "Survivor" would look tame. That's why I urge you to videotape all assaults and market them worldwide.

According to John Markowitz, president of New York-based Spartacus Entertainment, my idea "has the potential to be immensely profitable..." Markowitz told me that "Tough man competitions in New York and Europe have been sensational...customers paid fifty dollars and up for tickets and they were always sold out." He emphasized that UFC subscriptions jumped from 80,000 to 350,000 in two years, and added: "There's a lot of money to be made in this business; however, there are obstacles you will have to overcome. Particularly opponents who will seek to ban your events the same way they outlawed the UFC's."

Chief among the accusations hurled at Markowitz and the UFC was that his events were nothing more than "human cockfights...savage, barbaric skirmishes that unraveled the moral fiber of humanity." The most vociferous critic was State Senator John Goodman (R-Manhattan) who stated: "This sport has no place in civilized society and I will do everything in my power to ensure it is banned forever." In an article published in the *Daily News* (October 28, 1985) Goodman said: "New York cannot and will not become a haven for this type of bloodthirsty activity." However, in Markowitz's opinion the Senator was motivated by political interests (it was an election year).

Political considerations aside, I believe Senator Goodman is out of touch with reality. Remember Corcoran State in California? Officers there pitted Black and Latino gang members against each other and wagered on the outcome. The fights were aptly described by the

Los Angeles Times as "blood sports." The special report said guards permitted several inmates to knife their enemies to death, whereupon they in turn were shot and killed by marksmen in the towers. Amazingly, each one of the triumphant warriors received a single bullet wound to the head. After the F.B.I. received complaints from prisoners about human rights violations at Corcoran, several officers were arrested, and ultimately convicted in Federal court. One, a captain suspected of being the mastermind of the brutalities, committed suicide before he was scheduled to go on trial.

The lessons of Corcoran were not lost on me and I incorporated them into my strategy. If citizens enjoyed seeing inmates battle each other, imagine watching officers get in on the act—not just at a distance, like the sharpshooters at Corcoran, but also close-up, using their clubs to break up fights, isolating and manhandling the combatants, recreating the days of massive retaliation at Attica. Toss in a bunch of gangs, lax security, incompetent personnel, lots of narcotics, plenty of weapons, and you have the whole recipe. The inmates will take care of the rest. Video cameras with zoom lenses would have to be positioned in strategic locations everywhere, especially in Special Housing Units, not to detect and prevent barbarity, but to exploit it.

I realize we will have to overcome massive protests, that liberal-minded bleeding hearts will say this is insane. But I'm convinced if prisoners are given the choice between dying and doing life, they will certainly choose death every time.

Skeptics may question the logic of my premise, but the fact is for some inmates the sorrow, the pain, the loss of freedom, and the separation from loved ones, is unbearable. I can attest to that having been behind bars for the better part of twenty years.

Joe Miceli is an inmate at Auburn Correctional Facility in Auburn, New York.

Why I Am Not a Cultural Anthropologist

continued from page 8

causations. It didn't really sound that way, but perhaps. Still, he is not the first first-rate cultural anthropologist to puzzle over how natural selection works. In his book *The Use and Abuse of Biology*, Sahlins (half-facetiously, one hopes) wonders how kin selection is supposed to work if native people cannot rationalize partial relatedness because they lack the linguistic terms to express fractional relationships. To this, Richard (*The Selfish Gene*) Dawkins sarcastically replied

A snail shell is an exquisite logarithmic spiral, but where does the snail keep its log tables; how indeed does it read them, since the lens in its eye lacks 'linguistic support' for calculating μ , the coefficient of refraction?¹³

Turner has produced a considerable body of thoughtful ethnographic and theoretical work over his career. His analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus* in terms of kinship and kin symbolism, for instance, is one of the most penetrating works of anthropologically-inspired literary criticism I'm aware of.¹⁴ Culturologists do the study of behavior a service when they express legitimate skepticism about overly enthusiastic genetic and biological reductionisms. I have expressed like skepticism about certain popular tenets among evolutionary psychologists, such as Stephen Pinker.¹⁵ Pinker, incidentally, has publicly supported Chagnon against Tierney's attack.

What is implicit in this entire sad episode, however, is a hostility to science far more virulent than the Edmonton B vaccine. In a characteristic passage, Turner and Sponsel write "Tierney's analysis is a case study of the dangers in science of the uncontrolled ego, of lack of respect for life, and of greed and self-indulgence" (emphasis added). It is interesting that the authors felt the need to add the words "in science" to their warning; one would think, after all, that an "uncontrolled ego" would be dangerous in any context, including among cultural anthropologists.

One of Neel and Chagnon's real crimes, it appears, is to dare to root an explanation for one aspect of Yanomamö social life at some

order of integration other than sociocultural. Chagnon, in particular, rankled the sensibilities of many culturologists by publishing a study in *Science* that purported to demonstrate (with statistics, no less) that Yanomamö who killed male enemies had more wives and children than those who hadn't.¹⁶ This would presumably give behaviorally dominant males a fitness advantage over others, promoting the frequency of certain behaviorally-relevant alleles in the population. Genetic relatedness, moreover, was claimed by Chagnon to be a better predictor of overall observed patterns of violence than political or cultural factors. In other words, Chagnon actually attempted to explain an aspect of Yanomamö social behavior, not just to describe it, celebrate it, or invoke its cultural ramifications.

Even worse, he stands accused of portraying the tribe in a state of "Hobbesian savagery," red in tooth and claw, and therefore of naturalizing/rationalizing extermination or dispossession of the Yanomamö. This runs despite the fact that Chagnon notes, in the very same *Science* paper, that notwithstanding the prestige attached in the tribe to the epithet *waiteri* ("fierce"), "I suspect the amount of violence in Yanomamö culture would not be atypical if we had comparative measures of precontact violence in other similar tribes." That any portrayal of "savagery" among the Yanomamö should scarcely excuse savagery against the Yanomamö seems not to have occurred to the immaculate advocates. As Gross and Leavitt observe in *Higher Superstition*, "The academic left's critiques of science have come to exert a remarkable influence. The primary reason for their success is not that they put forward sound arguments, but rather that they resort constantly and shamelessly to moral one-upmanship"¹⁷ (emphasis in original).

Depending on whom you read, Chagnon's sociobiological claims have been either falsified or supported. One clear flaw in his presentation is his failure to quantify degrees of relatedness not only within villages, but between them (fission appears to be a regular event at the village level); another is the general problem of evaluating whether this or that degree of relatedness may be behaviorally relevant. In short, Chagnon may well be wrong, and could

be proven so. This stands in stark contrast to the vague admixtures of Delphic lit-crit cant, political slogans, and *ad hoc* anecdote typical of much recent sociocultural writing.

Unfortunately, in some anthropological circles these that might just seem unflattering to native people must not only be disproved. Rather, their scientific advocates must be professionally destroyed. In accord with Tierney's highly tendentious, highly disputed version of what happened on the upper Orinoco in 1968, Turner and Sponsel write "He [Neel] insisted to his colleagues that they were only there to observe and record the epidemic, and that they must stick strictly to their roles as scientists, not provide medical help" (emphasis added). Inhuman sciences, indeed.

Efforts to address the questions that first animated anthropology, about the origin, evolution, and variety of human experience, have not vanished but only moved elsewhere. One model for this shift is the fissioning of Stanford University's department into a department of Anthropological Science and a Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology. Another is the process long underway at Cornell, where such fields as Psychology, Neurobiology and Behavior, Rural Sociology, and Human Development (among others) have steadily taken up many of the preoccupations of traditional anthropology. The joke may ultimately be on militant moralists like Turner and Sponsel: as they help render anthropology into a post-scientific enterprise, their field becomes less and less relevant beyond its own rapidly contracting horizon.

Nicholas Nicaastro is a doctoral student in Psychology at Cornell University. He is the producer of Science or Sacrilege: Native Americans, Archaeology and the Law, a video documentary distributed by the University of California Center for Media and Independent Learning. His second novel, *Between Two Fires*, will be published in Spring 2002 by McBooks Press.

Notes:

1. Turner, Terence, and Leslie Sponsel. (2000) <http://www.egroups.com/message/evolutionary-psychology/7180>. Downloaded 11/13/00.

2. Sahlins, M. (1995) *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, for Example*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 10-13.
3. Jay, Nancy. (1992) *Throughout Your Generations Forever*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, xxv-xxvi.
4. Geertz, Clifford. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 5, 43.
5. Cosmides, L. and J. Tooby (1992) "The Psychological Foundations of Culture," in *The Adapted Mind*. J. Berkow, et al., eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 19-136.
6. Cf. Krech, Shepard III (1999) *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
7. Turner, Terence. (2000) "Heart of Darkness," *The Bookpress*. Vol.10, No.7. 1, 11.
8. Hill, Kim (2000) <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/eldorado/kimhill.html>. Downloaded 11/13/00.
9. D'Antonio, M. (2000) "Napoleon Chagnon's War of Discovery," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*. 1/30/00.
10. Katz, S.L. (2000) <http://www.egroups.com/message/evolutionary-psychology/7341>. Downloaded 10/9/00.
11. Alberts, B. (2000) "Setting the Record Straight Regarding Darkness in El Dorado," <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/nas/nas>. Downloaded 11/13/00.
12. Ruby, Jay (1995) "Out of Sync: The Cinema of Tim Asch," *Visual Anthropology Review*. Vol.11 No.1 Spring 1995.
13. Dawkins, R. (1995) "Reply to Lucy Sullivan," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*. B, 349, 219-24.
14. Turner, T. (1969) "Oedipus: Time and Structure in Narrative Form," in *Forms of Symbolic Action (Proceedings of the 1969 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society)*. R.F. Spencer, ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 26-68.
15. Nicaastro, N. (1998) "How Pinker's Mind Works," *The Bookpress*. Vol.7, No.9, 6-7, 11.
16. Chagnon, N. (1988) "Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare in a Tribal Population," *Science*. 239, 985-92.
17. Gross, P. and N. Leavitt (1994) *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 8.

Welcome to the Funhouse

continued from page 1

ribly dangerous. But not always. Gordon also tells of Orlock the child-molester, lowest of the lowest of the low, who wrote long, false, preachy stories and then one day produced a horribly vivid three-page account of his own childhood history of molestation, a daily ritual performed by his mother and her boyfriend. Gordon managed a few words about the effectiveness of understatement, but was then at a loss until the other students, putting Orlock's crime aside, came to his aid:

They knew, as I did not, what he needed: to hear that what had happened was not his fault, and that he had, with regard to the horrors he'd endured, absolutely no cause for shame... They spoke in hushed tones about the terrible things that they, too, had endured when they were children. They told Orlock it must've been rough. They praised him for the courage it took to

write his story, and they told him how powerful it was. They quietly talked about the harshness of life, and told Orlock how sorry they were.

There is a lot more in this short book. A convicted rapist tells us what prison life is like for him, and we hear from a man who worked through the violent anger that gained him constant beatings and years in solitary. We get Gordon's fictionalized account of Mona, the beautiful librarian. She was a wonderful listener; smuggled in home-baked cookies; took pleasure in wearing clothes that gave pleasure to the inmates; but then when something inevitably went wrong, she disappeared, "transported, like an angel, to the other side," leaving her inmate worshippers in darkness.

I have spent some time working with prison inmates on reading and writing, and just about everything in *The Funhouse Mirror* rings true for me.

I know what he means and what he doesn't

mean when he describes himself an addict, and calls his prison classroom a true home. (I too, God help my innocent soul, have imagined receiving a blatantly unjust sentence for some admirable act of civil disobedience and spending a few weeks at Auburn, making friends in the yard, reading Gramsci and Bonhoeffer in my cell at night, being remembered with love and respect after my character is utterly vindicated and I am forced to return to Cayuga Heights.) But as a user's manual, the book seems to me to have two main shortcomings.

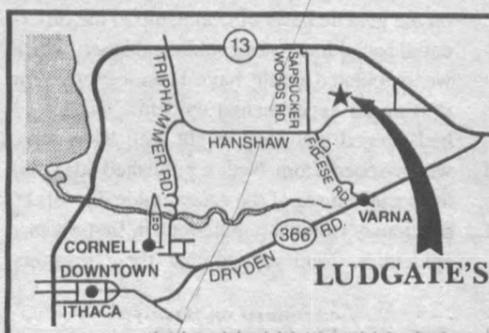
First, Gordon's inmate students are all open and honest, friends, and his failures with them are failures of empathy. But prisoners more or less have to be several people at once. The student who has gotten on top of things, whose writing wrestles in a serious way with hard questions about his past life and present condition, whom you know well and have come to love, may also be a con artist, cynical and manipulative about the opportunity your

class represents, and incapable of keeping these two equally genuine selves in clear and distinct perspective.

Second, the prison guards in *The Funhouse Mirror* are apt to be bigoted, sadistic, lazy or just incompetent. COs deserve a better break. They do high-stress, dangerous, often nasty work, in return for benefits and a pension, precious assets in Monroe, WA (or Auburn, or Marcy, or Malone). As Ted Conover puts it in *New Jack*, his recent chronicle of a year spent as a corrections officer at Sing Sing, they too are doing time.

But Gordon is angry, as he should be, and the lard-ass bureaucracy who have gutted prison education programs in the face of their own reports on its effectiveness, who have reduced "correction" and "rehabilitation" to meaningless terms, are out of reach. Read *The Funhouse Mirror* and you'll be angry too.

Pete Wetherbee is a professor in the English Department at Cornell University.



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Human Science, Pseudo-Science, and Anthropological Ethics in the Yanomami Controversy

continued from page 9

were caused, not by genetic susceptibilities to the diseases in question, but by social causes (whole families, adults and children, falling ill together, so that no one was available to help the others). After the first exposure, Neel argued, the survivors would be immune, and thus constitute a cadre of resistant individuals who could help children and others who had not yet been exposed. This is why, he argued, the second and later onsets of such diseases tend to be much less fatal than the first. Reasoning from this social explanation of differential morbidity in successive onsets of epidemic diseases over time, we hypothesized that headmen, with their many wives and large families, would be more likely to have someone in their households who might be relatively resistant to the disease or not fall ill at the same time, and thus remain able to give assistance, than common people with monogamous families. That might in turn mean that those with superior genetic indexes of innate ability would thus tend to have a higher rate of survivability in first onset epidemics than less highly endowed individuals. Higher genetic indexes of innate ability might thus turn out to confer more social immunity to such epidemics, in the form of better ability to survive the social breakdown and chaos that Neel emphasized played such a heavy role in first-contact epidemic disasters. This is in principle a testable hypothesis, and not such an implausible extrapolation from Neel's ideas as we knew them. It was an educated guess which we made in the absence of any plausible reason for such an experiment offered by Tierney in the galleys of the book that we had read. It is nevertheless irrelevant and doubtless wrong, as we are now happy to recognize, since it has become evident that Neel never had any idea of starting a real epidemic. As is clear from this explanation, however, the ideas that Nicaastro attributes to us on this topic—that resistance to any particular disease could be genetically linked to traits of leadership or that there might be a genetic correlation between immunity and hostility—played no part in our thinking.

In the course of his rebuttal of his misimpression of our misimpression of Neel's ideas about the possible relationship of headmanship to epidemic survivability, Nicaastro actually says something that I fully agree with, to wit that "we have very little evidence for direct genetic influence on complex human behaviors like leadership." Right! But where does that leave the selectionist project of sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists, who seem to depend on arguing for just such direct influences? A page after making the resoundingly correct assertion for which I have just given him credit, for example, Nicaastro recounts how

One of Neel and Chagnon's real crimes, it appears, is to dare to root an explanation for one aspect of Yanomami social life at some order of integration other than sociocultural [in other words, reduce it to an effect of genetics—T.T.]. Chagnon, in particular, rankled the sensibilities of many culturologists by publishing a study in *Science* that purported to demonstrate (with statistics, no less) that Yanomami who killed male enemies had more wives and children than those who hadn't. This would presumably give behaviorally dominant males a fitness [i.e., selective—T.T.] advantage over others, promoting the frequency of certain behaviorally-relevant alleles in the population. (Italics mine—T.T.)

Well, there it is again, by another name: Neel's index of innate ability, conceived as a set of "behaviorally relevant alleles" that promote "behavioral dominance," which in turn

translates into social leadership, which in turn bestows a selective (reproductive) advantage. Chagnon's contention that "genetic relatedness" is "a better predictor of overall observed patterns of violence than political or cultural factors," that Nicaastro touts as an "attempt to explain social behavior, not just describe it" rests on data, and selective manipulations of that data, that have been repeatedly challenged by critics, while supplementary data which Chagnon has promised would confirm his analysis and answer the criticisms has never appeared. This case, which sociobiologists and other selectionists have proclaimed as the prime example of a genetic reductionist account of social behavior, has for long been regarded outside their ranks as an egregiously flawed exercise in manipulated statistics and incomplete data.

Selectionists, following Chagnon's lead, have developed standardized rhetorical tactics to deflect such criticisms of their theoretical and empirical claims. Critics are "academic leftists" committed to Rousseauian sentimentalism about "noble savages," who are unable or unwilling to face the hard and unpleasant facts of the violent and aggressive behavior of primitive peoples revealed by objective scientific researchers like Chagnon. Nicaastro repeats this ideological canard at several points, beginning with his epigraph from Gross and Leavitt's conservative tract, *The Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and its Quarrels with Science*. Charging their critics with being politically correct leftists becomes a cover for alleging that it is they, the critics, who inject politics and ideology into what selectionists attempt to conduct as a politically neutral discussion of objective scientific issues. Tommyrot! It is the selectionists with their reductionist cult of science who habitually resort to ideological name-calling. They should not be allowed to avoid the clear implication their repeated charges that criticisms of their positions come from the academic left: namely, that they reciprocally identify themselves with the academic and political right.

Genetic reductionism, of the selectionist variety that identifies genes as innate properties of individuals, determining behavior independently of and prior to social, cultural, and environmental factors, is obviously congenial to the ideological framework of contemporary Neoliberalism and other ideological perspectives associated with the Right. The point is not new: it has been made by scientific critics of selectionist approaches like Gould and Lewontin, as well as anthropological critics like Sahlins. Nicaastro mentions these critics only to associate them with opponents of selectionism from "the academic left." This done, he makes no attempt to deal with their specific criticisms. This is politically neutral, non-ideological scientific discourse?

The selectionist charge that anthropological critics proceed from a naively sentimental conception of the good savage is instantly recognizable as a travesty within anthropology itself, but effective as propaganda among non-anthropologists, journalists, and the selectionist faithful themselves. It serves as a rhetorical basis for the pet selectionist allegation that "cultural anthropologists" resist biological reductionist theories of social behavior because they are Idealists who hold a "tabula rasa" conception of human nature, whereby all cultural and social behavior is one hundred percent "culturally constructed." Nonsense. There are some anthropologists who fit this description, but many others who concern themselves with social processes of appropriation and transformation of the body, psychological capacities, and the natural environment, all recognized as in varying degrees independent (extra- or infra-cultural) realities.

This charge that social-cultural anthropolo-

gy has degenerated into sentimental Idealism is directly connected to the allegation of Nicaastro and other selectionist ideologues that the discipline has turned itself into a "well-meaning consensus" that suppresses any anthropological approach "that takes knowledge as its primary value" and demands the destruction of the reputations and careers of any who dare to speak up for scientifically correct but politically incorrect truth (in other words, "scientific" selectionists). This paranoid projection returns us to the master-trope of the Manichaean struggle between true science and the anthropological Other with which we began. Through this ideological filter, Nicaastro views the controversy over Tierney's book, including my review in *The Bookpress*, my memo with Sponsel, and the criticisms of Chagnon by many anthropological colleagues, and discovers that "the entire sad episode" is motivated by "a hostility to science more virulent than the Edmonston B vaccine." In support of this interpretation he cites a passage from Sponsel's and my memo that he claims we wrote, but which is actually a quotation from a disgusted chemist warning about the danger of "uncontrolled ego [and] lack of respect for life" in science (not of science).

Nicaastro, in sum, is fundamentally mistaken about the reasons for the controversy. It is not about "hostility to science" but the ethics of research, and the responsibility for the damage that has been done to the Yanomami by those who have studied, filmed, and reported about them. Nicaastro's misattribution and misreading of the quoted passage is emblematic of this larger misunderstanding.

He is not alone. A remarkable feature of the vast outpouring of e-mail messages and postings by selectionist defenders of Neel and Chagnon over the past two months is that virtually none have mentioned or attempted to deal directly with how the Yanomami have suffered from the actions and representations of those who have conducted research among them. Like Nicaastro, the authors of these messages have been exclusively preoccupied with defending the scientists, and their version of "science," against critics seen as primarily motivated by anti-scientific views or misunderstandings. In this discourse, the vindication of science and scientists becomes implicitly assimilated with the dissipation of the issue of Yanomami suffering and the reasons for it. If the critical allegations against the researchers can be refuted, then the questions about the effects of their actions on the Yanomami can be made to go away, at least as matters of concern to us.

"Science" has thus become, for the selectionist side of this controversy, a rhetorical trope for dissolving ethical issues, together with their political and ideological implications. This tropic use of "science" is epitomized by the attempt by selectionist defenders of Neel and Chagnon to use Tierney's gaffe about the vaccine possibly causing the measles epidemic to discredit his entire book, ninety percent of which actually deals with completely different issues, mostly related to Chagnon's activities and their effects on the Yanomami. Far from being merely figments of Tierney's journalistic scandal-mongering, or worse, out-and-out lies, as numerous selectionists have been charging on the net and at the recent Anthropology Meeting in San Francisco, most of these actions and events were already common knowledge among those who have worked among the Yanomami as anthropologists, missionaries, journalists, medical personnel or government functionaries—not to mention the Yanomami themselves, who are rapidly becoming more vocal in their own behalf—long before the appearance of Tierney's book. The American Anthropological Association at its recent meeting in San Francisco refused to be bull-

dogged into dropping its plans for an investigation of the ethical and human rights issues raised by these other episodes and actions; planning for the specific form of this investigation is under way as I write.

The harm that the Yanomami have suffered is real. Over a period of thirty years, Chagnon used methods to extract culturally taboo data and blood samples from Yanomami that caused dissension and conflict between communities and between factions of the same community. These conflicts, according to anthropologist Brian Ferguson and others who have studied the political and historical record, sometimes led to the breakup of communities and to inter-village raiding.⁷ Chagnon's tactics included giving huge amounts of steel tools, the most esteemed presents, to one village or faction, thus stimulating jealousy and rivalry on the part of non-recipients; and deliberately lying to a village or faction that he had obtained the taboo names of their dead relatives from another village or faction, thus arousing anger and resentment that he would exploit to get the village or faction in question to give up the names of the deceased ancestors of the other group, and so on *ad infinitum*. After Chagnon got his data and departed, the villagers were left with bitter resentments that could last for years and provoke open conflicts. Chagnon also used bullying and intimidation, brandishing weapons and shooting off firearms to make the Yanomami willing to give him information. The effectiveness of these tactics owed much to Chagnon's ability to exploit the great discrepancy between his resources and those of the Yanomami. In so many words, he exploited a colonial situation as leverage to extract information in ways that disrupted the cultural values and social relations of the people among whom he worked, in the process doing lasting damage to the stability and peace of their communities. The main authority for these allegations are the writings of Chagnon himself. One does not need to be a "left-wing academic" or an "anti-science culturologist" to agree that these tactics may raise questions of research ethics. Many of those who have expressed concern over the ethics of these field methods, as well as the ethical issues arising from Chagnon's statements and silences concerning Yanomami leaders, NGOs, and territorial rights discussed earlier, are also committed to science as they understand it. Ethical issues should be a common ground on which scientists and humanists, conservatives and progressives, can agree. Nicaastro to the contrary, there is no intrinsic opposition between anthropological humanism and anthropological science. Here, if anywhere, is the real parallelism between the issues raised by the Sponsel-Turner memo and the anthropology department's insistence that it is both a science and a humanistic discipline.

Notes:

1. Ingold, Tim. "The Poverty of Selectionism." *Anthropology Today*, vol. 16, no. 3. 1-2.
2. Ibid. 2.
3. Ibid. 2.
4. Ibid. 2.
5. Turner, Terence and Leslie Sponsel. (2000) http://www.egroups.com/message/evolutionary_psychology/7180.
6. Turner, Terence. Letter to Dr. Samuel Katz. 09/29/2000. http://www.egroups.com/message/evolutionary_psychology/7180.
7. Ferguson, R. Brian. (1995) *Yanomami Warfare: A Political History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

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Janus Dreams

Jason Cons

Looking Backward 2000-1887

by Edward Bellamy

Viking, 2000.

\$11.95, Softcover.

That fabric of times that approach one another, fork, are snipped off, or are simply unknown for centuries, contain all possibilities. In most of those times, we do not exist; in some, you exist but I do not; in others, I do and you do not; in others still, we both do. In this one, which the favouring hand of chance has dealt me, you have come to my home; in another, when you come through my garden you find me dead; in another, I say these same words, but I am an error, a ghost.

—Jorge Luis Borges "The Garden of the Forking Paths"

As the political rhetoric of the presidential campaign dissolves into Florida's post-election disaster it is tempting to imagine an alternate vision of the year 2000. What alternate threads of time would lead to a messianic 21st century? An almost infinite number of possibilities present themselves. What if either of the two major parties was able to nominate a candidate who could have better galvanized the issues in this election? What if Gore had been more able to run on Clinton's record? What if Nader had been a more (or less) viable candidate. While such simple questions are inevitable, the most appealing imaginations are of America with an entirely different political and social landscape. It is an interesting time to re-visit Edward Bellamy's utopian socialist vision of the year 2000.

Re-reading *Looking Backward* toward the end of the year it takes as its subject is a somewhat strange experience. While texts written in the past about the present are always suggestive of comparison—How clear was the author's vision? What imagined technologies have come into being? Is the social landscape recognizable in any way?—Bellamy's novel still leaves the reader with an eerie sense of pullulation and possibility. *Looking Backward* feels—against the backdrop of partisan maneuvers that determine this country's future, a cooling information-based economy, a landscape of environmental degradation, and the ever-increasing economic stratification of our population—like a seductive reminder of the promise of American democracy.

Looking Backward is more manifesto than novel. It has minimal plot and is primarily a vehicle for Bellamy to dialogically air his plans for social reform. In short, it is the story of an upper-class Rip Van Winkle, Edward West, who falls asleep in 1887 in the midst of the "labor wars" of the late 19th century and wakes up in the remarkably changed world of the early 21st. There he discusses at length with his benevolent host, Dr. Leete, the foundational and ethical policies that are the basis of a new American socialist-democratic para-

dise. West falls in love with Leete's daughter who, it turns out, is the great-granddaughter of West's nineteenth-century fiancée. After a climactic scene of revelation and declared love, West goes to bed only to awaken back in his proper century, utterly changed in the way he views his contemporaries and the privileges afforded his class.

Bellamy uses this simple canvas to argue his visions for reform in great detail. The society in the year 2000 that West discovers has apparently solved all of the worst problems and injustices of 19th-century industrial capitalism. There is no poverty, crime, or gender inequality (well, in fact, there is some gender inequality). The world is in a state of perfect social democracy, with the means of production entirely owned by a benevolent state. There is bountiful surplus and everyone has such equitable access to cash and commodities that the social drive toward consumption, with all of its concomitant class distinctions, has died.

Hugely influential when it was published—Charles Beard, John Dewey, and Edward Weeks all independently ranked *Looking Backward* next to *Capital* as the most important work published since 1885—Bellamy's novel influenced the likes of William Allen White, Eugene Debs, and Thorstein Veblen, as well as inspiring the foundation of numerous "Bellamy Clubs" devoted to discussing the propagation of Bellamy's ideas. And while Bellamy certainly cannot lay claim to the kind of influence Marx has had on the 20th century, the novel did go far toward providing a platform and popular base for the Populist Party.

Looking Backward is not a novel of prescient technological vision. In an economy increasing focused on information, Bellamy's idea of hot meals delivered to the house by "tube" seems rather quaint. In fact, the only technological innovations recognizable to the reader are the gradual disappearance of cash in favor of "credit cards" and the popularization (although not the eclipse) of radio. Yet Bellamy's failure to focus on technological advancements makes *Looking Backward* all the more compelling. The reader is not distracted by fantastical visions of space travel, time machines, or journeys to the center of the earth, but is left to focus on Bellamy's social arguments.

Looking Backward is a simultaneous critique of the industrial society in which Bellamy lived and a dream for a better future. Bellamy's vision, like Marx's, is rooted in the belief that the demise of capitalism is rooted in the very injustices and contradictions inherent in its constant struggle for accumulation. In fact, his version of utopian socialism is based on the tendency of capitalist industry toward monopoly, a reality that was already apparent in Boston in 1888. In Bellamy's version of the future, an ongoing series of mergers finally results in the formation of a single, monolithic company. This ur-corporation is subsequently taken over by (or becomes) the government which, for some unclear reason, undertakes a series of social programs that lead to the eradication of, among other things,

child labor, economic disparity, conspicuous consumption, bankers, lawyers, and many of the other "evils" of capitalist society.

Against the backdrop of the Haymarket riots and numerous other labor conflicts of Bellamy's day, he paints a rather placid picture of the transformation from capitalism to socialism. Where, for Marx, the translation from capitalism to socialism is imagined as an explosive, violent revolution—the inevitable product of a society that can no longer bear its own contradictions and disparities—for Bellamy the utopia of the year 2000 evolves gradually, peacefully, and equitably. *Looking Backward's* 21st-century America isn't a post-apocalyptic vision of class warfare, but rather a simple fulfillment of the promises of democratic society.

The new system guarantees equal education for all, with additional training available for those who choose such fields as medicine. Tenure in "the industrial army"—Bellamy suggestively organizes his social system around recognizably military metaphors—is limited to the ages of 21–45. All citizens are encouraged to find the career that they are most "suited" for. Universal respect is held for all professions and none incur special favors, privileges, or rights. There is no such thing as an unskilled, under-paid workforce (all citizens serve a mandatory three years as menial laborers at the beginning of their service). Higher-level administrative offices, such as judges and government officials, are voluntary positions democratically chosen from a group of volunteers who willingly serve beyond their 45th year. Citizens are paid annual allowances that they can spend in whatever way they choose. These allowances are so ample that unused portions are often re-absorbed into a general surplus. While not all countries have adopted this system of government, most have and soon all will. Governments freely and easily share resources and trade without barriers (Bellamy doesn't anticipate any of the more insidious side-effects of neo-Liberalism or the imperfections in capital, trade, and labor flows inherent in the new "global" economy).

While it's extremely hard to imagine a social system for the common good growing out of absolute monopoly control (especially a non-hierarchical, socialist utopia), Bellamy's vision takes the form of a critique of society which, despite the shift from an industrial to a service-based economy, still rings true. Take, as a simple example, Bellamy's critique of shopping. In response to a query regarding how the women of the 19th-century leisure class navigated through thousands of shops, all containing the same basic commodities, West is forced to admit:

This class had made a science of the specialties of the shops, and bought at advantage, always getting the most and best for the least money. It required, however, long experience to acquire this knowledge. Those who were too busy, or bought too little to gain it, took their chances and were generally unfortunate, getting the least and worst for the most

money. It was the merest chance if persons not experienced in shopping received the value of their money.

When questioned why 19th-century society was willing to tolerate such inconveniences West concedes, "It was like all our social arrangements.... You can see their faults scarcely more plainly than we did, but we saw no remedy for it."

Looking Backward is more than a fictional portrait of an abstract utopia. In great detail, Bellamy describes the checks and balances necessary to ensure social democracy. For example, when West raises the concern that the state-owned media must necessarily be an ideological tool of government, Dr. Leete explains the system whereby a newspaper's (and logically a periodical's, television station's, or Internet content provider's) editors are elected by subscribers who bear the full costs of publishing, production, and distribution. No new periodical is founded unless it has a broad enough popular base to pay for its own expenses.

Similarly, publishing houses are required to publish any manuscript submitted to them. They do this under the agreement that the author foots the initial expenses of publication. Royalties are paid to authors in the form of time allotments excusing them from service in the industrial army. The more successful the author, the larger the royalties and the more time he or she has to write.

What makes reading *Looking Backward* such an eerie experience, is ultimately the similarity between Bellamy's vision and the political promises and rhetoric of our own time. As Dr. Leete observes toward the end of *Looking Backward*, "If I were to give you, in one sentence, a key to what may seem the mysteries of our civilization as compared with that of your age, I should say that it is the fact that the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man, which to you were but fine phrases, are, to our thinking and feeling, ties as real and as vital as physical fraternity." The power of such a statement is clear, but, as a quick look at the campaign rhetoric of both major party campaigns will show, this is the fundamental promise of politics in America. For all its differences, the argument of *Looking Backward* is most powerful in its easy recognizability and appeal to our basic political instincts.

As the aftermath of the 2000 elections grows more and more absurd, it is tempting to view *Looking Backward* in all its utopian possibility as a model, a goal for a society infinitely more equitable than our own. It's useful to remember, however, that the world of *Looking Backward* and the political landscape it portrays as an inevitability is only one possible version of late capitalism. In most versions, such a utopian state is an impossible fantasy; in others it remains a bright hope; in still other's Bellamy's vision is warped into a repressive police state; but today it remains an unfortunate, hopeful ghost.

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Porto Alegre—A City Worth Watching

continued from page 3

One can imagine radically democratic administrations reversing power in the city to block the favoring and reinforcing of privilege. A truly democratic administration will interfere with the strict solidarity of economic and political power; it will reduce private appropriation of resources; it will promote the city as a collective and socially dynamic body. In other words, a city's administration can cease to honor the many processes used to their advantage by dominant urban groups. We refer to real estate profits, but also to other forms of private appropriation of public resources—

corruption, privatization of scenic and environmental resources, allocation of infrastructure, and property value increases resulting from public investments.

Political and symbolic resources are normally monopolized by those who control economic power. These resources, themselves, constitute objects of conflict and appropriation. A reconfigured, publicly oriented city administration will permit access to traditionally excluded groups, with consequences that cannot yet be measured or adequately evaluated.

The essence of this urban experiment in Porto Alegre emerges not so much directly in

the economic market as in new experiences with power, new political actors, and new values and meanings for the conditions of its citizens. This suggests that the experience of Porto Alegre can be adequately understood and measured only if we consider the symbolic and political dimensions. Even as they weigh their expectations against stagnating macroeconomic conditions, people can find hope in new visions of what the city might be. These new forms of exercising power affecting land use and governance issues give city residents a new capacity to participate directly in the decisions that determine their lives.

Further Reading on Porto Alegre:

Rebecca N. Abers. *Inventing Local Democracy: Grassroots Politics in Brazil*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000.

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