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THE PROBLEMS OF THE PICTURESQUE: NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN TRAVELERS IN BRITAIN

"If the picturesque were banished from the face of the earth," Henry James wrote in 1875, "I think the idea would survive in some typical American heart."[1] Nowhere is this connection between the picturesque and the American heart more plainly revealed than in the tradition of nineteenth-century American travel writing on Britain. James's own collection of British travel essays, published in 1905 as *English Hours*, merits particular attention as a work that both convincingly records the beauties of the British landscape and acknowledges how highly problematic the picturesque was for American travelers of the nineteenth century.

Derived from the debates around Edmund Burke's theory of aesthetics, and drawing its models from continental landscape painters of the seventeenth century, the picturesque had become, by the time James was a young man in the mid nineteenth century, a somewhat antique set of conventions for the arts. In poetry, painting, landscape gardening, and travel, the picturesque sensibility sought to create or describe the sort of landscapes that might have been framed over the signatures of Claude Lorraine or Nicolo Poussin.

Describing rural landscapes and recording the emotions and associations connected with them were, of course, a uniform convention in all the branches of nineteenth-century travel literature. But as James was aware, the conventions of the picturesque presented to the American traveler in Britain two special problems. The first of these was that as American tourism in Britain increased with the availability of inexpensive steamer passages in the 1840s, and as publishers' lists swelled with each year's new batch of transatlantic travels, the fashion of picturesque description came to seem more and more trite. How was one to do justice to the very real attractions of the British landscape without perpetrating what had become a very well-worn literary cliché?

James and many of his predecessors on the British scene also recognized that to examine the country through the picturesque eye was to enact a sentimental reduction of British reality. American travel literature on Britain is permeated with a distinctive cultural ambivalence. In his *Gleanings: England* (1837) James Fenimore Cooper described this ambivalence as a feeling of "longing and distrust"—a longing, that is, for a sense of connectedness with the cultural traditions of the Old Home, and a republican distrust of Britain's political traditions.[2] This ambivalence was particularly vexing for travel writers committed to the conventions of picturesque description. To pay tribute to the picturesque merits of the British landscape, many of them recognized, was to ignore those human and political realities of the scene that most inspired distrust in the republican sensibility.

It is for these reasons that the picturesque invites special examination in the tradition of nineteenth-century American travel writing on Britain. This tradition, from Irving's sentimental *Sketch Book* (1820) to James's urbane *English Hours*, embraces a very large number of works by writers both canonical and deservedly forgotten. In virtually all of them, the picturesque appears as a richly problematic element. To understand this element, and especially to understand the broadened sense in which American travelers defined the term itself, it is necessary to survey briefly the eighteenth-century origins of the term.

The three most important writers in eighteenth-century discussions of the picturesque were Edmund Burke, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight. Price maintained that the picturesque was a *tertium quid* supplementing Burke's categories of the sublime

[1] *Transatlantic Sketches* (1875; rpt. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1972) 232.

[2] *Gleanings in Europe: England*, ed. Robert Spiller (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930) 9.

and the beautiful. The sublime, according to Burke, is to be found in objects exhibiting the qualities of magnificence, immensity, and obscurity. It affects the human instinct for self-preservation with a "sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror."[3] The beautiful is manifest in objects characterized by smoothness, delicacy, and gradual variation of form and hue. It operates upon the social instinct, exciting feelings of sympathy, ambition, and imitation (9). According to Price, the characteristics of the picturesque existed objectively in a landscape as did the features of the sublime and the beautiful for Burke. The picturesque, as Price identifies it, is manifest in roughness, sudden variation, irregularity, and intricacy. It excites in the observing eye a sense of curiosity and, embodied in a varied natural scene, "corrects the languor of beauty, or the tension of sublimity."[4]

The picturesque for Knight was not so much an objective quality existing in a scene, but a manner of seeing nature with an eye educated in the compositional principles of seventeenth-century landscape painting.[5] Knight maintained that appreciation of the picturesque involves a train of association between encountered objects and the works of art in which they are idealized. Picturesque objects "recall to the mind the imitations, which skill, taste, and genius have produced; and these again recall to the mind the objects themselves, and show them through an improved medium—that of the feeling and discernment of a great artist" (Hipple 261). Through this emphasis on association Knight exerted a great influence on subsequent generations of enthusiasts.

One such enthusiast was the Reverend William Gilpin, the prototype of the picturesque traveler. Through his many books of travel in rural Britain, Gilpin popularized the figure of the gentleman aesthete in pursuit of scenic prospects. Gilpin's aesthetic was that of the Claude glass, of landscape composed, framed, and reduced for the traveler's pen and pencil. He wrote that "searching after effects . . . is the general intention of picturesque travel."[6] Through his books and prints, Gilpin not only presented captured effects, but provided a detailed set of instructions as to how the picturesque was to be identified and stalked. He is minute and voluminous on the values of chiaroscuro and symmetry, on foreground and the placement of figures in the landscape to be encountered. And he provides travelers with an intellectual and emotional protocol for their reactions to that landscape.

Before the scene, travelers must bring to bear their knowledge of compositional taste: "We examine what would amend the composition: how little is wanting to reduce it to the rules of our art. . . . Or we may compare the objects before us with objects of the same kind:—or perhaps we compare them with the imitations of art. From all these operations of the mind there results great amusement." After this amusement Gilpin prescribes a general accession to picturesque sentiment:

> We are most delighted when some grand scene, tho' perhaps of incorrect composition, rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought—when the *vox faucibus haeret*: and every mental operation is suspended. In this pause of intellect; this *deliquium* of the soul, an enthusiastic sensation of pleasure overspreads it, previous to any examination by the rules of art.
>
> (49)

If Gilpin's enthusiasm for captured effects was perpetuated by nineteenth-century American travelers, the body of his compositional prescriptions was not. Americans never wrote of the values of foreground, symmetry, and chiaroscuro that occupy Gilpin. They were concerned only with recording the enthusiastic sensation those elements were supposed to confer. Neither were the Americans concerned with the closely reasoned definitions of the picturesque over which Knight and Price debated, and which still informed British usage of the term during the nineteenth century. Americans used the word broadly and without reference to any formal system of aesthetics.

[3] *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968) 57.

[4] W. J. Hipple, *The Sublime, the Beautiful and the Picturesque* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1957) 204.

[5] Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Putnam, 1927) 69.

[6] *Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty, on Picturesque Travel and on Sketching Landscape, with a Poem on Landscape Painting* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1803) 41.

When the term appears in the same work, even on the same page, as the terms "sublime" and "beautiful," the American betrays no interest in the debate about those categories that stimulated so many eighteenth-century minds.

When William Dean Howells, for example, wrote about Sheffield in his *Seven English Cities* (1909), he uses the term to record an impression of the city's valley of foundries and smokestacks:

> It was really like a forest, or like thick-set masts of shipping in a thronged port; or the vents of tellurian fires, which send up their flames by night and their smoke by day. It was splendid, it was magnificent, it was insurpassably picturesque.[7]

Howells seems to be well aware of the term's imprecision. He seeks to convey his impression of the foundries by displaying the impoverishment of his vocabulary before them. He pretends that he has no word for the scene but the tired, aesthetic catch-all: "picturesque." It is also significant that Howells describes an urban panorama as picturesque. The picturesque of the eighteenth century was a vision of rural and wild nature. Gilpin wrote that the traveler will always be "disgusted with the formal separations of property—with houses, and towns, the haunts of men, which have much oftener a bad effect on landscape than a good one" (56). At Sheffield, then, Howells uses the term to describe a scene which Price, Knight, or Gilpin would have designated as something between the sublime and the disgusting.

Another example of the term's doing service to describe industrial Britain sheds some light on just what Americans did mean by "picturesque." An episode from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (1854) presents the author and her party approaching Glasgow on a night train from Liverpool. Through their windows, they saw "what we supposed to be a castle on fire—great volumes of smoke rolling up, and fire looking out of arched windows."[8] The travelers imagined themselves to be witnessing a latter-day conflict among the Scots clans and amused themselves with appropriate allusions to Scott and Burns, before they realized what they were really seeing:

> So, after all, in these peaceful fires of the iron-works, we got an idea how the country might have looked in the old picturesque times, when the Highlanders came down and set the Lowlands on fire. . . . To be sure, the fires of the iron foundries are much less picturesque than the old beacons, and the clink of hammers than the clash of claymores; but the most devout worshiper of the middle ages would hardly wish to change them.

Here, again, the spectacle described hardly conforms to what eighteenth-century aesthetics would describe as picturesque. But Stowe, like many of her countrymen in Britain, uses the term not so much in reference to the character of an observed landscape, as to the overlay of historic and poetic association suggested by that landscape. The eighteenth-century theoreticians believed that association joined with purely objective elements in rendering a scene picturesque. American travelers, on the other hand, used "picturesque" as a shorthand term for the associations that made a scene interesting regardless of its objective qualities. "Picturesque," then, came to describe those places where associations to British literature and legend were strongest, those places, in other words, where encountered Britain conformed most closely to the Britain that Americans knew through books.

Because "picturesque" could be used by these travelers as an all-embracing term to convey associational interest, it was not confined simply to discussions of landscape. In Irving's *Sketch Book* it occurs less frequently in reference to landscape than to the list of British experiences—moral, personal, and historical—that he took as his material. A characteristic use of the term occurs in the sketch on "Westminster Abbey," as Irving pauses to examine the tomb of a crusader there:

> . . . one of those military enthusiasts who so strangely mingled religion and romance and whose exploits form the connecting link between fact and fiction, between the history and the fairy tale. There is something extremely picturesque in the tombs of these adventurers, decorated as

[7] *Seven English Cities* (New York: Harper's, 1909) 31.

[8] *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (London: Sampson and Low, 1854) 1: 37.

Enthusiasm."[14] Such a tourist, Hawthorne felt, was to be preferred to one whose enthusiasm carried him away into stereotyped gushing over the picturesque.

Hawthorne liked to deflate the conventions of the picturesque with comedy. Frequently, he sets up scenes apparently ripe for sentimental rapture, then resumes his guise as the "Tourist without Imagination or Enthusiasm" by undercutting them with some comically mundane detail. On a visit to Lichfield Cathedral, Hawthorne watches as the choristers leave the chancel at the end of their singing. The boys are dressed in long white robes and seem to Hawthorne "cherubs . . . created on purpose to hover between the roof and the pavement of that dim, consecrated edifice, and illuminate it with divine melodies."[15] The build-up is exquisite, preparing us for further enthusiasm on the picturesque merits of the scene:

> All at once, however, one of the cherubic multitude pulled off his white gown, thus transforming himself before my eyes into a commonplace youth of the day, in modern frock-coat and trousers of a decidedly provincial cut. This absurd little incident, I verily believe, had a sinister effect in putting me at odds with the proper influences of the Cathedral, nor could I quite recover a suitable frame of mind during my stay there.

The "proper influences" of Lichfield Cathedral, aesthetic and moral, had been amply described by scores of travelers before Hawthorne. By lingering over this "absurd little incident," Hawthorne avoids adding one more passage of conventional enthusiasm to an already overwritten genre.

In *English Notebooks* Hawthorne similarly imposes the mundane upon the picturesque. At Stirling Castle he is happy to notice a painted "Canteen" sign in the courtyard (525). Outside a government building on Regent street, he notes a pair of immaculately uniformed redcoats. Their presence strikes him as an agreeably "picturesque circumstance," but he enjoys the thought that their carbines are without ammunition and that their function has been rendered ornamental by the telegraph (205).

Harriet Beecher Stowe was as much aware as Hawthorne of how hollow conventional raptures over the picturesque had come to sound. But while Hawthorne chose to distance himself from the role of the passionate pilgrim, Stowe poked fun at this role by occasionally posing in it. Touring the country around Eton, Stowe's party set off in search of Gray's famous churchyard, a traditional stopping-place in the Americans' sentimental itinerary. Stowe records in *Sunny Memories* an account of the party's approach to the site, their emotions at the scenery and associations of the place, and their surprise at learning that they had been directed to the wrong churchyard:

> After all, imagine our chagrin on being informed that we had not been to the genuine churchyard. The gentleman who wept over the scenes of his early days on the wrong doorstep was not more grievously disappointed. However, he and we could both console ourselves with the reflection that the emotion was admirable, and wanted only the right place to make it the most appropriate in the world.
>
> (270)

The joke here, old as it is, points up the republican critique of the sentimental-aesthetic approach to Britain: to look for picturesque associations is to lose sight of where you actually are. And Stowe, as we shall see, was most sensitive to the politically reductive aspects of picturesque vision. In the episode at the churchyard, however, she identifies the triteness and limitations of the picturesque vision, without denying herself its pleasures. As would Henry James, Stowe playfully treats the old conventions as a musty literary fashion in which one might still dress up on occasion.

Throughout *English Hours* James flirts with the sentimental-aesthetic approach without ever quite declaring himself its votary. In the essay "In Warwickshire," for example, he describes the prospect from a house by the Avon—the lawns sloping down to the river, the spire of Shakespeare's church against the sky, the noble trees attending the house. The description closes with the sheep grazing beyond the river:

> These sheep were by no means mere edible

[14] "Some of the Haunts of Burns," *The Atlantic Monthly* 6 (1860): 384.

[15] *Our Old Home*, ed. William Charvat (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1973) 129.

> mutton; they were poetic, historic, romantic sheep; they were not there for their weight or their wool, they were there for their presence and their compositional value, and they visibly knew it.[16]

The sheep appear to have been reading William Gilpin. In their self-consciousness, they serve James by exposing the picturesque frame in which American writers had enclosed the English landscape. But if these knowing creatures tend to reveal the conventional aspects of James's description, they do nothing to diminish the fun of the passage. James is exercising a rhetorical sleight of hand. He acknowledges the weariness of the picturesque convention if only to excuse himself for a moment's surrender to it.

The same sleight of hand occurs in the essay "Chester." But here James employs a cynical foil character to help define his response to the picturesque. The essay opens on the city's old Roman wall:

> I have been strolling and restrolling along the ancient wall . . . with a certain friend who has been treating me to a bitter lament on the decay of his relish for the picturesque. 'I have turned the corner of youth,' is his ceaseless plaint; 'I suspected it, but now I know it—now that my heart beats but once where it beat a dozen times before, and that where I found sermons in stones and pictures in meadows . . . I find nothing but the hard, heavy prose of British civilization.'
>
> (36)

The passage underscores the kind of political reservations that many American travelers experienced in connection with the picturesque vision. If "the hard, heavy prose of British civilization" could be antithetical to aesthetic pleasure in the landscape, then an unconditioned appreciation of that landscape was the sign of political carelessness on the part of the traveler.

In this sense, the American attitude to the picturesque was a specifically politicized version of an argument John Ruskin advanced in *Modern Painters* (1847). He maintained that "the modern feeling of the picturesque, which, so far as it consists in a delight in ruin, is perhaps the most suspicious and questionable of all the characters distinctively belonging to our temper, and art."[17] He draws a distinction between what he calls the higher and lower picturesque in the visual arts. J.M.W. Turner, an artist of the higher calling, experiences a "communion of heart" with his subject; his intellect and sympathies are engaged by the scene before him. The practitioner of the lower picturesque merely "casts his eyes upon it feelinglessly":

> For, in a certain sense, the lower picturesque ideal is eminently a *heartless* one: the lover of it seems to go forth into the world in a temper as merciless as its rocks. All other men feel some regret at the sight of disorder and ruin. He alone delights in both; it matters not of what. Fallen cottage—desolate villa—blasted heath—mouldering castle—to him, so that they do but show jagged angles of stone and timber, all are sights equally joyful. Poverty, and darkness, and guilt, bring in their several contributions to his treasury of pleasant thoughts.

Ruskin has in mind the association, conventional since the time of Price and Knight, between scenes of ruin and the picturesque. He maintains that to delight in the romance of a Goldsmithian deserted village is to overlook the facts of human dispossession implicit in such a scene.

While many Americans—Irving, especially—perpetuated such "heartlessness" in their pursuit of picturesque effects, many more of them furthered Ruskin's argument and, in fact, recast it in a specifically republican vocabulary. For them, the pursuit of the British picturesque was "heartless" precisely because it obscured those facts about the country with which traveling republicans might best concern themselves—the facts of reform, of industrial urban poverty, and of class hierarchy and aristocratic privilege. James wrote that because Warwick Castle had been opened to the public, a tour of the place "amply satisfies the imagination without irritating the democratic

[16] *English Hours*, ed. Leon Edel (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981) 123.

[17] *Modern Painters* (1847; rpt. Philadelphia: Univ. Library Association, 1949) 4: 25.

conscience" (51). Rarely, though, did Americans find that the demands of the "democratic conscience" could be so easily satisfied in their travels. At the heart of their experience of Britain was a conflict between aesthetic and political response to the fields and parks and great houses of the land.

Anecdotes and expostulation revealing this clash became themselves one of the conventions of American travel books on Britain. Nathaniel Parker Willis, foreign correspondent for the *New York Mirror* and author of the fashionable travel book *Pencillings by the Way* (1836), responded thus to the gardens of Dalhousie Castle: "The labor and taste of successive generations can alone create such an Eden. Primogeniture! I half forgive thee."[18] On a visit to Blenheim, described in *Our Old Home*, Hawthorne divides his time between genuine enthusiasm for Capability Brown's gardens and invidious speculations about their titled owner. He imagines that the "besotted" Duke of Marlborough, "if in a condition for arithmetic, was thinking of nothing nobler than how many ten-shilling tickets had that day been sold" (177).

The clash between the British picturesque and the American democratic conscience forms the point of an episode in Melville's fourth novel, *Redburn* (1849), a largely autobiographical work based on Melville's first voyage as cabin boy to Liverpool in 1839. Horrified by the starvation and beggary among the poor of the Liverpool docks, young Wellingborough Redburn decides to visit the open country. "Who that dwells in America has not heard of the bright fields and the green hedges of England, and longed to behold them?"[19] In spite of what he had seen at Liverpool, Redburn believes there is a true "old England" that he has yet to experience, and after a long hike he declares: "I had found it at last—there it was in the country!" But as he goes to lie down in the grass of a particularly inviting park, Redburn reads a sign that sends him back to Liverpool in a fit of republican indignation. The park is presumably the holding of a titled personage; the sign warns trespassers away with the threat of "Man-traps and Spring-guns." For Redburn, like the travelers who followed him, the facts of British class privilege were always latent in even the most beguiling landscapes.

Near the end of the essay on Chester, James describes the political reductiveness of the picturesque vision with particular clarity. In his enumeration of the aesthetic "suggestions" of Chester Cathedral, he considers what a purely aesthetic response to Britain leaves out of the picture:

> They suggested too what is suggested in England at every turn, that conservatism here has all the charm and leaves dissent and democracy and other vulgar variations nothing but their bald logic. Conservatism has the cathedrals, the colleges, the castles, the gardens, the traditions, the associations, the fine names, the better manners, the poetry; Dissent has the dusky brick chapels in provincial by-streets, the names out of Dickens, the uncertain tenure of the *h*, and the poor *mens sibi conscia recti*.
>
> (42)

Here James states plainly the American version of the "heartlessness" that Ruskin observed in the conventions of the picturesque: a purely aesthetic appreciation of Britain could induce the traveler to a conservative bias of vision. To indulge a cultivated taste for the scenic in Britain, James recognized, was to fail in one's duty to the democratic conscience.

Much of the interest of nineteenth-century travel books on Britain comes from following the ways in which different travelers responded to the political dimension of the picturesque. Irving and Cooper responded by strategies of avoidance: Irving avoided the problem, and Cooper avoided the picturesque. In Hawthorne's British writings there is a sharp and unreconciled contrast between aesthetic taste and political principle. Stowe attempted some reconciliation of these extremes in *Sunny Memories* and met with only partial success. James, as we shall see, made the political aspect of the picturesque a central concern in his British travel writings and succeeded, to a greater degree than his predecessors, in producing a treatment of Britain both aesthetically convincing and politically astute.

The transatlantic popularity of Irving's *Sketch Book* derived in part from the carefully apolitical tone he maintained throughout. Irving's landscapes were only scenic. His polite Geoffrey Crayon persona confines himself mainly to the fox hunt, the country church, and the rural

[18] *Pencillings by the Way* (Philadelphia: Carey, 1836) 169.

[19] *Redburn*, ed. Harold Beaver (New York: Penguin, 1976) 286.

wedding. When he does consider the social and political associations of the scenery, it is with a cheerful and anglophilic conservatism. In the sketch on "Rural Life in England," Irving writes:

> The great charm . . . of English scenery is the moral feeling that seems to pervade it. It is associated in the mind with ideas of order, of quiet, of sober, well-established principles, of hoary usage and reverent custom. Everything seems to be the growth of ages of regular and peaceful existence. . . . All [the] common features of English landscape evince a calm and settled security, a hereditary transmission of home-bred virtues and local attachments which speak deeply and touchingly for the moral character of the nation.
>
> (70)

It was just these associations of "hoary usage and reverent custom" that most exercised the democratic conscience in Britain. But Irving never allowed his enthusiasm for the picturesque to be compromised by the questions of class, wealth, and government that occupied so many of his successors in Britain.

Cooper was as combative a republican as ever came to Britain. Most of his *Gleanings: England* is devoted to indicting the manners and social privileges of the British aristocracy and to describing the unsavory face of British urban poverty. Despite the strong interest in landscape evident in the continental volumes of his *Gleanings* series, Cooper seems to have taken pains to exclude the picturesque from his treatment of Britain. Out of the almost four hundred pages of the British volume, Cooper devotes only a single chapter to the rural beauties that enchanted his contemporaries and successors. Early in the book, Cooper assures his readers that "I shall not entertain you with many cockney descriptions of 'sights' " (35). He is as good as his word. His infrequent lapses into the familiar itinerary of the picturesque traveler are acknowledged with comic apology. He writes to his brother from London: "Perhaps I ought not to confess the weakness, but we have actually been to see the Tower" (284). British sightseeing, for Cooper, was a lapse from republican high seriousness.

Nathaniel Hawthorne shared Cooper's distrust of the conservative political institutions that presented such picturesque fronts to the American traveler. Hawthorne's situation was complicated, however, by an aesthetic response to Britain much deeper than Cooper's. Despite Hawthorne's presentation of himself as a "Tourist without Imagination or Enthusiasm," the superlatives in his British writings show how frequently the landscape caught him off guard. The bridge over the Doon he records in his *English Notebooks* as "absolutely the most picturesque object, in a quiet and gentle way, that I ever beheld" (510). York Cathedral is "the most wonderful work that ever came from the hands of man" (544). In *Our Old Home*, he speaks of the gardens at Nuneham Courtenay as "perfect as anything earthly can be" (191).

Throughout his British writings, Hawthorne attempts to analyze and justify these enthusiasms. Musing on Westminster Abbey in *The English Notebooks*, he asserts that the place wears "the glory of a declining empire. . . . Its beauty and magnificence are made up of ideas that are gone by" (246). In *Our Old Home* he recognizes that the "picturesque effect" of Warwick "is produced by the sudden cropping up of an apparently dead and buried state of society into the actual present" (70). If the picturesque is a sign of Britain's old age and her lapse from world power, then the American visitor, with his "Western love of change," may indulge a "tenderness for the stone-encrusted institutions of the mother country." His license comes from "the tendency of these hardened forms to stiffen her joints and fetter her ancles, in the race and rivalry of improvement" (60).

But try as he did to make the picturesque sentiment a legitimate one for the patriotic American, Hawthorne still experienced powerfully mixed feelings before the beautiful accumulations of the British establishment. Here, for example, is his response to Hampden Court recorded in the *Notebooks*:

> . . . it is impossible for even a Republican not to feel something like awe . . . for the institutions which are here represented, [and] the Sovereigns whose moral magnificence demand[s] such a residence. . . . If we view the matter in another way, to be sure, we may feel indignant that such dolt-heads, scamps, rowdies, and every way mean people as most of the English sovereigns have been, should inhabit these stately halls, and contrast its splendors with their littleness; but, on the whole, I readily consented within myself to be impressed for a moment with the feeling that royalty

has its glorious side. By no possibility can we ever have such a place in America.

(286)

The passage is tortuous because Hawthorne reverses himself three times here. Aesthetic enthusiasm and republican principle compete for primacy in his description of Hampden Court, and the result, as throughout Hawthorne's English writings, is an account of the British landscape that is ambivalent and contradictory.

Harriet Beecher Stowe also understood how politically suspect the emotions of the picturesque could be, and tried to find ways of accommodating them to a liberal American sensibility. At a reception given for her by an association of Glasgow laborers, Stowe was surprised to discover that the works of Walter Scott were held in less esteem by the Scots themselves than by her own countrymen. Stowe explains the disparity this way:

> The fact is, Scott belonged to the past, and not to the coming age. . . . He loved and worshipped in his very soul institutions which the majority of the common people have felt as a restraint and a burden. One might naturally get a very different idea of a feudal castle by starving to death in the dungeon of it, than by writing sonnets on it at a picturesque distance. Now, we in America are so far removed from feudalism, that we are at full liberty to appreciate the picturesque of it.
>
> (51)

The passage suggests a disturbing complacency on Stowe's part. Simply being a good American, the passage implies, justifies an unconsidered appreciation of Britain. A conscientious republican could enjoy the landscape from a "picturesque distance" and comfortably separate aesthetic and political responses to it.

Later in *Sunny Memories*, Stowe offers an approach to the picturesque that is somewhat less characterized by the self-congratulatory republican rhetoric of the above passage. She finds in the thoughts and conversation of her party on the road to Stratford an ideal for the enlightened American's response to the variety of British experience:

> Our ride along was a singular commixture of upper and lower currents of thought. Deep down in our hearts we were going back to English days; the cumbrous, quaint, queer, old, picturesque times; the dim, haunted times between cock-crowing and morning. . . . While, on the other hand, for the upper current, we were keeping up a brisk conversation on the peace question, on the abolition of slavery, on the possibility of ignoring slave-grown produce, on Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, and, in fact, on all the most wide-awake topics of the present day.
>
> (143)

It should be pointed out that in *Sunny Memories*, at least, Stowe's credentials as a wide-awake liberal are not so solid as she makes them out to be here. In the final portion of the book she produces a lengthy argument in defense of the Highland clearances, taking up a position quite inconsistent with the demands of the democratic conscience.[20] In the above passage, however, Stowe seeks to reveal herself as a traveler of liberal politics and to suggest that she may take pleasure in the British picturesque without compromising those politics. Yet Stowe's two "currents of thought"—the one alive to the aesthetic suggestions of the landscape, the other registering its political associations—never achieve a synthesis in *Sunny Memories*. The book as a whole is characterized by an uneasy alteration of tone; Stowe gushes over the picturesque and then apologizes for the gushing by such proclamations of republican virtue as those cited here. Stowe's performance in *Sunny Memories* is important, however, in its anticipation of James's response to the political dimension of the British picturesque. Like Stowe, James always puts before his readers a double response to the scenery, but his response has a balance and integrity Stowe never achieved.

Much of what has been written about James in Britain suggests that his was a sensibility immune to the sort of political reservations that

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[20]Stowe's argument was probably motivated by her friendship for the Duchess of Sutherland, whose father-in-law was involved with the inclosures of 1811. Stowe describes the clearances as "a great movement that passed through the Highlands of Scotland, when the advancing progress of civilization began to make it necessary to change the estates from military to agricultural establishments" (221).

Stowe, Hawthorne, and Cooper experienced. As the cosmopolitan aesthete, the passionate pilgrim, James is supposed to have sojourned in the Old Home without feeling a twinge of the democratic conscience. Christopher Mulvey has written that James "believed that the American traveler should make it his business to like what he found in England." The pilgrim who concerns himself too much with Britain's social realities "would miss his aesthetic opportunity."[21] Indeed, there are a few passages in *English Hours* where James appears quite willing to sacrifice political concerns to aesthetic interest. Studying the great houses in the "conservative county" of Warwickshire, he declares:

> I had a feeling, as I went about, that I should find some very ancient and curious opinions still comfortably domiciled in the fine old houses whose clustered gables and chimneys appeared here and there, at a distance, above their ornamental woods. Imperturbable British Toryism, viewed in this vague and conjectural fashion—across the fields and behind the oaks and beeches—is by no means a thing the irresponsible stranger would wish away; it deepens the very colour of the air; it may be said to be the style of the landscape.
>
> (120)

On a first reading, the passage seems worthy of Irving in its apparent subordination of the political to the aesthetic. But the language of the passage works to qualify the impression that James approves the political associations of the scene. These suggestions of Toryism are only beautiful when rendered vague by distance. Unlike Stowe, James recognized that the traveler who relishes them even at a "picturesque distance" is necessarily "irresponsible."

James was not such an irresponsible traveler. Neither did he simply make it his business to like what he found in Britain. James's achievement in *English Hours* was, rather, to register with great self-consciousness the full range of the conflict between the picturesque eye and the democratic conscience, which so many Americans experienced there. Indeed, this conflict is a central theme of *English Hours*. James consistently presents himself as struggling with the problem of the picturesque, as trying to achieve a balanced cognizance of the disparate suggestions in the landscapes before him. In the process, he reveals political sentiments inconsistent with the passionate pilgrim role in which he has been cast.

In his magnificent essay "London," James considers the editorial problems facing the writer who would describe the city. London presents an embarrassment of riches, a "confusion of brightness"; there is simply too much material for the traveler to master and describe. James must carefully select what he will present:

> Inevitably there must be a choice, and I know of none more scientific than simply to leave out what we may have to apologize for. The uglinesses, the 'rookeries,' the brutalities, the night aspect of many of the streets, the gin-shops and the hour when they are cleared out before closing—there are many elements of this kind which have to be counted out before a genial summary can be made.
>
> (18)

The "uglinesses" James mentions here comprise the "hard, heavy prose of British civilization" that in the essay on Chester he found to be incompatible with a relish for the picturesque. To produce a "genial summary" of the British scene, these blemishes must be cut out. But James's elision actually gives an underhanded emphasis to the darker aspects of the picture. The "genial summary" is sentimental and reductive, and James cannot make such a summary without forcefully registering those things he is tempted to leave out of the picture.

In the essay "North Devon," James contemplates a staple of picturesque enthusiasm, the thatched cottage, and indulges a familiar lyricism over the scene. The humble dwelling "seems to have been stationed there for no more obvious purpose than to keep a promise to your fancy"—especially if your fancy has had some prompting by Irving and Willis. James cannot help but acknowledge, however, that the picturesque thatch "covers, I suppose, not a little of the sordid side of life which the fancy likes to slur over" (53). Again, James presents himself as looking away from the ugly underside of the picture, only to tell us that he is doing so. By announcing the omission, James shows that

[21] *Anglo-American Landscapes* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983) 117.

even in picturesque Devonshire there are unsavory social realities to be found. What James is doing in these passages is calling attention to his own persona as it seeks to register both what is beautiful and what is politically disturbing in the encountered landscapes. The pretended omissions reveal what James calls the American's "imported consciousness" as it tries to make sense of the scenery (90).

Elsewhere in the book, James presents this dilemma through a different sort of pretense. In "London at Midsummer" he looks quite squarely at the "underside, the wrong side" of the British scene, but does so in the pretended role of a traveler who cares more for scenic "effects" than for the people in the landscape (80). One section of the essay, first published in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1877, concerns itself with the transients living in London's Green Park—a subject that would also occupy Jack London in *The People of the Abyss* (1902). London's book is written in the vocabulary of economics and class. His description of the sleepers in the park enables his clearly stated intention "to criticize the powers that be."[22] James, I am certain, intends a comparable indictment through his description of Green Park, but he makes it slyly, by wearing the mask of the sentimental pilgrim. James presents the tramps as if they were another picturesque feature of the landscape. "Their velveteen legs . . . [and] their purple necks and ear-tips" present "rich possibilities" to the hunter after scenic effects. They lie there with a "romantic attractiveness," like "stage-villains of realistic melodrama":

> The six square feet of brown grass are their present sufficiency; but how long will they sleep, whither will they go next and whence did they come last? You permit yourself to wish that they might sleep forever and go nowhere else at all.
>
> (92)

The passage is unsettling because it shams so convincingly the "heartlessness" that Ruskin condemned. By describing the tramps as if they were only scenery, James effectively caricatures the reductiveness of the picturesque traveler's vision and forces us to reconsider the hard fact of the tramps' dispossession. In his urbane way, James has advanced a criticism of the "powers that be" at least as disturbing as London's.

It is striking how frequently in *English Hours* James returns to images of the British underclass. He gives, of course, a full measure of attention to the cathedrals, gardens, and rural vistas that made up so much of his itinerary in Britain. But again and again James shows that his focus on these cannot be consistently maintained. Having promised us a "genial summary" of London, he still lingers over a "vision" encountered there one December: "a horrible old woman in a smoky bonnet, lying prone in a puddle of whiskey! She seemed to assume a kind of symbolic significance and almost frightened me away" (75). At Chester, James turns from description of the Cathedral and the Tudor houses to recall that "[t]he English landscape is always a 'landscape with figures'. And everywhere you go you are accompanied by a vague consciousness of the British child hovering about your knees and coat-skirts, naked, grimy, and portentous" (40). The "symbolic significance" these portentous figures held for James is certainly the same as that which comparable figures held for Cooper, Stowe, Hawthorne, and London. Ingrained in the American traveler's experience of Britain was the conviction that the nation's poor were an indictment of those political norms that, to use Cooper's idea, Americans distrusted despite their longing for a connection to the Old World. For all James's love of Britain and his long residence there, as a travel writer he can certainly be included in this tradition of distrust.

James saw with particular clarity the difficulty of reconciling political condemnation of Britain with the attractions of the picturesque, both as a fact of the landscape and as a literary convention. In *English Hours* he treats the problem of this reconciliation with a rare degree of self-consciousness by making his own persona an element of central interest in the book. The figure James presents in the essays is one very much in the grip of the dilemma that frustrated so many of his predecessors in Britain. We see him playing out variations on the old theme of the picturesque and the republican sensibility. He weighs political and aesthetic responses against one another. He tries and fails to keep the "underside" out of the picture, and often emphasizes it by pretended omissions. He poses as a heartless pursuer of scenic effects in order to suggest the reductive myopia connected with such a role. Throughout

[22] *The People of the Abyss*, ed. Jack Lindsay (London: Journeyman Press, 1977) 53.

the book he presents himself as fully conscious of what must be elided when the traveler becomes committed to either the aesthetic or the political response to Britain. James dramatizes the full range of the problem in the very figure who guides us from one British scene to the next and who describes each in vivid and memorable terms. James was a traveler very much aware both of the democratic conscience and the seductions of the British picturesque. His achievement in *English Hours* was to have done full justice to both.

Christopher Hussey has written that the picturesque was "the nineteenth century's mode of vision" (9). The broad currency of the term from William Gilpin's day to Henry James's confirms that the conventions of the picturesque were a well-established part of the cultural apparatus that nineteenth-century Americans brought with them to Britain. Yet to study the accounts of their travels is also to become aware of how restrictive those conventions could be to the more thoughtful Americans in Britain. As a literary device, a way of describing the experience of travel, the picturesque was static, inflexibly idealizing, and simply trite. As an aesthetic with an implied social vision, the picturesque was "heartless," in Ruskin's sense, and conducive to the assumptions of conservative politics. Excited by the beauties of the British landscape, Americans tested the conventions of the picturesque and sought, with varying degrees of success, to accommodate them to their own aesthetic and social imperatives. The connection, then, between the picturesque and the "typical American heart" was, as James knew, a troubled one. Still the term itself, and the conventions of sentiment and description associated with it, remained an indelible aspect of nineteenth-century American travel in Britain.□

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Umberto Saba

OLD CHIMNEY

Translated by Will Wells

Old chimney that juts above the roofs
which frame my window—an ashen
sky, partly clouded, overhead—
you have smoked from the era of the Grand Dukes
through all the times that followed:
bright banners and deluded hearts.
You've also watched a boy return
on leave from the war. What a fuss
they made all around him! He held his head
in his hands, absorbed at length
in silent meditations. Sometimes he said,
"Mother," and no more. Someone else said,
"It's an evil, but it will bear
an even greater good." Instead. . .

Old chimney shaped by the hand
of a man many centuries ago, so much
has passed over you, years and seasons,
clouds and sunlight in succession, perhaps
you have witnessed nothing sadder
than that. One day a futile
troupe appeared before you on the roofs,
young men fed up with days of siege
and crisis, moving—so it seemed—
like dancers to a phonograph. And eager
to be under fire; they were resistance fighters.
It was the end. You could see for yourself
in the streets below, the brief, red proof.
Today, rendered almost useless by the new
discoveries, you send, ever more rarely,
a greeting of smoke to the sky.
While I choose to hold my tongue
among my fellow men, I choose to speak
to you because you listen, holding your peace.
You are as old as me, a survivor.

"Camino Vecchio" ("Old Chimney") is from Umberto Saba's collection *Canzoniere*, published by Giulio Einaudi Editore S.p.A.

Richard S. Lowry

FRAMING THE AUTHENTIC: THE MODERN TOURIST AND *THE INNOCENTS ABROAD*

I

In one of the best known moments in Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, he visits what he calls "the most celebrated painting in the world—'The Last Supper' by Leonardo Da Vinci."[1] Coming as it does in the midst of what is already, barely a quarter of the way into the narrative, an almost frantic gallop through hotels, cathedrals, and museums, the episode represents just one more stop on a hectic itinerary. In Milan alone, itself sandwiched between a few days each in Genoa and Venice, the travelers already have visited the Duomo and its "7,148 marble statues" (129), the Ambrosian library—where they see, along with an autograph letter of Lucrezia Borgia, some drawings by Michelangelo and Leonardo ("They spell it Vinci and pronounce it Vinchy; foreigners always spell better than they pronounce" [132])—and a public bath, before they find their way to "an ancient tumbledown ruin of a church." There, in this anonymous place, they pause to see for themselves the "wonderful painting, once so beautiful, always so worshipped by masters in art, and forever to be famous in song and story" (136).

The episode opens as a rehearsal of what by 1869 had become a familiar ritual of viewing art described time and again in travel literature. Primed, like Twain, to a high pitch of expectation by guide books, art reproductions, lectures—the whole range of nineteenth-century cultivated education—previous travelers approached European art like Harriet Beecher Stowe, who, as she mounted the steps of the Louvre, felt a "flutter of excitement and expectation."[2] For her brother Henry Ward Beecher, the flutter became a crescendo on his visit to the painting collection at the Palace de Luxembourg in Paris. If not typical in its intensity, his account nonetheless exemplifies the disorienting shock many felt when encountering authentic art. He felt himself undergo an "instant conversion, if the expression be not irreverent": "to find myself absolutely intoxicated—to find my system so much affected that I could not control my nerves—to find myself trembling and laughing and weeping, and almost hysterical, and that in spite of my shame and resolute endeavor to behave better,—such a power of these galleries over me I had not expected."[3] Even the more urbane art critic James Jackson Jarves, who lived much of his life amid the European art he loved and collected, recalled wandering the Louvre feeling "oppressed, confused, uncertain, and feverish," struggling "in a convulsive effort to maintain mental equilibrium."[4]

In part these accounts record honestly overwhelming experiences of confronting, after years of having access only to reproductions, the authentic works themselves.[5] "I have seen good copies all over the world," confessed one traveler, "but they lose their charm after seeing so much of heavenly beauty and earthly sweetness as this glorious work of Raphael exhibits."[6] Another attested to "the new sense which is developed by the sight of a

[1] *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: New American Library, 1966) 136.

[2] *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1854) 2: 159.

[3] *Star Papers; or, Experiences of Art and Nature* (New York: J. C. Derby, 1855) 59, 57.

[4] *The Art Idea*, ed. Benjamin Rowland (1864; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960) 44.

[5] See Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966) 124-69.

masterpiece. It is as if we had always lived in a world where our eyes, though open, saw but a blank, and were then brought into another, where they were saluted by . . . grace and beauty."[7] These were Americans finding for themselves, by following a program of leisured self-cultivation first codified in the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, what many intellectuals had felt their country lacked: a rich tradition of culture made sturdy by a backbone of canonical masterpieces and ancient monuments. It was this expectation that had persuaded Harvard earlier in the century to send abroad such prospective faculty members as George Ticknor, Edward Everett, George Bancroft, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to prepare for their roles as educators.[8] Their experiences in turn helped inspire Americans to import as much of Europe as they could for their own edification. Boston's Anthology Society Reading Room—later to become the Athenaeum—was founded on the strength of books travelers brought back from Europe.[9] Later in the century Jarves, inspired by his experience at the Louvre, assembled an impressive collection of Renaissance Italian art, which Yale acquired in 1868 for its own museum (Strout 70, 72). Similarly, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Boston's Museum of Fine Arts both opened their doors in 1870 stocked with the products of their patrons' European buying tours.

Thus when Bayard Taylor, the most popular travel writer in America after mid-century, confessed, "I cannot disconnect my early longings for a knowledge of the Old World from a still earlier passion for Art and Literature," he merely made explicit what many travel accounts took for granted: Europe was for nineteenth-century Americans a vast museum, a collector's cabinet that made solid what had only been dreamed of.[10] To visit Notre Dame, Shakespeare's home, Florence, Athens was to make literal the literary, to make authentic the imaginary, to divest allusion of illusion: "The Capitol, the Forum, St. Peter's, the Coliseum—what few hours' ramble ever took in places so hallowed by poetry, history, and art?"[11] Thus it was the viewing of art, already consolidated in impressive collections in Paris, Florence, and above all in Rome, that in many travelers' accounts most accurately condensed the experience of visiting Europe.

In visiting the Leonardo, then, Twain walks a path already well-trod by Americans eager to open the door to authentic art and culture. In fact, he figures "The Last Supper" as the essence of Art, "celebrated" not just by travelers and critics, but by other "masters in art"; it is, in short, the masterpiece of masterpieces done by the original and originating Master. Twain's language deftly echoes a tradition of almost giddy homage to the picture both by critics and travel writers—an earlier traveler visits "This celebrated painting, a copy of which, in one form or another, everybody has seen, and which has been pronounced one of the finest in the world."[12] In their use of "celebrated," both writers in turn echo one of the most powerful pronouncements of the painting's value by Goethe, whose essay on Leonardo's "Celebrated Picture of The Lord's Supper," published in English in 1821, cited it as "The picture . . . known to all that have ever heard the name of art pronounced."[13] According to Mrs. Jameson, whose *Sacred and Legendary Art* went through numerous editions, Leonardo, "the greatest thinker as well as the greatest painter of his age," had with this painting brought forth "a

[7]John Overton Choules, *The Cruise of the Steam Yacht North Star; a Narrative of the Excursion of Mr. Vanderbilt's Party* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1854) 221.

[8]W. M. Gillespie, *Rome: As Seen by a New-Yorker in 1843-4* (New York: 1845) 82, as qtd. in Harris 128.

[9]Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (New York: Harper, 1963) 64.

[10]See Lewis P. Simpson, "Joseph Stevens Buckminster: The Rise of the New England Clerisy," *The Man of Letters in New England and the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1973).

[10]*By-Ways of Europe* (1869; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1889) 8.

[11]Bayard Taylor, *Views Afoot, or Europe Seen with Knapsack and Staff*, rev. household ed. (1855; New York: G. P. Putnam, 1890) 407.

[12]Rev. John E. Edwards, *Random Sketches and Notes of European Travel in 1856* (New York: Harper, 1857) 268.

[13]Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Observations on Leonardo da Vinci's Celebrated Picture of The Last Supper," trans. G. H. Noehden, in *Goethe on Art*, ed. John Gage (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980) 166.

creation so consummate, that since that time it has been at once the wonder and the despair of those who have followed in the same path."[14] Leonardo was more than a great artist, he embodied Art; he was, according to Charles Eliot Norton, a "great genius, one whose power all the world recognizes and honors, [one who] stands apart from his time, unapproached, alone."[15]

Twain's visit to the painting is framed by a whole set of expectations that links the genre in which he writes—European travel literature—with a discourse of art appreciation and demands his reaction to the painting. Where he had avoided such a confrontation earlier at the Louvre with a casual reference to "its miles of paintings by the old masters," here he faces the demands of convention (100). And he does register a new vision, but it is one that deliberately travesties those of others. The painting he describes is "battered and scarred in every direction, and stained and discolored by time. . . . The colors are dimmed with age; the countenances are scaled and marred, and nearly all expression is gone from them; the hair is a dead blur upon the wall, and there is no life in the eyes" (137). Despite the image's inscrutability, Twain finds himself alone in his disappointment. Around him artists assiduously copy it onto canvases while tourists stand "entranced before it with bated breath and parted lips," uttering "catchy ejaculations of rapture." Gauging their reactions against his own, he wonders, "How can they see what is not visible? . . . You would think that those men had an astonishing talent for seeing things . . . which had faded out of the picture and gone a hundred years before they were born." Indeed *his* eyes lead him to notice "how superior the copies were to the original, that is, to my inexperienced eye" (138).

The moment captures in miniature the irreverent texture of the text of *The Innocents Abroad* as a whole. Twain visits "The Last Supper" as what he calls elsewhere an "American Vandal," "the roving, independent, free-and-easy character of that class of traveling Americans who are *not* elaborately educated, cultivated, and refined, and gilded and filigreed with the ineffable graces of the first society." Unburdened by education (if "one has no opportunity in America to acquire a critical judgment in art," then he will parade, rather than hide, his "uncouth sentiments" [170, 171]), the Vandal gazes at Art "with a critical eye and says it's a perfect old nightmare of a picture and he wouldn't give forty dollars for a million like it."[16]

Twain's innocent may represent an American abroad—one English reviewer characterized him as "a very offensive specimen of the vulgarest kind of Yankee"—but he places more emphasis on the Vandal whose uncultivated or "inexperienced eye" underwrites a clear-eyed skepticism, always quick to expose the Empire's new clothes, to dismiss as shams the fruits of civilization offered to him by breathless guides and sanctimonious guidebooks.[17] If Europe is a museum, he suggests, it resembles more that of P. T. Barnum than Charles Wilson Peale: a house of humbug filled with disfigured paintings by "Old Masters" and buckets of nails from the True Cross. And it is this humbug, distilled in the catch-phrased awe of visitors to "The Last Supper," and perpetuated by other travel writers, that Twain will expose. "This book," he posits in his preface, "has a purpose, which is to suggest to the reader how *he* would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who traveled in those countries before him. I make small pretense of showing anyone how he *ought* to look at objects of interest beyond the sea—other books do that, and therefore, even if I were competent to do it, there is no need."

While this bravado led Bret Harte, for instance, to praise Twain as a "hilarious image-breaker," Twain's contentious stance is not as straightforward as his preface suggests.[18] In fact, his disappointment about the Leonardo was, by 1869, in many ways no less a cliché than the rapture of those who stood around him. "I sat before it for some time," noted one traveler, "and looked at it, and read all the guide-books

[14]*Sacred and Legendary Art*, 8th ed. (1848; London: Longmans, Green, 1879) 2: 268.

[15]*Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1859) 317.

[16]"The American Vandal Abroad," *Mark Twain Speaking*, ed. Paul Fatout (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1976) 27, 29.

[17]Unsigned review, *Saturday Review* 8 Oct. 1870, in *Mark Twain, The Critical Heritage*, ed. Frederick Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) 43.

[18]*Overland Monthly* Jan. 1870, in Anderson 33.

said about it, but was not able to work myself up to the point of extravagant admiration expressed by some travellers in its contemplation" (Edwards 268). Bayard Taylor admitted to a similar reaction in viewing the comparably admired Venus de Medici: "It may be considered heresy, but I confess I did not go into raptures, nor at first perceive any traces of superhuman beauty" (*Views Afoot* 352). Even Harriet Beecher Stowe's flutter of excitement subsided once she entered the Louvre and experienced "nothing of that overwhelming, subduing nature which I had conceived" (23).

The persistence of such reactions, often coming as they do hand-in-hand with expressions of giddy elation, suggests that disappointment itself was as integral a component of the rhetoric of authentic culture as was rapture. Indeed, Twain's purpose is not so much to denigrate art—he admits to being "satisfied that 'The Last Supper' was a very miracle of art once" (138)—but to explore his, and by implication his readers', relationship to that art. The narrator's disappointment in "The Last Supper" stems from the fact that the painting—far from being *too* cultural for his vulgar taste—is not authentic enough; as merely a scarred piece of history, it cannot deliver the pure experience that the conventional rhetoric of rapture leads him to anticipate. In his disillusionment, the narrator is as much a victim of the rhetoric of reverence as are his fellow travelers in their illusion. He, too, visits the painting to experience in the original what he had known only in reproduction and in prose. His "impartial" description of the disfigured picture, by virtue of how thoroughly it negates the rapturous comments of others, perfectly expresses his disappointed expectations once he is there. Indeed, so caught up is he in his search for aesthetic experience that he endorses the copies as "superior" precisely because they at least help him recall what he came to see.

Thus the irony in his carefully worded praise for the painting: "The Last Supper" is "the picture from which all engravings and all copies have been made for three centuries" (137). This seemingly naive statement, in fact, points to the final significance of Twain's staging his confrontation with Art with the Leonardo rather than in, for instance, the Louvre. As informed commentators were well aware, in the decades after "The Last Supper" was painted it had suffered such damage from flooding and heavy-handed restoration—not to mention Leonardo's own use of media—that the "original" masterpiece had long since, in Goethe's words, "almost ceased to exist, in its own substance" (166). To later connoisseurs, the picture was no more than the "wreck of a glorious presence" (Jameson 268) in which less educated travelers could "distinguish little beside the composition and the general sentiment of the picture."[19] By the nineteenth century the real picture had been for centuries known best only through copies; its fame and its "beauty" lay solely in its "aura" of authenticity paradoxically attested to by the ubiquity of, if not always the skill in, the reproductions.[20] Thus in turning an "impartial" but "inexperienced" eye from the original to its copies, Twain suggests that the rhetoric of reverence finds as its true object nothing more than the mental image such language has shaped beforehand.

Art is not the only sight on Twain's itinerary to disappear behind the flood of images and expectations framing it. At virtually no point does his tour elicit an experience "authentic" enough to exceed his expectations. The issue is comically foreclosed at one of the earliest stops on his tour at the city of Tangier, "the spot we have been longing for all the time. . . . We wanted something thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign—foreign from top to bottom—foreign from center to circumference—foreign inside and outside and all around. . . . And lo! In Tangier we have found it" (57-58). As the apotheosis of the authentically foreign, the city's architecture, the exotic dress and customs of its inhabitants, and its associations with a history reaching to the time of ancient Thebes, all lead Twain to invest Tangier with an uncanny "foreignness":

> Here is not the slightest thing that ever we have seen save in pictures—and we always mistrusted the pictures before—they seemed too weird and fanciful for reality. But behold, they were not wild enough—they have not told half the story. Tangier is a foreign land if ever there was one, and the true spirit of it can never be found in any

[19]Grace Greenwood [Sara Jane Lippincott], *Haps and Mishaps, or, A Tour in Europe* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1854) 397.

[20]"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969).

book save *The Arabian Nights.*

(58)

Just as in front of "The Last Supper," Twain's attention oscillates between the object (the city, the foreign) and its image, as he weighs the reality of one against the expectations generated by the other. At first it seems that Tangier does, indeed, exceed its images, which tell only "half the story." In citing *The Arabian Nights*, however, Twain finally locates the authentically foreign in a "reality" measured not by its difference from images, but rather by its resemblance to what travelers know beforehand. Tangier, as he sums up, is nothing less than "an oriental picture," an image of the foreign best embodied in a book of fantasy.

In interpreting the "foreign" or the "authentic" by its image, as he does both in Tangier and before "The Last Supper," Twain represents both encounters in essentially aesthetic terms. Indeed, under Twain's "ignorant" eye, all of Europe emerges as a form of art. Whether he visits the Vatican, the dungeons of the Castle D'If, the markets of Constantinople, or Notre Dame ("We recognized the brown old Gothic pile in a moment; it was like the pictures" [95]), his vision tears each site from any historical or social context—any foreign or authentic reality—and transforms it into a "sight" framed by pre-existing images linking it to other "site/sights."[21] The Leonardo, Notre Dame, Rome, Tangier: no matter the scale, everything in Europe is there to be visited, recognized, and categorized with other images. The result is an experience that is remarkably uniform, even at times boring. "What is there in Rome for me to see that others have not seen before me?" he asks in mock desolation. "What is there for me to touch that others have not touched? What is there for me to feel, to learn, to hear, to know, that shall thrill me before it pass to others? What can I discover? Nothing whatsoever. One charm of travel dies here" (190-91). Like the "twelve hundred pictures by Palma the Younger . . . and fifteen hundred by Tintoretto," much of Europe leaves Twain "weary with looking" and incapable of interest, much less enthusiasm (169-70).

Twain's prefatorial claims notwithstanding, what differentiates him from previous travel writers is not a particularly scrupulous veracity—the standard avowal of virtually every writer—but the fact that he travels Europe as a tourist rather than as a cultural pilgrim. In his irreverent haste he anticipates what Henry James would later characterize as the "passionless pilgrims" who evinced "a disposition, which had perhaps even at most a comic side, to treat 'Europe,' collectively, as a vast painted and gilded holiday toy, serving its purpose on the spot and for the time, but to be relinquished, sacrificed, broken and cast away, at the dawn of any other convenience."[22] The commentaries Twain offers, the history he supplies, the comic comparisons he constructs, all serve to fragment "Europe" into a touristic collection of interchangeable sights that are then shuffled and reintegrated in a narrative organized as much by the contingencies and coincidences of Twain's tour, as well as his personal predilections, as it is by the countries he visits.

While James may have characterized the modern tourist as "passionless," Twain's pilgrim, in fact, emerges as a creature of enthusiastic anticipation riding a cycle of expectation and consummation or disappointment. Far from rejecting aesthetic experience, he revels in it; from the opening pages he immerses himself wholeheartedly in the levelling vision of tourism, trusting in the very equivalence of one sight to another to sustain his passion. The excursion, he is sure even before he sees the itinerary, will be "a picnic on a giant scale," a "royal holiday" during which passengers would "scamper about the decks by day, filling the ship with shouts and laughter" (17). Nor does the dry language of the prospectus advertising the trip's itinerary—"The undersigned will make an excursion as above during the coming season"—dampen his enthusiasm (18). In fact its catalogue of sights gives shape to the innocent's revel by invoking a litany of magical names—Lyon, Genoa, Correggio, Corsica, Napoleon, Joppa, Jerusalem, Caesar: places and names mingle in a soup of association linked only by the timetable of travel. Twain opens the list of marvels by asking "who could read the program of the excursion without longing to make one of the party?" (18), and closes it by answering emphatically,

[21]The distinction comes from Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

[22]"Preface to 'The Reverberator,'" *The Art of the Novel*, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner's, 1962) 189.

"Human nature could not withstand these bewildering temptations" (22).

The Innocents Abroad opens with the tourist already preformed, keyed to a pitch of comic hyperbole by the anticipation of travel itself. And in fact, this lust for travel, more than the attraction of any particular site, fuels the pilgrims' trip. Despite their repeated disappointments, indeed despite their growing skepticism as to whether these promises can be fulfilled, Twain and his companions time and again eagerly strain for the first glimpses of Gibraltar, France, Milan, and Jerusalem, their appetite whetted by pictures, guidebooks, religious and historical associations. Once having arrived, no matter how completely each place may satisfy or disappoint their expectations, the pilgrims quickly succumb to a simple thirst for travel that pulls them to the next sight.

In this sense, *The Innocents Abroad* unfolds as a sustained exegesis of the opening prospectus Twain significantly prints in full as "a text for this book." For if Europe promises a certain kind of "experience," this experience is valid insofar as it recreates and fulfills the promises of the prospectus. Europe emerges as a metonymic series of buildings, paintings, streets and vistas; like the words in the prospectus, it is linked as a system of equivalent signs. Indeed, Twain ends his text evaluating the success of the excursion in precisely these terms: "I have no fault to find with the manner in which our excursion was conducted. Its program was faithfully carried out. . . our holiday flight has not been in vain—for above the confusion of vague recollections, certain of its best prized pictures lift themselves and will still continue perfect in tint and outline after their surroundings shall have faded" (474-75). The "pictures" he has in mind are not those by the "Old Masters" but the very sites, impressed now as images, vaguely hinted at in the prospectus: "We cannot forget Florence—Naples—nor the foretaste of heaven that is in the delicious atmosphere of Greece—and surely not Athens. . . . We shall remember Baalbek—the pyramids of Egypt" (475). Twain ends his book where it began, with another prospectus that registers his experience only in the few modifiers with which he surrounds each "sacred" word.

Tourism then is not strictly a form of enlightened travel, but a comically philistine cycle of anticipation and consumption—a process which entails reading about each site, evaluating the actual place in light of its prior image, and comparing it to other sites and experiences. Geographic places and material objects are torn from their social context and transformed into images of themselves, tourist "sights" framed by the touristic imagination. Sights for Twain are commodities the cultural value of which is established not by any "aura" of authenticity, but by guides and guidebooks, by the planned activity of tourism as it materializes in the ship's relentless itinerary, and most of all by the act of consumption itself.

II

Twain's comic discovery of Europe rode a mounting tide of American travel oriented more to sightseeing and less to personal cultivation. With the Paris Exhibition, which Twain visited on his cruise, in full flower in 1867, unprecedented numbers of visitors took advantage of lower steamship fare and faster and more comfortable continental travel to visit Europe. Twain himself estimated the number of Americans traveling abroad in 1867 as nearly 100,000 per year.[23] More sober judgments set the number at mid-century, before the travel boom following the Civil War, at around 30,000.[24] Despite these numbers, however, Europe remained for most Americans inaccessible: even a second-class cabin for a return trip between New York and Liverpool cost no less than $150, far beyond the means of even the middle class. Their experience of Europe came strictly at home, where they read widely popular travel literature or viewed stereocards and chromolithographs of famous art works and well-known European vistas and monuments.[25]

Indeed, despite popular travel writing's explicit use of the rhetoric of authenticity, it stimulated such vicarious consumption of culture. Even as authors sought "to make words a substitute for pencil and palette," even as they struggled to "acquire the power of bringing

[23]Cited in Dewey Ganzel, *Mark Twain Abroad: The Cruise of the "Quaker City"* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968) 3.

[24]Foster Rhea Dulles, *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964) 44.

[25]See Peter C. Marzio, *The Democratic Art: Pictures for a 19th-Century America* (Boston: David Godine, 1979).

attribute to art itself a power to shape society. "Art is the surest and safest civilizer," wrote one traveler. "Open your galleries of art to the people [as the Europeans do] and . . . you give them a refinement to which they would otherwise be strangers," a "sense of the beautiful and the sublime" that, when accompanied by "a few salutary lessons on the necessity of submission to authority," will eventually leave Americans "as well-behaved as the people of France or Italy."[28]

Travel accounts did more than document the mutation of enthusiasm into evaluation, ignorance into knowledge. They stood as its final result. They offered their readers more than secondhand descriptions of culture. They suggested a language, a disposition, a set of expectations that allowed readers to maximize their own presumably more meager aesthetic capital in a stance of taste. Thus the pretext of travel writing lay in the pretensions of taste and hierarchy that lay implicit in virtually every episode of art viewing, pretensions that linked proper uses of culture with social hierarchies. The meaning of Europe lay not in how texts represented its cultural wealth, but in how they dramatized travelers' reactions to that wealth.

Twain's consuming vision threatened this rhetoric on a number of different grounds. In displacing an aesthetics of appreciation with one of recognition, he implied that the acquisition of cultural capital lay not in collecting the authentic but in reflecting the conventional. The values of his culture lay not in distinction (among art works, among connoisseurs) but in indistinguishability (among originals, and between originals and their images). His was, in short, an aesthetics of mass culture, an aesthetics potentially outside the realm of taste, dramatized by the blissfully ignorant tourist vandalizing the hierarchies of culture.

Thus it was not in Europe that Twain played the American Vandal most successfully, but at home, where he could align the vision of the "uneducated" or "impartial eye" of the innocent abroad with "the mercenary eye" of the practicing author.[29] Twain took seriously the connection between capital and culture that lay only implicit in the writing of others. He joined the Quaker City cruise as a well-known humorist and newspaper writer whose fare was paid, like that of others on the trip, by two newspapers which printed the letters he regularly dispatched in the course of his travels. After returning, he revised his articles into a book only when publisher Elisha Bliss could promise Twain the extensive profits of subscription publishing—an early form of mass publishing whereby huge numbers of books were sold door to door by itinerant canvassers. In signing his first book contract, Twain entered a terrain of culture shaped broadly by values of the literary as embodied in and disseminated by the book, and every bit as codified and canonized as was Europe. As when abroad, Twain traveled this new land as a vandal to taste.

It has been common to characterize Twain's attention to, and at times obsession with, the business of writing as separating him from the more literary concerns of his peers. Yet Twain's pursuit of the profits of culture actually placed him at the center of Gilded Age literary production, where culture and capital coexisted in uneasy union. Even as the marketplace for reading—shaped by the expanded scale of book publishing, the growth of mass-circulation magazines, and the emergence of reading as a leisure-time "habit"—seemed to offer greater prospects for a popular dissemination of culture, it threatened to transform all writing into a form of commerce, and author's names into, to quote William Charvat, "brand names, to be sold, goods [to] be promoted."[30]

Bliss could assure his new author of great profits because, unlike many of his more genteel peers, he felt relatively free, in the words of one critic, to treat "literature and art . . . like common merchandise."[31] The result, for many in the book trade, was a kind of "false" culture. Subscription books, fumed another critic, were easily identified: "[A] gorgeous binding, usually in very bad taste, thick but with cheap paper, outrageously poor woodcuts, the largest types

[28]Charles Bullard Fairbanks, *Aguecheek* (Boston: Shepard, Clark, and Brown, 1859) 127, 128, 129.

[29]Letter to Henry Houghton 12 Feb. 1875, *Mark Twain's Letters to His Publishers 1867-1894*, ed. Hamlin Hill (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967) 83.

[30]Matthew Brucolli, ed., *The Profession of Authorship in America: The Papers of William Charvat* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968) 273. On the politics of the literary marketplace, see also Christopher Wilson, *The Labor of Words: Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1985).

[31]*Publisher's Weekly* 21 June 1880: 8.

with the thickest leads, add up to a very big, gaudy book which a glib tongue or persistent boring cheats folks into buying for five dollars, when the reading matter which it contains, if worth anything, would make about a dollar-and-a-half book in the regular trade."[32] This description was by and large accurate: subscription books *were* in fact big, gaudy, ornamental, and expensive. Publishers like Bliss worked hard to justify steep prices and high profits by making sure that the customer received as much physical book as possible: in effect, the text often served as nothing more than an excuse for the binding. In other words, entrepreneurs like Bliss succeeded because they focused on selling images of a culture their customers could not otherwise acquire. Such books were meant to be put on coffee tables or displayed prominently on shelves as much as they were meant to be read.

As blatantly opportunistic as this marketing strategy was, it did not necessarily represent a cynical affront to taste. Rather, it traded on an increasing propensity by the American middle class to judge a book—and its owner—by the cover. Even as genteel critics in dozens of advice books outlined for their readers courses of reading for improvement, they also charted what can be characterized as an etiquette of book possession, implying that owning books entitled one to similar claims to distinction as reading them. "[B]ooks are the most telling furniture which can be placed in a room," assured one such writer. "[A]n opinion is formed at once, from them of the taste and cultivation of the family."[33] Echoed another, "Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house. The plainest row of books that cloth or paper ever covered is more significant of refinement than the most elaborately carved etagere or sideboard."[34] Subscription books thus took their place in the family parlor with the very copies of the original artwork that Twain professed to prefer.

Both Bliss and Twain, who eventually became a subscription publisher himself, recognized the importance of, and realized the profits from, this image-making process by offering buyers as elaborate a piece of furniture as they could afford. As Bliss instructed his door-to-door agents, "Books are seldom bought for what they are as a whole, but for some *particular feature* or *features* they contain."[35] So his agents gave their customers as many reasons as possible for purchasing by showing them ornate, leather bound prospectuses containing title page, illustrations, and some representative text. One of the most powerful selling tools was a list of prominent local citizens who already had agreed to purchase a book. Adding one's name to the list allowed the customer to join, quite literally, a select group of cultural consumers. Done correctly, Bliss assured his agents, such tactics would give them "a kind of mesmeric power" and "a tremendous leverage" over the buyer.

In effect, agents offered their customers what Twain was offered to join the Quaker City cruise: an "authentic" image of Culture. Thus when Twain opens his book with the travel "prospectus," he literally offers "a text for this book," a guide to buying his book translated as a guide for his trip. Like the customer/reader, the narrator is mesmerized by a commodity notable for its discrete features: "Constantinople! Smyrna! The Holy Land! Egypt and 'our friends the Bermudians'!" And like the customer, he, too, enters a list, "selected by a pitiless 'Committee on Applications,'" which includes celebrities like Henry Ward Beecher and General Sherman. Twain's tourist and his reader travel the same terrain of the tasteless, a geography shaped as much by the consuming pretensions of Culture as any authentic experience.

This is not to suggest that in travestying the distinctions of taste, in displacing the authentic with the reproduced, Twain rejects the value of culture altogether. Rather, just as the tourist remakes Europe into an image of itself, so too does Twain locate the ultimate value of culture in its images. This dimension emerges most powerfully at precisely the moment when Twain grows most weary of the "shams" of tourism:

[32]"The Subscription Book Trade," *Publisher's Weekly* 23 July 1872: 93-94.

[33]Lyman Abbott, "Suggestions for Household Libraries," *Hints for Home Reading: A Series of Chapters on Books and Their Use* (New York: Putnam, 1880) 112.

[34]Charles F. Richardson, *The Choice of Books* (New York: American Book Exchange, 1881) 164-65.

[35]The bookselling guide is reprinted in Hamlin Hill, ed., *Mark Twain and Elisha Bliss* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1964) 170-82.

during his pilgrimage through the Holy Land. The journey re-enacts with greater intensity his experience in viewing "The Last Supper." If his visit to the painting promised a paradigmatic encounter with an authentic icon of High Culture, the Holy Land promises contact with the origins of culture itself. It represents "the chief feature, the grand goal of the expedition"; the tourists' imminent arrival elicits "the wildest spirit of expectancy" (309). In traveling overland to Jerusalem, the pilgrims will touch the authentic sites of the Bible, the most powerful text in Western Christendom. They will walk the ground once "pressed by the feet of the Saviour" and gaze at the same vistas "that God looked on. . . . The situation is suggestive of a reality and a tangibility that seem at variance with the vagueness and mystery and ghostliness that one naturally attaches to the character of a god" (339).

Almost immediately, however, whatever expectations Twain entertains are dashed by the sheer absurdity of translating a text of religious miracles to a bare and ruined geography. No matter how much in disrepair was "The Last Supper," no matter how heavily framed it and other sights were by either the glib tongue of a guide or the preconceptions of guidebooks, they existed materially. In the Holy Land, on the other hand, Twain finds himself often visiting sights with no site. Biblical towns survive only as impoverished hamlets or as "shapeless" ruins. The Sea of Galilee is a dreary stretch of water in a harsh landscape bereft of the fishermen of Biblical times. He and his fellow tourists are shown the precise spot where Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus, or where Joseph's brothers cast him into the pit, knowing full well that the location is not only disputed, but in fact arbitrary.

Absurdity reaches its highest point at the pilgrimage's most sacred destination, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, where the group enters both "the most sacred locality in Christendom" and a Barnumesque stage for humbug (405). Under one roof Twain visits Christ's grave, the hill at Calvary, the "true pillar of flagellation," and the spots where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene and to his mother after his resurrection. This zealous marking of origins breaks all bounds of the believable when Twain also encounters Adam's grave and, next to it, a pillar marking the center of the earth, from which the dust was taken to form Adam. The authentic site of history and culture is at the same time its most thorough parody, composed of monuments that are pure images, signs with no referents. The obsequious rituals of pilgrims and monks, the vast ornamentation of the separate chapels, even the Church itself, designate what is essentially an *image* of truth.

Out of this absurdity, however, emerges an unexpected epiphany. As Twain did in front of the Leonardo, he shifts his attention away from the source to the image, from the "rock" of the Church to its "illustrious edifice." This time, however, he does so not to initiate a play between image and site, but to locate the authentic in the image itself. Despite "its claptrap sideshows and unseemly impostures of every kind," Twain concedes that the Church is, "in its history from the first, and in its tremendous associations, [the] most illustrious edifice in Christendom" (414). Adam's grave may be no more "true" than the bushel of fragments of the "true cross" Twain has seen during his voyage. Neither, however, are any of these markers a sham: the Church and its sacred filigree have accrued too much meaning throughout history to be dismissed as a fraud:

> for fifteen hundred years its shrines have been wet with the tears of pilgrims . . . ; for more than two hundred, . . . gallant knights . . . wasted their lives away in a struggle to seize it and hold it sacred from infidel pollution. Even in our own day a war that cost millions of treasure and rivers of blood was fought because two rival nations claimed the sole right to put a new dome upon it. History is full of this old Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
>
> (415)

In inverting the normal touristic relationship between the site and meaning (the church is not full of history, "history is full of this old Church"), Twain explicitly relocates authenticity in the historical process that has designated that site as worth visiting, a process that as a tourist Twain affirms. Thus the true site in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—indeed, the true origin of historical and touristic authenticity—is the comically mistranslated sign reading, "'Chapel of the Invention of the Cross'—a name which is unfortunate, because it leads the ignorant to imagine that a tacit acknowledgement is thus made that the tradition that Helena found the true cross here is a fiction—an

invention" (411). Twain, of course, is one of those "ignorant" visitors: in this "invention," which has long since overwhelmed the integrity of the original, lies the authentic.

The image here, the designating marker, emerges not as a perversion of "true" culture, but as culture itself. If the innocent abroad never really leaves the domain of the mediated, if he is caught in an endless deferment of the authentic as he visits cities, churches, museums, shrines, and monuments, he nonetheless actively participates in making them "authentic." Moreover, it is in terms of this paradoxical situation that Twain's own text can be understood. Tourism, as he presents it, is an activity of reconstitution, of interpretation, and finally of writing. The final product of this imposture is *The Innocents Abroad*—an extended prospectus for culture. Thus the book itself represents one more marker in the comic cycle of expectation and fulfillment that both Twain—as tourist and writer—and the consuming reader reproduce. Just as Twain's parody of travel rewrites the grounds for tourism, anticipating in its humor a new form of cultural consumption, so too does his text parody prior assumptions of cultural value as they were embodied in the book, initiating a new phase in literary production.□

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David Berry

THE ITALY NOT IN THE TRAVEL BROCHURES

—for Mernie King

When all the grapes were in, the blind, half-crazy
old accordionist was let out of the jail.
He always was the music for the orgy.
Snoring finally out-rattled all the giggles.

Next day the Pope thought best to send a wind
to humble (once again) this little hill,
though now the hill was silent as a bell,
the clapper melted into wedding rings.

The wind went at it, anyway, made limbs
catch at each other, moan, scrape and release.
Trees bent and swayed like the accordionist
wrestling music from his old squeeze-box.
This always woke the old accordionist,
and it was back to jail another year.

The farmer's daughter handed him his stick
and her elbow, and he went gliding back
on home to bars and floor, roof, and free meals . . .
a monk at heart.

First thing he wound his clock.
The pendulum, its shape was like a leg,
took off force marching for the next festival
although last night was now a year away—
same step come winter, summer, spring, or fall.

Sometimes an extra tick was the accordionist
speeding things up with his walking stick,
although by now he knew by heart the way
and seldom rushed. As he saw it, the days
got longer, seemed as if a day would never
end, but the years came quicker and quicker.

Heather Henderson

THE TRAVEL WRITER AND THE TEXT: "MY GIANT GOES WITH ME WHEREVER I GO"

Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern Fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican, and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"

The giant that accompanies every travel writer is constructed in part by the books he or she has read. As the Victorian traveler Eliot Warburton tells us, he had read the accounts of many previous travelers before setting out on his own journey to Egypt and the Holy Land: "notwithstanding which, I found much novelty, as well as interest, in my own personal experience."[1] The tentative wording of this remark suggests that what he had seen in his imagination, through the words of others, was really more vivid to him than what he had seen for himself. This curious interplay between literary experience and lived experience forms one of the defining characteristics of the genre of travel literature.

There are two kinds of travelers: those who seek to fill in the "white spaces" on the map, and those who travel to see places that have been previously visited and described. Some are looking to inscribe themselves upon a blank page, others to reread an already written landscape. This essay concerns itself with the latter, with the complex responses of travelers for whom the written word interposes between self and sight. As Warburton acknowledges, texts tend to prevail over the material world of real places, real people: past sight dominates present site. Still further complexities are encountered by travelers who then go on to produce their own travel texts. Theoretically, the value of travelers' accounts lies in the opportunity travelers have for first-hand observation: they can lend their eyes to the stay-at-home reader. But what value do re-seeing and re-telling have? As Mark Twain complained: "What is there in Rome for me to see that others have not seen before me?"[2] For the travel writer, the real question is, what is there for me to write about?

In exploring how landscapes are both read and written, this essay refers to a range of works, while examining in some detail three British travel books about the East, two from the nineteenth century, Alexander Kinglake's *Eothen* (1844) and Warburton's *The Crescent and the Cross* (1846), and one from the twentieth, Philip Glazebrook's *Journey to Kars* (1984).[3] For the Victorian traveler to the East, like Kinglake or Warburton, not only the Bible and the classics but also previous travel accounts provided a textual framework that largely determined his experience of travel. For a modern traveler like Glazebrook, the Victorian adventurers themselves contribute significantly to this intertext: Glazebrook undertakes his journey to Turkey in order to find out why the Victorians traveled, and he confesses that "besides looking

[1] *The Crescent and the Cross; or, Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel*, 2 vols. (1845; New York: Putnam, 1850) preface. Because there are several editions, parenthetical citations are to volume and chapter, rather than page.

[2] *The Innocents Abroad* (1869; New York: New American Library, 1980) 190.

[3] As should be obvious, I am looking at holiday travelers rather than the explorers, missionaries, and colonizers, whose exploits have been so well analyzed by Mary Louise Pratt and Patrick Brantlinger in *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986) 138-62; 185-222.

through my own eyes . . . I have been . . . in the company of ghosts, the shades of real travellers, whose voices I have tried to overhear, and whose thoughts I have tried to understand."[4]

Initially, a traveler's previous reading may seem relevant only as a motivating factor in the decision to travel: it was "the rapturous and earnest reading of my childhood which made me bend forward so longingly to the plains of Troy," Kinglake explains.[5] Or, as the prolific travel writer Freya Stark puts it, "An imaginative aunt who, for my ninth birthday, sent a copy of the *Arabian Nights*, was, I suppose, the original cause of trouble."[6] The notion of a bookishly inspired journey crops up again and again. Sometimes travelers' imaginations are so fired by what they have read that their entire journey attempts to follow in the footsteps of another traveler, real or fictional: Jonathan Raban's *Old Glory* (1981) follows Huck Finn down the Mississippi, Richard Holmes' *Footsteps* (1985) traces the route chronicled by Robert Louis Stevenson in *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), and the title of Israel Shenker's *In the Footsteps of Johnson and Boswell* (1982) speaks for itself.

But the effects of reading go far beyond merely providing the stimulus to travel. For even when the journey is underway, books condition travelers' choices and shape their perceptions. Clearly these literary pilgrimages are examples of mediated desire: the value of a scene, landscape, or monument lies not so much in its own intrinsic qualities as in the satisfaction of seeing for ourselves what someone else has seen, and described, before us. The observer's relationship to the scene is indirect, filtered through the literary representation by which he first came to know it. Kinglake marvels at the "beautiful congruity betwixt the Iliad and the material world" for it confirms "that Homer had *passed along here*—that this vision of Samothrace . . . was common to him and to me" (48-49). Seeing this island near Troy is unimportant in itself, but immensely important because it proves Homer's authenticity and because it establishes a link between Homer and Kinglake.

The pleasure of imagining scenes from the past on the spot where they took place is often greater than the pleasure of witnessing scenes of today. Glazebrook's obsession with this aspect of travel makes *Journey to Kars* one of the most self-conscious and thought-provoking contemporary travel accounts. He suggests that only tourists travel to see the present; "real" travelers search for a glimpse of the past: "The truth is that few individuals have ever travelled, in modern times, to see what other countries are like nowadays; in general people travel in search of traces of past eras" (151). The book opens at Belgrade, with the narrator conjuring up visions of Victorian travelers for whom crossing the Danube was "the frontier between Christendom and Islam" (8). Modern Belgrade interests him not at all: "For there to be any point in travelling, you have always to be looking for things as they were, and dodging things as they are" (52).

Glazebrook is explicit about his preference: "It was Turkey's past that I was interested in—the 'past' which was the contemporary scene to nineteenth-century travellers." His clarification stresses that of course it isn't really *Turkey*'s past but rather the experience of Victorians *in* Turkey that attracts him. The same was true, he argues, for nineteenth-century travelers: they "didn't come to the East in order to study contemporary Eastern life or character; the contemporary East was just the condition prevailing, like the weather" (86). As a result, the travelers' perceptions are constantly determined by preconceptions. Warburton, for example, devotes most of his chapter on "The Nile" to recounting Nelson's victory over Napoleon: "as the traveller paces by these silent and deserted shores . . . he lives again in the stirring days when the scenery before him was the arena whereon France and England contended for the empire of the East" (1.6). Warburton's knowledge of the past—or rather, of a particular past, European and imperialist—colors everything he sees.

Each of these writers privileges the past (Homeric, Napoleonic, Victorian) over the present. In *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) Claude Lévi-Strauss captures that sense of belatedness: "I wished I had lived in the days of *real* journeys, when it was still possible to see the full splendour of a spectacle that had not yet been blighted, polluted and spoilt." But he recognizes

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[4]*Journey to Kars: A Modern Traveller in the Ottoman Lands* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984) 9.

[5]*Eothen, or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East*, introduction Jan Morris (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982) 45.

[6]*The Valleys of the Assassins, and Other Persian Travels* (1936; London: Century, 1986) 7.

that the "modern traveller, chasing after the vestiges of a vanished reality," is succumbing to an insidious illusion, for "a few hundred years hence, in this same place, another traveller, as despairing as myself, will mourn the disappearance of what I might have seen, but failed to see."[7]

The pervasive desire to reimagine the past underlies one of the central preoccupations of travel literature, the search for the lost innocence of a Golden Age. Glazebrook notes that "as persistently as the idea of Eden runs through human history, the existence, and rare attainment, of an Earthly Paradise runs through the books of Eastern travellers" (126). In *Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle* (1965) Dervla Murphy thinks she's found paradise in Afghanistan:

> I feel I've been privileged to see Man at his best—still in possession of the sort of liberty and dignity that we have exchanged for what it pleases us to call 'progress.' Even a brief glimpse of what we were is valuable to help to understand what we are. Living in the West, it's now impossible for most of us to envisage our own past by a mere exercise of the imagination, so we're rather like adults who have forgotten the childhood that shaped them.[8]

Murphy's belief that travel enables us "to envisage our own past" assumes, of course, that foreigners are like the children we once were (an assumption Glazebrook shares with his Victorian predecessors). The insidious consequence of the Westerner's quest for origins is that it negates the foreign present by seeing it merely as a version of our own past, an embodiment of Western myth.

Glazebrook believes not merely that foreigners are like children, but that travel itself is a process of locating sites marked on "a secret map given him in childhood" (149). That map is created by literature, whether it be the classics or fairy tales, the *Arabian Nights* or boys' books of adventure. Similarly, in *Journey Without Maps* (1936), Graham Greene finds that travel offers a return to both "a personal and racial childhood."[9] He goes to Liberia to get in touch with the primordial infancy of the human race: "there are times . . . when one is willing to suffer some discomfort for the chance of finding—there are a thousand names for it, King Solomon's Mines, the 'heart of darkness' if one is romantically inclined, or . . . one's place in time, based on a knowledge not only of one's present but of the past from which one has emerged" (19-20). Again, childhood reading—in this case the novels of Rider Haggard and Joseph Conrad—"maps" a foreign place.[10] There is something both naive and solipsistic in the way certain travelers persistently view others through the lens of their own literature.[11] Trekking through the Liberian jungle in search of self-understanding, Greene turns Africa into an imaginative exercise, a literary construct.

Greene seems unconscious of the racist implications of his quest, with his assumption that "darkest Africa" represents mankind at an earlier stage of development. As Patrick Brantlinger argues, "evolutionary thought seems almost calculated to legitimize imperialism. The theory that man evolved through distinct social stages—from savagery to barbarism to civilization—led to a self-congratulatory anthropology that actively promoted belief in the inferiority, indeed the bestiality, of the African."[12] Furthermore, seeing "Them" as a primitive "Us" enables travelers to overlook "Them" as distinctively and legitimately "Other." Reflecting on his journey, Greene concludes:

> But what had astonished me about Africa was that it had never been really strange. . . . The 'heart of darkness' was common to us both. Freud has made us conscious as we have never been before of those ancestral threads which still exist in our unconscious

[7] *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (1955; New York: Pocket Books, 1977) 33-34.

[8] *Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle* (Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1986) 94.

[9] *Journey Without Maps* (1936; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 93.

[10] In *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), Paul Fussell glosses Greene's title thus: "Childhood is a non-cerebral, thus mapless, little journey" (69).

[11] Greene writes, for example, that "Dakar was the Baudelaire of *L'Invitation au Voyage*" and that "Freetown had a Bret Harte air" (33, 37-38).

[12] *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988) 186.

> minds to lead us back. The need, of course, has always been felt, to go back and begin again. Mungo Park, Livingstone, Stanley, Rimbaud, Conrad represented only another method to Freud's. (248)

Thus travel, for Greene as for Murphy, is primarily a means to self-knowledge ("more costly, less easy" than Freud's), rather than knowledge of others. Western exploration becomes merely another form of psychoanalysis. As Glazebrook puts it, what interested the nineteenth-century traveler was "research into his own character and capabilities seen in relief against a background which had passed away in Europe" (86).

Into the Heart of Borneo (1984), the title of a work by a more recent British traveler, suggests the continuing fascination of the "heart of darkness" metaphor, which associates "primitive" peoples with "our" buried instincts and half-forgotten past. Noting that "late nineteenth-century men of science took Borneo very seriously as a possible birthplace of mankind," Redmond O'Hanlon writes: "Joseph Conrad had imagined central Borneo to be the heart of twilight, the home of the 'old mankind'; and a sight of the Ukit, I reflected, might be as close as we could ever hope to come to those imagined ancestors."[13] Like Greene, O'Hanlon reenacts the Westerner's fantasy of discovering an uncorrupted people who will provide us with a glimpse of our lost selves. He romanticizes his native guide, calling him "a Beowulf, or, more accurately, a warrior-king out of Homer," and he depicts the villagers as sexually free and unselfconscious, like Adam and Eve before the Fall (45). But as we all know, you can't go home again, and so the traveler's search for the past is doomed from the start. O'Hanlon is dismayed to find that the Ukit speak English and demand to be taught the latest disco steps. They reject the past he desires to recapture, and he takes revenge for his frustrated nostalgia in his mocking portrayal of them as superficial and absurd.

Inevitably, modern reality clashes with literary evocation: in his own eyes, Eliot Warburton insists, Calypso's isle was "still the enchanted island . . . but a fat gentleman in green spectacles . . . declared it was the Botany Bay of Naples" (1.3). Thus, in travel literature, the narrator moves in a climate of expectation—engendered, usually, by other literature—but the potential for disappointment is so great that it becomes virtually a convention of the genre itself. As Glazebrook observes, "the disappointments are brought about by the mis-preparation of your mind for what really exists; yet it's the mis-preparation—the treasure trove buried in your mind under certain place-names in early days—which draws you on to travel in the first place" (152).

But if this discrepancy between reality and literature is not to be fatal to their dreams, travelers must find a scapegoat. Clearly Homer and the rest of the Western literary tradition cannot be wrong; such a case would require travelers to question the entire culture that has produced *them*. Far easier to grumble about the natives: Turks are dirty and immoral, Africans sensual and savage, Ukits ludicrous and corrupt. The need to protect one's literary myths no doubt underlies much of the familiar litany of travelers' complaints. Fanny Trollope, for example, went to America partly because of her friend Fanny Wright's enthusiastic account in *Views of Society and Manners in America* (1821). But disenchanted with America for not being the democratic Utopia she had read about, Trollope produced *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), a devastating satire of American vulgarity and provincialism.

The fear of being let down leads the traveler to employ bizarre devices in an attempt to salvage the moment. After an elegiac address to the Nile because it now has steamers on it ("Unhappy river! . . . thy old days of glory are gone by; thy veil of mystery is rent away"), Warburton comforts himself with the thought that when it gets dark he can *pretend* that reality lives up to his romantic fantasies: "by the time the evening and the mist had rendered the country invisible [!], we had persuaded ourselves that Egypt was indeed the lovely land that Moore has so delightfully imagined in the pages of the 'Epicurean'" (1.7). The illusion that has been fostered by reading can only be sustained by blotting out the actual landscape.

Mark Twain resorts to the same psychological sleight of hand in *The Innocents Abroad*. First he records his disappointment with Venice: "And this was the storied gondola of Venice! . . . This the famed gondola and this the gorgeous gondolier!—the one an inky, rusty old canoe with a sable hearse body clapped onto the middle of it, and the other a mangy, barefooted

[13] *Into the Heart of Borneo* (1984; New York: Vintage, 1987) 128-29, 129-30.

guttersnipe with a portion of his raiment on exhibition which should have been sacred from public scrutiny" (155-56). But although Twain sighs that his "cherished dreams of Venice have been blighted forever," he soon discovers that if he waits until midnight he can preserve his fantasy intact. After dark, his imagination soars:

> In the glare of day there is little poetry about Venice, but under the charitable moon her stained palaces are white again . . . and the old city seems crowned once more with the grandeur that was hers five hundred years ago. It is easy then in fancy to people these silent canals with plumed gallants and fair ladies—with Shylocks in gaberdine and sandals, venturing loans upon the rich argosies of Venetian commerce—with Othellos and Desdemonas, with Iagos and Roderigos.
>
> (158)

Not only does darkness enable the imagination to transcend mere humdrum reality, but it unleashes a specifically literary flow of Shakespearian associations. Even those dingy gondolas and gondoliers are forgiven. Twain now finds the one "as free and graceful in its gliding movement as a serpent" and the other "a picturesque rascal for all he wears no satin harness, no plumed bonnet, no silken tights" (163, 164). The transforming efforts of the imagination spare Twain any further thought about contemporary Venice, "decayed, forlorn, poverty-stricken, and commerceless."

The desire to see for oneself is, of course, one of the chief motivations for travel, and having done so is one of the traveler's chief claims on the attention of readers. Thus, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu frequently reminds her correspondents of the value of first-hand observation, and Mark Twain prefaces *Innocents Abroad* with the claim to have "seen with impartial eyes." But, like Warburton and Twain, travelers often arrive at the paradoxical conclusion that *not* seeing can be preferable. Kinglake, disappointed by the sight of the river Scamander, happily finds in retrospect that "'divine Scamander' has recovered the proper mystery belonging to him, as an *unseen* deity." "Your feelings," Kinglake explains, "are chilled and borne down for the time under all this load of real earth and water, but, let these once pass out of sight, and then again the old fanciful notions are restored" (45-46). The passage of time accomplishes for Kinglake what night achieved for Warburton and Twain, the hegemony of the observing subject over recalcitrant reality: "One's mind regains in absence that dominion over earthly things which has been shaken by the rude contact," he reflects (45). Absence makes the traveler's heart grow fonder, allowing the imagination to regain its privileged position of "dominion." Seeing things is not as wonderful as dreaming of them.

Glazebrook's approach to travel provides a modern counterpart. Wandering through quiet backstreets in Turkey he is delighted to find that "from that view modern Turkey was eclipsed, and there existed instead the idea of a fruitful and well-watered oasis" (88-89). Once again, the traveler strives to preserve "the idea" he has arrived with, though it means obliterating the modern country to do so. His defense of his ignorance of the language reveals his priorities: "if I spoke Turkish would I then be able to maintain my view of Turkey as mysterious and hostile territory, which is the tint most useful to my imagination in the task of resurrecting the Turkey of Ottoman rule?" (153). What is striking about these writers is the deliberateness with which they employ a variety of self-insulating strategies designed to keep the contemporary world at bay; they consciously perform contortions in order to keep their romantic visions alive.

The conviction that such mental gymnastics are incumbent upon the educated traveler oppresses Kinglake at times:

> If one might judge of men's real thoughts by their writings, it would seem that there are people who can visit an interesting locality, and follow up continuously the exact train of thought that ought to be suggested by the historical associations of the place. A person of this sort can go to Athens, and think of nothing later than the age of Pericles. . . . I am not thus docile: it is only by snatches, and for few moments together, that I can really associate a place with its proper history.
>
> (116)

Kinglake's light-hearted tone fails to conceal a certain anxiety, evident throughout the book, at not being able to work himself up into the "proper" frame of mind at sites like Troy and Jerusalem, which history and literature have made sacred. Despite his implication that earlier

writers have exaggerated their enthusiasm, Kinglake seems to regret his inability to participate fully in the sublime sensations promised by their accounts. Although he warns us in his preface that "there will often be found in my narrative a jarring discord between the associations properly belonging to interesting sites, and the tone in which I speak of them," he adheres to the belief that there are in fact "proper" associations that a gentleman ought to have (3).

His meditations on the strange interaction of mind and landscape become a recurrent preoccupation in the book. Riding through the Ottoman Empire, he is continually distracted by reminiscences about his schooldays: "As for me and my comrade," he writes, "we often forgot Stamboul, forgot all the Ottoman Empire, and only remembered old times. We went back, loitering on the banks of the Thames . . . the 'old Eton fellow' that wrestled with us in our boyhood" (25). Later, although he struggles to be suitably impressed in Galilee, his thoughts again keep flying home: "instead there came to me a loving thought from over the seas in England—a thought more sweet than Gospel to a wilful mortal like me" (117). Kinglake's private memories get in the way of literary associations, yet his awareness of the ways in which the landscape is already "written" imposes on him an obligation to think, feel, and see in a particular way.

Kinglake's efforts to connect self to scene illustrate how the landscape of travel is always mediated. For, as Dean MacCannell puts it in his analysis of the phenomenon of tourism, "usually, the first contact a sightseer has with a sight is not the sight itself but with some representation thereof."[14] And, as Jonathan Culler points out, "tourists want to encounter and recognize the original which has been marked as a sight."[15] Even "getting off the beaten track" is no solution: the very expression has become a cliché. Culler explains: "The authenticity the tourist seeks is at one level an escape from the code, but this escape itself is coded in turn, for the authentic must be marked to be constituted as authentic" (165). Wrestling with this dilemma, George Packer, author of *The Village of Waiting* (1988), relates the attempts of African entrepreneurs to cater to tourists' desire for the authentic: "they put on a tribal dance tape, and serve pounded yams with peanut sauce, and give the traveller their own idea of the traveller's idea of them." Can we avoid this well-intentioned but ridiculous comedy and discover a world that does not insistently mirror our own? "No one knows the answer," Packer says. "On every trip I thought I'd left my cultural baggage at home; on every trip it had been forwarded to my destination."[16]

Yet where the sophisticated semiotician and the politically aware traveler of the 1980s may despair of ever leaving their baggage behind, the Victorian gentleman happily carted it all along with him. As Eliot Warburton complacently remarks, "What a versatile power our mind possesses of adapting nature to its mood! It is not what a country is, but what we are, that renders it rich in interest" (1.20). Emerson may sigh at not being able to leave Self behind, but Kinglake frankly acknowledges the "egotism of a traveller . . . his habit of referring the whole external world to his own sensations" (5). And Glazebrook welcomes the presence of his Victorian forerunners: although he congratulates himself for his decision to travel alone—"I wanted no one interposed between myself and the scene" (98)—he is delighted to be traveling "in the company of ghosts." Not real people but "real travellers" (that is, dead ones) are his companions of choice. For these British travelers, mediation is not something to be overcome but rather profoundly desired. Their ability to quote Homer on the spot invests their travels not only with meaning but with status; it distinguishes them as gentlemen, the possessors of a certain kind of education. (Twain, middle-class and American, wavers between contempt and reverence for the past, between daytime debunking and midnight dreaming.)[17]

But whatever the traveler's attitude toward mediation, the fact of it is unarguable: no one can see with innocent eyes. Glazebrook's reaction to Kars captures this inescapable, over-determined aspect of travel in a nutshell: "I

[14]*The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976) 110.

[15]"The Semiotics of Tourism," *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Norman and London: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1988) 161.

[16]"Travelers in a New Age," *Boston Review* Aug. 1988: 27.

[17]The phrase "daytime debunking" is Leslie Fiedler's. In his afterword to *The Innocents Abroad* he writes that "this doubleness of vision . . . has lain deep in the heart of every run-of-the-mill tourist" (490).

never was less disappointed with reaching an objective in all my life" (136). Paradoxically, the very structure of his sentence introduces the idea of disappointment into a context in which he claims it was not present. The literate traveler cannot escape the literature that preconditions his experience of travel. Wherever he goes, as Emerson observes in *Self-Reliance*, the traveler carries his "giant" with him.

Travel writers, however, carry an additional burden: the necessity of turning their travel experiences into a book. They must go from being readers of texts to producers of them, thus entering the literary tradition that has shaped them. Given the pressures of this situation—to visit places full of associations, to feel the "right thing" when they arrive, and finally to come up with something new to say—how do travel writers go about accomplishing their task?

Kinglake failed twice in his attempt to recount his journey to the East. He explains in the preface to *Eothen* that he only succeeded on his third try, in response to a friend's request. That friend was Eliot Warburton, who was on the point of undertaking a similar journey. Instead of setting himself up as an authority, Kinglake adopts a casual and intimate style, quite unlike that of many earlier travel writers. He admits that he has shirked the traveler's duty to provide factual information, flippantly avowing that "from all details of geographical discovery, or antiquarian research—from all display of 'sound learning, and religious knowledge'—from all historical and scientific illustrations—from all useful statistics—from all political disquisitions—and from all good moral reflections, the volume is thoroughly free" (3). Instead, he confesses, he has produced "a sadly long strain about Self."

Kinglake knows that he has broken with the demands of the genre, and he apologizes for not fulfilling his readers' expectations about what a travel book should be: "My notion of dwelling precisely upon those matters which happened to interest me, and upon none other, would of course be intolerable in a regular book of travels" (4). But only by writing something that was *not* "a regular book of travels" could he write at all.

Eothen is generally regarded as marking a turning point in the history of the genre. In 1916 F. A. Kirkpatrick described how, in contrast to the travel writing of the eighteenth century, "the better travel-books of the nineteenth century . . . deal less with monuments, museums, churches and institutions: they deal more with men and women in relation to their surroundings. Sometimes, this human interest lies in the pleasant egotism of the traveller."[18] Many readers have enjoyed this "pleasant egotism": Jan Morris, for example, remarks that "*Eothen* is a thoroughly self-centred book, and that is half its charm."[19] Anita Damiani, however, criticizes Kinglake and other Victorian travelers for their retreat into subjectivity and the personal. She compares them unfavorably with their eighteenth-century precursors, who not only provided useful information but also took a less aggressive and imperialistic stance.[20] And in *Orientalism* Edward Said writes disapprovingly that Kinglake "is more interested in remaking himself and the Orient . . . than he is in seeing what there is to be seen."[21]

Kinglake's approach to travel, however, has more to do with feeling than with seeing. "As I have felt," he declares, "so I have written." This need not make his writing untruthful, he hastens to assure us: "My excuse for the book is its truth . . . it conveys, not those impressions which *ought to have been* produced . . . but those which were really and truly received at the time" (3). The insistent claim to be telling the truth is characteristic of travel literature; as Mary Kingsley asserts in the preface to *Travels in West Africa* (1897): "if you go there you will find things as I have said."[22] Travel writers, it is worth noting, are in a singular position: they have great license to write what they please, since readers can hardly check up on them without undertaking arduous journeys (and even then, no one could verify a specific incident or reported conversation, much less a feeling). But their reputations depend on convincing a skeptical audience, for as Percy G. Adams has shown in *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800*

[18]"The Literature of Travel, 1700-1900," *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, eds. Sir. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1916) 14: 249.

[19]Introduction, *Eothen* xi.

[20]*Enlightened Observers: British Travellers to the Near East, 1715-1850* (Beirut: American Univ. of Beirut, 1979) 171-78.

[21]*Orientalism* (1978; New York: Random House, 1979) 193.

[22]*Travels in West Africa* (1897; London: Virago Press, 1982) xxi.

(1962), travel writing also provides a rich field of opportunity for liars—who, of course, also claim to be telling the truth.

But Kinglake goes a step further than the usual boast of objectivity ("impartial eyes"). He argues that the traveler's very subjectivity—he calls it his selfishness—guarantees his truthfulness, for "he tells you of objects, not as he knows them to be, but as they seemed to him" (5). Making a virtue of subjectivity, Kinglake's solution to the problem of how to write about places that had already been much seen and described is to turn inward, focusing on the impressions received by "Self."

Wildly popular, *Eothen* had an immediate influence upon the style of other travel writers. When Warburton came to write his own book, he imitated Kinglake's device and wrote as though he were having "a sort of imaginary conversation with the reader" (preface). The reader thus becomes his companion, whom he addresses at the end with these words: "Reader!—you have been my only fellow-traveller through many lands; wherever I have wandered you have been; whatever I have learned you have known" (2.20). Warburton's emphasis on the seeing "I" illustrates how the intervening presence of the travel writer has become the point of the travel book. Just as he likes to feel that he has seen through the eyes of Biblical and classical authors, so Warburton claims that his own readers have seen through his eyes.

Mark Twain, in contrast, is ambivalent about the kind of intimate fellowship Warburton proposes. More antagonistic toward an enshrined literary tradition, he wants to demystify travel by suggesting "to the reader how *he* would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes, instead of the eyes of those who traveled in those countries before him" (15). But of course this attempt to dispense with literary mediation is doomed to failure: *Innocents Abroad* cannot help but show us Europe and the East though other eyes than our own—Mark Twain's.

The travel writer inevitably interposes his own text between the sight and the reader, just as previous writers interposed their texts between him and the sight. Textual mediation is inescapable: the writer cannot act as a transparent or self-effacing medium. Warburton's assertion that the reader has seen exactly what he did suggests a faith in the power of language to transmute seeing into reading, and reading back into seeing. These nineteenth-century travel writers all seem confident in the ability of their readers to penetrate language, to decode the literary encoding of an experience in order to re-experience it along with them. To suggest that reading is not the same as seeing would be to break the circuit that binds travel writers to their readers, who in turn become writers for others.

But however much they may protest that we are "seeing" along with them, our reading is clearly not the same as their seeing. In *Journey to Kars* Glazebrook shows himself to be more skeptical about the power of language to capture the essence of an experience. "Never mind," he writes. "I'm used to wrecking the magic of things by writing about them: very little of the mystery of a place or an idea survives the scrutiny required to sort out and to put into words what it was about that mystery sufficiently intriguing to have compelled you to write about it" (171).

Although Glazebrook relishes the way literary evocations create mystery in an "empty" landscape, putting the mystery into words is another matter. On a boat nearing the Turkish coast, he contrasts himself to an Australian couple who, lacking his own classical background, appear oblivious to the Homeric associations of the scene. Instead, their attention is occupied with attending to their baby, and Glazebrook remarks, "I couldn't change the baby's nappies out here for fear of storms, monsters, waterspouts, rocks hurled by blinded giants." He adds disdainfully, "I think I probably prefer to travel with my chimeras, and leave the baby behind" (40).

But it turns out not to be so easy to leave the baby behind. Glazebrook carries his own figurative baby—the preoccupation with writing a travel book—that hinders his appreciation of the foreign adventure. The traveler may want to live for the moment and be content with the memory, but the writer is obliged to turn experience into words: "I spend my life trying to squash Spirit into Word, life into sentences, unruly feelings into orderly syntax, trying to get the naked kicking baby into its clothes" (51). Fussing with the baby emerges as a metaphor for that which occupies and distracts the traveling writer. It represents both the embryonic quest that brought him on the journey and the literary creation to which he must give birth through writing about it.

As a traveler Glazebrook sometimes resents and resists the demand that a writer give birth

to books; indeed, he sometimes despairs of doing so: "Hardest, because most important, was to find words for the certainty of happiness which had filled me as I had walked away from the ruined city in the dusk. I could not—cannot—crush that kicking baby into its clothes." And so for a time he tries to fool himself into believing that he doesn't have to, that he can find a substitute for words. Speaking of a precious intaglio he has bought from a Turkish shepherd, he says, "But I had in my shirt pocket the gem which expressed it all" (73). His desire to believe that the intaglio can contain the essence of his experience better than any words could do seems an attempt to evade the burden of being a writer. But this is an illusion—the "gem" eventually turns out be a worthless fake, expressing nothing, and he throws it away. He wants the easy satisfaction of a tangible memento—revealing his kinship to the souvenir-hunting tourist—but in acquiescing to that self-deception, he is himself deceived.

Kinglake overcomes his writer's block by violating some of the conventions of the genre. Glazebrook, in contrast, writes his travel book by commenting on, and tacitly imitating, the conventions of his Victorian models. Aware that his modern audience is unlikely to be familiar with their works, he even supplies his own frame of reference in the form of lengthy quotations. Although he sometimes pretends to break with earlier conventions, even mocks them outright, he invariably reproduces them. Thus, the intertext provides not only the motivation for his journey (to see Turkey as the great nineteenth-century adventurers did), but also the structure for his own book (his "re-writing" of their travels). He solves the problem of dressing the baby by using old clothes.

Glazebrook claims the status of the detached critic, analyzing the methods of nineteenth-century travel writers, but not employing their rather obvious devices himself. For example, he points to the way in which it was *de rigueur* to conjure up a sense of danger so that the writer would appear brave and heroic:

> Travellers mentioned only those like themselves, who would hold to the convention that to reach the spot where they had met was a bold and hazardous enterprise, not to be undertaken by mere merchants out for profit. They suppressed the merchants because they got in the way of the sense of adventure they wanted to convey. I would have done better to have suppressed the Australian baby if I was to convey the sense of adventure I really felt as we ran along that wild shore.
>
> (41)

Yet despite this pose of being above or outside the conventions, Glazebrook actually takes great pains to evoke danger. He builds suspense by describing the unsettled political situation, the recent military takeover, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, and his own uncertainty about whether or not to break off his journey before reaching Kars.

Similarly, he contrasts his unsuccessful efforts to obtain news with those of the Victorian traveler, who was "given advice in dramatic terms, usually against proceeding, by consuls and pashas and shocked merchants met by chance in khans after alarming experiences." He wonders whether the writer may only have recorded "the advice of those who begged him to turn back . . . so that the traveller's calm pursuance of . . . his plans should seem all the bolder by light of the perils he has leaked into the reader's mind by this device." And he suggests that his own situation is quite different: "There was no one on whom I could lay the responsibility of deciding" (100). But in fact his very first chapter alludes to the warnings he's had: "Objections raised by others—thirty people a day murdered in Turkey that summer, for instance—show them not to be practical travellers" (10). In making light of these dire statistics—while not omitting to mention them to the reader—Glazebrook participates fully in the very tradition he has been gently satirizing.

He makes fun of the vocabulary of the Victorian narrator, who writes in order to "satisfy the romantic expectations of the armchair traveller": "Here the crags 'beetle', the cliffs 'frown', heights are 'dizzy', chasms 'yawn', and the rivers are all 'cataracts'" (145). But two pages further on we find Glazebrook's own romantic description of a bus ride at top speed on a winding mountain road: "The scenes of despair were like those between decks in a slaver, the captain crowding on sail to escape the pursuing man-of-war. At last, through mist and darkness, I saw pine trees lit by the headlights, and shrubs clinging amongst the rocks, and many wild briars" (147).

Glazebrook is astute about the conventions informing the narratives of Victorian travelers, but without often admitting it, he himself

employs precisely the same devices to which he has called our attention. To take a final example, he writes that "it was conventional amongst travellers . . . that when they returned home they closed the door in your face" (33). As a disappointed reader, he bemoans his eviction, saying, "I long to eavesdrop further." Quoting Warburton's dismissal of the reader ("I scarcely venture to hope that you will share in the regret with which I say—Farewell!"), Glazebrook cries, "But I do, Eliot (if I may call you that), I do!" (242). And then Glazebrook closes the door in *our* faces, observing the convention in the same moment that he deplores it.

This foregrounding of literary convention vividly illustrates the extent to which travel writing, though it may present itself as mere factual reportage, is in fact a highly selective and self-conscious genre. Although the casual reader may expect strict truthfulness from travel writers—why read travel books if they aren't "true"?—their works are unavoidably circumscribed by text and tradition. Kinglake's answer to this question is to proclaim that subjectivity offers its own kind of truth; Glazebrook's answer is that fiction may be the closest approximation to reality: "The impulse to write fiction is felt strongly, I think, by travellers. . . . Incidents need to be developed or run together, events shaped, characters touched up, drama heightened, if the reader is to appreciate what were the traveller's real feelings at the time" (167). Yielding to literariness ironically serves as his strategy for overcoming the gap between experience and language; his solution is to write a book about writing a book.

Glazebrook, interestingly, shows how fully he has accepted Kinglake's philosophy: he automatically assumes that the reader will be curious about "the traveller's real feelings," rather than, say, accurate delineations of landscape, monuments, local customs, or political developments. The temptation "to invent, or at least to embellish, so as to convey to others the force of what you have felt yourself" is perfectly permissible, for the traveler is primarily engaged in the production of a literary text:

> For the reader's appreciation of the reality of travel, it is more important that the book's author should be a born writer, than that the events narrated should be the literal truth. . . . The narrator must turn himself into the Hero, if readers are to follow his adventures sufficiently eagerly, and to achieve this requires selection and embellishment, even invention, so long as verisimilitude—dramatic truth—is the aim. (167, 168)

Conspicuously missing from such an analysis of how travel literature works are the moral and political dimensions of the British presence in the Middle East. "Dramatic truth" cannot be the only aim of texts which present themselves as reliable accounts of foreign places, for they will inevitably influence readers' attitudes, even public policies. As Patrick Brantlinger has shown,

> The great explorers' writings are nonfictional quest romances in which the hero-authors struggle through enchanted, bedeviled lands toward an ostensible goal: the discovery of the Nile's sources, the conversion of the cannibals. . . . The humble but heroic authors move from adventure to adventure against a dark, infernal backdrop where there are no other characters of equal stature, only bewitched or demonic savages. (180-81)

The metaphors chosen by travel writers—quest romance, bringers of light—are not as innocent as Glazebrook believes. Turning "himself into the Hero" does not merely liven up a traveler's tale; it also reinforces Western cultural chauvinism.

Glazebrook is aware that in constructing himself as Hero, the nineteenth-century traveler "employed Asiatics as the crowd of extras and bit-players forming a background of atmosphere and Eastern colour whose function was to show off himself as the central figure" (84). He realizes that "of the many hundreds of native servants underpinning these books of travels, very few surface as individuals" (85). Yet here again Glazebrook shares the conventional attitudes even as he exposes them. Reinscribing Victorian racial prejudice, he frequently indulges in condescending generalization, remarking, for example, that "as a race the Turks don't care a jot for preserving what is beautiful, or even what is useful" (75), and that "as with their love of sweets and loud noises, this inquisitiveness makes Asiatics seem to Europeans like children" (111).

Travel writing is in fact a double-pronged quest for domination, not only of actual experience (foreign lands and foreigners) but

also of literary experience (prior travel texts and their authors). Glazebrook's tactic for dealing with his precursors, exposing their foibles and tricks, only to re-use them himself, reveals him to be engaged in a power struggle to become as "authoritative" as they. The adversarial nature of the relationship between travel writers and their literary heirs is confirmed by the military imagery Glazebrook uses to describe it: "By buying the man's book of travels you haven't bought access to his confessions, and he doesn't show you his weaknesses any more than he would show them to the enemies he encounters on his road. That isn't to say that weaknesses may not be deduced" (33). Glazebrook puts his predecessors at the mercy of *his* narrative, so that instead of being one more follower in their footsteps, he makes them seem like part of his experience—he is the one who gives them new life. The ambitious travel writer controls his world by becoming master of the texts that describe it.

Such narrative maneuvers seek ascendancy not only over other peoples, but over one another. Thus Glazebrook's approach is not just a matter of "selection and embellishment," of animating a prosaic narrative. Travel literature is so highly intertextual that at times texts are actually substituted for experience itself, and the attempt to control crucial passages, whether in the Bosphorus or in Victorian prose, represents an essential strategy in the campaign to make a place one's own. This appropriation of the texts of others has its Victorian antecedents: when Warburton makes the obligatory pilgrimage to the home of the late Lady Hester Stanhope, he finds he has little to say, so he slots in whole passages from *Eothen*, in which Kinglake relates *his* visit to this unusual woman. Warburton also quotes and thereby recovers from Kinglake a letter of his own—a letter which Kinglake had already printed in *Eothen*—about her death (2.3). In later editions Kinglake omitted Warburton's letter, explaining that "I must now give up the borrowed ornament . . . for the rightful owner has reprinted it in 'The Crescent and the Cross'" (94n). At this point the narrative has become a tissue of juxtaposed texts, and almost all attempts at reporting the actual moment are dropped in the effort to annex whichever preexisting words have become, in MacCannell's terminology, markers of "authentic" experience.

Glazebrook even more boldly uses old reading to stand in for new experience: "I saw nowhere I wished I was stopping, though I peered out at Aksehir with interest, thinking of Layard's description of riding into it in 1839"; he then quotes Layard at length, rather than get off the bus himself (79). Similarly, he waits in the bus station at Erzurum instead of going out to explore the town, "content . . . to remember Erzurum by the pictures of it painted into my head by Robert Curzon" (141). Such evasions lay bare the true nature of the genre, a genre in which texts are primary: "new" experiences are not merely conditioned by generic demands and precedents; they are subsumed by them. Russian formalists regarded the bizarre, self-conscious literary devices of *Tristram Shandy* as making it the most, not the least, representative of novels; the same may be said of Glazebrook's flagrant substitution of literature for experience. His textual pilgrimage takes to its logical conclusion the endeavor of travelers to see what they have already read about. The travel book substitutes nicely for the "real" experience by conscientiously reinscribing the signs of its authenticity; literature does more than motivate travel, it replaces it.

And indeed, when we last see Glazebrook he is writing up his notes and musing about the book he must produce: "Probably I could have written it without leaving Dorset, except to travel to the London Library." Intertextual to the last, he leaves us with a quotation from Tennyson's "Ulysses" ("There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail . . .") and the observation that "[t]he journey ahead was writing the book" (240). The author's physical journey was in fact a journey through books, an extended trip to the London Library; and now the book itself has become a journey. A reader's ticket not only enables the energetic traveler to explore Homeric "realms of gold" by embracing the words that constitute foreign lands, it also grants him dominion over all who have written the landscape that he will reframe and rewrite. Travel literature, the genre that by rights seems most likely to take both writer and reader out of their usual surroundings, is actually most at home with itself when it reveals how neither has ever really left the armchair.□

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Cai Qi-jiao

STILL PRAYING

Translated by Edward Morin and Fang Dai

I pray for a breeze in sweltering summer,
A little less precipitation in winter.
May the flowers bloom red, purple, or whatever;
May love be spared derisive laughter,
May someone be available to prop up the fallen.
Let me have compassionate people around
So that when a man is really down
They at least won't increase his pain
By turning a cold shoulder and arched eyebrows;
Each day of the year, like a cooling spring
Gushing forth non-stop, let us have some wisdom,
Instead of bans and rulings against this or that.
I ask to hear songs welling from the heart
Without someone laying down a formula
Of prearranged keys for every melody.
I pray
For the day when people will have no need
To pray the way I have had to do here.

Martha Dimes Toher

BEARING WITNESS: EXPLORATIONS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

In *A Book of Common Prayer,* Joan Didion's Grace sets herself the task of bearing witness to events in a fictional Central American country. The novel ends with Grace concluding, "I have not been the witness I wanted to be."[1] The idea of bearing witness—and the worry about how one does so effectively—is significant in several narratives of travel in Central America published in the 1980s. It signals an ideological shift from exploration as an act of conquest to exploration as witnessing; it involves an attempt to understand rather than dominate another culture, hence a tacit acknowledgment of pluralism.

Joan Didion's *Salvador* (1983), Christopher Dickey's *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua* (1985), and Charles Clements' *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador* (1984)—documents of journeys in El Salvador and Nicaragua in the early 1980s—express both physical and ideological exploration. The writers are, in Dickey's words, "witnesses to the . . . madness" of U.S. involvement there; two journalists and a physician, all are trained to be objective observers.[2] They reject the conquestive tradition of travel writing: their works undermine the dominating power of the traveler—and the culture he or she represents—questioning the traveler's ability to comprehend a foreign culture and criticizing the imperialistic impulse. Therefore they subvert, to varying degrees, the traditional travel narrative's structure, heroic characteristics, and reliance on abstract rhetoric in order to reveal an often kaleidoscopic world that cannot be controlled by a politics of nostalgia. The three books self-consciously reveal the traveler's struggle to understand and witness the unknown.

[1]Joan Didion, *A Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Pocket Books, 1977) 280.

[2]Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua,* 2nd ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987) 16.

Politics of Nostalgia

Travel narratives of journeys into areas of military conflict are as much political excursions as physical ones. The narrative's notion of progress from initial preconceptions to ultimate knowledge suggests the dominating force of the traveler, who may actually impose these preconceptions in actions or words upon the landscape. Direct financial backing by a political institution, as Columbus had from the Spanish crown and Lewis and Clark had from the Jefferson presidency, only intensifies the issue. Too often the place explored becomes an object of projected hopes, intentions, and fantasies. Central America especially, writes one former foreign service agent, "is Fantasy Isthmus, a region of the American mind, peopled by our own political demons, where too often expediency rules and rhetoric substitutes for reality."[3] However well-meaning they may have been, U.S. policies have indeed become political demons for many in Central America, establishing an unequal relationship between a normative power and weaker, deviant Others. These policies have depended upon an outdated unilateralism bolstered by heroic imagery and rhetoric better suited to nineteenth-century imperialism than to twentieth-century realities.

The effort to gain knowledge and make progress often expressed in a travel narrative mirrors the conquest of territory that has taken place in the Americas. Historically, citizens of the United States have assumed that expansionism would be beneficial for those whom we considered inferior; we would improve their lot, and ours as well. We characteristically have had enormous confidence in Manifest Destiny. As John L. O'Sullivan in the 1840s described this vision in the *Democratic Review,*

> We are the nation of human progress, and

[3]Frank McNeil, *War and Peace in Central America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988) 9.

> who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? . . . the right of our manifest destiny [is] to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the . . . great experiment of liberty.[4]

O'Sullivan failed to see the irony in an expanding empire of democracy: one cannot at once possess and liberate. The unself-conscious, innocent bravado of traveler-writers who approach other cultures to "improve" them becomes a secular mission to impose democracy on them.

Perhaps the post-Revolutionary need for the United States to establish an identity based on a democratic ideal has also driven its citizens to define others in our own terms, as a means of reinforcing our values—a defensive move that becomes predatory. The failure to match cultural signs and referents, along with the mistaken assumption that one *has* successfully done so, characterizes the imperialist mission. Self-interest often combines with or masquerades as altruism. Furthermore, the written representation of such acts is itself political, observes Edward Said: "the gross fact [is] that the swathe the United States cuts through the world is considerable, . . . heavily dependent on cultural discourse . . . *our* culture."[5]

The "altruistic sentiments" and "noble words" that in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* help describe the ironies of European expansion in Africa continue to describe American efforts in Central America, as Dickey, Didion, and Clements note in their travel books. Much of the world, says E. Bradford Burns, still has a "romantic vision" of a "David and Goliath scenario" involving larger powers of empire and smaller, underdeveloped countries. Burns contends that the U.S. government has employed a "politics of nostalgia" toward Central America, policies that may have been useful once but that no longer apply to current affairs.[6] Beneath particular differences in policy from administration to administration has been the assumption that American hegemony is best for Central America. The post-World War II Pax Americana advocated peace and world order, but in our own terms: says Burns, "the model exclusively mirrored American views. Noble as some of those views might have been, all could not reflect the desires of a complex world" (121).

The power to veto policy, the attempt to keep other powers out of the area, the maintenance of troops in the region, and economic assistance directed only toward approved purposes continue to reflect Manifest Destiny's ideology of liberation through possession. What makes it seem palatable are appealing symbols and abstract rhetoric, of which such terms as Manifest Destiny and Pax Americana, as well as "freedom fighters," are a part. Historian David Healy points out that although nineteenth-century travelers in Central America truly believed in the value of expansionism, by the late twentieth century we should have learned our lesson: "Surely," he says, "our policy makers can do better than unknowingly repeat the errors of the past, while making the same inflated claims for the benefits of a pax [*sic*] Americana and private enterprise."[7] Surely, too, travel writers can avoid the presumption of knowledge and the projections of intention that in their work may embody a political agenda, in favor of questioning, observing, growing—witnessing.

Bearing Witness

The efforts of Dickey, Didion, and Clements to bear witness in Central America have important parallels in the epistemological questions addressed recently by both cultural anthropologists and by members of the Witness for Peace movement: How much can one participate, while observing, without violating the integrity of the subject? And how much can one understand, given the differences in cultural contexts?

In the past, anthropologists and travel writers often projected their normative assumptions upon foreign places and peoples.[8] What Richard A. Schweder calls "the enlightenment approach" to anthropology has assumed that people are

[4]Qtd. in Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945) 427.

[5]Edward W. Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1989): 215.

[6]E. Bradford Burns, *At War in Nicaragua: The Reagan Doctrine and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987) ix.

[7]David Healy, *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean 1898-1917* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1988) 290.

rational and that reason and evidence are stable across cultures—a universal "natural law."[9] This belief in progress and rational development is a kind of anthropological manifest destiny. The question anthropologists and travel writers now pose is more likely to be, how can we see and know this place, these people? For Clifford Geertz, anthropology is "the desire to understand what it is to *be* a member of another culture."[10] But Geertz also knows that it is impossible to "go native" completely—"the myth of the chameleon fieldworker."[11] Differences in background keep outsiders from ever fully becoming insiders. Learning facts, details, or occurrences may produce some understanding of another culture, but it will remain incomplete, due to ignorance of context or of the subject's mind. Knowledge of parts does not guarantee synechdochic knowledge of the whole. Whether information is given freely by the informant or (perhaps more violently) is extorted by the observer, the process reinforces the insider/outsider distinction. "Because discourse in global power systems is elaborated vis-à-vis," writes Clifford, "a sense of differentness . . . can never be located solely in the continuity of a culture. . . . Identity is conjunctural, not essential" (11). How can one love (know) another if one does not acknowledge the difference (selfhood) of the other? But in acknowledging difference, one tends to assume a hierarchy in selves.[12]

However "natural" a text a travel book may be—and it often comes as close to recording reality as any text can—the human tendency, writes Edward Said, is to retreat to narrative conventions "when the uncertainties of travel in strange parts seem to threaten one's equanimity."[13] This is a very human desire to make order out of chaos. Consequently, the observed scene is often not so much recorded—an activity that implies passive, almost photographic objectivity—as it is interpreted according to received convention: "such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (*Orientalism* 94). Given this tendency, the writers' deliberate effort to get past such conventions also subverts the entity that they represent: to renounce the conquestive narrative is to renounce conquest itself in favor of a kind of semiotic guerrilla warfare. But the traveler often finds it hard balancing, on one hand, identification with a group sufficient to know it and, on the other, the reporter's detachment combined with the outsider's difference.

The insider/outsider problem is evident in the mission of the Witness for Peace organization: to "get to know local residents in order to better understand the situation" and to remain independent of internal politics.[14] Begun in 1983 in response to the U.S.-backed contra war in Nicaragua, Witness for Peace is a nonprofit, ecumenical movement of U.S. citizens who advocate nonviolent resistance to the war. Almost four thousand members have traveled in delegations to rural areas of Nicaragua and Guatemala in order to document civilian conditions. While living with the residents for either two-week or months-long periods, the delegations interview civilians, report on conditions, help with local projects, and "mobilize public opinion and help change U.S. foreign policy to one which fosters justice, peace, and friendship" (statement of mission). Clearly, the latter goal is not disinterested; witnessing in this case does have an agenda that assumes the goals of the delegations coincide with those of the civilians with whom they live. As activists, these witnesses *act*, not simply record—and must, therefore, somehow reconcile the two. An important issue for the witness is how to maintain a balance between distance and

[8]James Clifford equates ethnography with travel and imperialism (*The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1988] 13).

[9]Richard A. Schweder, "Anthropology's Modern Rebellion Against the Enlightenment," in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, eds. Richard A. Schweder and Robert A. LeVine (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984) 27-66.

[10]Robert C. Solomon, "Getting Angry: The Jamesian Theory of Emotion in Anthropology," in *Culture Theory* 253.

[11]Clifford Geertz, " 'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in *Culture Theory* 123.

[12]Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984) 168.

[13]Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979) 93.

[14]Part of statement of mission, Witness for Peace.

immersion. I asked a member of Witness for Peace if he felt it was possible to find, if not "the truth," at least a coherent whole. "It's incredibly complex," he said; "everybody has a different story. . . . You have to have a certain amount of intelligence to find the logic out of all the stories." Nevertheless, he feels there is a logic to be found, based on a series of complex factors that interact in variable formations: "People are not rational actors; they are passionate actors."[15] And being passionate, they will sometimes appear to contradict themselves. The witness's task is to discover the underlying logical pattern beneath the details.

Credible witnesses must tell the stories in order to validate them, and, says David Apter, they should be *both* insiders and outsiders.[16] The travel writers discussed here address, in various ways, these problems: How do we "read" experience as we do a text, and then translate it into an actual text? How do we get close enough to understand yet remain objective? How do we locate the patterns? And what if we cannot? How do we bear witness?

Dickey, Didion, Clements

While in the past many travel writers, perhaps reflecting dominant groups to which they belong, have wanted to see (and mold) others in their own image, Dickey, Didion, and Clements "defend the coequality of fundamentally different 'frames' of understanding" (Schweder 48). Whether implicitly or explicitly, they reject notions of inherent cultural superiority: "right" versus "wrong," the idea of progress toward a "proper" state, the desire to discover universal truth—and the certainty that such truth exists. They aim, instead, for local truth. Their narratives show them "going native" to varying degrees, attempting to identify and appreciate what they perceive (rather than appropriate it for use), to learn idioms, and to comprehend signs. Compared to Didion's kaleidoscopic form and Dickey's ironic circularity, Clements' narrative comes nearest to conventional travel narrative. Furthermore, he has more faith than the others in his ability to witness and identifies more closely with his subjects.

Charles Clements' *Witness to War* documents the year he spent (1982) as physician in rural El Salvador. It is, as State Department official Murat W. Williams notes in the foreword, a "remarkable memoir of his year in a rebel enclave twenty-five miles north of . . . San Salvador."[17] The length of stay allows Clements to experience and describe in depth the countryside, farming techniques, primitive living conditions, and medical problems from undernutrition, unsanitary conditions, and war injuries. A graduate of the Air Force Academy, Clements went to Vietnam in 1969 as a C-130 transport pilot. "An officer and a gentleman," he had hoped to become a general; "Instead, I became a doctor and a Quaker" (6). The shift from a military to a pacifist stance, which changed his life, frames the narrative of his experience in El Salvador.

The narrative in *Witness to War* seems, at first, a linear chronological movement, based on Clements' diaries, but it soon becomes evident to the author and to the reader that the experiences in El Salvador he records arrange themselves into patterns whose significance is other than chronological. His initial journey from Honduras to the Salvadoran border and into the country where he will spend the next year moves from the urban to the primitive. Journeying from Tegucigalpa, "what settlements we encountered grew more primitive in direct ratio to their distance from the capital" (25). In this instance, movement into the primitive echoes Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* not in the colonizing impetus but in the dissociation from the familiar, the isolation, the helplessness of the traveler. New to the country, on his way to the front (the Salvadorans having misunderstood his mission), and wounded, Clements was "alone, exhausted, and suddenly very vulnerable" (66). The time he needs to recuperate serves as a break in the narrative movement, a period for reflection; re-reading his diary, he sees that "all the wonder and randomness of my first days on the Front had overpowered my contemplative powers. The entries seemed to gallop everywhere, moving lickety-split" from impressions to notes to complaints "and questions, questions, questions" (66).

Clements' convalescent reflections produce a

[15]Kevin Kresse, personal conversation, 29 Oct. 1990.

[16]David Apter, "Mao's Republic," *Social Research* 54 (1987): 709.

[17]Murat W. Williams, foreword, *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador*, by Charles Clements (New York: Bantam, 1984) ix.

second narrative structuring device: the use of his past as parallel to the present. Cut off from the familiar, "living under a pseudonym—Camilo—among people who had no last names, no histories they would talk about," Clements felt at once not only the submersion of his individuality but also the need to make individual and historical sense out of his experience (19). Thus, he interrupts his narrative of Salvador to reminisce about previous experiences in Vietnam and in a psychiatric ward. He relates his initial naiveté about the U.S. presence in Vietnam and his gradual realization of deception, futility, and betrayal, resulting in an "insane" antiwar stance that landed him in psychiatric treatment (the references he makes to *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, Catch-22,* and *Don Quixote* show a clear inversion of "craziness"). Throughout *Witness to War,* the parallels between the Vietnam and Salvadoran wars become clear. More significantly, however, the progression seen in the narrative about the past—from innocent faith to a saner wisdom of experience—demonstrates that for Clements history is meaningful and historical parallels are cautionary. Whereas in El Salvador people lived solely in the present, without identity or history, Clements attempts to find perspective and knowledge through history. Just as he grew from his Vietnam experience into the pacifist healer who can aid the Salvadorans, he hopes that the sense he makes of this experience will be valuable for others.

Christopher Dickey, a *Washington Post* reporter who covered Central America from 1980 to 1983, spent a week with the contras in Nicaragua in the spring of 1983. He set out to discover the "odyssey of the men who loved to kill" (16). Through the story of the contra leaders, he wanted to exemplify the recent turmoil in Central America and the U.S. contributions to it. Sections of his book, *With the Contras,* covering the years 1979 (the end of the Somoza regime) through 1982 (the beginning of the secret war and the U.S. involvement in it) and also late 1983 provide a convoluted and bloody sequence of events in Nicaragua's political struggle. Although this frame constitutes three-quarters of Dickey's text, his personal experience told at the center both colors and validates the frame.

Dickey places the account of his time with the Contras in the heart of a history of events leading up to and away from his experience. The historical context with which he begins *With the Contras* is based on interviews and documents from immediate local sources; through them Dickey attempts to understand the points of view of the contras and of the United States. The events are dated and arranged chronologically. But what Dickey terms "the randomness of pure chronology" (236) seems to negate any sense of progression that might be provided by the physical movement through the terrain or implied by the shifting of focus among Commander Zero (code name for Edén Pastora), Krill (Julio César Herrera), and Suicida (Pedro Pablo Ortiz Centeno). Where U.S. leaders find continuity in facile historical parallels ("Haig began talking about Korea in 1950 and Cuba in 1962" [104]), Dickey ultimately finds these problematic; for him, they do not verify the progress that the politicians wish to see in them.

Dickey's ambivalence is revealed in a scene that is central to his experience in Nicaragua—his meeting with Suicida. "I began wondering what we were going to say to Suicida when we saw him: the first words." When the time came, " 'Commandante Suicida, I presume,' was all I could think to say" (201). The allusion here—to Henry Stanley's words upon finding Dr. Livingstone in Africa—has become a trope of western imperialist response in primitive territories. Beyond that, however, as Marianna Torgovnick points out, Stanley's own words were not extemporaneous but carefully chosen, rehearsed, and controlled in order to maintain "the dignity of the white man" before the Africans.[18] Thus Dickey's words are a rehearsal of a rehearsal. Perhaps ironic, perhaps humorous, they certainly conjure the trope; but the uncertain phrase that ends the passage questions the very enterprise the greeting reflects. The presumption implied by Stanley's expression, which reflects the traveler-as-imperialist, clearly makes Dickey both self-conscious about his own role and uncomfortable about the role of the culture he represents.

Dickey also undercuts his narrative's progressive movement with the presence of various smaller circular structures: for example, such statements as "Violent rule spawned violent opposition, and violent opposition was used to justify violent rule" (17). Other compound structures using "but" transform what seems a step forward into a step backward. The regular turnover in leadership through

[18]Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990) 26-34.

elections and in family generations at best maintains the status quo: "their faces changed very little, and their names not at all, from father to older son and then younger son, through almost half the century: Somoza" (18). The ruling family exemplified the lack of change or progress experienced by the Nicaraguan people up to the Somozas' ouster in 1979. In subsequent years, the individual leadership may have changed, but conditions remained the same; the code name "El Muerto," for example, was "a family tradition," used by several members (114). Along with these structures, the frequent mention of "chaos" and "madness" makes progress only illusory and suggests that despite the value of interviews and experience, Dickey's ability to gain knowledge remains limited.

Salvador, the result of Joan Didion's two-week trip to El Salvador in 1982, was first published (in part) in the *New York Review of Books* (October 1982). Just over one hundred pages long, *Salvador* does not claim to be a comprehensive historical or political treatment of the country; rather, Didion's strategy is to present a series of graphic images as an alternative to the bureaucratic rhetoric of government officials. In so doing, she conveys what it is like to be in a strange place, to try to deconstruct what she sees and hears, and to come up short of answers.

Didion hopes to find out "la verdad," the truth, in detailed experience. She discloses these details within an impressionistic structure in which scenes, dates, and people appear and move at random. Although she divides *Salvador* into six sections, they bear none of the dates, places, or names that structure Dickey's and Clements' narratives, and thus might easily be rearranged. She gives few signs to indicate place or time. Only well into the book do we discover that Didion is in El Salvador in June 1982 for two weeks. Where Dickey and Clements try to place current events in historical context, Didion seems to see such efforts as fruitless. The memos she includes at the end of the book, quoted from embassy officials and other journalists who comment upon U.S. involvement in El Salvador, serve only to show the deceptions caused by abstract ideological thinking; they reflect no sense of progress. Time, along with space, becomes distorted, its arbitrary system of divisions rejected as meaningless: "Time itself," she says, "tends to contract to the here and now."[19] Didion's rejection of traditional temporal and spatial order denies any possibility of an orderly movement toward knowledge. Her abandonment of structural progression, like Dickey's circular undermining of it, indicates that the U.S. presence in Central America is neither ideologically nor economically progressive.

Whereas heroic biography provided models for new empires, *Salvador*, *With the Contras*, and *Witness to War* are all similarly hero-less according to traditional fashion. These works suggest no western exemplars by which to civilize the natives, nor do they depict indigenous heroes as traditional "great men." Didion, for example, submerges her own perspective beneath the detailed images of places and people that she describes. Aware that "writing is an act of saying *I*, of imposing oneself upon other people . . . an invasion," she reduces references to herself in the text and refuses to pose as either hero or conqueror.[20] Nor does she discover a hero in El Salvador: "This is a national history particularly resistant to heroic interpretation" (72). Thus, *Salvador*'s people merge and recede, achieving only temporary significance or efficacy.

Like Didion, Dickey does not want to impose himself as a hero upon the narrative. As his title suggests, he attempts to identify with the contras so that he will *not* impose his own views upon them. He finds that the three potential roles he might play begin, confusingly, to overlap: To discover information he becomes a participant, but in so doing he risks becoming a less objective observer and even becoming a hero in the narrative. As Dickey becomes more an actor, he is less an observer.

The tension he feels among roles is exemplified in an important scene. When Dickey becomes physically exhausted and feels he cannot continue the march to safety, a contra leader saves him. The experience is almost hallucinatory, "the most disturbing sort of dream" (207). Dickey's physical weakness slows down the group, putting it in danger; betrayed by his body, then, Dickey becomes subject to the group's will. While the hallucinatory effects of the experience are partly due to physical weakness, Dickey underscores the loss of objectivity it signifies. His immersion into the

[19]Joan Didion, *Salvador* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1983) 70.

[20]Joan Didion, "Why I Write, in *Joan Didion: Essays and Conversations*, ed. Ellen G. Friedman (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984) 5.

river at the border marks his relief at being safe. But as he sinks almost lifeless into the river, he realizes what his helplessness entails. His physical dependence on the contras makes him an actor, unwilling and unheroic, not merely an observer. He discovers his objectivity crumbling.

Dickey does search for other heroes, however, though finally he cannot locate a hero in the contras. His excursion began, in fact, with an interest in Suicida as a potential hero or exemplar: "in the story of Suicida I had found a way of conveying some of Central America's tragedy and some of the contradictions in Washington's view of what happened there" (9). Dickey was looking for an exemplar for the place and time. The contras allow Dickey into their circle because "it was important . . . to have some heroes and some martyrs. And no one would know about your heroes and martyrs if you did not allow the press to meet them" (176).

His narrative shows several potential heroes—Commander Zero, Suicida, and Krill—each attempting to identify with idols of their own. Zero (Pastora) allies himself with one idol after another. For a time, Fidel Castro "seemed to be the mythical father" for Pastora (71). But Sandino was for Pastora and others "the perfect hero, full of fire and intensity, fighting against enormous odds and practically on his own, defying the power of his nation's armies and those of the vast and magically powerful United States with a mystical and indefatigable determination. It was not an ideological thing. It was purely visceral" (33). Now mythic, Sandino's example became impossible to replicate. His successors' personae were manufactured, as were their names, to become symbols. Bravo "was a creation" intended to parallel Commander Zero (63), and Pastora—Zero—was seen as "a revolutionary—*the* revolutionary; a Nicaraguan man—*the* Nicaraguan man" (40). All disappoint; none can live up to the myth of Sandino. Each achieves, one after the other, only a fragile fame and ultimately fails in both mythical and political purpose. The U.S. politicians' characterization of these men by North American clichés—"paladins of the west," "cowboys," "freedom fighters," and "the revolutionary as poet"—suggests a nostalgia for mythic heroes of our own past. Perhaps the failure of these men can be attributed in part to the impossible demand for them to live up to an ideal that was at least partly imposed from outside their culture.

Clements finds heroism in everyday Salvadoran life, if he finds it at all, not in larger-than-life military figures. Unlike Didion, he is very much a character in his own work, and unlike Didion and Dickey he has no contact with the high political echelons. Just as history helps Clements make sense of the present, exemplars—real or imagined—help him portray for the reader the political situation. The Salvadorans certainly believed in the efficacy of exemplars: "A guerrilla had to be more than a fighter, [Ramon] believed. The *compañeros* had also to be examples to the rest of society" (39). Leadership was exercised by example.

To make his readers *see* (echoing Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*), Clements asks us to imagine, for example, "if the Speaker of the House or the Majority leader of the Senate were known to spend his private hours ordering the murders of opposition congressmen, the leadership of the AFL-CIO, or the hierarchy of the Presbyterian church" (195). With this and other comparisons—like that of a compañero with the U.S. Revolutionary War hero Francis Marion, for example—he attempts to engender in readers both immediacy and sympathy (217).[21] Clements is cautious about such comparisons, however: "It would be easy to romanticize . . . the traumatized orphan and the heroic commandante, especially when their principles and dignity are contrasted with the terrorism wrought by the Salvadoran right. But a truer portrait would be of a man and a boy caught in the vortex of revolutionary violence" (40). His statement seems to suggest that heroism, when possible, can be found in localized groups of people working toward a shared goal, not in the celebrated leaders. While in *With the Contras* these leaders fail as heroes, in *Witness to War* they are almost totally absent.

Clements' professional mission—to provide medical care to the Salvadorans and to help them care for themselves, "a commitment to heal and to witness"—may be more empathic than that of the journalists (18). He identifies almost immediately with the Salvadorans. He must, in order to do his work: "Winning their acceptance meant my total submission" (18); but doing so created a pacifist/activist dilemma. Clements, a pacifist, would be accepted only when he agreed to carry a weapon, and acceptance was necessary for his job. Living with the group, carrying a weapon, and learning

[21]Significantly, Marion was more a guerrilla hero than a traditional military leader.

their ways challenged Clements' neutrality (as Dickey's is also challenged); he found himself writing "we" (*campesinos*) and "they" (government) in his diary (115).

Despite empathy with and acceptance by the guerrillas, Clements confronts the insider/outsider problem. Several times he is stymied by his ignorance of local custom and frustrated by the lack of "common points of reference. . . . The true distance was cultural" (134). He was reminded that despite his identification with the guerrillas' politics and lives, this fight was not really his: "We do not sing the song for you, gringo" (170). Elsewhere Clements writes that "questions of imperialism and exploitation didn't interest me nearly as much as the perceived opportunity to alleviate suffering," but he discovers that the two are less distinct than he had thought (163). Though he makes no effort to distance himself or obliterate himself from his narrative, Clements cannot fully identify with his subject either. As a witness, he must get close enough to see clearly but not so close that he cannot see at all.

The lack of focus upon a hero in these three works and the resultant shifting of authorial perspective also parallel the shifting meaning of images and signs that the travelers encounter. Each book reflects semiotic disjunction between cultures and the difficulty of seeing another culture clearly. All three writers find abstract political rhetoric particularly slippery. Clements asks, "what good were these abstractions in such circumstances" as random attack, torture, starvation? (191). Experience is far more real for him than words, reports, expectations. Didion, too, separates experiential details from the political spin given them by various interpreters. The Salvadoran election, she writes, "is a potent symbol for many Americans" (*Salvador* 89), and "even the fact that the election had resulted in what [one diplomat] called 'political disorder' could be presented, with a turn of the mirror, positively" (90).[22] Likewise, Dickey notes that U.S.-contra policy was one of symbols: The contras themselves were "a symbol of hope," and "all the symbols were meant to speak of strength"; conversely, "democracy meant weakness" (10). Government officials obscure precise meaning by using vague, abstract terms: "The tactic of the hard-liners," says Dickey, "was to keep everything as vague as possible" (209). In the midst of the details, experiences, and portraits presented by these writers, rhetorical abstraction seems thin. Says historian Walter La Feber, "democracy remains a talisman brandished by U.S. presidents whenever they employ military force."[23]

Didion's conclusion about U.S. intervention in El Salvador can apply equally to Nicaragua:

> That we had been drawn, both by a misapprehension of the local rhetoric and by the manipulation of our own rhetorical weaknesses, into a game we did not understand, a play of power in a political tropic alien to us, seemed apparent, and yet there we remained.
>
> (*Salvador* 96)

Misapprehension of rhetoric and plays for power combine to produce political nostalgia. Invoking "freedom fighters" and "founding fathers" may force us to hearken back to the American Revolution, but the context of that revolution no longer exists. The Reagan doctrine's heroes and symbols remain trapped in a nineteenth-century legacy that bears little resemblance to the complexities of modern global affairs. "Constructed on faith," Dickey writes, "it [the Reagan doctrine] suffered in the face of facts" (11).

Clear images, not abstractions, convey meaning for these writers. Frequently throughout *With the Contras* and *Salvador*, images of fiction and theater suggest the lack of possibilities for objective perception. However, many images cluster around the principal one, of hallucination. For Didion, El Salvador itself is a "central hallucination . . . vision is blurred; eye contact is avoided" (*Salvador* 13-14). In the midst of chaos, details may provide a momentary stay—"details," Didion writes, "on which the visitor to Salvador learns immediately to concentrate, to the exclusion of past or future concerns, as in a prolonged amnesiac fugue" (14). But details provide for her only ephemeral meaning: structures and definitions, like the

[22]Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky call these "demonstration elections," whose primary function is "to convince the home population that the intervention is well-intentioned, that the populace of the invaded and occupied country welcomes the intrusion, and that they are being given a democratic choice" (*Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* [New York: Pantheon, 1988] 87).

[23]Walter La Feber, "Four Themes and an Irony," in *Central America: Democracy, Development, and Change*, eds. John M. Kirk and George W. Schuyler (New York: Praeger, 1988) 154.

things they represent, are either opaque or temporary. The result, Didion finds, is a language of obfuscation. The passive voice omits an actor, so responsibility moves into limbo, unassigned: "Eye contact is avoided. Documents are scrutinized upside down" (14). Words function in a "tortured code," and their meanings, like people's names, have only situational significance (15).

When Dickey confronts his physical helplessness and dependence on the contras, in the episode discussed above, he is in a dreamlike state. His physical senses have been distorted and he expresses his fears of the forest's unknown as "ghosts," shadowy projections of the eye (207). The passage's attention to physical sensation expresses the breakdown of Dickey's physical and journalistic independence. As the passage in the book containing the most "I"—the most of Dickey as participant—it colors the rest of the narrative with an uneasy sense of objectivity's limitations. Just as Didion sees documents "upside down," kaleidoscopically, Dickey writes that "once again, Central America's world was turned around," the passive voice suggesting a world adrift among the shadows (75).

Both Didion and Dickey emphasize the sightless eyes of the dead in the body dumps, and the blind, shadowy, or fractured vision reflecting the traveler's perception in an alien place. Dickey notes that a soldier "had the unsettling feeling he had signed a contract printed in invisible ink . . . before his eyes the terms were changing, the guarantees evaporating" (172). Dickey reads signs as "ghosts," shadowy traces of reality (191). Hearsay, an equally shaky form of evidence, is sometimes all he could find; he can only wonder if it might be true (195). By resorting to the passive voice—"Children and old people were tortured" (89); "a veterinarian and an accountant . . . were captured . . . and their throats were cut" (180)—particularly when describing atrocities, Dickey acknowledges his failure to attribute responsibility for the acts.

Didion's mirror imagery suggests that objects are constantly appearing and receding, changing aspect and meaning. Instead of a mirror that reflects reality, hers, like Hans Christian Andersen's demonic mirror, distorts and finally fragments *Salvador*'s world, magnifying the evil and chaos in it. The mirror and kaleidoscope are significant for Clements, too. At times he finds it impossible to identify individuals with their organizations (CIA? KGB? FDR?); perhaps those affiliations change routinely. The mirrored sunglasses of a customs official prevent Clements from looking into his eyes; he sees only his own "troubled image" reflected (23). And he finds himself cursing at the indefinite, "just general singsong imprecations against the idiot cosmos" (65).

For Didion, bearing witness involves "details, not just impressions" (*Salvador* 48). Although she never mentions "witnessing" per se, her many images of vision/blindness reveal frustration at not feeling able to get at the truth. The early image of a "body with no eyes" (17) sets the tone for the details to follow: people who are blind or blindfolded; forensic photographs and "facets presented . . . as on a stereopticon" (55), which capture details but not a complete picture; a freelance writer who "was last seen" somewhere, with no syntactical subject doing the seeing; and, overall, the "miniature aspect of the country" (40), distorted as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope. These details are supposed to "illuminate the story," but the more Didion witnesses, the more she discovers that "this was a story that would perhaps not be illuminated at all" (36).

Dickey, too, is well aware of those dead eyes, but hopes to make some sense of the situation despite them. His ambivalence about witnessing can be seen in his "Prologue" to *With the Contras* in two sentences that appear very close together on the page: "The witnesses to the worst madness were scattered all over Central America and the United States." But, as he then quotes an informant, "There are times when it is better not to know too much" (16). Much of Dickey's witnessing is secondhand, in interviews about past events or questioning about the present: "Tell me about the Sandinistas" (190). His experience with the contras—physically and emotionally difficult—makes him wary. When Sister Lisa Fitzgerald leaves Nicaragua, Dickey observes that "[s]he had witnessed enough. . . . By bearing witness she had become, increasingly, a target" (215). Dickey's own stint as a target, just prior to her departure, has alerted him to the dangers of witnessing.

Clements' understanding of the nature of witnessing is related to his discovery that the better he got to know the residents, the more he identified with them and, thus, the less independent he became. Dickey's identification was less complete and Didion's almost

nonexistent, suggesting that there may be a direct correlation between the level of the writer's "incorporation" and the sense he or she is able to make of the place, people, and politics. Clements has more faith in a reliable context of signs and details; they form a clearer picture for him, the details falling into place. For example, while the perhaps temporary names the guerrillas give themselves may obscure "true" identities, they are not designed merely for this purpose. Taking the names of heroes or martyrs of the revolution is a form of "incorporation"—"literally . . . to join their body" (30); the *campesinos* thus achieve a kind of permanence through solidarity. Mythic heroes survive as exemplars through the Salvadoran people who bear their names. Where Dickey finds failed exemplars in Nicaragua, Clements sees successful ones in El Salvador. He finds further continuity in the enduring, primitive qualities of their lives: the Salvadorans with whom he lives are "deeply tied to the earth's cycles of fertility" (102). They reckon local time by natural signs and they find value in the land itself, more than in the political structures imposed upon it. By evoking this pre-Columbian state of nature, by asserting that heroic exemplars do have value, even by drawing historical parallels between the Salvadoran and Vietnam wars, Clements suggests, far more optimistically than either Dickey or Didion, that witnessing is possible because knowledge of another culture is attainable by the traveler. Such knowledge comes from distinguishing the natural—land, farmers' time, physical health and illness—as opposed to the bureaucratic—political distinctions, economic structures. The bureaucratic is artificial, imposed, and therefore changeable, unstable, whereas the natural is continuous and therefore "true." "Salvador, like Ramon and Raul Hercules, was remarkably free of cant and sloganeering"—the true Salvador of the people, not the political structure (159).

What are the alternatives to exploration that attempts to mold a place and people in another image? Is altruism without dominance possible? Can bearing witness become an effective corrective to political nostalgia? Perhaps. Nostalgia remakes the present in terms of "the good old days"; it therefore requires distancing and creative memory. Didion, in particular, tries to subvert the tendency toward nostalgia by creating an immediate present in her text, subject to no spatial or temporal order. Even so, like Dickey and Clements, she still can only *recreate* immediacy from a distance. Thus, the impediments to witnessing remain the subjective tricks of memory and interpretation and the impossibility of reconciling insider and outsider. As Edward Said points out, "the difficulty . . . is that there is no vantage *outside* the actuality of relationships between cultures" from which to be objective ("Representing the Colonized" 216). The political and the epistemological are intertwined. The travel narrative, moving squarely into the heart of political matters in Central America, bears some responsibility for them, historically having both documented and reinforced cultural conflict. These three writers, however, attempt a shift from a politics of imperialism to "a politics of limits that respect horizontal social relations—multiplicity over hierarchy, juxtaposition over usurpation, difference over deference."[24] Dickey, Didion, and Clements have helped bring the travel narrative from a conquesting mission to a questioning one. It remains to be seen who will provide the answers.□

[24]Todd Gitlin, "Postmodernism: Roots and Politics," in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, eds. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (New York: Routledge, 1989) 359.

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Tomasz Jastrun

STONY BROOK ON LONG ISLAND*

Translated by Daniel Bourne

This elderly pair says my eyes
Are the spitting image of my father's

My father's eyes are closed

This thought
Flutters so quietly
Between us unsaid
That for the first time
I see bone start to show
Silence
Bleached white
By the current of time

They hand me a photo

A young man
He has to be my father
I recognize
The young woman as well

Their legs bare
Knees like little mirrors
In a dark room

The blunt edge
Of my father's smile
Cuts to the bone

The shot captured
By a writer still living
But in constant migration
Between Warsaw and Paris

We discuss who lately died from cancer
How his own heart grows weaker
Stung into beating
By an electronic bug planted in his chest
Then saying goodbye his hand rustles
Like the page of a poem
Crumpled out of failure and despair

And as if this was not enough
Today I turned thirty-five
Easy as going downhill
To the river where as a child I caught fish
Their round eyes full of sadness and surprise

*Mieczyslaw Jastrun, father of Tomasz Jastrun, is recognized as one of the most important Polish poets of the twentieth century. He died in 1983.

Harveen Sachdeva Mann

A VOYAGE INTO THE WORLD OF V. S. NAIPAUL: "THE CROCODILES OF YAMOUSSOUKRO"

In the Author's Foreword to *Finding the Center* (1984), V. S. Naipaul notes that the two long narratives comprising the text—"Prologue to an Autobiography" and "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro"—are "personal" pieces "about the process of writing." Both, Naipaul states, "seek . . . to admit the reader to that process," albeit in varied fashion.[1] In a recent article, however, David Mickelsen discounts the role of "Crocodiles" as a personal narrative and as a segment of Naipaul's autobiographical portrait of the artist, instead evaluating it as a failed political and sociocultural treatise. Declaring that it "does not provide a very meaningful picture of the Ivory Coast," he dubs the narrative "hotel ethnology"; asserting that the essay "is to 'real' culture as [African] airport art is to tribal sculpture," he concludes that it "perpetuate[s] and reinforce[s] the old stereotype of 'dark,' magical, superstitious Africa."[2]

Mickelsen's critique is compromised by its failure both to define a poetics of objective, scientific cultural representation and to delineate the "real" Ivorian society that it faults Naipaul for misrepresenting. More importantly, his argument proves faulty because it measures "Crocodiles" against inappropriate interpretive criteria, as failed ethnography rather than as the artist's accomplished text about "the process of writing" cast within the tropology of travel that Naipaul intended it to be. This article corrects such misreadings of "Crocodiles" as Mickelsen's first by reviewing and criticizing representative political, polarized responses to Naipaul's non-fiction. The article then analyzes "Crocodiles" as a narrative of an exterior voyage intended to be read correctly and more profitably as a voyage through the workings of the writer's craft and examines it as an outward account of a geographical journey that in fact affords the reader a journey into the middle-aged artist's sensibility. Naipaul's text is, I contend, successful "literary/artistic" autobiography, not failed ethnology, anthropology, sociology, history, or even journalism. It is a skillful aesthetic construct and narrative, not an erroneous cultural account; an accomplished reflexive and self-reflexive piece about Naipaul the individual and artist, not flawed scientific discourse.

A brief review of Naipaul's heritage reveals the promptings behind his extensive travels and travel-related writings. Born in 1932 to a family of Hindu immigrants in Trinidad, then a colonial backwater, Naipaul became aware early on of the remoteness and marginality of his homeland. Because post-World War II Trinidad had little to offer the aspiring writer—few literary models, an inadequate publishing industry, an inconsiderable literate audience, and even, as Naipaul believed at the time, a paucity of subject matter—he left in 1950 for London, the mecca of most fledgling artists from the British colonies. "Traveling to write," therefore, Naipaul gathered what he deemed "metropolitan" material, producing a few imitative, Bloomsburian romances that went unpublished.[3] But when five years later he decided to examine his Trinidadian-Hindu

[1] V. S. Naipaul, *Finding the Center: Two Narratives* (1984; New York: Vintage, 1986) viii. "Prologue to an Autobiography" was first published in *Vanity Fair* (Apr. 1983) as an independent piece; "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro" originally appeared in *The New Yorker* 14 May 1984. Naipaul collected the narratives in a single book in 1984 because, according to him, they were written consecutively and because they both examine the themes of writing, of sacrifice, and of the search for the philosophical "center" of one's beliefs (*Finding* vii; "V.S. Naipaul: 'It Is out of This Violence I've Always Written,'" Interview with Mel Gussow, *New York Times Book Review* 16 Sept. 1984: 45).

[2] David J. Mickelsen, "V. S. Naipaul's 'The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro,'" *World Literature Written in English* 27.2 (1987): 270, 269, 274.

[3] V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (New York: Knopf, 1987) 124, 135.

background in *Miguel Street* (pub. 1959), he found his true novelistic métier—the colonial/postcolonial worlds "contained within himself" (*Enigma* 147).

Since his first voyage abroad, Naipaul has traveled often and far, visiting not only the rest of the Caribbean and his ancestral India but also South America and Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, North America and Europe, in search of a home and of fresh insights into himself and humankind. "Every exploration, every book," he admits, "added to my knowledge, qualified my earlier idea of myself and the world" (*Enigma* 154). Travel has also remained for Naipaul intrinsically linked to his artistic development, modifying his vision and craft. It is true that "the writer's journey that had begun that day [in 1950] ha[s] not ended" for Naipaul, both literally in terms of geographical travel and metaphorically in terms of artistic evolution (*Enigma* 165).

A prolific writer, Naipaul has won worldwide acclaim for his eleven novels, among them the acknowledged masterpiece *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and the compelling Conradian text *A Bend in the River* (1979). Yet he believes that in a postcolonial world fractured by social, political, and technological change, the art of fiction is becoming a "curious, shattered thing."[4] As fantasy and fabulation, modernist "anti-novels" and postmodernist experimental fictions increasingly replace traditional novelistic forms, Naipaul feels that the world requires "another kind of *imaginative* interpretation" ("The Novelist" 368; emphasis added). He provides such an interpretation in an impressive body of nonfiction—six travel narratives; other peripatetic journalistic pieces collected in *The Overcrowded Barracoon* (1972) and *The Return of Eva Perón* (1980); and even a "history," *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969). As he emphasizes the centrality of nonfiction writing to his *oeuvre*, Naipaul underlines its subjective and engaged nature. "I take my journalism extremely seriously because I think it's a very fair response to *my* world," he says; "[i]t's very personal and very particular. It's something that can't be converted into fiction" because fiction would transmute the personal, "invent," and "convert experience into something else" ("The Novelist" 367; emphasis added).[5]

Yet most of Naipaul's critics, even as they admit that his nonfiction is more about himself than about the lands through which he travels, praise or censure his texts for what they deem to be their ethnographic accomplishments or shortcomings. The contemporary politics of reading are most clearly implicated in assessments of the travel books: the majority of "First World" critics commend what they interpret as the writer's clear-sighted appraisals of developing countries, and "Third World" critics typically condemn what they perceive as his colonialist, racist views of all peoples and places non-Western.

What has come to be known as "the Naipaul controversy" took root early with the publication in 1962 of his first *récit de voyage, The Middle Passage*. Whereas William Walsh praises Naipaul for his "brilliant . . . evocation of place" and "scrupulous accuracy" in portraying the Caribbean of the early 1960s, the Guyanese critic Gordon Rohlehr upbraids him for depicting "anarchy and absurdity as the norms of his society."[6] Like Walsh on *Middle*, a reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement* notes the value of *An Area of Darkness* (1964), Naipaul's account of his first visit to India, both as a technical *tour de force* and as a sociocultural critique: "With a few swift and beautifully calculated strokes, Mr. Naipaul brings the essence of a social situation so vividly to life that one begins to wonder whether all the sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists who have tried to explain India have not laboured in vain."[7] Conversely,

[4]"The Novelist V. S. Naipaul Talks about His Work to Ronald Bryden," Interview with Ronald Bryden, *Listener* 22 Mar. 1973: 368.

[5]In a 1979 interview and in the 1981 Foreword to *The Middle Passage*, Naipaul once again points out the differences between his nonfiction and fiction, noting that "[t]hey come out of two entirely different segments of the brain . . . they're actually written differently" and "take shape very differently": whereas the nonfiction is "done very carefully . . . by hand, because it's very planned," the fiction, composed on the typewriter to allow for "a certain speed," "works towards conclusions of which [the novelist] is often unaware" ("A Conversation with V. S. Naipaul," Interview with Bharati Mukherjee and Robert Boyers, *Salmagundi* 54 [Fall 1981]: 12; and *The Middle Passage* [1962; New York: Vintage, 1981] 5).

[6]William Walsh, *V. S. Naipaul* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973) 15; Gordon Rohlehr, "The Ironic Approach: The Works of V. S. Naipaul," *Critical Perspectives on V. S. Naipaul*, ed. Robert D. Hamner (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1977) 180.

[7]"Mr. Naipaul's Passage to India," *Times [London] Literary Supplement* 24 Sept. 1964: 881.

Nissim Ezekiel, the noted Indian poet-critic, declares that Naipaul, relying upon "reckless generalization," "grotesque exaggeration," and a "nagging, irritable manner," appears to "act out of pure, unreasoned hostility" in recording his observations of India.[8]

The schism in critical opinion regarding Naipaul persisted with the publication of *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), a study prompted by the 1975 national political emergency declared by prime minister Indira Gandhi. Whereas Margo Jefferson praises the Naipaul of *India* as an "elegantly precise and exacting writer" who "combines reporting, analysis, literary criticism and theory to contrast the elaborate mythologies of India's past with the intractable realities of its present," Edward Said castigates him for offering mere "observation" and little "real analysis," for resorting to "an almost hysterical repetition of how the place has no vitality, no creativity, no authenticity" and to "turgid denunciations of a poor country for not measuring up."[9]

Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey (1981), Naipaul's account, following the Iranian revolution of 1979, of the nature of the fundamentalist religious revival in Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia, intensified the divergence in Naipaul criticism. V. S. Pritchett declares the author a "remarkable diagnostician"; and Elie Kedourie describes the book as a "faithful report of the real state of affairs as it exists in the countries Mr. Naipaul has visited," as "the most notable work on contemporary Islam to have appeared in a very long time."[10] In evaluations diametrically opposed to Pritchett's and Kedourie's, such critics as Said and Amin Malak respectively denounce the text for its "ridiculous misinformation" and "potted history," and its author for his "superficiality . . . cynicism, arrogance, [and] ridicule," compounded by his "refusal to try to understand Islam within its own context."[11]

The critical reaction to "Crocodiles" further demonstrates the historical and political contingency of reading as well as the persistence, in Naipaul's case, of the polarity of opinions regarding his achievements or failures as a political and sociocultural analyst. For example, in contrast to Mickelsen's negative appraisal quoted above, a reviewer for *The Economist* applauds "Crocodiles" as one of today's finest "sustained piece[s] of writing" about "an African state seen with unsentimental perception and first-world detachment."[12] Such evaluations, whether disapprobatory or approbatory, illustrate the continued misreading of Naipaul's nonfiction as ethnography primarily and as personal narrative only secondarily, if the latter aspect is considered at all.

In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford notes that traditionally the "predominant metaphors" in anthropological research were participant-observation, data collection, and cultural description, all of which "presuppose a standpoint outside—looking at, objectifying, or, somewhat closer, 'reading' a given reality."[13] It is no doubt such "metaphors" that Mickelsen has in mind when he demands from Naipaul "a very meaningful picture" of the Ivory Coast. Measured against such stringent anthropological/ethnological criteria, Naipaul's text undoubtedly appears flawed. However, in contemporary times even ethnology is no longer regarded as objective, scientific discourse. Rather, as Clifford points out, it is "always caught up in the invention, not the representation of cultures," predicated as it is upon "contexts of power, resistance, institutional constraint, and innovation" (2). History and power relations impinge upon all cultural accounts, thus making ethnographic "truths" "inherently *partial*—committed and incomplete"

[8]Nissim Ezekiel, "Naipaul's India and Mine" (1965), *New Writing in India*, ed. Adil Jussawalla (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 77, 85.

[9]Margo Jefferson, *Newsweek* 6 June 1977: 84; Edward W. Said, "Bitter Dispatches from the Third World," *Nation* 3 May 1980: 523, 524.

[10]V. S. Pritchett, *The New Yorker* 4 Jan. 1982: 86; Elie Kedourie, *The New Republic* 4 Nov. 1981: 185.

[11]Edward Said, "Expectations of Inferiority," *New Statesman* 16 Oct. 1981: 22; Amin Malak, "V. S. Naipaul and the Believers," *Modern Fiction Studies* 30.3 (1984): 566, 565.

[12]*The Economist* 5 May 1984: 100. I take issue with the reviewer's use of the phrase "first-world detachment," both for its implicit arrogance and the patronizing attitude evident in such praise for a "Third World" writer.

[13]James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1986) 11.

(7). If the ethnologist's account is neither whole nor factual and accurate, we cannot fairly expect the creative writer to produce a "real" and "very meaningful" interpretation of a culture. In addition, just as ethnographers ought not to be considered novelists manqué, as Clifford notes they often are, so novelists/travel writers ought not to be judged as failed ethnographers (4).

Furthermore, many contemporary ethnologists agree with such hermeneutic philosophers as Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, and Paul Ricoeur that all cultural accounts are deliberate creations and that all cultural interpreters construct themselves through those they study (Clifford 10). A similar construction of the self through a reconstruction of the "other" is evident in Naipaul's travel narratives. In "Crocodiles," in particular, the articulation of the self is unequivocally emphasized over the articulation of the "other" as Naipaul fashions a personal narrative in which the theme of fiction and fictionmaking predominates.

That "Crocodiles" is not "objective" ethnography but an integral part of Naipaul's recent subjective texts becomes clear when one examines it within the context of "Prologue" and Naipaul's 1987 book, *The Enigma of Arrival.* All three narratives readily reveal themselves as Naipaul's exercises in "finding the center," a phrase that takes on several meanings: finding the center of the narrative; finding "the center of the truth of every experience, the philosophical center for one's belief"; and finding that "the center . . . *does* hold," an inverted reference to W. B. Yeats' apocalyptic line ("V. S. Naipaul" 45).

"Prologue to an Autobiography," as its title implies, departs from conventional autobiographical writing: instead of providing a chronological transcription of the artist's familial and social past, it presents an account of what Naipaul describes as "something less easily seized," of his "literary beginnings" and the "imaginative promptings of [his] many-sided background" (*Finding* vii). Offering the reader a glimpse into his compositional process, Naipaul traces in the text the evolution of "Prologue" from its inception in 1967, through two false starts, to its completion in its present form in 1982. In addition to demonstrating the process of his "finding the center" of the present narrative and of making the various strands of the story cohere around this center, Naipaul reconstructs for the reader his hesitant origins as a writer in 1954 and elucidates his relationship with his journalist-writer father, who had earlier instilled in him the ambition to become an artist.

Following the publication of "Prologue," Naipaul declared in an interview that rather than follow up with an autobiography proper, he wanted to write a book that would "extract the truth about all [his] varied life, culturally varied, geographically varied" ("V. S. Naipaul" 46). The result was *Enigma*, its narrative, like that of "Prologue," eschewing Naipaul's "personal adventures" and life of the affections, elucidating principally his development as an artist, portraying primarily the writer "defined by his writing discoveries, his ways of seeing" (*Enigma* 344).[14] To examine the "enigma" of his arrival as both artist and colonial/postcolonial man, Naipaul once again abandons a chronological retelling of his past, instead arranging the text as a collection of five quasi-independent essays that trace his complex passage from artistic nascence and emotional naïveté to maturity in both spheres.

"Crocodiles," like "Prologue" and *Enigma*, embodies Naipaul's increasingly contemplative, philosophical stance, which in turn induces a personal, not scientific, response toward the peoples and lands he encounters. An account of Naipaul's 1982 journey to the Ivory Coast, "Crocodiles" does not purport to provide an exhaustive, objective study of Ivorian culture. Rather, it embodies Naipaul's quest for artistic development at the same time that it records the growth of his self-knowledge through his understanding, albeit partial, of the "other." Revealing Naipaul's "method" of literary travel and travel writing, it also demonstrates more clearly than his earlier nonfictional texts his means of fashioning aesthetically appealing narrative—of gathering material and of determining structure, theme, and authorial voice.

Employing the trope of travel, Naipaul casts "Crocodiles" as another chapter in his description of "the writer's journey" (*Enigma* 344). Yet like "Prologue" and *Enigma*, the text is

[14]Despite its unambiguously autobiographical grounding, Naipaul chose to label *Enigma* a novel because, as he notes, "the autobiography is elusive . . . the 'doing' life, the life of the affections is not there"; and, he continues, although "the writer, the observer [character] . . . is scrupulously myself," he is "defined entirely by his writing" ("The Enigma of V. S. Naipaul's Search for Himself in Writing," Interview with Mel Gussow, *New York Times* 25 Apr. 1987: 16). Also see note 15 below for Naipaul's views regarding the differences between autobiographical and fictional writings.

not "pure" autobiography because, according to Naipaul, such writing can distort, conceal, and elide.[15] Rather, in hybrid generic form—part literary/artistic autobiography, part travelogue, part fiction, with the emphasis falling more upon narration than upon description—Naipaul shows the reader both narrative in the making as well as the finished product.[16] Explicating this twofold artistic intent in "Crocodiles," he declares in the Author's Foreword to *Finding*,

> I would have liked in "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro" to take the reader through all the stages of my adventure in the Ivory Coast. I would have liked to begin at the very beginning, with the blankness and anxiety of arrival. But it didn't work as narrative. And narrative was my aim. Within that, my traveling method was intended to be transparent. The reader will see how the material was gathered; he will also see how the material could have served fiction or political journalism or a travelogue. But the material here serves itself alone: "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro" offers the experience of travel and human discovery for its own sake. All that was added later was understanding. Out of that understanding the narrative came.
>
> (xi)

Evincing a keen awareness of the subjectivity of "Crocodiles," of its reflexivity—its revelations about Naipaul the individual—and its self-reflexivity—its revelations about the composition of the narrative—Naipaul steers the reader away from interpreting and assessing the text as a veridical discourse about the history, economics, or sociopolitics of the Ivory Coast.

In a 1981 interview Naipaul explained the engaged, personal-political impetus behind his travels:

> I have to travel. Unless my imagination can be released from all these familiar deadening scenes [in Wiltshire], I will go stale. My travel is so different from that of Graham Greene and others. They're travelers in a world that's been made safe for them by empire. . . . The primary difference between my travel and theirs is that while they travel for the picturesque, I'm *desperately* concerned about the countries I'm in.[17]

Naipaul thus hardly professes to engage in his nonfiction in the disinterested, objective, and deictic investigation of cultures expected of the ideal ethnographer. All his travels have been dictated by his colonial past and prompted by a perceptive amateur's intellectual curiosity about different peoples, not by a scientist's design to record and interpret a culture. Although Naipaul's original intent in journeying to the Caribbean in 1960 was, as he admits, "political-cultural," his travel having been funded by the Trinidad and Tobago government, there was a readily apparent disjunction between the inception and "personal" execution of *The Middle Passage* (*Finding* ix). To resolve the resultant problem of authorial perspective and tone in *Middle*, Naipaul found it necessary to "acknowledge more of [him]self," to "define [him]self very clearly to [him]self" (*Enigma* 153, 154).[18] Thus he embarked on the two voyages to India recounted in *An Area of Darkness* and *India:*

[15]Dotted through Naipaul's works are several revealing statements about what he perceives to be the distinction between "pure" autobiography and fiction, the former concealing, the latter revealing. Commenting upon the eponymous protagonist's autobiographical novel-in-progress in "Michael X and the Black Power Killings in Trinidad," Naipaul states that "[a]n autobiography can distort; facts can be realigned. But fiction never lies: it reveals the writer totally" (*The Return of Eva Perón* [1980; New York: Vintage, 1981] 67). In *Among the Believers*, he partially echoes this sentiment: "People can hide behind direct statements; fiction, by its seeming indirections, can make hidden impulses clear" (1981; New York: Vintage, 1982) 13-14. Even as early as 1965, he remarked to Derek Walcott that "[i]n the process of [creative/fictional] writing one might discover deeper truths about oneself which might be slightly different from day to day truth about one's reactions" ("Interview with Derek Walcott," *Trinidad Sunday Guardian* 7 Mar. 1965: 6). Thus, instead of resorting to conventional autobiography and providing a chronological yet highly selective transcription of his personal past, Naipaul chooses in *Finding* and *Enigma* to write "fiction"—in the sense of a making or fashioning—in order to elucidate his development as an artist and simultaneously to demonstrate the working of his craft.

[16]Drawing upon Janet Varner Gunn's study entitled *Autobiography: Toward a Poetics of Experience* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia Press, 1982), Selwyn Cudjoe describes "Prologue," "Crocodiles," and *Enigma* as *auto-bio-graphies* or Naipaul's "attempts to bring himself [*autos*] to life [*bios*] through language [*graphie*]," as texts that locate Naipaul's ontological center as a writer through a return to his literary beginnings (*V. S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading* [Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1988] 210).

[17]"The Dark Visions of V. S. Naipaul," Interview with Charles Michener, *Newsweek* 16 Nov. 1981: 109.

A Wounded Civilization, not so much to explore India as to explore his Hindu-Indian self. Even his Islamic journey and his 1987 travels through the southeastern United States—the latter recorded in his latest *récit de voyage*, *A Turn in the South* (1989)—divulge his subjective aims: to better acquaint himself with the Muslim ethos which he "had known . . . all [his] life" as a member of the Indian community in Trinidad (*Among* 11); and to discover parallels between the former slave colonies of the Caribbean and the old slave states of America.

"Crocodiles," even more readily than the other travel texts, demonstrates the personal promptings underlying Naipaul's travel. The narrative, he claims, is intended to show him "in his latest development," going about "one side of his business [writing being the other]: traveling, adding to his knowledge of the world, exposing himself to new people and new relationships" (*Finding* viii). Eschewing any political or cultural agenda at the very outset, Naipaul journeyed to the Ivory Coast to test what he labels a "private fantasy" based upon his boyhood love of the French language: "African success, France in Africa"—those were the "glamorous" ideas that took him to West Africa where he had never before been (*Finding* 79). Consequently, "Crocodiles" contains few ideological pronouncements or authoritative statements about the country's history, politics, economics, and social customs. Instead, repeatedly using himself and his past as referents, Naipaul filters the country through a subjective lens, describing only those cultural phenomena that appeal to his colonial/postcolonial and Hindu sensibilities: the rootlessness of expatriates, the mythology of power created by a once powerless slave society, and the spiritual completeness of Africa.[19]

"Crocodiles," therefore, clearly does not record what Louis Althusser terms "social formation"—"the economic, political, and ideological practices that constitute the social whole" (Cudjoe 243). Nor does it present what E. B. Tylor terms "culture" in its ethnographic sense—"that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[20] Neither is its aim to provide what the Nigerian scholar-critic Sunday Anozie terms a "true introspection" of Africa—whether cultural, social, historical, or ethnographic—which can only be accomplished by adopting "appropriate paradigms and models derived from the culture or society itself."[21] Rather, "Crocodiles" is intended to record another segment of Naipaul's literary/artistic autobiography: here Naipaul can be seen seeking self-knowledge through social discovery, plumbing the center of his artistic self through discovering the center of Africa, and coming to possess the center of his existence through a growing comprehension of the colonial/postcolonial worlds that have shaped him. Naipaul's engaged, subjective narrative in "Crocodiles" thus consciously departs from the objective narrative of a formal ethnographic text which, according to Mary Louise Pratt, is supposed to "conform to the norms of a scientific discourse whose authority resides in the absolute effacement of the speaking and experiencing subject."[22]

Although Naipaul's reasons for traveling to the Ivory Coast differ from those underlying his visits to the Caribbean, India, the Middle East, and elsewhere, his method of investigative travel remains much the same. This serendipitous process which, he says, "could be as creative and imaginative . . . as the writing that came after," Naipaul describes as follows:

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[18]"When it came to the writing [of *The Middle Passage*] I was uncertain about the value I should give to the traveler's 'I,'" Naipaul admits retrospectively; "[t]his kind of direct participation came awkwardly to me, and the literary problem was also partly a personal one. In 1960 I was still a colonial, traveling to far-off places that were still colonies, in a world still more or less ruled by colonial ideas" (*Finding* ix). And in *Enigma* he states, "The fight between my idea of the glamour of the traveler-writer and the rawness of my nerves as a colonial traveling among colonials made for difficult writing. When . . . I went back to London . . . to do the writing [of *Middle*], the problems were not resolved. I took refuge in humor—comedy, funniness, the satirical reflex, in writing as in life so often a covering up for confusion" (153).

[19]"You refer to yourself in order to understand other people. That's the novelist's gift," Naipaul remarked in a recent interview ("The Enigma of V. S. Naipaul's Search" 16).

[20]Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," *Writing Culture* 141.

[21]Sunday O. Anozie, *Structural Models and African Poetics: Towards a Pragmatic Theory of Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) 44.

[22]Mary Louise Pratt, "Fieldwork in Common Places," *Writing Culture* 32.

> To arrive at a place without knowing anyone there . . . ; to learn how to move among strangers for the short time one could afford to be among them; to hold oneself in constant readiness for adventure or revelation; to allow oneself to be carried along, up to a point by accidents; and consciously to follow up other impulses. . . .
> (*Finding* x)

"Crocodiles" furnishes numerous examples of the "adventurous," "accidental" nature of Naipaul's Ivorian investigation. His interest piqued by a newspaper story about an evil spirit believed to be setting mysterious fires, Naipaul travels to the settlement of Kilometre 17 to investigate the role of magic in Ivorian life; a casual suggestion by some expatriates that he visit the ancestral village of President Houphouët-Boigny takes him to Yamoussoukro to witness the ritualistic feeding of a live chicken to the totemic crocodiles; and an English contact's recommendation leads him to the University of Abidjan and to Georges Niangoran-Bouah, a specialist in "drummologie," with whom he discusses not only the ancient art of drumming but also slavery, burial customs, and the conjunction of Christian and animist beliefs in West Africa. Such a reliance upon chance encounters to supply material for his narrative Joan Didion attributes to the writer's instinct in Naipaul for "the possibilities in the apparently peripheral," a sort of "professional thrift."[23]

Again Naipaul underscores the creative—as distinguished from the scientific—aspect of his travel when he admits the partiality of his sources as well as of his narrative: "The intellectual adventure is also a human one," Naipaul writes in elucidating his travel "method"; "I can only move according to my sympathy. I don't force anything; there is no spokesman I have to see, no one I absolutely must interview. The kind of understanding I am looking for comes best through people I get to like" (*Finding* 90). And in the Author's Foreword he declares that the people he felt drawn to in the Ivory Coast were "not unlike [him]self," displaced beings searching for "order in their world."[24] Instead of seeking out indigenous politicians, socialites, or even commoners, therefore, Naipaul moves chiefly among expatriates, both white and black, with whom he empathizes, seeing the Ivory Coast through their foreign eyes. From ambassadors and other embassy officials, displaced divorcées from Martinique and Guadeloupe, an English schoolteacher and an American lawyer among others, he elicits information through Socratic questioning: Are there still slaves in the villages? What do the President's crocodiles mean? How do people become sorcerers? Why did the Ivorians build the ambitious city of Yamoussoukro if they believe the world is only an illusion? And the question Naipaul finds most engaging—do modern-day Africans, like the Caribbean slaves of more than a century ago, live in two realms, a daytime realm of material things and a nighttime realm of spirits and magic, the latter making more bearable the adversities of the former?

Incorporating the respondent's views of the Ivory Coast into his narrative, Naipaul is constantly aware of the biased nature of such information as well as of his inquiries and evaluations. "Ambassadors have to choose their words," Naipaul writes; "with ambassadors as with other expatriates in black Africa, there appears . . . a kind of ambivalence. To say what they feel they have to say they appear to be denying or ignoring part of what they know" (*Finding* 82, 83). Coming upon a story about sacrificial heads being exported in refrigerated containers, Naipaul is skeptical about its veracity, thinking that it and similar sardonic accounts are perhaps expatriate-African jokes. He is aware as well that he does not have access to the "real" or the "whole" Ivory Coast: at the international hotels in Abidjan he is exposed to the "officially approved 'culture'" of traditional forest dances performed in "a landscaped garden, electric light playing on the big, bare breasts of dancing, chanting women" (80); and in Yamoussoukro he notes that the visitors are predominantly white tourists satisfying their taste for magical Africa by witnessing the feeding ritual.

Of his own intellectual response to people's casual remarks, Naipaul admits,

[23]Joan Didion, "Discovery," *New York Review of Books* 11 Oct. 1984: 12.

[24](ix). "[T]he people I found [in the Ivory Coast], the people I was attracted to, were not unlike myself," Naipaul admits in the Author's Foreword to *Finding*. "They too were trying to find order in their world, looking for the center; and my discovery of these people is as much part of the story as the unfolding of the West African background. A writer after a time carries his world with him . . .; and I do believe . . . that I would have found equivalent connections with my past and myself wherever I had gone" (ix).

> Perhaps, forgetting his [Djédjé, his Ivorian guide's] innocence and misled by his opening statement that the country had taken a wrong turn, I had been looking in his conversation for something that wasn't there: an attitude, a thought-out position. Perhaps—uneducated, unemployed, a villager in Abidjan—he was genuinely confused by the development of the country 'from the top.'
>
> (103)

Finally, aware of the tentativeness of his own conclusions, Naipaul qualifies his remarks, questions his beliefs, and offers for the reader's perusal contrapuntal interpretations of events to underscore the inscrutability and enigma of a foreign land. For an incident in which a villager is mangled by one of the crocodiles, Naipaul considers several explanations—that it was an accident, that the man had been sacrificed against his will, that he had voluntarily sacrificed himself to save his village from evil. And confirming the "mystery" of the crocodiles, he writes, "[T]he symbolism remained elusive, worrying" (150): was the feeding ritual a remnant of ancient Egyptian earth worship, he wonders; or were the Ivorians simply appeasing a universally feared creature? Did the chicken represent a hapless enemy? Or did it, giving up its life so the crocodile might live, emblematize the ruler's drawing of power from his people? In the end Naipaul admits that "[p]erhaps the concepts were not really translatable," that the crocodiles "were meant to be mysterious, to be felt as a mystery" (151, 168).

David Mickelsen, however, uses Naipaul's admissions in "Crocodiles" regarding his predilections and biases, the limited range of his informational sources, the subjective nature of his narrative, and even the transparency of his craft to censure him for what he believes are the writer's ethnographic lapses. Had Naipaul intended "Crocodiles" to be read as an unambiguous, objective ethnography, he would hardly have been so unsophisticated as to mention in the text the scientific shortcomings of his discourse. Furthermore, Naipaul's claims regarding his method of travel and composition are not "disingenuous," as Mickelsen claims, nor are they excuses for a failed ethnography; they are, rather, the comments of a self-aware writer whose aim it is to implicate the reader in his method of literary travel and narrative-making (27).

Omitting the details of his physical journey to and from the Ivory Coast and curtailing the descriptions of his three excursions within the country, Naipaul focuses instead upon the unfolding of his narrative, paralleling the documentation of his birth as an artist in "Prologue" and *Enigma*. As Anthony Burgess notes about Naipaul's "exemplification of 'the process of writing'" in "Crocodiles," "[H]ere is how material is gathered and here is how the imaginative faculty begins to work on it . . . . What Mr. Naipaul is really doing is practising his craft, and practising it well."[25]

Inviting the reader's participation in his discovery of the narrative's shape, Naipaul declares in the text that as the blankness of his first days in a foreign land gave way to a hesitant understanding, he began to "discover themes and people," to "live, as it were, in a novel of [his] own making, moving from not knowing to knowing, with person interweaving with person, incident opening out into incident" (*Finding* 99, 90). Such human discovery, such a finding out of "how a society works, what drives the people on," is for Naipaul a necessary preliminary to the final composition of the narrative ("The Dark Visions" 110). Echoing Naipaul, and underlining the creative nature of his travels, Edward Hoagland declares in a review of *Finding* that "[p]art of [Naipaul's] fidelity may be due to his regarding the trips themselves as little novels, each with a set of characters, risks and dilemmas, which he follows out to see how they're resolved."[26]

In an interview following the publication of "Crocodiles" Naipaul described what for him constitutes "the process of a journey," simultaneously confirming that his travel technique approximates his writing technique, that on his peregrinations he is a writer rather than a traveler, ethnologist, or sociologist:

> When a place begins to hold you, you begin to move like a writer and a traveler. I get awfully wound up. It's like writing a book although you're not actually writing it at the moment. You're thinking what to do

[25]Anthony Burgess, "Interior Excursions," rev. of *Finding the Centre*, by V. S. Naipaul, *Times [London] Literary Supplement* 22 June 1984: 691.

[26]Edward Hoagland, "Staking His Life on One Grand Vision," rev. of *Finding the Center*, by V. S. Naipaul, *New York Times Book Review* 16 Sept. 1984: 44.

next, how to do it—and you're processing. The "I" is only an actor in so far as he looks and arranges the scenes around himself. What takes all my time is understanding what happened during those days—to be true to one's experience and to be true to what one's learned about it. Making it hold together.

("V. S. Naipaul" 45)

In "Crocodiles," as in "Prologue" and *Enigma*, the reader gleans how Naipaul makes his experience and its subsequent articulation in narrative form "hold together," how the writer's physical journey is transmuted into his journey through his composition. Just as Naipaul's chief perplexity in writing the other two texts lay in finding their narrative "center," so did the choice of narrative shape, center, and theme initially elude him in the drafting of "Crocodiles." Only with the perspective of time and a growing insight into his Ivorian experience did Naipaul realize that a chronological transcription of his travels would not work as narrative, that the heart of his composition lay not in its story line but in the discovery of the narrative itself. Only later did he alight upon the daily feeding of the president's pet crocodiles and Yamoussoukro as the structural center of his text.

Naipaul's narrative opens with a description of President Houphouët-Boigny's ancestral home of Yamoussoukro as "one of the wonders of black Africa" (75); circles back constantly to its conjunction of ancient and contemporary, magic and technology, totemic crocodiles and ultra-modern buildings; and concludes with an acknowledgment of the two planes of reality—the natural and the spiritual—embodied in the very conception of the town. Rather than reveal what Mickelsen describes as Naipaul's "fixation" upon and stereotyping of Africa as a "black night-world of magic," the repeated focus on and attempt to interpret the crocodiles illustrate not only Naipaul's organizational technique but also his novelist's propensity for symbol-making (271).

The "literary," as opposed to the ethnographic, nature of Naipaul's response to the Ivory Coast is divulged additionally by his apt choice of title for his narrative. Had Naipaul intended to write an unequivocal sociocultural critique, he would hardly have deflected so much attention away from the scientific study of the country to Yamoussoukro and its crocodiles. As he admits, the latter engage his attention chiefly because their "mystery," symbolizing the Conradian "mystery" of cultures, speaks to the increasingly meditative, Hindu aspect of his personality, which he defined in a recent interview:

> I think [it is] the philosophical aspect—Hindu I would say. . . . It's the feeling that life is an illusion. I've entered it more and more as I've got older. . . . I think it's . . . accommodating [one]self to reality. Other people from other cultures can become more greedy, more aggressive. I become the other, and this chimes with the Hindu's more contemplative attitude.[27]

This older, reflective Naipaul has not fashioned an ethnographic essay but orchestrated a personal narrative around Yamoussoukro's crocodiles, a narrative that sketches his inner geography as it reveals its own complex themes, authorial personae, and voices. That "Crocodiles" is written against Naipaul's background as a Trinidadian Indian and as an artist becomes quickly evident. To allow for the discursive analysis of his journey as man and writer, Naipaul keeps to a minimum the details of his Ivorian voyage. Instead, he employs the trope of the physical journey as the structural correlative of the themes embodied in the narrative, themes that reverberate through his corpus: the exilic journeys of the modern individual—of expatriates to ex-colonies, colonials to metropolises, villagers to cities—that create a state of flux in the whole world; the passage of history from colonial to postcolonial times and the continuing exploitation of the Third World by nonnatives and natives alike; the journey of the soul through life to death and the spiritual realm; the development of the artist; and Naipaul's own temperamental voyage from rejection to acceptance of his colonial past, from cynicism to sympathy in his views of his fellow colonials.

By the time Naipaul came to write "Crocodiles," he had resolved the dichotomy in himself between the personal and literary, between the engaged colonial/postcolonial man and detached metropolitan/Westernized writer that plagued him early in his career.[28] Consequently, his uncertainty about an authorial "role" vanished: "a role was not

[27] "The Elusive Genius," Interview with Andrew Robinson, *Illustrated Weekly of India* 5 July 1987: 13.

necessary," he concludes; "I recognized my own instincts as a traveler and was content to be myself, to be what I had always been, a looker. And I learned to look; in my own way" (*Finding* x). In "Crocodiles," therefore, Naipaul adopts the first person point of view as opposed to the detached, scientific third person rhetoric of ethnography. But he does not offer his interpretation of events as privileged. Interspersing his text with dialogue and third person explanations, he creates a Bakhtinian polyvocality; incorporating the speech of his informants, he crafts a collaborative text in which we "hear" the Ivorians: Djédjé, the guide, announcing that "[w]ithout civilization, everyone would be a sorcerer" (124); the poet, Ebony's father instructing him, "Remember. I am not sending you to the school to be a white man or a Frenchman. I am sending you to enter the new world, that's all" (140); and Niangoran-Bouah, the drummologist, intoning, "Le monde des blancs est reel. Mais—mais—nous avons, nous autres africains noirs, nous avons tout cela dans le monde de la nuit, le monde des tenebres" (162).

Even within the first person presentation, multiple authorial personae and voices proliferate, confirming the many-sidedness of Naipaul's self. As an ex-colonial from Trinidad, Naipaul notes parallels between the idea of Africa's spiritual "completeness," even among materially successful modern-day Ivorians, and the millenarian vision underlying both the slave revolts and more recent political movements in the black Caribbean. As an objective observer trained in the Western tradition, however, he is initially skeptical about the conjunction of the contemporary and ancient in Africa, of international hotels and magical arts, wondering whether the "miracle" of the Ivory Coast can last. But as a middle-aged, contemplative traveler, he sympathizes with beliefs that would have proved antipathetic to him even a decade ago: along with the Ivorians, he "half [begins] to see" that the world is an illusion, that the "true life" lies in the realm of magic and spirits, that the African world, with its emphasis upon the "inner" as opposed to workaday reality, is "whole" (141, 174).

Naipaul's philosophical and temperamental stance in "Crocodiles" thus demonstrates a marked change since 1964 when he declared that in India "the creative urge [has] failed. . . . Shiva has ceased to dance [the dance of life]," that in the "absence of growth and development" the only lesson of Indian history is that "life goes on";[29] since 1970 when he described the Caribbean islands as the "half-made societies of a dependent people, the Third World's third world . . . [which] will forever consume . . . never create";[30] and even since 1980 when he concluded that modern Islam has "the flaws of its origins. . . . [T]o the political issues it raise[s] it offer[s] no political or practical solution. It offer[s] only the faith. . . .This political Islam [is] rage, anarchy" (*Among* 355).

In "Crocodiles," by contrast, the oftentimes vitriolic assessments of the younger Naipaul give way to a new-found objectivity in describing and accepting ways of thinking opposed to his own. Instead of seeking to confirm negative preconceptions about the country he is traveling through—a charge that has often been leveled at him in the past and one that Mickelsen also brings against him in "Crocodiles" (271)—Naipaul is in search of what Edward Hoagland describes as a "balanced view of Africa," offering a narrative replete with "ameliorating attitudes" and "a wise good humor" (44). In sharp contrast to his provocative, apocalyptic pronouncement to Elizabeth Hardwick in 1979 that "Africa has no future," Naipaul now demonstrates a genuine concern for its fate:[31]

> To the man from outside, whatever his political or religious faith, Africa can often seem to be in a state of becoming. . . . So it

[28]At age eighteen, Naipaul naïvely believed that only "metropolitan" subject matter—"sophisticated, big-city, like something in a film or play or a book"—could help define him as a writer (*Enigma* 138-39). Consequently, early in his writing career, even as early as his first Pan American flight in 1950 from Port of Spain to New York, there appeared a schism in Naipaul, as he admits in *Enigma*: "[B]etween the man writing the diary [taking notes for potential stories] and the traveler there was already a gap, already a gap between the man and the writer. Man and writer were the same person. But that is a writer's greatest discovery. It took time—and how much writing!—to arrive at that synthesis" (110).

[29]V. S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (1964; New York: Vintage, 1981) 229, 213.

[30]V. S. Naipaul, *The Overcrowded Barracoon and Other Articles* (1972; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 271.

[31]"Meeting V. S. Naipaul," Interview with Elizabeth Hardwick, *New York Times Book Review* 13 May 1979: 36.

> arouses hope, ambition, frustration, irritation. And even the success of the Ivory Coast induces a kind of anxiety. Will it last? Will the Africans be able to take over from the French and the Israelis and the others who have built it all for them and still effectively run it?
>
> (78)

In "Crocodiles" one does not find derogatory stereotyping of the sort typical of "Africanist"-imperialist discourse—involving the description of Negroes as physically offensive, sexually voracious, and spiritually wanting. Nor does one find a more general hegemonic "colonial" discourse which, according to Homi Bhabha, is deeply rooted in ideologies of racial, cultural, and historical domination and which portrays the colonized as a "population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin."[32] Instead, Naipaul's empathy with the Ivorians grows until it culminates in a partial sense of identification with the "other." After talking to the residents about African belief in the world of spirits and about the predominant mythologies, he admits, "I began to enter a little into the African world [they] saw" (98). This temperamental evolution and participation continue until Naipaul can conclude about a West Indian Ghanian living in London that "probably he didn't know how whole the world of Africa still was" (117); until he can observe about Niangoran-Bouah's love for things African, "I began to understand the richness of the material he had made his subject and his passion to present this material adequately to Africans and the world" (166); and until he can internalize the Ivorian belief in the insubstantiality of the material world and note about a group of French businessmen that they were "white men sitting at tables, listening to a man lecturing before a board: phantoms, preparing plans for things that were one day bound to perish" (174). Joan Didion believes that Naipaul's "changing focus" on the people he met, his "gradual realization" that the African night world existed for many Ivorians as literal reality, not metaphor, and his conclusion that the role of magic in the Ivory Coast could only be described, not interpreted or judged, were for the author "a different way of looking, a narrative in itself" (12).

Althouth "Crocodiles" reveals a mellower, more accepting Naipaul than his readers have come to expect, the novelistic technique underlying the narrative proves familiar, supporting Percy Adams' contention that Naipaul's "novels are travel books and [his] *récits de voyage* are novels," that for him "the travel book and the novel become one form."[33] It is Naipaul the novelist who creates revealing character sketches in a few masterful strokes—of Djédjé, his displaced Ivorian guide, whose eyes display either "intelligence, vapidity, a wish to please, or a latent viciousness" (100); of Andrée, the Antillaise secretary, whose "respectable French, respectable West Indian" style of dress and talk of malaria tablets and Ivorian marriage customs reveal her to be an outsider (105); of Niangoran-Bouah, the nationalistic ethno-sociologist, a "big and very black man," with the physique of an African chief, a clear and precise French speech, and "the lecturing manner . . . of the French academic," whose cause it is to educate the world in African art and civilization (156). It is Naipaul the novelist with his eye for telling detail who notices the incongruity of microphones in a drumming and singing ceremony, of the big gold digital wristwatch worn by a village chief, of the Land Rover driven by the master of ceremonies at the ritual feeding of the crocodiles. And it is Naipaul the novelist who paints symbolical portraits of the landscape, interspersing interpretive commentary with telling description:

> [T]he great mosque of Yamoussoukro . . . in the North African [Islamic] style . . . [indicated that] the African ruler, aiming at material splendor, had to look outside black Africa. It was part of the pathos of Yamoussoukro. The mosque, off a wide, unfilled avenue, was in a big yard, open to the sun and the harmattan. Like many other buildings in Yamoussoukro, it appeared—

[32]In his article "The Other Question," Homi Bhabha defines colonial discourse as "an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences." It "seeks authorisation for its strategies by the production of knowledges of coloniser and colonised which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated," he asserts; "[t]he object of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin in order to justify conquest. . . . Therefore . . . colonial discourse produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" ("The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," *Screen* 24.6 [1983]: 23).

[33]Percy Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1983) 284.

perhaps wrongly—to await full use. It felt like a shell; it was possible, in the barrenness of its unwelcoming yard, to see it as a ruin.

(151-52)

And later, entering into the Ivorian belief of the world as illusion, he creates a poetic mood piece:

The sun was sinking in the haze of dust: the harmattan, arrived at last on the coast. The lagoon was hazy; the far bank, lost in haze, was like a view from the temperate zone. To one side of the hotel landscape work was going on around many of the new houses built in this fast-rising area.

I said, "Arlette [one of Naipaul's expatriate acquaintances] you make me feel that the world is unstable. You make me feel that everything we live by is built on sand."

(174-75)

Naipaul's voices in "Crocodiles" proliferate beyond those of a middle-aged ex-colonial and novelist. Although he is not writing a political document, he reveals a rare political acumen as he contrasts the success of the Ivory Coast with the internal chaos of the surrounding nations of Liberia, Guinea, and Ghana. And although his text is not intended to be read as sociology, anthropology, or ethnography, Naipaul seeks to comprehend this Ivorian success by determining the "principle of organization that suited the people" and by inquiring into the prevalent religious customs, social mores, and philosophical beliefs (*Finding* 81). Most importantly, however, Naipaul discloses himself as a self-aware writer, cognizant of the biographical stimulus for and subjective method of his recent literary travel:

I travel to discover other states of mind. And if for this intellectual adventure I go to places where people live restricted lives it is because my curiosity is still dictated in part by my colonial Trinidad background. I go to places that, however alien, connect in some way with what I already know. When my curiosity has been satisfied, when there are no more surprises, the intellectual adventure is over, and I become anxious to leave.

(*Finding* 90)

Commenting upon the creative nature of Naipaul's travel, Didion distinguishes his interest in a place from that of a reporter (and, one might add, that of an ethnologist):

What interests a writer like . . . Naipaul is only rarely what interests, in the same situation, a reporter . . . the novelist's interest in the situation wanes at that precise point when the reporter begins to consider himself competent: when the place is understood, when it begins to come clear, when the remarkable becomes commonplace and the course of a day can be predicted.

(12)

Whereas a journalist's aim is reportage and an ethnologist's aim is a descriptive anthropology of a culture, Naipaul's purpose in "Crocodiles" is, in his words, not so much to "unfold the West African background" as to convey "his own burden of experience, human experience and literary experience" (*Finding* ix). In this narrative, Naipaul's new-found tranquillity and concomitant sympathy for people and cultures color the depiction of his "human experience." The portrayal of his "literary experience" admits the reader to the process of narrative writing at the same time that it confirms Naipaul's claim that travel has "broadened [his] world view" by showing him a "changed" world and by taking him out of his "colonial shell." Literary travel and the composition of travel narratives have thus become for Naipaul "the substitute for the mature social experience . . . which [his] background and the nature of [his early] life denied [him]" (*Finding* x).[34]□

[34]An early version of this paper was presented at the 1989 Northeast Modern Language Association Convention held in Wilmington, Del. Research grants provided by The Pennsylvania State University Organized Research/Scholarship Activities Fund and Research Development Grant Program enabled me to complete the writing of this article.

Harveen Sachdeva Mann *has published and presented papers on V. S. Naipaul and other post-colonial authors.*

Desanka Maksimović

I HAVE NO MORE TIME

Translated by Richard Burns and Jasna Misić

I have no more time for long sentences
and I have no time to negotiate,
I tap out messages like telegrams.
I have no time to fan the flame,
now my hands just scrabble burnt embers.
I no longer have time for pilgrimages,
all at once my route to the estuary shrinks,
I have no time to glance back or turn back,
nor have I time for little bits and pieces,
now I have to think of the everlasting and the boundless.
I have no time to think about crossroads,
I can only get to places nearby.
I have no time to study anything new,
and I've no time for analyses,
for me water now is just water
as when I drank it from the pure spring;
there is no time for me to dissect the sky into bits,
I see it just as children see it.
I have no time for strange gods,
I have not even explored my own properly.
There is no time left to adopt new commandments,
even the old ten commandments are too much for me.
I have no more time for togetherness
even with those who keep striving to prove the truth.
I have no more time to fight against the hunters.
I have no more time to dream, to stroll along.

David C. Estes

BRUCE CHATWIN'S *IN PATAGONIA*: TRAVELING IN TEXTUALIZED TERRAIN

In Buenos Aires, Jorge Luis Borges tried to dissuade the professional traveler and author Paul Theroux from heading further south to Patagonia, about which the nature writer W. H. Hudson had fondly reminisced. Borges cautioned: "*Idle Days in Patagonia* [1893] is not a bad book, but you notice there are no people in it—only birds and flowers. That's the way it is in Patagonia. There are no people there. . . . There is nothing in Patagonia. It's not the Sahara, but it's as close as you can get to it in Argentina. No, there is nothing in Patagonia."[1] Indeed, Hudson himself acknowledged it to be "a desert cursed with eternal barrenness."[2] Yet there he could feel "the effect of nature's wildness on the spirit" particularly strongly because the terrain gave no promise "that eventually the advancing tide of humanity will come with its flocks and herds, and the ancient silence and desolation will be no more" (221). Hudson wrote about his fascination with this place, in part, to explain the puzzlement that Charles Darwin, who visited there some thirty years before Hudson came in the 1860s, had expressed in *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839): "In calling up images of the past, I find the plains of Patagonia frequently cross before my eyes; yet these plains are pronounced by all to be most wretched and useless. . . . *Why, then—and the case is not peculiar to myself—have these arid wastes taken so firm possession of my mind?*" (qtd. in Hudson 201). To Hudson, the reason was that "the monotony of the plains, or expanse of low hills, the universal unrelieved grayness of everything, and the absence of animal forms and objects new to the eye, leave the mind open and free to receive an impression of visible nature as a whole" (220-21).

Despite this region's long-standing association with the absence of human life, Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977) is filled with people and their adventures. He tells about twentieth-century refugees and contemporary Patagonians whose ancestors emigrated to establish the sheep industry there, the adventurers who first explored the nethermost reaches of South America, and also the Indians whom these Europeans colonized. By showing that "the advancing tide of humanity" did, indeed, arrive in Patagonia, Chatwin undercuts Hudson's confident predictions, and hence his idealistic portrait of the region.

Chatwin subordinates views of unpopulated landscapes to an interest in the social consequences of imperialism in this inhospitable New World wasteland. Upon crossing the Río Negro into Patagonia, for example, he first surveys the village where the public bus stops and describes some of the Indians, their shacks, and the fields in which these migrants work. Only after measuring this unattractive reality against the renowned ferocity and bravery of the Araucanians a century ago, does he turn to the desert: "There was no sound but the wind, whirring through thorns and whistling through dead grass, and no other sign of life but a hawk, and a black beetle easing over white stones."[3] Although such details are in harmony with Hudson's impressions and Borges' warning, just one sentence later Chatwin shifts to his contrasting social and cultural perspective, with characteristic understatement: "Unlike the deserts of Arabia, it [the Patagonian desert] has not produced any dramatic excess of the spirit, but it does have a place in the record of human experience." His text offers a collection of persons and events from the past four centuries that are all part of that record, thereby deconstructing Hudson's illusory Patagonia.

Chatwin squarely confronts the fact that

[1]Paul Theroux, *The Old Patagonian Express: By Train through the Americas* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979) 377.

[2]W. H. Hudson, *Idle Days in Patagonia* (1893; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1917) 203.

[3]Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (New York: Summit Books, 1977) 15.

Patagonia's geography, history, and people have been implicated in European imperialism, even though the colonial Spanish presence in what is now Argentina was tiny compared to that in Peru and Mexico.[4] Even after Argentina claimed independence in 1810, Indian attacks as well as poor terrain continued to make settlement in Patagonia undesirable for decades. Finally in 1879, a military campaign "subdued, drove out, or exterminated the scattered Tehuelche and Araucanian tribes in the region, stopping at last their depredations against the southern *estancias*" (Rock 154). By the end of the century, the sheep industry was expanding in Patagonia, but few of the growing number of inhabitants had been born in Argentina. In fact, "many of the landowners of Patagonia, on sheep ranches and fruit farms alike, were British" (Rock 179). As Chatwin notes, the wealthiest of the sheep station owners, an Asturian and his Jewish son-in-law, "imported . . . farm-managers from the British Army, who stamped the smartness of the parade ground over the operation. The result was that the Province of Santa Cruz looked like an outpost of the Empire, administered by Spanish-speaking officials" (91-92).

In Patagonia focuses on three features of imperialist thought and activity, each considered in this essay, that characterized Europe's colonial ventures: the assumed savagery of the native people, the confident journeys of adventurers and settlers into the New World, and also the explorations for artifacts and natural curiosities in order to claim them as personal or national possessions. Yet Chatwin does not assume himself to be judging the mistakes of the past from morally high ground. Unlike Hudson, he recognizes his own ironic entanglement in imperialist behaviors and values, making the book a narrative of personal growth as well as a critique of culture.

Chatwin's method is to revise Patagonia as a literary text by alluding to, quoting, and extensively summarizing a wide variety of previous writings, all the while that the organizing narrative of his own journey progresses. Out of this multi-vocal text a new Patagonia emerges. It comes not from a travel book, such as many that have been published, devoted to the particular adventures of a singular traveler. That kind of book provides a literary version of a geographic place that is as idiosyncratic as the writer's personality. Rather, Chatwin's activity of literary creation depends, instead, on frequent silences about his experiences so that readers can hear the voices of others. Thus, Patagonia emerges from the act of reading against each other, as well as against Chatwin's adventures, those texts that are his journey's multiple frames.

Although not a traveler's book, *Primaleon of Greece*, a Castilian romance published in 1512, might be considered the outermost framing text. Among other adventures, Knight Primaleon sails to a remote island where he overcomes "a monster called the Grand Patagon, with the 'head of a Dogge' and the feet of a hart" (96). This literary work may well be the source of Magellan's exclamation "Ha! Patagon!" when he landed in 1520 and saw a giant Indian dancing on the shore. Chatwin questions the familiar interpretation of "Patagon" as "Big-Foot": "though *pata* is 'a foot' in Spanish, the suffix *gon* is meaningless" (95). He finds the literary source more plausible and has playfully speculated in a lecture to The Royal Geographical Society that *Primaleon*, because of its length, "was the kind of book an explorer might take on a long journey as we might take away Proust."[5] The choice between these alternative origins of "Patagonia" is, nevertheless, of significance. On the one hand, the region's name would be derived from the physical appearance of its indigenous people. On the other, it would be a sign of their similarity to monsters previously invented and conquered in the European literary imagination. Chatwin finds the latter sense of the term more convincing because it suggests Magellan's awareness that naming and possessing are related acts. Signifying both moral deficiency and physical weakness, "Patagonia" thus justifies imperialist designs and confidently heralds the triumph of civilized culture over savagery.

The encounter with native Indians is one of the conventions in accounts of exploration. Although the subject of these scenes is the Other, Europeans have generally inscribed in them a sense of their own superiority. The

[4]Of the 250,000 Spaniards who came to the New World in the sixteenth century, only 3,000 were in Argentina. Although as many as 25 million Indians may have been living in central Mexico at this time, there were no more than 750,000 ("and quite possibly only half that number") in Argentina (David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985] 1).

[5]Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, *Patagonia Revisited* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986) 37-38.

quotations Chatwin selects from several voyagers call attention to the metaphorically charged descriptions through which they reveal themselves. For example, Darwin stated that the Fuegians "resembled the devils in 'plays like *Der Freischutz*' . . . and confessed he could hardly make himself believe they were 'fellow creatures and inhabitants of the same world'" (128). Similarly, Chief Officer Robert FitzRoy of the *Beagle*, on which Darwin sailed, called the Indians "satires upon mankind." They were "the colour of devonshire cattle," and their teeth were "flat-topped like those of a horse" (qtd. in Chatwin 129). In contrast to these views and the figurative language that conveys them, Chatwin notes that Darwin "read (but ignored) the description by Drake's chaplain of a 'comely and harmless people' whose canoes were of fine proportion 'in the sight and use whereof princes might seem to be delighted.'" As Chatwin's method implies, he is an observer/writer unlike Darwin, for he refuses to ignore the texts produced by others, even when he disagrees with them. Embedding his journey so deeply inside the words of others marks Chatwin as a traveler highly conscious of writing as a public as well as private act. He is aware of the textual dialog into which his account will enter, just as he recognizes that his language of description refers not only outward to the Indians but back onto himself as well.

Chronicles of voyages have inspired poets, dramatists, and novelists, thus giving Patagonia's Indians a place in English literary history. Chatwin traces the textual lineage of these characters in several works, emphasizing the contrasting depictions of this New World Other in order to shed further light on the imperialist mentality. The most demonic representation is that by Edgar Allan Poe in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), the story of a fictitious journey by ship all the way to the South Pole. In James Weddell's *Voyage towards the South Pole* (1825), Poe had read about the barbaric Fuegian Indians, the search for phantom islands, and the sighting of a "'Nondescribable Animal' with a red face of human form and green hair hanging from its shoulders" (130). These details all find a place on Poe's island of Tsalal, where the black natives "represent the ultimate in bestiality and low cunning." Although Poe never went to Patagonia himself, he captured the physical fear and moral loathing of many Europeans who did.

Opposing this picture of savagery is Shakespeare's Caliban in *The Tempest* (1611). His literary ancestors include the Indians captured by Magellan as described in Pigafetta's account, with which Shakespeare was familiar. Chatwin speculates that the great playwright might have created Caliban also out of details found in *Primaleon of Greece*, the romance from which Magellan could have drawn the name "Patagonia." The accuracy of this genealogy notwithstanding, Caliban is a literary Other significantly different from his ancestors, even though similarly captive to a European with an art "of such pow'r / It would control my dam's god, Setebos, / And make a vassal of him" (qtd. in Chatwin 96). As Chatwin points out, Shakespeare voiced "all the bitterness of the New World" through his character. Caliban protested the loss of his land and the institution of a new language as normative within its borders. Although he threateningly commanded "the red plague [to] rid you for learning me your language," he himself had become powerless to avoid the consequences of European conquest.

In a later age, Voltaire also looked with sympathy rather than horror on these Indians: "through him the Araucanians became candidates for the Noble Savage (tough version)" (14). But Chatwin reminds readers that romantic admiration did not translate into policies that offered respect. Satirically, he recounts the mid-nineteenth century misadventures of Orélie-Antoine de Tounens to suggest that literature's noble Indians, no less than their demonic relatives, confirmed Europe's irrational imperialist projects. Voltaire had met Patagonia's Indians in Alonso de Cercilla's *Araucana*, and Voltaire, in turn, was responsible for Orélie-Antoine's reading that sixteenth-century epic. Chatwin quotes these lines describing the Araucanians:

> Robust and beardless,
> Bodies rippling and muscular,
> Hard limbs, nerves of steel,
> Agile, brazen, cheerful,
> Spirited, valiant, daring,
> Toughened by work, patient
> Of mortal cold, hunger and heat.
>
> (17)

The image of Indians both powerful and innocent inspired Orélie-Antoine, and many others more successful than he, to set these people to work for his own ends. As Chatwin points out, he was aided by the dying Cacique

Mañil, who "prophesied that eternal delusion of the Amerindian: the end of war and slavery would coincide with the coming of a bearded white stranger." Orélie-Antoine was convinced that he should become king of the Araucanian tribes, and for a brief moment he realized that fantasy, when "he stood within a circle of naked horsemen, in a brown poncho, with a white fillet round his head, saluting with stiff Napoleonic gestures." He was, quite naturally, unable to unify the tribes and amass an army to protect the borders of his state. Soon jailed by the Chilean government, Orélie-Antoine eventually found exile back in his native France, where his kingdom lives on in the minds of the heirs to his title.

One final book, also by a sympathetic writer, furthers Chatwin's literary search for the Indians of Patagonia. It is the *Yaghan Dictionary*, a life-long project of the late nineteenth-century missionary Thomas Bridges, whose 32,000 entries reveal "a complexity of construction and a vocabulary no one had suspected in a 'primitive' people" (135). By quoting from it, Chatwin recovers the voice of the natives whom imperialism silenced and "resurrect[s] the clarity of their intellect" (136). He concludes that the language's rich metaphorical associations with their homeland reflect their idea that "a tribe's territory, however uncomfortable, was always a paradise that could never be improved on. By contrast the outside world was Hell and its inhabitants no better than beasts" (138). Thus Chatwin hears these words speaking a view of civilized society that counters western expansion and cultural colonization. The Yaghan notion is that a truly civilized society accepts its location and incorporates into its culture the essential geographic features of that place. This means of assuring permanence and continuity is quite at odds with imperialism's hope of achieving the same ends through conquest and the settlement of an enlarged territory.

That Chatwin saw few Indians on his trek southward is not surprising. The framing texts are clear reminders that neither Patagonia's remoteness nor its scanty natural resources would protect the natives from the ravages that overcame tribes throughout the New World. Central to both the literary frame and Chatwin's encounters with Indians is that issues of power and powerlessness are yoked with speech and language. Grandpa Felipe, the last pure-blood Yaghan, recollects that "[w]e forgot our language. Mister Lawrence knew our language better than we did. He taught us to speak our own language" (133). What the old man states simply as facts—the death of his language and its ironic preservation by Europeans—is contextualized by quotations from the *Yaghan Dictionary*. The white Mister Lawrence's attempt at cultural restoration was doomed not only by the epidemic that killed the Indians, leaving Grandpa Felipe ill and weak all his life. The language could not have been revived in any case because its basis was an irrecoverable intimacy between its speakers and their land, which had been seized.

One Indian man riding a train is likewise weak, despite a show of drunken bravado. Chatwin says, "I sat back and watched the history of South America in miniature" when the Indian tries to start a quarrel with two mountaineers: "The boy from Buenos Aires took his insults for half an hour, then he stood up, exploded and pointed the Indian back to his seat. The Indian bowed his head and said: *'Si, Senor. Si, Senor'* " (51). Read alongside the texts assembled in *In Patagonia*, this native is a modern-day Caliban, who can speak his impotent rage only in the language of the new masters. The "red plague" Caliban called down has yet to touch them, even though the Indians have suffered from epidemics and the sickness of alcoholism. In contrast to the denigrating figurative language of earlier travelers, Chatwin describes the Indians in scenes whose precise details might suggest an objective witness. Nevertheless, an underlying sympathy emerges, not from direct statement, but from the textual interplay within the pages of his book. It is an intertextuality constructed to revise imperialist readings of the Patagonian Indians.

In Puerta Deseado, Chatwin meets a young ornithologist who "was studying the migration of the Jackass Penguin": "We talked late into the night, arguing whether or not we, too, have journeys mapped out in our central nervous systems; it seemed the only way to account for our insane restlessness" (86). This mechanistic understanding of human migration, which rejects human agency, might seem fanciful and, moreover, rather surprising, given Chatwin's foregrounding of imperialism and its legacy. One might expect, instead, to hear him put forward an economic argument that the lure of wealth spurred both seafaring adventurers and the monarchs backing them. Yet Patagonia's extreme barrenness and poverty demand

pondering alternative explanations for the lust for wandering. Chatwin does so by assembling historical and literary texts that disclose intensely private motivations for avoiding a life rooted in one geographic place. This human, rather than national, perspective also brings into focus the psychological consequences risked by those who journey either to explore or to colonize. Chatwin recovers the voices of several adventurers from their manuscripts, both published and private. These texts, then, frame his own observations of Patagonian immigrants and their descendants, who cope with the feelings of separation and nostalgia that arise from their perceived geographic dislocation in the New World. In a study of travel books written between the two world wars, Paul Fussell has argued that they are "implicit celebration[s] of freedom" because the narrator "exhibits himself as physically more free than the reader."[6] The narratives within *In Patagonia*, however, challenge such an observation.

Seeking a haven from arrest and a new base of operations, the American outlaws Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid moved to Cholila after leading the Wild Bunch on a string of train robberies between 1896 and 1901. Of the three texts in *In Patagonia* composed by adventurers, a letter Cassidy sent to a friend back in Utah appears first. His deceptive pose is a warning to readers hunting for clues to wanderlust's source. Cassidy says, "[The] U.S. was too small for me the last two years I was there. I was restless. I wanted to see more of the world. I had seen all of the U.S. that I thought was good" (42). Implying a curiosity to observe fresh sights, his language both conceals and reveals a concern for personal safety, depending on whether the audience knows his alias. One can almost hear the unstated "for me" at the end of the last sentence. The expressed appetite for travel, even if taken at face value, was apparently easily fulfilled. Only a few lines later Cassidy confesses, "this part of the country looked so good that I located, and I think for good" (43). He measures its suitability in the precise number of livestock and horses he possesses, the land's agricultural possibilities, and the distances to markets and cheap supplies. Yet the legal way to wealth did not hold his interest. In the pages following this letter, Chatwin recounts some of the legends about Evans and Wilson, the names under which Cassidy and his partner resumed their robberies in Patagonia. Cassidy's life and letter testify to the desire for wealth as an explanation for human migration, particularly the desire to amass it through unrestrained plunder. His lawless amorality deconstructs imperialist exploitation advanced under the ironically high-minded banner of "bearing the white man's burden." The swift thoroughbreds on which Cassidy depended are simply a different means than the colonizing armies and laws for assuring the same end—getting away with it.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's imagination wove the experiences of sixteenth-century navigator John Davis into the ill-fated voyage of his Ancient Mariner. They have a personal impulse for journeying unlike the hopeful enterprise of exploration and conquest in which many saw themselves participating. "The Great Malady: Horror of One's Home," as Chatwin calls it, has compelled many wanderers into travels that have increased rather than relieved their inner distress (90). Whereas Cassidy gained safety through a practical, self-chosen departure, others have, uncontrollably and inevitably, headed toward peril.

Davis, discoverer of the Falkland Islands in 1592, could escape misfortune on neither sea nor land. The sea and wind were enemies, as documented in the account by one of his crew about rounding Cape Pilar, which Chatwin quotes in its entirety. Likewise, the shore offered no hospitality: his sailors, while bathing, were murdered by Indians and Portuguese; penguins dried and salted for provisions rotted in the barrels, breeding "a loathsome worme"; and he returned to Devon to discover his wife with a "sleek paramour" (qtd. in Chatwin 89). Davis and the Ancient Mariner endure similar disasters: "a voyage to the Black South, the murder of a bird or birds, the nemesis which follows, the drift through the tropics, the rotting ship, the curses of dying men" (90). Chatwin quotes these lines from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798) as "particularly resonant of the Elizabethan voyage":

> The many men so beautiful!
> And they all dead did lie:
> And a thousand, thousand slimy things
> Lived on and so did I.

Here is a counter to Cassidy's confident testimony about his journey to Patagonia.

[6]Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980) 203.

Coleridge's own life reminds Chatwin of "blighted wanderers," such as Cain, the Wandering Jew, and "the horizon-struck navigators of the sixteenth century." Theirs are the eternal rovings into the nightmares of life's dark nights, bringing loss instead of gain. Compulsion rather than free choice sets such travelers off into the wide world, where they find no land in which to settle.

A final adventurer bridges the space between Chatwin and the framing historical/literary wanderers, for Charley Milward is his grandmother's cousin. While captain of a merchant ship, he saw much of the world. He chose to settle in Punta Arenas rather than back home in England because "the weird magnetism of the South held him" (165). As a child, Chatwin imagined him to be "a god among men—tall, silent and strong, with black mutton-chop whiskers and fierce blue eyes" (1). Yet the section on Milward near the end of *In Patagonia*—at twenty-five pages by far the lengthiest of the framing narratives—traces a quite different reality: the wreck of his merchant ship in the Strait of Magellan in 1897, resulting dismissal by the company, moneymaking schemes gone awry, and unforeseen bankruptcy in old age. Chatwin pieces together Milward's years in Punta Arenas "from faded sepia photographs, purple carbon, a few relics and memories in the very old" (171), but the years at sea come alive through his own words in "the unpublished collection of sea stories he wrote as an old man" (149). From these Chatwin quotes, letting readers hear the voice of the former captain spinning yarns about the time when life seemed most intense. Despite the fact that Milward is a young man in them, it is a mature man who narrates these tales about vulnerability. Even before the shore was out of sight on his first apprentice voyage, the ship's bully "made him hand over his jack-knife and silver pencil case" (148). A victim of theft rather than a robber, he differs from Butch Cassidy also by writing of the loss that wanderers risk in foreign lands.

Printed in its entirety in *In Patagonia* is Milward's reminiscence of the unsuccessful attempt to save a man overboard. Complications arose because the rescue boat capsized before reaching the ship, and albatrosses attacked the heads and eyes of the defenseless sailors in the water: "the poor chaps had willingly untied the strings [of their lifebelts] and sunk when they saw that no help came, for they couldn't fight the birds with any hope of winning" (154). Milward's style is literal, but his albatrosses, when read alongside the other texts framing Chatwin's travels, become tropes, not simply the actual assailants of those particular sailors. The figurative process links them with the Ancient Mariner's slaughtered albatross and its real-life inspiration, the " 'disconsolate Black Albitross' shot by one Hatley, the mate of Captain George Shelvocke's privateer in the eighteenth century" (90). Together, these birds of ill omen figure forth a notion that menaces the pleasant conceit of a traveler enjoying the freedom of the open road. Rather, they haunt voyagers, dislodging illusions of independence and safety.

Milward's final journey, motivated solely by economic reasons, directly inverts the imperialist quest for wealth: he returned to Patagonia, resigned to his predicament of ruinous financial losses. After selling his foundry, in 1919 he had retired to the English countryside. The buyers, however, did not continue their payments and, moreover, ran up debts in Milward's name. His life-long code of honesty required him to go back: "He bought a ticket to Punta Arenas, one way, third class. Friends in the first-class saw him gazing sorrowfully at the sea" (173). Photos from those last six years of his life "show a stooping old man in a homburg with huge whiskers and wounded eyes." Unlike the comrades of his youth who lost their eyes—and lives—to the attacking albatrosses, Milward's wounds are spiritual. The "wildness" (170) that impelled him to travel about and then remain in a new land had a consequence, and he finally confronted what he had risked—irrevocable separation. Chatwin's last image of Milward is from 1928: he is "sitting in the tower [of his house] with his telescope, straining to catch the last of the steamer that carried the boy [his son] to school in England" (174). Milward was most certainly ignorant that he would ever feel such deep attachment when, as a young seafarer, he penned this dictum in his scrapbook under the title This Freedom: "A man rides away, a tent-dweller, an arab with a horse and the plains about him. Woman is a dweller in a city with a wall, a house-dweller, storing her possessions about her, abiding with them, not to be sundered from them" (157).

The lives of these wanderers—Cassidy, Davis, and Milward—are the frame within which Chatwin inscribes the contemporary Patagonian immigrants and descendants of immigrants

whom he meets. Although all are without any prospect of leaving Patagonia, they continue to identify themselves as English, German, or Russian; Welsh, Scotch, Basque, or Boer; Arab, Persian, or one of many other nationalities. They are acutely aware of being geographically dislocated in Patagonia. Yet they are strangers to their ancestral homeland as well. Mrs. Powell's grandfather emigrated from Caernarvon, "but she couldn't say where that was. Caernarvon wasn't marked on her map of Wales. 'You can't expect much,' she said, 'when it's printed on a tea-towel.' I pointed out where Caernarvon should be. She had always wanted to know" (23-24). Similarly ignorant of geography, Jim Ponsonby poses as "the perfect English gentleman," dressed in tweed Norfolk jacket, khaki shirt, and worsted trousers even while at work on his stud farm. But he gives himself away by assuming Gloucestershire to be in the North and then changes the subject "to avoid our geographical conversation" upon learning Chatwin is from nearby what Ponsonby calls "our place" (32-33).

The immigrant groups in Patagonia have had a strong desire to maintain their distinct cultural traditions and, over the years, have not easily mixed with other nationalities. Today the most clannish are the Boers, descendants of Afrikaners who arrived in 1903. Their genial Lithuanian neighbor in Sarmiento calls them "difficult" and has trouble finding any of them willing to talk with Chatwin. One family "stared with set faces," another person slammed the door, and another "fierce" woman would talk "for money and in the presence of her lawyer" (71). But separateness has become difficult for other Patagonians to maintain. Sharing the traditional teas and hymn-singing of the Welsh on Christmas Day, Chatwin was told, " 'When Welshmen marry foreigners, they lose the tradition.' Gwynneth Morgan was unmarried. She wanted to keep the valley Welsh, the way it was. 'But it's all going to pieces,' she said" (28). Although the Welsh arrived in 1865 as the first group admitted under a national policy encouraging immigration, her proprietary notion of the valley as Welsh and the other settlers as foreigners is one that Chatwin, attentive to incongruities, implies cannot be much longer maintained if it depends on renouncing marriage.

Through the houses in which they live, the Patagonians attempt to resist a sense of displacement. These are quaint, nostalgic spaces, employing visual symbols to preserve an increasingly tenuous cultural continuity in a foreign land. Milward's house in Punta Arenas, for example, has "high-pitched gables and gothic windows" as well as two towers, one square and the other octagonal. His neighbors would comment, "Old Milward can't decide if it's a church or a castle" (146). In Río Pico, a Swede built "the perfect cottage of his native Malmö, with its intelligent windows and vertical battens painted red with iron-oxide" (62). Butch Cassidy's decaying North American log cabin, chinked with now-crumbling mortar unlike the log structures more suitable to Patagonia, is emblematic of the futility of trying to recreate a geographically and historically distant place. The buildings constructed by newcomers as signs of their identity are truly illusions that cannot stand for long.

Chatwin pays close attention to interior decor as well. The Welsh live in whitewashed rooms with "brown painted doors, polished brass handles and grandfather clocks" brought by the colonists (22). An elderly German's house, a duplicate of those in a South German village except for its metal roof, has typical "scrubbed floors, painted panelling, the chandelier of antler tines and lithographs of the Rhineland" (63). At Estancia Lochinver, "a tin of Mackintosh's toffees was placed reverently under the [photograph of the] Queen" (67). An aging Swiss soprano has the most extravagantly nostalgic home. Plastic curtains, painted "in trompe l'oeil to resemble the crimson velvet of theatre draperies," separate the two rooms that are covered with her own murals: "A yellow sun rolled over the pampa and into the room. It played over the sails of yachts drifting on a summer's day; on cafés hung with Japanese lanterns; on the Château de Chillon, mountain chalets and the Île des Peupliers" (62). The incongruity of such decoration inside a small, Swedish-style cottage surrounded by the pampa calls attention to the essential theatricality of many of the homes Chatwin visits. He finds the people living with indoor illusions of making the impossible return to those places from which they set out on their journeys.

Read alongside Milward's anguish in old age, Chatwin's encounters with two young men he meets along the way suggest that the acute sense of separation haunts not only travelers and first generation settlers who remember the homeland for themselves. It is also a tormenting legacy immigrants pass on to their children. The piano

student Anselmo, son of a German and an Italian, has "a passion for the culture of Europe, the authentic, blinkered passion of the exile" (25). Through education and single-minded dedication, he longs to preserve in Patagonia the music of Europe's great composers. The intensity of his commitment, however, has taken its toll: "He was a thin nervous boy with a drained face and eyes that watered in the wind" (25). In the sound of his music, Chatwin hears the futility of his desire: "he played the mazurka that Chopin dictated on his deathbed. The wind whistled in the street and the music ghosted from the piano as leaves over a headstone" (26).

Unlike the educated Anselmo who speaks a little English, the ginger-haired Robbie Ross is a laborer who "had no words of English" nor any sense of the distinction between England and his ancestors' Scotland (78). Yet Chatwin says that "he peered at me with milky blue eyes, feeling out affinities of race and background with a mixture of curiosity and pain." Robbie announces the identity that his immigrant family has instilled in him, allying himself with the guest: "*Si, soy Escocés. . . . Mi patria es la Inglaterra misma.*" In jest, another laborer tells Chatwin to ignore him because he is a drunk. Surprisingly, Robbie becomes enraged: "he set his clenched fist on the table. . . . The colour drained from his face. His lips quivered, and he lunged for the man's throat. . . . The others overpowered him and he began to cry." This brief scene reveals the dilemma of the displaced person who finally awakens to find that he has become an alien, the Other against which his own ancestors once measured their supposed cultural superiority. Robbie lacks the language appropriate for claiming a bond with Chatwin, and the other laborer mocks the absurdity of his attempting to do so in Spanish. The laughter stings because it forces Robbie to abandon an illusion deeply embedded in his world view: that Patagonia, rather than Scotland, is the foreign place. Acknowledging the absoluteness of separation is painful, but doing so in front of a "fellow countryman" is unbearably humiliating.

Not surprisingly, Robbie is the only Patagonian of European origin for whom Chatwin's visit brings on a crisis of identity. The others have well-practiced defenses for disregarding their own transformation. They hold fast to the delusion of a round-trip ticket, that is, the fallacy that those who go, can also return. A case in point is the story of the Scottish farm manager who went mad early in the century. Alexander MacLennan earned the nickname Red Pig because he preferred to kill Indian sheep rustlers rather than "round them up and civilize them in the Mission" (117). He died in his mid-forties of delirium tremens, but as Chatwin hears the tale, "the Indians *did* get the Red Pig, you know" (118). His tea-time informants are two "English spinster ladies . . . with nice ladylike accents" and comparable taste in make-up and clothes. One night, afraid the Indians he kept seeing in his sleep were going to kill him, he ran out of the house and "right on into the forest. They lost him for days. And then a peon found him in a pasture with some cows. Naked! On all fours! And eating grass! And he was bellowing like a bull because he thought he *was* a bull. And that was the *end* of course." To these proper matrons, the Red Pig's descent into madness is *his* nightmare, not *theirs*. Yet framed by the multiple narratives of *In Patagonia*, it provokes readers to ponder, along with Chatwin, whether all voyagers and migrants risk the nightmare of ultimate displacement from their origins—and themselves. Such reflections are, naturally, meta-textual in a travel book. In raising them, Chatwin weighs not only the consequences of migrations that advanced the dreams of European empires, but also the psychological perils to which his own fascination with far-away places may jeopardize him.

The narrative thread running through *In Patagonia* is Chatwin's journey to a cave on Last Hope Sound, which he reaches only a few pages from the end, to search for a bit of skin from the prehistoric mylodon. His grandmother had received a piece as a wedding gift from her cousin Milward at the turn of the century, when there was great interest in the discovery of the remains of this beast in Patagonia. Displayed in her dining room cabinet, the natural curiosity kindled young Chatwin's imagination. When he came to ask for it after her death, he was told it had been thrown out. His trip to replace it is inscribed within not any additional texts, but treasure-hunting expeditions sent out by colonial powers and also the curious obsessions of collectors. Chatwin thus exposes his ironic predicament: the hunt for an object associated with his own childhood innocence entangles him in the imperialist motive of appropriation. Just as the narratives of voyagers and immigrants frame his identity as traveler, he finds himself inside the frame of his cultural

critique of imperialism.

References to futile searches appear throughout the book. One is tied explicitly to the greed of the Spanish during the colonial period. The report of Trapalanda, a fabled golden city in the Andes, in the early sixteenth century inspired "a legend that fired human hopes and human greed until the nineteenth century" (83). Both large expeditions and individuals hunted fruitlessly and sometimes fatally for this spot, two descriptions of which locate it within Patagonia. In 1922, Martin Sheffield, an American who suffered from "gold fever" and who had previously discovered a fossilized dinosaur skeleton in Patagonia, reported sighting a live one. Interestingly, the American Museum of Natural History quickly cabled a request for a piece of skin, and the University of Pennsylvania pledged a team of zoologists, "adding that if the animal were caught, the proper place for it was the United States" (40). Even today, people continue to travel to Patagonia on similarly hopeless missions. A hippie from Haight-Ashbury, whom Chatwin runs across, is rather surrealistically seeking a coal mine in which to work, because "mines gave him a feeling of security" (54). He has only an inadequate map of Argentina's mines, torn from an old encyclopedia. It shows "a gold mine at Río Pico," but a shopkeeper informs Chatwin the gold mine closed fifty years ago.

Unlike these men, the mylodon hunters did find their prey. In the 1830s, Darwin collected its bones on the beach at Punta Alta. Then, in the cave on Last Hope Sound in 1895, Herman Eberhard, a German immigrant, discovered a piece of its skin, measuring four feet by two feet. It had been preserved by a coating of salt during the ten thousand years since the mylodon's extinction. As soon as archaeologists finished excavating the cave, Albert Konrad, a German gold-hunter, "started dynamiting the stratigraphy to bits" (192). Milward went to help retrieve "yards of skin and piles of bones and claws, which, by this time, were a saleable commodity." The mylodon became one of the many prehistoric treasures, indigenous artifacts, and ancient works of art that western powers either purchased or stole from around the world, as if museum displays would adorn their imperial image. Milward profited from this acquisitive craving by selling his plunder to the British Museum for four hundred pounds, "after a tremendous haggle." Any reaction to Milward because of this transaction goes unrecorded, but Eberhard's grandson told Chatwin, "You must know, this Albert Konrad was most unpopular in Chile for selling out the mylodon. So he went over the border to live" (193).

Like Konrad and Milward, Chatwin carries away a prize from the cave. He expects, however, no economic gain. His objective is to keep the skin for himself, a desire *In Patagonia* frames within imperialism's questionable endeavor to own the foreign. Thus Chatwin's social critique is simultaneously self-referential; the indictments directed outward are charges against himself as well. At the cave he feels "immensely pleased" with his success, but at the same time, he disparages his undertaking: "I had accomplished the object of this ridiculous journey" (194). In reality, the piece of skin is not the inspiring specimen in his grandmother's cabinet. His find "looked like hairy peanut brittle" (6). Nevertheless, he could not check his passion for obtaining this unappetizing prehistoric article. Such acquisitiveness characterizes several other collectors in *In Patagonia* with whom Chatwin recognizes an uncomfortable kinship. Their behavior not only censures colonialism's seizure and commodification of the Other, but also suggests that such a desire for appropriation is a kind of madness.

Early in the journey, Chatwin meets two elderly women who are part of "a tight group of Sarmiento ladies, the archaeologists" (70). From the surrounding area, they collect such antiquities as arrowheads, knives, and boleadora stones. Ironically, "the 'professionals' cursed them as looters." Chatwin watches a Lithuanian woman skillfully display her collection so as "to feed her rival's jealousy." Her Welsh "competitor" looks on "with envious eyes" and sneers at the boast that the Presidenta will one day purchase the collection for the National Museum. Chatwin pokes fun at these women for using Indian artifacts to enhance personal status and wealth, but his satire also touches the more complex endeavors of colonial powers, who laid claim to foreign people and their lands with the same expectations.

The compulsion of two others for collecting rocks essentially reduces such ventures to a form of madness. Chatwin's visit to the isolated mylodon cave appears in between the descriptions of these insane stone hunters, and an event there hints at his unexpected brotherhood with them. Having just put the mylodon hairs into an envelope, Chatwin is

shocked to hear a group of nuns singing to the Virgin Mary at a shrine by the entrance: "Now I too had gone mad," he thinks (194). Konrad, the German who dynamited the cave, began gathering ordinary stones, considering them to be gold, in the last years of his life. By the time he committed suicide, his "cabin was bursting with grey stones" (193). At Punta Arenas, waiting to leave Patagonia by ship, Chatwin meets another kind of traveler, a traveling lingerie salesman from Santiago. He is a "big, unhealthy man," whose smile reveals "swollen pink gums" (196). In the morning he places on each table in the hotel dining room an arrangement of stones he has gathered on the beach. Later in the day, the manager reports the salesman has been taken to the hospital. "*Es loco*," he apologizes. This salesman does not, like Konrad, consider the stones to be economically valuable, but instead finds in their shapes "the imprint of God" (197). The madness of both lies in single-mindedly seeking objects they have mis-valued. Their piles of stones thus re-contextualize the possessions noted throughout *In Patagonia*—from colonies to mylodon hide—turning signifiers of the supposed power, wealth, or virtue of the owners into markers of ludicrous delusions.

Chatwin structures the narrative of his journey to force a corresponding re-valuing of western culture's notions of the heroic. In addressing The Royal Geographical Society, he acknowledged that his "piece of dung wasn't exactly the Golden Fleece, but it did give me the idea for the form of a travel book, for the oldest kind of traveller's tale is one in which the narrator leaves home and goes to a far country in search of a legendary beast" (Chatwin and Theroux 16-17). Chatwin carefully frames his trip to the cave so that "the extinct beast merged with the living beast and the beast of the imagination" (189). He refers to legends passed down by Indians and travelers in the region that describe a large animal "with something human about it." Whatever the name by which it was called, its reputed ferocity caused great terror. All of this folklore about an elusive wild creature, he attaches to the skin of the extinct mylodon. Thus Chatwin appears to be on a quest that duplicates Knight Primaleon's conquest of the monster Grand Patagon. But, in fact, it is a parodic quest, which repeats with a critical difference both that literary text and Magellan's vision of Patagonia as well. Although successful, Chatwin can hardly claim to be heroic while holding something that resembles "hairy peanut brittle." The heroic self-image that explorers and adventurers inscribed in autobiographical accounts of domination becomes suspect when read against the reality of Chatwin's adventures. *In Patagonia* does not elegize the passing of such valor in the modern world. Rather, it satirizes the claims of heroism that have been advanced throughout the history of western expansion across the globe.

According to Chatwin, both he and Paul Theroux are literary travelers. By that, he does not mean that they write travel books. He has in mind, instead, that "a literary reference or connection [to a place we visit] is likely to excite us as much as a rare animal or plant" (Chatwin and Theroux 7). Their joint lecture to The Royal Geographical Society is a collection of such references, culled from a wide range of texts written, for the most part, in English. The two are, however, distinctly different literary travelers in their individual travel books. In *The Old Patagonian Express*, Theroux gives a strict accounting of every book with which he passes time on the trains from Boston all the way to Esquel, Patagonia. On the basis of this reading, he lectures in San Salvador on the topic "Little-known Books by Famous American Authors." The flyleaf of one or another of these volumes occasionally serves as a convenient place to jot a note. The opportunity for literary conversation arises along the way when he meets several authors, the most distinguished of whom is Borges. Typically, Theroux's literary references, despite their frequency, are as fleeting as the scenes that pass before his train compartment window. Only Boswell and Poe seem to have written something that sticks with him as he hurries along.

Chatwin, on the other hand, does not spend his time in Patagonia reading, or, at least, he does not confess to doing so. Yet he puts before his audience numerous texts in which Patagonia has been inscribed. No matter the illusion that readers are accompanying him on a journey, they can travel only within a written world. The multiplicity of texts Chatwin sets alongside each other forces an act of engaged reading that is analogous to his own act as a traveler of making sense out of immediate experience. These texts resist being read linearly, as Theroux does the books he carries along. They are in a dialog with each other, as well as with Chatwin's more recent observations, that forces rereadings. Thus meaning arises, not from a single text, but from

out of the spaces between them. As a literary traveler, Chatwin is not a collector of texts about Patagonia, something his remarks to The Royal Geographical Society might mistakenly suggest. Assembling a collection of any sort implies a sense of possession and control thoroughly discredited within the pages of *In Patagonia*. Chatwin's method of inscribing Patagonia's many texts within his own is not such an act of appropriation. Rather, it maps the terrain in which all literary travelers, of whom he is one, make their own journeys.□

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Tommaso Landolfi

THE FIRE

Translated by Lawrence Venuti

For that Christmas night, I had chosen an enormous log with a huge round knot, or hump, which was slightly pointed on one side. In a word, I immediately perceived that the knot was a snout, or perhaps an entire head, although a rather monstrous one. It looked like the head of a bear or some other merciless animal. Resting on the stone floor of the fireplace, the log seemed chained, as if it were a gigantic creature that had been imprisoned there up to its shoulders, and only their tops and its head were visible.

Yet the woman who was resting her cheek on my shoulder said: "Here I am in my house, sitting by my fire. Be kind, spirit of these places, and you too, spirit of this hearth, who have my beloved in your care. Let him be faithful to me; don't let these places be visited by any anguish but that which issues from me. No, let us be happy forever; let us, and our children, wear out our time in undisturbed peace near your flaming hair, in the trustful gaze of your burning eyes, now and after the hour of our death."

The woman voiced these and other wishes, then fell silent; and we listened intently to the fire, as if its most eloquent voice had been joined with ours. I myself was under this illusion.

Fire is peaceful, and speaks with a familiar grumbling, although few people understand its protean language. It can be ingenuous or severe, natter like a child, transmit serious messages. It conjures up flaming villages, ashen villages. Heavenly and earthly creatures are stirred by it, or they stand motionless, gazing into its entrails. Eyes dilated, eyes veiled by lids stare into its heart. But even if, obeying its free nature, it sometimes flicks its viperous tongues, howls like the wind, roars like a tempest, seems almost to shake its mane, even then it is still a benign spirit.

Thus they speak of fire, and I too believed what they say. But that night I saw it enraged. It had challenged an ominous landscape (which seemed struck by the bloody, burnt moonlight), and it shuddered, leaped, hurled its tongues higher and higher, howling and snarling. Certainly, it wanted to tell us something we could not hear distinctly, and for this reason, it was in a fury. Its divine speech was nearly transformed into our wretchedly articulate language.

I turned to my companion, frightened. She remained silent, gazing with burning eyes at the fire, the monster chained to the stone. At that moment, I suddenly perceived that the head did not resemble a bear's, but mine: it looked like a human head, despite its immensity. The flames had hollowed out cheeks and shaped an entire face. The huge imprisoned creature was revealed. With a deep ardor in its eyes, amid the last flaming veils, the creature looked at the woman who stared unblinkingly at it.

In a sudden blazing flash, the head was crowned with flames, and the snarl became words. "Lo, I respond to you, lady," said the fire, "and to your invocation. I reveal myself to a pure heart, as I have never done until this hour. I am the spirit of this fireplace, imprisoned here, as you see; yet you shall hear sad things. Near me is no peace, and your hope is foolish. An obscure doom weighs heavy on me—and on whomever approaches me: fatal is my power. Is not the bright sun, to whom we all owe reverence, of the same essence as me? Yet the sun is free to spin through the heavens, and he who has confined me here is unknown to me. Am I not, then, a free element, the most noble of the elements? And yet I try in vain, with every flicker, every leap, to reach my heavenly birthplace. My voice should have a different tone, should promise men a better land. But this is not so, lady, and whoever among you lives intimately with me enjoys a fate like mine in the end. Just as men are permitted to bend me to the most base purposes—supreme outrage!—so am I entitled to stir in their hearts a pointless, bitter anguish. I deafen them to the profound sound of time, the shrill harmony of the elements. Near

me they will not hear the manifold accent of nature, the eternal mother of us all, or even my own death rattle: they will lend their ear only to indecipherable noise. I turn aside their hearts, as I have said, from every glorious enterprise, and I lead them to obscure deeds; I distract their minds from every lofty thought, and subject them to dull anxiety. Above all, I unleash from their breasts a vain tempest of words, not wicked or violent, just spirited, dark, and breathless, inglorious and incessant, words they use to torment themselves and one another without end.

"And what is sadder than their words? They throb inside like corrupt blood; the mind can become confused in their sterile whirl; they can lead to desperation, or an anguish close to madness: hence, the parent will no longer recognize his offspring, nor the tender child her ancestor. Hidden rage, rancor, a concealed enmity among fellow creatures, perhaps hatred—this is the kind of benevolence men can expect from me, the noblest of the elements. And do not earth, water, and air lead their lives freely outside? Nevertheless, they will remain in here, bound to their useless, their barren toil, prisoners of this air buzzing with human words as I am imprisoned by this stone, and thus it will always be. Therefore, flee me, lady, and do not invoke me: now you know that peace will never thrive near me. Can there be peace when one is accused and abandoned in the vast bosom of the elements, a peer of the free creatures of earth, water, and air? Is there any peace among you? My wish is to return to my heavenly birthplace—but of this subject I shall speak no more.

"Note what I have said, lady: such is my fatal power. And listen to what I, the spirit of this fireplace, shall tell you: your beloved will never be yours, as you would like, since he belongs to me. Here your ancestors lived and died, and here he will live and die; just as I am condemned here, so is he doomed to remain amid the whirl of words, amid the trivial cares of this venerable house. Nor will his spirit ever be able to rise from here or trace the features of a perfect beauty."

"You lie," I shouted at this point, "whoever you are!" But the fire impatiently shook its flaming head and proceeded without paying attention to me: "All the same, lady, console yourself, if you can. In fact, this vain and sterile tumult is finally nothing but the play of shadows. If you look carefully, you will see that the faces reflected by my flames are scarcely faces, unformed, fleeting faces, witnesses of a terrible nightmare—mine. They were not men, nor am I one; they are reflections. But their fleeting presence endures forever, just as, obliterated by every light but my bloody glow, your face and your beloved's will attend me in eternity, after the hour of your death. Do you not hear the chorus of spirits—indeed, the spirits of those who spent their lives in this house—do you not hear how they sing to me? Ardent and doubtful masquers, they spy on you at your shoulders, and they will not easily abandon their prey. Nor do I abandon mine, lady."

"You lie," I shouted again, "evil spirit!" At this point, however, the fire had resumed its changeable language, whose words once more we did not quite understand. The woman was also quiet, her head bowed. The gigantic prisoner in the stone had lowered its ashen lids and no longer gazed at her. In fact, its entire face was becoming covered with those delicate lids which tremble and throb at every blaze of the fire and anticipate a horrible decay.

The landscape of bloody moonlight was corrupted, grew more and more dark and deserted. More and more the face of the immense creature disintegrated and darkened, the cheeks sank in ash, the pale skin separated. No longer was the head crowned gloriously with flames. It had turned to livid parchment, its substance gradually melting into dust.

Thus the fire fell completely silent. A cat walked by and slowly mounted an andiron, its tail and flanks tracing a soft arabesque on the ashen face.

I did not then realize what the fire's death might have represented. But I know better, now that my companion's face has also become a fleeting fiery image, a reflection, in this inarticulate nightmare that the fire breeds. And according to its prophecy, she is dead, as we all shall be, without ever having lived.□

Bogomil Gjuzel

PANDORA

Translated by Mary Crow and Bogomil Gjuzel

It's only that they won't give me
everything I struggled to earn
with my body and mind, blood and sweat

but I've got to try to get it by begging
dragging myself from office to office
with pleas, lies, threats and blackmail

so that when I finally return home
I start crying, cursing and breaking
everything I shake from the bottom of my bag

the furies—my children—run out frightened
and on the bare floor a worm is crawling
my hope, my nothing, my husband . . .

Enrique Jaramillo-Levi

THE FOUNTAIN

Translated by Samuel A. Zimmerman

You were seated with the child in your arms alongside the small, crystal clear fountain which was gushing out of the ground in slow spasms. With her eyes fixed on yours, she seemed to be asking what are you looking for, Mommy, your gaze so absorbed, so far away.

I sprang up from the other side of the fountain and began to move toward the two of you, hardly noticing the obstacle of those spurts of water which would soon be in my path unless I could alter my course at the last minute. No matter how hard I tried, the distance always remained the same, preventing me from reaching you. You realized this, with your gaze cutting through the water, and turning to her you said I have to help him be with us again. You sat her on the grass, and seeing an expression of anticipation on her mouth, you added later you'll understand. The child murmured yes as she closed her eyes.

You walked up to the fountain and entered the jet of water which stopped, crystallizing, in mid-air. From the other side, without having stopped my forward movement, I sensed that at that moment the distance was beginning to diminish and that I was finally nearing your side.

You were like a willing prey, caught up in a cylindrical transparency in which I could see the reflection of my face. Soon after I had managed to ignore my reflection, I sensed the determined persistence with which you were calling to me from your isolation. You were beckoning with your eyes, with the agitated rhythm of your nostrils, with the silent throbbing of lips, formerly tense, now purple in anticipation.

I placed both hands on the hardened water which surrounded you. My flesh slowly passed through the crystal and soon was one with your flesh. We remained that way, united by an absorbing warmth, as if it had become a new, compact receptacle, reminiscent of our shared good times and misfortune. And then memory stopped in its tracks; it was now hanging over the horrible scene, watching it, breaking into its essence beyond the sound of the weapon going off and the explosion of my skull. I was beginning to understand the stupidity of the act, we were both now realizing that it had been an absurd thing, rash and senseless, and at that moment the child anxiously called you, shouting, causing us to move apart. We walked hand in hand toward her.

Pointing at me, as if speaking for me, expressing my tastes, she told you I wish you would wear your hair down, Mommy, the way you used to fix it. You smiled and at once allowed my hands to undo your coal black hair so that it cascaded over your shoulders. At that moment we heard a low delicate sound coming from behind us.

The fountain had begun to gush again from the earth. But now it shot higher in the air, in torrents, and was shining intensely, like a pyramid of juxtaposed sheets of steel whose brilliance had been illuminated by the sun. But in this enchanted spot there was no sun. Nonetheless, we had to close our eyes, dazzled.

Soon thereafter, we decided to move away from that place. We had said nothing but we had begun to walk, as if impelled by the same thought, toward the old house, the one which I had left abruptly, without any word of warning, weighed down by the certainty of the illness. The child walked between the two of us, as she used to do on our long walks through the woods, before the certainty and the cowardice. She accepted my presence as if I had never gone away, tacitly denying the separation, seemingly content.

You, on the other hand, feared the bifurcation of time, its fissures. The threat of the past hovered over us and was a presence as real as my own resurrected presence. I felt that you sensed some kind of restraint, seemingly generated by the need to hold on to me now, to save us. Perhaps for that reason, in your anguish you ordered the child not to look back. Curiosity

made her turn her head. She was not turned into a pillar of salt, but instead she screamed, frightened, causing us to look back also: there comes Daddy, he's coming again, running toward us.

You refused to keep looking, and in an absurd gesture you covered your eyes with one of your hands and the girl's eyes with the other. I said be strong, as I failed to be back then. After a minute you agreed, and the three of us, hand in hand, waited for my double to come closer. He encountered no obstacles in his path, as I had earlier. It is for our own good, I said. I noticed that you were smiling. Then, an instant before he stood before us, I kissed the palm of your hand, which was extraordinarily cold, and with my index finger traced the words "thank you" on it.

We heard him pronounce your name with my voice, a thin thread of blood flowing from his lips, his head identical to mine with no trace of violence. I understood that with his presence the precise meaning of one identity was affirmed, the reclaiming of a past which for him was irreversible. I also understood that it would be a duel, not of wills, but of attitudes altered by time in this new space which was taking me in, which was disposed to offer me asylum if I would accept it as such. One reality facing another, both made of the same metaphysical substance, that and nothing else was what was occurring. Except that the reality which I represented had established itself first and was strongly nourished by a shared love. I had to defend that reality. With wide open eyes and the new warmth which your hands radiated, you and the child were pleading for me to do so. I saw myself somewhat older in the other presence, destroyed in him forever. He took a step toward me to annex me to his defeat, to fuse with my body made of energy and the will to be. But I suddenly jumped to meet him. It was I who entered his form and imposed in him my mission of permanence. We were once again one, the one who I am now and who is telling this love story.

Today we live spiritually. We never speak of the past, not even of what happened the previous day. Daily living flows along without allowing itself to be buried in routine. You, as before, work during the morning; in the afternoon you tend to the garden and to our daughter. Nights are a long generous substance which we share and which shares us. I create joys in your being and you are reborn and transfigured. Drawn by my presence, day after day you honor me with the perfection of your beauty. Meanwhile the child is growing, fills new clothes, develops new ways of looking, new mischiefs. We chat without measuring time, as if finding a light from within. Our home is a source of serene vitality.□

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Duska Vrhovac

WHEN A CHILD DIES

Translated by Richard Burns and Vera Radojević

—For Nikola

When a child dies
it's wrong to weep
every sob
and tear
are far too loud
for the womb
it nestled in
when a child dies
no star falls
but climbs higher
climbs forever
on its damned
starry way

Silvina Ocampo

THUS WERE THEIR FACES

Translated by Daniel Balderston

Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

—Ezekiel 1:11

How did the younger children come to know it? That will never be explained. Besides, one would need to clear up what it was that they came to know, and whether the older ones already knew it. One assumes, nevertheless, that it was a real event, and not a fantasy; only people who did not know them or their school or their teachers could deny it without scruple.

At the hour when the bell was rung uselessly, routinely, ritually, to announce the milk or, a little later, during recess, when they ran to the back courtyard, or perhaps, as seems most likely, when they unconsciously, slowly, constantly, without distinction of age or sex, came to know it, and I say came, because various signs showed that they were waiting, up to that moment, for something which would allow them to wait once more, and once and for all, for something very important. We know for certain that from then on (from that moment to which I am alluding in an imprecise way, but which is the subject of thousands of conjectures), without losing their innocence, but losing that apparent nonchalance which is so characteristic of childhood, the children thought about nothing else.

Everything allows one to assume, after long reflection, that the children discovered it simultaneously. In the dormitories, when they fell asleep; in the dining hall, when they ate; in the chapel, when they prayed; in the courtyards, when they played tag or hopscotch; sitting before their desks, when they did their assignments or were being punished; in the square, when playing on the swings; or in the bathrooms, when dedicated to bodily cleanliness (important moments, because during them worries are forgotten), with the same sullen, withdrawn look on their faces, their minds, like little machines, spinning the web of one sole thought, of one sole desire, of one sole expectation.

People who saw them go by in their Sunday best, clean and well-groomed, on national or religious holidays, or on any Sunday, would say: "Those children all belong to one family or to one mysterious society. They are identical! Their poor parents! They must not be able to recognize their own children! These modern times, the same barber must cut all their hair (the little girls look like boys and the boys look like girls): cruel, unspiritual times."

In fact, their faces did resemble one another that much; they were as lacking in expression as the faces on the badges or the images of the Virgin of Lujan they wore on their breasts.

But they, each of them, at first, felt alone, as if an iron skeleton covered them, isolating them, stiffening them. Each one's pain was individual and terrible; happiness also, which for that very reason was painful. Humiliated, they imagined themselves different from one another, like dogs of various breeds, or like prehistoric monsters in illustrations. They thought that the secret, which was splitting at that very moment into forty secrets, was not shared and would never be shared. But an angel came, the angel who sometimes attends to the multitudes; he came with his shining mirror held high, like the picture of the candidate, the hero or the tyrant which is carried in demonstrations, and showed them that their faces were identical. Forty faces

were all the same face; forty minds were all the same mind, despite the differences in ages and families.

No matter how horrible a secret may be, when it is shared it sometimes stops being horrible, because the horror of it gives pleasure: the pleasure of perpetual communication.

But those who suppose it was horrible are jumping ahead. In reality we do not know whether it was horrible and then became beautiful, or whether it was beautiful and became horrible.

When they felt more sure of themselves, they wrote letters to one another, on different colors of paper, with lace borders or pictures pasted on. At first they were laconic; later, longer and more confused. They chose strategic places, which served as post offices, where the others could pick them up.

Since they were now happy conspirators, the normal difficulties of life no longer troubled them.

If one of them planned to do something, the others immediately resolved to do the same thing.

As if they wanted to become equal, the shorter ones walked on tiptoe so as to look taller; the taller ones stooped over so as to look shorter. One might have said that the redheads reduced the brilliance of their hair and that the darker ones lightened the color of their warm bronze skin. The eyes all shone with the same brown or grey color characteristic of light-colored eyes. Now none of them chewed his nails, and the only one who sucked his thumb stopped.

They were also linked by the violence of their gestures, by their simultaneous laughter, by a boisterous and abruptly sad feeling of solidarity which hid in their eyes, in their straight or slightly curly hair. So indissolubly united were they that they would have conquered an army, a herd of hungry wolves, a plague, hunger, thirst, or the earnest exhaustion which destroys civilizations.

At the top of a slide, not from wickedness but from excitement, they almost killed a child who slipped in among them. On the street, in the face of the admiring enthusiasm of all of them, a flower vendor almost perished with all of his merchandise.

In the dressing rooms, at night, the navy blue pleated skirts, the pants, the blouses, the rough white underwear, the handkerchiefs were crammed together in the darkness, with that life their owners had endowed them with during the day. The shoes, all together, ever more together, formed a vigorous, organized army; they walked as much at night without them as with them during the day. An unearthly dirt clung to their soles. Shoes are already pathetic enough when they are alone! The bar of soap was passed from hand to hand, from face to face, from chest to chest, acquiring the form of their souls. Bars of soap lost between the toothpaste and the hairbrushes and toothbrushes! All the same!

"One voice is dispersed among those who talk. Those who do not talk transmit its force to the objects that surround them," said Fabia Hernandez, one of the teachers; but neither she, nor Lelia Isnaga, nor Albina Romarin, her colleagues, could penetrate the closed world which sometimes dwells in the heart of a solitary man (who defends himself and opens himself to his misfortune or his joy). That closed world dwelt in the heart of forty children! The teachers, out of love for their work, with utmost devotion, wanted to catch the secret by surprise. They knew that a secret can be poisonous to the soul. Mothers fear the effects it may have on their children; no matter how beautiful it may be, they think, who knows what monsters it may conceal!

They wanted to catch them by surprise. They turned on the lights in the bedrooms all of a sudden, under the pretext of needing to inspect the ceiling where a pipe had burst, or because they were hunting down the mice which had invaded the main office; with the excuse of a need to impose silence they would interrupt the recesses, saying that the racket bothered a sick neighbor or the celebration of a wake; with the excuse of having to do their duty supervising the religious conduct of the children, they would go into the chapel, where the heightened mysticism allowed for raptures of love, in which the children would utter dismembered, but noisy and difficult, words, before the flames of the candles which lit up their hermetic faces.

The children, fluttering like birds, would burst in on the movie theaters or the playhouses of some benefit concert, where they had the chance to entertain or distract themselves with dazzling shows. Their heads turned from right to left, from left to right, at the same time, revealing the full extent of the pretense.

Miss Fabia Hernandez was the first to notice that the children had the same dreams, that they made the same mistakes in their notebooks, and that when she scolded them for having no

personality, they smiled sweetly, which was unusual for them.

None of them was troubled by having to suffer for the mischief of a classmate. None of them was troubled when seeing others given credit for his own work.

On various occasions the teachers accused one or two of them of doing the assignments for the rest of the students, but it was difficult to explain why the handwriting was so similar, and the sentences in the compositions so identical. The teachers confirmed that they had been mistaken.

In the drawing class, when the teacher, in order to stimulate their imagination, asked them to draw any object they felt like, they all, for an alarming length of time, drew wings, the forms and dimensions of which varied infinitely without taking away, according to her, from the monotony of the whole. When they were scolded for always drawing the same thing, they grumbled, and finally wrote on the blackboard, "We feel the wings, miss."

Without falling into a disrespectful mistake, would it be possible to say they were happy? To the extent that children can be happy, given their limitations, everything leads one to believe that they were, except during the summertime. The heat of the city weighed on the teachers. At the hour when the children liked to run, climb trees, roll around on the lawn, or go down the hill doing somersaults, all of these diversions were replaced by the siesta, the feared custom of the siesta. The cicadas sang, but they did not hear that song which makes the heat even more intense. The radios made a racket, but they did not hear that noise which makes the summer, with its sticky asphalt, unbearable.

They wasted hours sitting behind the teachers, who held parasols while waiting for the sun to go down or for the heat to subside; when they were left alone they played unintentional pranks like calling some dog from the balcony which, when it saw so many possible owners all at once, would leap madly into the air to reach them; or, they would whistle at some lady in the street, who would angrily ring the bell to complain of their insolence.

An unexpected donation allowed them all to go on vacation by the sea. The little girls made themselves modest swimsuits; the boys bought theirs at an inexpensive store, where the materials smelled of castor oil, but were of a modern cut, one of those that looks good on anybody.

So as to give more importance to the fact that they would be vacationing for the first time, the teachers, using a pointer, showed them the blue point on the map, next to the Atlantic, where they would be going.

They dreamed of the Atlantic, of the sand: all the same dream.

When the train left the station, the handkerchiefs waved back and forth in the train windows like a flock of doves; this is preserved in a picture that appeared in the papers.

When they got to the sea they hardly looked at it; they kept on seeing the sea they had imagined before seeing the real one. When they got used to the new landscape, it was difficult to control them. They ran after the foam which formed drifts similar to those formed by snow. But joy did not make them forget the secret, and they would go gravely back to the rooms, where communication between them was easier. If what they felt was not love, then something very similar to love linked them, gladdened them, exalted them. The older ones, influenced by the younger ones, blushed when the teachers asked them trick questions, and answered with a quick nod. The younger ones, all serious, looked like adults whom nothing could bother. The majority of them had the names of flowers like Jacinto, Dahlia, Margarita, Jasmine, Violeta, Rose, Narcissus, Hortense, Camilla: affectionate names chosen by their parents. They carved them in the trunks of trees, with their fingernails which were as hard as a tiger's; they wrote them on the walls, with gnawed-on pencils in the sand, with their fingers.

They set off on the trip back to the city, hearts bursting with joy, since they would travel by plane. A film festival was starting that day, and they could catch glimpses of furtive stars at the airport. Their throats hurt from laughing so hard. From looking so hard, their eyes turned bright red.

The news appeared in the papers in texts like this: *The plane in which forty children from a school for deaf-mutes were traveling, on their way back from their first vacation by the sea, suffered an unforeseen accident. A door which came open during the flight caused the disaster. Only the teachers, the pilot, and the crew were saved. Miss Fabia Hernandez, when interviewed, assures us that when the children threw themselves into the void they had wings. She wanted to stop the last one, who pulled himself from her arms in order to follow the others like an angel. The scene astonished her so much because of its intense beauty that at first she could not consider it a disaster, but*

rather a celestial vision she will never forget. She still does not believe in the children's disappearance.

"That would be a mean trick from God, to show us heaven while casting us into hell," declares Miss Lelia Isnaga. "I don't believe in the disaster."

Albina Romarin says, "It was all a dream the children had, wanting to astonish us, just as they did on the swings in the square. Nobody will persuade me they have vanished."

Neither the red sign which announces that the house where the school was located is up for rent, nor the closed blinds, dishearten Fabia Hernandez. With her colleagues, to whom she is linked as the children were linked among themselves, she visits the old building and contemplates the students' names written on the walls (inscriptions for which they were punished), and some wings drawn with childish skill, which bear witness to the miracle.□

Aleksandar Petrov

AUBADE

Translated by Richard Burns and Aleksandar Petrov

Peretz Markish in line facing the firing squad.
Indian summer in Siberia. The twelfth of August
nineteen fifty two. Dawn spreads its red cloth
upwards. The counter-revolution of night
is destined to fail.

Peretz Markish in line facing the firing squad.
Alongside him: Poets. Novelists. Critics.
The Yiddish Anthology waits. To burst into flames
at sunrise. Everything is prepared. The bullets.
The shovels. The wind. The pliers for teeth.

Peretz Markish in line facing the firing squad.
The parrot-prophet opens his envelope. In his beak:
a leaden key to unlock the Poem of Life. All the wires
are flowering. The stage: a glass-house.
This blood: just make-up.

Peretz Markish in line facing the firing squad.
He imagines the crib, the donkey, the stable.
In the arms of a Jewish girl with eyes of always,
wife to a tailor, a cobbler, a carpenter,
the child craves the breast's horn.

Peretz Markish at sunrise facing the firing squad.
In the north. Before him east and west unfold.
The way is clear now. A sandy path, wide open.
Toward Moscow. And further. Pointing south.

Juan Benet

VIATOR

Translated by Leland H. Chambers

The traveler who endeavors to get to Región by rail—insofar as possible—from any of the neighboring capitals, either getting off in Palanquinos to opt for the connection with the Castellanos, or continuing on to Ponferrada in order to go up the Sil with the Villablino mining train, or—if he comes from the East—going as far as La Robla with the Vascongado, or by stretching the railway's resources to the fullest, to the Macerta terminal via Rañeces-Cabezas del Torce, such a traveler will soon find out how things stand. If you make the journey in wintertime, any assurance regarding what any of the routes can provide is not to be expected. If you do it by night . . . well, it is possible that you might have known or you may yet come to know worse nights than that. The worst part, they say, is not the traveling in itself but the transfers: the interminable stopovers in deserted, filthy, and freezing waiting rooms (those steamy windows that have not tested contact with a cleaning rag since the inscriptions of the Asturian October were wiped off), the lack of faith with which the stationmaster—with a skepticism proper to the keenest and most thoughtful observers of the history of contemporary Spain—answers questions about the schedules while attempting to bring the stove to life. And if you decide to make the trip by day, going to the Shanghai, the Portuguese, or any of those fast locals that seem to be aimed at Central Europe, always just ahead of the enemy, then so much the worse for you. Because it would be unusual indeed not to find yourself in the wee hours of the morning in one of those towns with no other shelter than the arcade in front of the City Hall, or the church porch, or the waiting room. And if you do succeed in making connections at all your transfer points—a rather improbable possibility—it's almost certain you'll have to spend the night in Macerta (if not in Cabezas), since the 1022—coming down—anticipated to arrive at 12:50, rarely gets there before 3 in the morning, an hour which the conductor of the daily train from Región does not find himself disposed to experience while awake, though he is quite aware that the imaginary and disoriented passenger who aspires to that solution will never be able to find a taxi driver to take him to his final destination at that hour.

Consequently, apart from the siestas during his daytime transfers, the most likely thing is that the traveler may sleep his full seven hours on a lath bench, head propped up on a piece of travel luggage, because it goes without saying he will need the shelter of his overcoat because of what its name designates. If he manages to conciliate sleep at all. Huddled up, his knees almost touching his chin, it will be given to him to confirm that one of the few things that go well in the Cabezas station is the beautiful clock on the wall, a Garnier from Paris, with a Roman face and a large double pulley, proud of its mechanism and content with the fulfillment of its duty. Observe—it seems to be saying—those of you who are mindful as well as those who, preferring silence, would rather not like to hear it, observe—I repeat—that I keep watching out for you and complying with a duty that no one has imposed on me.

There are those who affirm that no matter how great one's weariness and anger, the most unpleasant thing about such journeys is a companion with an urge for conversation in his compartment or the waiting room. It's about as bad as impatience, if not worse. There are even those who, swept away by their enthusiasm for the human race and their trust in solidarity, do not hesitate to pull out a deck of cards and, after rolling up their shirt cuffs, flexing their fingers, and shuffling dexterously, hint at the possibility of a little game, in all probability ignorant of the fears they provoke. There are others more reserved who without any desire to interfere in the traveler's thoughts know how much an

uplifting word is worth in a moment of tribulation. There are those who (differing from the card player who once he has gotten a game together pulls out a leathern flask of cognac and without taking his audience into consideration tosses down a swallow and smacks his lips) when asked their opinion—as men accustomed to such waits—about the possibilities for the arrival of the mail train from Macerta, their whole reply consists of offering their neighbor a half-full bottle of aguardiente, indicating with a gesture that one is not to observe any other limitation than his own resistance to the burning liquor.

Upon finishing my course of studies, for several years (or months, I don't remember which, the one turns into the other when enthusiasm begins to flag) my first job as an engineer consisted of directing the work in several hand-operation mines which an unscrupulous owner possessed in the Tremor basin as well as along the upper Torce. These are analogous formations—anthracite—about a hundred kilometers distant from each other, or a journey of some thirty hours on horseback, train, and plain old automobile combined; these are lands where, as the famous opium addict of the last century would say, "for a thousand mile stretch a dog isn't able to find shelter against a snowstorm, nor will one of those so-called troglodyte birds find any pretext for breakfast."

On one of my first return trips to Región from Bierzo, I had to spend the night, naturally, in Cabezas, between two versions of differing parity and remotely divergent schedules; Cabezas is a station in the high mountains which at that time boasted the highest point above sea level of the entire rail network except for La Cañada, and it was furnished with large, filthy windows that, whipped by the nor'easter, resounded all night long like a ramshackle bus. It was, I believe, one of the first nights on which I was to come up against that nocturnal entertainer, the experienced traveler who knows by heart all the schedules and places on the route, all the combinations with simple or double transfers, the best procedures for getting tickets without standing in line, always in second-class but at the price of third, whom age was fitting out with the face of a bell, and who, at the opportune moment, always pulls a deck of cards from his pocket. The sort of man for whom a young fellow just finished with his studies represents the same as a swamp fly to a silver spider.

We must have been on about the fourth or fifth hand, sitting in a corner where two benches formed a right angle, when the stationmaster (a young man, but with a melancholy, absent air, an insomniac and a birdlover according to what he told me later on) came into the waiting room with a bucket of firewood for loading the dying stove. My playing companion made a face at me whose intention at that moment did not register. He was finding himself at that point when, having already won a few dollars and been shown his absolute dominion over me, he understood how necessary it was to make himself pleasant or else allow me some kind of ridiculous revenge if he didn't want to see me, bored and disheartened, get up from the game prematurely to go sleep on the other end of the bench.

But the presence of the stationmaster, who came over to look on after examining the weights in the clock and picking up a pile of newspapers from the floor which he deposited on his writing desk, must have infused him with a new energy, doubtless to demonstrate the breadth of his knowledge of cards in front of the stationmaster. Upon observing my flustered, ingenuous responses, the latter was unable to repress a movement of his head with which he made clear the pity that a situation as desperate as mine awakened in him. Once he had withdrawn, my companion whispered in a low voice to me, with a tone of complicity and affected gravity, "He's completely insane."

"Insane?"

"Oh, yes, completely. Everyone knows about it, and there's a whole array of stories about him going around. You probably haven't been traveling around here very long, young fellow, because otherwise I wonder how you wouldn't have heard about him before this. It's well known."

I couldn't wish for anything more than a conversation that would put the game in suspension or at least would slow down the rhythm imposed by that demon of the cards.

"Believe it, believe it. But go on, play. Don't stop. No reason to pay too much importance to him. It's nothing new in these latitudes. The previous stationmaster wasn't in his right mind either, and apparently the one before that was still crazier than this one. But go on, let's see your card, don't stop now."

"What do you mean? Do you realize what you're telling me is absurd? How is it possible to put a railway station into the hands of a man

who has lost his mind?"

"It's not only possible, but apparently it's necessary, young fellow. Only someone who has partly lost his mind could stand it here, something rather easy to understand. Apart from the unusual things they say that happen and that I don't believe. But play now, let's keep on. As for the superiors you mention, knowing the difficulty of the situation, for a long time now they have been determined to choose some crazy person to take charge of this place. No, they aren't insane, but quite sensible."

"Do you mean to say they choose them that way?"

"Sure, of course. What else can they do? It's better for them to be crazy than to go crazy here; that could provoke some catastrophe. Besides, it's a kind of insanity that doesn't affect his professional work in the slightest, for apparently he is irreproachable. A lot of strange things are said about him, no doubt, but none of them detracts from their confidence in him or puts in question the accuracy of his work. But what's wrong with you? Why don't you play?"

He had come in again; with his vacant air, a bit absent, he carried along the reserve of patience for a lengthy wait which—with his whole life invested in the phlegmatic posture necessary to make it tolerable—would never lapse.

"What do you know about the mail train?" my playing companion asked him.

"Ah, the mail. Are you waiting for the mail train?"

The cards remained in the air, and upon their becoming the echo of our astonishment, he finished by adding:

"Oh, the mail. Without a doubt it will get here. It will arrive. With some delay, a long delay, but it'll arrive. No doubt about it. But first some things have to happen. Some phone calls, from someone, who knows? But a long delay; you've gone and made a bad choice of a date for that mail train. You should have thought more about it. It's the least propitious date for that mail train; people all know that. They know it very well. But you mustn't worry, now, because it will arrive, I know it will. It is a long delay because a lot of things have to happen first. But you'll be able to take it—" and he added as a colophon—"to your misfortune."

My playing companion, making the most of the fact that the other had turned his back, was copious in his gestures toward me, hinting at something like, "I already warned you that besides being from Galicia, he is insane, utterly insane," while he threw down three trumps and called out, "I've got this one."

The clock struck three at the very moment the stationmaster took a seat beside me on the bench and informed me, with giving it too much importance, "They won't be long, now."

I didn't notice the use of the plural and only paid attention to the contradiction, thinking he was referring to the mail train. That wasn't so; when my companion wanted to get it clear and then I questioned him about the importance of this ill-fated date, chosen so imprudently, he drew himself up a little closer and, without raising his voice, told us the following story, with a Galician accent and locutions along with frequent repetitions that I will omit:

"In times past there was a man in this very office who despite being considered a little crazy was so respected by whoever knew him and had dealings with him that his words were never questioned, despite the fact that they frequently turned out a little more than extravagant, even for the many who are accustomed to the surprises, misfortunes, and mysteries that beat down on this accursed land. Those were the turbulent years when (but you are too young to remember, he added, addressing me) the more provocative and violent a man was, the more powerful and influential he was believed to be. And especially the miners. You would say that everything depended on them, that our stability itself could be threatened by the mood of the most devious, blabbermouthed man who wielded a pick. Nothing ever demonstrated itself capable of holding them back, no victory was sufficient to satisfy their appetite for violence. At the least bit of information that came in from outside—and every day some piece of news or other was brought in, significant or not—they would abandon the working face at the mines and, loaded down with cartridges and packages of blasting powder and dynamite, they would come out to blow up whatever, even if it was just a henhouse. But thanks to that providential man, anything that had to do with the railway, believe me, they had such respect for that they never got together the least attack in our canton, not even on the boilers, which were the devices those people hated most. Nonetheless, in the final days of that fateful October—when the revolution already appeared to be snuffed out by the forces of order—they decided to go to the aid of their companions in Macerta, under siege for a whole

week. They came up to the station, and believe it or not, in the presence of such an imperturbable man and one haloed with singular nobility, who didn't leave his post even in the face of the small riot they were creating in the waiting room, they decided every one to obtain and scrupulously pay for their tickets to Macerta, in order not to create unnecessary complications with him. You must know that in order to transport explosives a permit was required, and that was the only obscure point of an operation organized quite legally up to that moment. It was on the third of November—I couldn't be mistaken about that—the same as today, at about three in the morning. No doubt he received several calls, not necessarily from the stations along the line. When he observed the group gathered on the platform, a platform empty of all other persons at such an hour, he only had one warning for them: 'I hope you are not carrying explosives,' he told them, 'and it will not be I who forbids it, because my jurisdiction does not go that far. But I warn you that if you are, the misfortune will be terrible; you'll blow up everyone inside the tunnel, Tunnel Twelve to be more exact, the one called El Cornil.' And, well, he never would say nor would it ever be known what his source of information was, but for those who understood such things, it couldn't have been anything else but the telephone. You know that in this country, there are voices—often voices of lament, but mostly of warning and caution—rising on all sides and at all times, and they don't even have anything to do with the railway's selective voice. I know something—a lot of things—about these voices; the least important thing is that they anticipate events, what's normal is that they provoke them. So what assurance can a man have whose principle obligation is to pay attention to those two telephones? No, I wouldn't want my worst enemy to be listening all day for those calls that, all things considered, no one can tell where they come from. Yes, the telephone. It's a big thing for someone who can talk with his fellow creatures in the flesh most of the time and only now and then picks up an announcement from the railway, but for someone who has to listen and talk through these things his whole life long without ever being given the chance to see the faces of those he is speaking with, how quickly the limits of what is real get lost, and how easy it is to fall into the hands of a power with whom he will never have any other contact than through their phone calls. Because they never say, 'This is so and so'; no, they will leave it to the hazard of a guess or a habit if not to the feeling of respect that their voice awakens. A voice that ought to be unmistakable in order to know where the fear should begin—but that it never is, that's the worst thing. Under those conditions, who can get things right all the time? Without a doubt they warned him that night that some mishap would occur in El Cornil tunnel if explosives were being carried, and a mishap did occur: nothing remained even of their bones, which were consumed among the ashes of some railway cars that had been constructed not merely of wood but of kindling. So much for the dynamite. After that night, this man no longer knew the meaning of rest any more, and every anniversary after that, a little after daybreak, a group of miners would come up to the ticket window to purchase tickets for Macerta. For some of them he was a demon, for others an angel of salvation, the man who brought the revolt in these lands to an end. But between the both of them they only managed to turn him into the flesh of remorse. He ended badly, very badly. Since then, it happens so often that on the third of November mysterious telephone calls come in and accidents occur whose causes the engineers are unable to describe—like the one about two years ago, with twenty victims—and delays that are recorded neither in the books nor on the clocks, with the result that the people of these parts have opted for doing without the Macerta mail on this date. It seems odd to me that you. . ."

He never finished the sentence because the telephone rang and he went into his office; we were only able to read his expression through the ticket window, his half-absent posture, holding the earpiece and watching the ceiling in surprise as soon as the lights initiated their sudden wavering. "Rañeces? Yes, Cabezas; the 1022 at 3:40, two hours and fifty minutes late." He hit the crank, and the bell rang again: "Macerta? The 1022 anticipated in Cabezas at 3:40, same as always. Nearly empty. Only two here." The lights in the waiting room went down in intensity, quavered in a headlong manner, casting those quivering shadows and flashes of light characteristic of a candle shaken by a current of air, and finally they went out altogether, leaving the waiting room in the deepest obscurity, the most propitious for the station master's words: "Rañeces? Cabezas. That's right, at 3:40. Toward the Cornil tunnel. I don't know anything yet, I'm waiting for

confirmation. Yes, two passengers, only two that don't seem to be from here. The list can be put together now: twenty-four all told, counting the two from here." "Macerta? Rañeces tells me twenty-four, counting the two from here; let's say about 3:55. . . ." He was still talking at the moment the lights came on and there came the sound of the glass door. My playing companion had disappeared with such haste that he even left a couple of tickets on the seat he had occupied.

Appearing through the ticket window, observing the loneliness of that bare, cold room decorated with posters of French railways, he threw me a glance, meaningful but not full of malice, to tell me:

"It will be here within fifteen minutes. If it turns out to be any later, he'll clean you out. He won't leave you the shirt on your back."□

Herbert Eisenreich

THE BLESSINGS OF A BAD REPUTATION

Translated by Renate Latimer

In our house, which had been hit by bombs during that fateful night and was gutted as far as the third floor, there lived twelve families. More precisely: there were nine families, two bachelors and one widow. We had all been living for quite some time in this house, and we all knew each other quite well. We saw each other after all not only on the staircase, in the courtyard, and in the communal laundry room, but also at the grocer's, in the tobacco shop, in the little pub across the street, on the way to church, and of course, as now, in the air-raid shelter. For over ten years no tenant had moved out and no new tenant had moved in, only the subletters at the widow Siegel's and at the Kowalskis' changed from time to time. At the moment they happened to be an official in the Armed Forces and a war-disabled medical student at the widow's, and a machine knitter, who had been bombed out and whose husband was at the Front, at the Kowalskis. During all these years only two deaths, one marriage, and three births had taken place: it was a truly quiet house with nothing but respectable tenants. And yet, although there was no cabaret dancer in our house and no hidden Jew, no one living in sin and no member of the Reichstag, not even a drunkard or an hysterical woman, nonetheless there was constantly a bit of investigating and snooping, a bit of meddling and gossiping going on. And actually only Fräulein Klara was totally ignored as an object of curiosity.

That changed, however, after the said night of bombing. The person on whom everyone's attention was now focused was a thoroughly honest, modest, pious being in her late forties, a picture book maidservant, who had worked since time immemorial for Professor Bierich, an old bachelor on the fourth floor. She never performed her chores reluctantly nor spoke a word too enthusiastically. Even on Sundays her clothing remained unadorned, nor did it even intimate a body underneath: she was not a woman, she was simply Fräulein Klara. Moreover, she looked as if she were made entirely of the dust which she swept away daily in the Professor's apartment. And now suddenly everyone said: "Who could have imagined that of her?" And everyone replied: "Not me." Still others asked: "Do you really believe it?" And their reply was: "It's obvious that she had somebody upstairs, now that the Professor happens to be in Italy. And when the alarm sounded, she naturally didn't want him to go into the cellar with her. She didn't want to reveal her visitor's identity. A soldier no doubt." Others said: "Of course, we sensed it at once from her wailing and blubbering." And still others said: "And the fact that she still doesn't say anything is, of course, the best proof." (It also didn't occur to anyone that no one had actually questioned her.) Naturally, the most absurd speculations abounded: for example, she and the Professor had had a secret child together and the charred bones were those of the child and not the earthly remains of her lover. These and similar conjectures, however, could not prevail for long against the general view that she had a soldier upstairs. Only the caretakers of the house, evidently out of professional vanity, opposed that view and retorted stubbornly: "It wouldn't have escaped us if she had taken somebody upstairs."

The main dissension among the residents concerned the question of how this affair was to be judged on moral and human grounds. The puritanical Noltes and the Armed Forces official damned such relationships on absolute principle: the former alluding to the already superabundant presence of immorality and the latter, an incredibly ugly human being of dwarfish proportions, probably acting only out of envy. The machine knitter was outraged that Fräulein Klara hadn't brought the man into the cellar, but the one-legged medical student reminded her that many soldiers at the front were instinctively reluctant to enter an air-raid shelter, and that it very well could have been the

now-deceased person's own wish to remain upstairs. The couple named Günther, on the other hand, were visibly upset that this "dissolute person in a penitential frock" (Herr Günther's actual words to the widow Siegel) had always been held up as a role model to their only, and not particularly domestic, daughter. Frau Siegel, thereupon, was so amused that she spoke of it all over the house and neighborhood and finally revised her originally rather stern judgment of Fräulein Klara to a liberal one. And several others rejoiced more or less openly: some, because they saw their thesis strikingly confirmed—that there was no virtue involved, simply a lack of opportunity. Others rejoiced out of sincere sympathy: "Such a loyal, decent person—for her especially we should not begrudge the pleasure of also experiencing some moment of joy, even though it ended sadly." Thus the tenants spoke of Fräulein Klara, who walked untouched and unsuspecting in the midst of all these rumors and whisperings. Of course the gossip was fueled by the fact that the tenants had to live more closely together than ever before, on the undamaged storeys of the house and in the cellar. As the tenants' judgments of Fräulein Klara changed, so did their relationships to her. She, of course, did not notice any change at first: that Frau Nolte still returned her greetings, but her words were more abrupt; that the young medical student treated her with as much consideration as he would a person grieving and bereft; that the machine knitter shared with her a letter from the Front from her husband; that the caretakers eyed her suspiciously like a peddler; that the widow Siegel tried to engage her in conversation about her previous marriage; that, in short, they began to discern in this creature of dust a human being, a human being of a kind similar to themselves. That they discovered her soul.

And not merely her soul. Pühringer, the foreman, the bachelor from the erstwhile fifth floor, who had now taken up quarters with us down below, followed her with his eyes on the staircase, and henceforth he shaved every morning. And in the evenings when he came home and had washed himself, he put on a tie.

In the meantime the Professor, after receiving a telegram from Fräulein Klara, returned from Padua, where he had been undertaking historical studies, to view and register the damage. He turned to me in this matter and said: "You, as a lawyer, know more about this than I. My losses are of inestimable value." He had already drawn up a list and mainly wanted to find out from me how high a claim he should make. The list started with his personal worldly possessions—quite pitiful for a university professor. Then there followed the enumeration of objects which Fräulein Klara had lost in the fire. The main portion of the inventory consisted of a concise description of his scientific library of approximately eight thousand volumes which had all been burned up, with the exception of about three hundred especially valuable and rare pieces which he had relocated in the country shortly before the beginning of the bombings. The concluding paragraph mentioned his manuscripts and notes and his other ongoing studies. I gave him advice, without much hope, however, but according to my best knowledge, and after we had finished we drank a little glass of schnaps. But when I thought he was about to take his leave, he asked me, with an apologetic glance toward my wife, who left the room at once, to assure the privacy of our conference, and said: "Of course it was unconscionable, but I was very young, and prehistory was my dream, and there were no witnesses. It was in Hallstatt and the grave was unusually well-preserved and the skeleton and the artifacts completely undamaged. Of course you can say that it was a theft, particularly you as a lawyer, but I—please understand me—for me it was something else: the life of my life. And not even my Klara knew about it. It was in a permanently locked cabinet and only when I was completely alone did I open the chest, and at its sight I rediscovered anew the Middle Ages and indeed all the Ages which had kept written records, instead of—quite simply, like this fellow. . ." His voice gave out, the old man collapsed inwardly, as if the loss of that skeleton had been his own, then he suddenly rose, gave me his hand, begged my forgiveness, and went to the door. There he turned around once more and said to me: "And Klara, good Klara, was in total despair because all the books had gone to hell." And shaking his head he walked out.

And I was also close to walking out and going from door to door to inform the people what kind of bones those had been which they had found among the ruins. Meanwhile my wife entered the room and I wanted to tell her the story, but I didn't tell her anything nor did I tell anyone else. The unconsummated experience with the Celt who had died two and a half thousand years earlier had transformed Fräulein

Klara in all of our consciences into a woman, and it seemed to me that this was a higher truth than the facts I had just learned. I wanted to be alone for a little while and indulge in my thoughts, and I went to the pub across the street. And there sat Herr Pühringer and Fräulein Klara in front of a large and a small beer. When she saw me she blushed a little, but she returned my greeting as unselfconsciously as is possible between members of the opposite sex. Then I knew that I would continue to keep my silence.

Later, by the way, the actual circumstances did become known, allegedly according to a notification by the dwarfish Armed Forces official; but that could no longer alter anything. Herr Pühringer especially did not permit himself to be distracted and took Klara as his wife and she, with her forty-seven years, still bore him a child. The godfather was the Professor, standing proxy for the Celt.□

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