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Space and the Place of Women in Edith Wharton's Short Fiction

Anne Marie Flanagan

Edith Wharton's interest in space and the way in which it relates to women was an abiding concern in her writing. In *The Decoration of Houses* (1897) an entire chapter is devoted to the ways in which doors function in a house. When she built her own house, The Mount, in Lennox, Massachusetts, she designed spaces where she could write and separate herself from the many visitors who were invited to spend time with her. Susan Fraiman points out that these spaces also allowed Wharton to alienate herself, through her writing, from a marriage that had grown increasingly unsatisfactory, and claims that *The Decoration of Houses* was "an implicit rebuke to matrimonial custom" (484). Although Wharton, a woman of strength, wealth, and reputation, appears to have constructed and negotiated a space for herself outside of marriage, both literally and figuratively, she writes frequently about women who struggle to define or occupy spaces within marriage and in transitional spaces between marriage, separation, and divorce. The connection between physical, emotional, and in some cases, legal space and matrimonial custom or status, as well as the way in which these spaces both shaped and were shaped by contemporary society is explored extensively in Wharton's fiction.

According to Debra Ann MacComb, authors such as James, Wharton and others writing in the Progressive age were considering "whether a woman—if *defined* by matrimonial status—need be *contained* by it" (230). While this idea does not necessarily apply to physical space, both James and Wharton spent a considerable amount of time, both in their fiction and in their non-fiction, commenting on the ways in which women relate to physical spaces. Doors and thresholds emerge as sites of particular interest. In "The Mind a Department Store: Reconfiguring Space in the Gilded Age," Gail McDonald points out that James was particularly concerned by "the absence of closable doors," which caused "the blurring of public and private" (228-29). Likewise, she concludes that "the disappearance of doors and thus of meaningful thresholds" was a major concern of Wharton and Codman in *The Decoration of Houses* (245). When referring to *Decoration,* Emily Orlando recalls Wharton and Codman's advice that doors "should always be kept

shut" (61, qtd in "Perilous Coquetry: Oscar Wilde's Influence on Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman Jr." 40). I am interested in what happens when doors are not kept shut, when women do or do not cross thresholds, and the ways in which this crossing relates to women's lives, particularly to their matrimonial status. Wharton's attention to and apprehension about how disappearing doors and thresholds relate to women's lives, particularly to their matrimonial status, is explored repeatedly in her works of short fiction. Wharton describes the movement of women through physical space based on their matrimonial status and on contemporary attitudes and laws regarding divorce.

"The Fulness of Life" is the perfect place to begin the discussion of Wharton's use of the threshold to explore the extent to which a woman's place in space, if defined by marriage, need be contained by it. Since the woman in the story has died, the idea of physical space and its role of defining or containing seems not to be of concern. She has, after all, supposedly entered a spiritual rather than a physical realm. This story takes place in the wide and varied expanse of space in the afterlife, but the restricted, socially determined space of a married woman in the worldly, material world is depicted as well. The story is structured in large part around a woman's movement through space. As the woman in the story loses consciousness and dies, she is transported to another realm that, while ethereal, is filled with pleasant and unrestricted material spaces that recall the earthly realm. As she emerges from darkness, she is situated in a beautiful landscape of mountains, rivers, and trees: "She stood, as it seemed, on a threshold, yet no tangible gateway was in front of her." She steps forward, "not frightened, but hesitating," (13). She wonders if in this vision of natural beauty she might "know what it is to live" (14) for the first time. Shortly after the woman in the story dies, she tells the Spirit of Life that her life with her husband has been "a very incomplete affair," and that although they were counted "a very happy couple," she did not find "the fullness of life" in her marriage (14). She seeks to escape from this unpleasant memory of her marriage while taking comfort in her recollection of the architectural wonders of Florence and of spaces that made her feel alive. As she contemplates the prospect of being united with her soul's true companion for all eternity, she elects to wait for her husband, in spite of recalling the uninspired words he spoke one day while visiting a church: "Hadn't we better be going? There doesn't seem to be much to see here, and you know the table d'hôte dinner is at half-past six o'clock" (17).

The decision to wait for her husband takes place on either side of a threshold. She can choose the "shining steps which descended to the valley" (19) and move into an open space with her soul-mate or pass through the threshold upon which she is seated at the end of the story

to wait for her husband (22). She chooses to perpetuate in eternity the dissatisfaction she felt with her marriage while alive, including the irritating "creaking of his boots" (22). Clearly, even though the possibility of crossing the threshold is available to the woman in "Fulness," she chooses to sit, inert, waiting for her husband to arrive so her rightful place as a married woman can be restored. Certainly, her death has nullified the contract of marriage, but she chooses to reject the prospect of living with a kindred soul who is proffered to her in heaven, with whom she can live for all eternity, in favor of the containment of marriage. She bases her decision to wait for her husband on the threshold on a sense of loyalty that somehow supersedes the marriage contract, which has obviously been rendered null and void by death. Her idea of marriage recalls the belief that marriage is more than a standard contract. In the early years of the nineteenth century the idea that marriage was more than a standard contract allowed for a sense of marital unity that could not be defined in terms of a contract. In her essay, "Edith Wharton and the Fiction of Marital Unity," Laura K. Johnson discusses changing attitudes and laws governing divorce and points out that by 1910, marriage was thought of by many as a contract like any other contract (951). But the idea of marriage unity, as something that supersedes marriage as a contract, is what apparently underlies the woman's decision to perpetuate, in eternity, her unhappy marriage. While the recuperation of marriage, however ironic, that takes place in the afterlife is striking, it is undercut by the woman's description of marriage in the earthly realm, replete with its restricted, socially-determined space and its physical and emotional confines. Her containment is poignantly portrayed as she speaks to the Spirit of Life upon entering the spiritual realm. Her thoughts return to the interior of her house where her role as a wife was defined by rooms, doors, and handles that were never turned:

> But I have sometimes thought a woman's nature is like a great house full of rooms: there is the hall, through which everyone passes in going in and out; the drawing room, where one receives formal visits; the sitting room, where the members of the family come and go as they list; but beyond that, far beyond, are other rooms, the handles of whose doors perhaps are never turned; no one knows the way to them, no one knows whither they lead; and in the innermost room, the holy of holies, the soul sits alone and waits for footstep that never comes. (14)

This passage from "The Fulness of Life" beautifully describes the relationship of a married woman to space. It illustrates the way in which

various rooms in a house, ranging from the most public to the most private, represent the life, duties, and private thoughts of a married woman. The woman describes her life with her husband as existing in the sitting-room, never passing through to something more vital and intimate. The relationship of the married woman to the rooms she occupies mirrors the dissatisfaction she experiences in the married state, but it can also serve as an interesting entrée into various stages and configurations of marriage and divorce as described in "The Reckoning," "Autres Temps," and "The Other Two." Wharton's description of space as it relates to the matrimonial status of three women—Julia Westall, a soon-to-be divorced woman, Mrs. Lidcote, a woman suffering from the effects of a divorce she experienced nearly two decades prior, and Alice Waythorn, an upwardly mobile twice-divorced woman—and to the depiction of marriage contract and marriage unity is an important feature of these stories. Rather than seeing the rooms described in "Fulness" as the inaccessible spaces of the woman's mind and body, which cannot be reached by her husband or perhaps by anyone else, the women in these stories are travelling through these spaces as they navigate lives defined by impending divorce, the memory of divorce, or divorce and remarriage. The story of these three women can be understood in relation to the spaces and rooms they inhabit.

In "The Reckoning," Julia Westall finds herself wandering among the unspecified other rooms mentioned in "Fulness," not knowing where they lead because her relationship with her husband has just come to an end. Although she and her husband made a conscious decision to build their marriage on the "fundamental article of [their] creed that the special circumstances produced by marriage were not to interfere with the full assertion of individual liberty" (465)—a contract, freely entered into by both parties—Julia is devastated when her husband chooses to exercise his right to end their marriage to be with another woman. As Julia reels from this revelation, she experiences "a reversion, rather, to the old instinct of passionate dependency and possessorship that now made her blood revolt at the mere hint of change . . . The new law was not for them, but for the disunited creatures forced into a mockery of union" (463-64). In her desperate, sad state, Julia longs for a definition of marriage that might contain her rather than set her free and that is bolstered by marital unity that supersedes a mere contract. Wharton establishes an equivalency between the architecture of the home and Julia's mental state. Annette Benert writes about the importance of characters' connections to the material world, "especially to their built environment, because that is the actual site and shape of their psychological and social lives" (55). At one point, the house seems animated; the connection Benert describes is intensified, veer-

ing toward conversation and interaction between Julia and the walls of the house: "'This is my room—this is my house,' she heard herself saying. Her room? Her house? She could almost hear the walls laugh back at her" (467). Her relationship to what was previously her room, her own comfortable space, where she and her husband shared "so many of their evening confidences" (458), is now becoming increasingly uncomfortable. As her eye wanders over the lamps, wall coverings, and flowers, she recalls, "she hardly knew why, the apartment in which the evenings of her first marriage had passed . . . It was a room with which she had never been able to establish any closer relation than that between a traveler and a railway station" (458). She is startled that her current drawing-room now has the same "sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity" (458). She is now in the space of moving from one matrimonial state to another. This space is akin to one described by the woman in "Fulness" who says, "no one knows the way to them, no one knows whither they lead" (14).

The idea that the Westall's notions about marriage may be the product of a not thoroughly examined notion of marriage as contract is equated to "the prints, the flowers, the subdued tones of the old porcelains, [which] seemed to typify a superficial refinement which had no relationship to the deeper significances of life" (458), perhaps the significance of marital unity. Johnson's discussion of marital unity is again relevant here. She says: "In Wharton's vision, the seemingly emancipatory nature of modern marriage is misleading" (951). In this story, Julia suffers acutely because she and her husband have conceived their marriage as a contract, devised specifically to allow for easy and drama-free dissolution. To her surprise, Julia realizes that her idea of marriage extends far beyond the limits of their simple straightforward contract. Wharton takes the reader beyond the rooms of the house to the substructure, the basement, which Julia thinks must be explored if she and her husband are to find the real basis of their relationship. The marriage and the mind are represented as part of a structure, a space which may or may not bring clarity to the state of their marriage. But this is just a fleeting thought as Julia thinks, "How often does a man dig about the basement of his house to examine the foundation? The foundation is there, of course—the house rests on it—but one lives above stairs and not in the cellar" (458-59).

In this story, the door is used both figuratively and literally. The process of divorce is described as a passage through a door. Julia muses, "now that the door of divorce stood open, no marriage need be an imprisonment, and the contract therefore no longer involved any diminution of self-respect" (463). Julia does not choose to walk through the door, but when her husband does, the disintegration of Julia's emo-

tional state is represented by a crumbling structure, the floor. The floor "fail[s]" under her (465). After Westall makes it clear that he will divorce Julia to marry another woman, "every detail of her surroundings pressed upon her..." (466). Julia struggles to define the nature of the room she occupies as well as to establish a place and connection to it. As her husband leaves the room, "her identity seemed to be slipping from her, as it disappears in a physical swoon" (467).

She opens the door to go upstairs, but she cannot find comfort in her house. She experiences an alienation from her own identity as she experiences alienation from the physical features of the house. They remain the same, but they no longer adequately reflect her inner thoughts or emotional state: "The visual continuity was intolerable. Within, a gaping chasm; without, the same untroubled and familiar surface" (468). Julia begins to wander, not through the corridors of the house, attempting to open doors that lead to undetermined destinations; rather, she wanders outside. It is clear in her wanderings that she does not know where she is going. This wandering reflects her confused state of mind as she attempts to come to terms with the theory of marriage that she and her husband have embraced and the consequences of the no-longer-binding contract of marriage. The law allows for the Westalls to dissolve their marriage upon their own terms. This is the basis upon which the Westalls married, but this is no longer acceptable to Julia. The door is now open, but this is the one door through which she does not want to pass.

After many hours of wandering through the streets of New York City, Julia finds herself at the home of her former husband, John Arment. Once again, rooms and doors, furnishings and decorations are inextricably bound to the action and emotional impact of the scenes. As Julia stands before the door of Arment's house, she feels "weak and tremulous" (471) after she has rung the bell. The door is opened by a young footman. She asks to see her former husband as the footman has his hand on the drawing room door. As the footman hesitates, Arment opens the door to the drawing-room from within, ushers her in, and closes the door. Once inside the room, despite her agitated and disoriented state, Julia responds to the design and decoration of the room. She is "vaguely aware that the room at least was unchanged: time had not mitigated its horrors" (472). Strangely, even though she finds the room displeasing to her taste, it is a space with which she is familiar, and this space serves to strengthen her resolve to tell her former husband what is on her mind and to ask him ultimately to forgive her. Finally, she does open the door to leave the drawing-room, but her hand gropes toward the door. She does not open the door assertively, and as she passes through the hallway, "the footman threw open the door, and she

found herself outside in the darkness" (475). There is every indication that she stumbled or wandered toward her former husband's house, without a clear plan or act of volition, and despite asking for and receiving his forgiveness, she continues to be adrift, displaced by the shock of hearing that her current husband wishes to divorce her and marry another woman. Such is the state of the soon-to-be-divorced woman who does not know where to go. Her movements through doors while at her former husband's house are controlled by others.

In "Autres Temps...," Mrs. Lidcote has voluntarily retreated to the "holy of holies" mentioned in "Fulness," where she will remain alone, waiting "for a footstep what never comes" ("Fulness" 14). As in "The Reckoning," Mrs. Lidcote is dealing with divorce, in her case the greatly protracted aftermath of divorce. Unlike Julia Westall, who wanders in indeterminate space, Mrs. Lidcote is contained in a circumscribed space. In the case of Mrs. Lidcote, she is both defined and contained by her matrimonial status, if not by society, by herself. Since she is divorced, she is not bound by the contract of marriage or by the concept of marriage unity. In fact, although Mrs. Lidcote is plagued by her status as a divorcée, she seems strangely detached from her former husband and from any sense that there was a period of marital unity. She does not engage in sentimental musings about her former husband or about the lover for whom she ended her marriage. Perhaps her long exile in Florence has conditioned her to become, in spite of the story's appeal to familial connections with her daughter, a self-absorbed woman who is bound by no attachments to others but by an idea—an idea that the dissolution of the contract of divorce has never been successfully effected. This story is about the intractability of old ideas concerning divorce. The title of the story, with its suggestive ellipsis, forces the reader to consider whether *autres moeurs*, other customs, are really being replaced by new ones. In the midst of change, no change occurs, or at least it appears so in Mrs. Lidcote's mind. Mrs. Lidcote's space has been and will be in exile in Florence. It is her belief that she can never be accepted by the social and generational set to which she belongs because she had left her husband for another man. In essence, she is without a space in society, but she has become reconciled to this situation. However, when her daughter divorces and remarries, she is told by all concerned that her previous actions will no longer be held against her. Times and customs have changed after all, they say. Throughout the story, it becomes clear to Mrs. Lidcote that times and customs have not changed for her, and this clarity is revealed largely in a room in which she is confined.

As Mrs. Lidcote journeys from Florence to New York to visit her daughter, Leila, she thinks of her past, present, and future in terms of

space. She remarks to a former suitor, Franklin Ide, whom she encounters on her passage from Italy: "I didn't take up too much room before, but now where is there a corner for me?" (71). Unbeknownst to Mrs. Lidcote, an actual room, a bedroom in her daughter's house, will be a space where she is contained by her matrimonial status. References to this room abound in the story. While everyone assures her that she can now reenter polite society, this is not the case. Her daughter fears that her husband's diplomatic appointment in Rome might be in jeopardy if her mother comes in contact with the ambassador's wife, Mrs. Boulger, whose ideas are more in tune with the attitudes of the previous generation. Leila repeatedly apologizes for "squeezing" Mrs. Lidcote into her room, but for all intents and purposes, Mrs. Lidcote is kept in her room, away from polite society, not by force, but by her daughter's complicity in defining her mother by her matrimonial status. Leila urges her mother to stay in her room through tea and dinner because she is too tired. Actually, Mrs. Lidcote is not tired at all. Leila sends a tea table to the room ostensibly to give succor to her mother: "It struck Mrs. Lidcote as one more mark of the subverted state of things that her daughter's solicitude should find expression in the multiplicity of sandwiches and the piping-hotness of muffins; but then everything that had happened since her arrival seemed to increase her confusion" (76). As it becomes clear that Leila does not want her mother to mingle with her dinner guests, Mrs. Lidcote responds to the atmosphere of her room, a socially-determined prison. A stark contrast is established between the comforting, almost-animated contents of the room and the loneliness and alienation Mrs. Lidcote experiences in what she now considers an inhospitable space:

> the sofa toward which she had been urged by Miss Suffern heaped up its cushions in inviting proximity to a table laden with new books and papers. She could not recall having ever been more luxuriously housed, or having ever had so strange a sense of being out alone, under the night, in a wind-beaten plain. (79)

This response to space, and to the objects that are contained within that space, reinforce Wharton's attention to the ways in which she represents women in space. Annette Benert has commented on how "constructed spaces both reflect social structures and reproduce them" (75). The connection between spaces and the social structures that are present in Mrs. Lidcote's world is clear. The new customs are inviting—perhaps she can be accepted by society. The promise of being housed in the luxurious atmosphere of acceptance beckons. But she cannot

partake of this. She is acutely aware of her circumstances. She accepts being alone, and retreats to the "innermost room" ("Fulness" 14) of her own convictions, represented by her little place/space in Florence.

Franklin Ide offers a way out of the "innermost room" mentioned in "Fulness" when he visits her in yet another room in a hotel in New York City on the night before she departs for Italy. He represents a "footstep" that might enter the room. But he, too, has revealed his hypocrisy. Despite the many assurances he has given Mrs. Lidcote, and despite the safe haven of acceptance he offers, a space outside her physical and emotional exile, he concocts reasons why Mrs. Lidcote should not be in the company of Mrs. Wynn, who recalled her daughter from Leila's house when she learned of Mrs. Lidcote's presence. The idea of a room, an enclosure, embodying old social customs, is juxtaposed to the expansive view from the window of the hotel room. Ide proposes that tradition and adherence to old social customs are absorbed by the teeming life of New York City. But this view proves unacceptable to Mrs. Lidcote based on her experience in her daughter's house and by the recent revelation that Ide is complicit in the act of shielding Mrs. Lidcote from polite society. She rejects the space that exists outside, and the room becomes more prison-like to Mrs. Lidcote:

> We're shut up in a little tight round of habit and association, just as we're shut up in this room. Remember, I thought, I'd got out of it once; but what really happened was that the other people went out, and left me in the same little room. The only difference was that I was there alone. Oh, I've made it habitable now, I'm used to it; but I've lost any illusions I may have had as to an angel's opening the door. (86)

She acknowledges that her own thoughts and ideas continue to imprison her: "We're all imprisoned, of course—all of us middling people, who don't carry our freedom in our brains" (86). For Mrs. Lidcote, there is the contracted space of the room in which she is kept by her daughter and her little place in Florence, but there is also the contracted range of thought in her own head that prevents her from imagining a space in a society that has ceased to bar divorced women from its space.

There seems to be no escape from the prison of old-fashioned social propriety that continues to dominate Mrs. Lidcote's life. Not even divine intervention by an angel can open the door and release her. Wharton catalogues in minute detail Mrs. Lidcote's various gestures toward opening or not opening doors. At one point, after being convinced by her long-time patient suitor, Ide, that she must no longer hold on to the idea that she is not accepted by society, she decides to

lead him toward the hotel lobby where some of the scions of old New York are gathered. She orders him to follow, "gaily turning toward the door" (88). He follows her, laying his hand on her arm, trying to dissuade her, much like her daughter did, from passing through the door. He makes feeble excuses about her acquaintances perhaps being too tired to receive her. She proposes that she send her maid down to the lobby to inquire, once again moving toward the door to summon her maid; "but before she could open it, she felt Ide's quick touch again" (88). Once again Ide makes excuses about why Mrs. Lidcote should not go down to the lobby, and she is prevented from turning the handle. Her hand drops from the door, and as they face each other she knows without a doubt that while he might accept and protect her, the rest of society will not.

Wharton describes the virtual imprisonment of Mrs. Lidcote by her daughter and Ide, both of whom profess their love for her. Leila prevented her mother from joining the dinner party at her house because she feared her mother's presence might jeopardize her husband's career. Ide prevents Mrs. Lidcote from joining the party in the lobby because, ostensibly, he wants to prevent her from embarrassment at being cut by Mrs. Wynn, another member of the old generational guard. However, in both cases, notwithstanding either Leila's or Ide's motivation, Mrs. Lidcote is prevented from opening doors and exerting control over her own life. At the end of the story, through an act of complete resignation and acceptance of her place in society, Mrs. Lidcote succeeds in opening a door. With this gesture, she orders her maid to oversee the transport of her luggage to the steamer which is to take her back to Italy. Her "little place in Florence, which held her past in every fold of its curtains and between every page of its books" is her own space (82). It is clear that Mrs. Lidcote's life has been controlled and socially circumscribed since she sealed her fate, socially, by leaving her husband for another man. While no longer married, she lives the life of a contained woman, defined by her matrimonial status. She recalls her words to Ide on the deck of the ship, unaptly as it turns out, named the *Utopia*. When she began her journey back to New York, imagining that perhaps the world had changed and that she might begin to think of a new place in society, she thinks about her tendency to conform to small spaces: "I didn't take up much room in the world before; but now—where is there a corner for me?" (71). Try as she might to imagine a space that will accommodate her status as a divorced woman, the only door Mrs. Lidcote can open and through which she might pass leads her back to a little place, a little corner, a little world where she does not take up much space. Mrs. Lidcote is bound neither by the principle of marital contract nor marital unity. She is divorced. Yet, she

continues to see herself defined by her former matrimonial status and she remains contained within a prison of her own making.

Unlike Julia and Mrs. Lidcote, Alice Waythorn moves through space freely and ultimately commands it. "The Other Two" is perched perfectly between old and new ideas about marriage and divorce and between the idea of marriage contract and marriage unity. In fact, the story succeeds in freeing itself from this perch. It redefines the terms of divorce and remarriage while simultaneously freeing Alice from the literal and figurative containment of her matrimonial status. Alice has recently been married after not one, but two previous divorces. While her husband "knew that society has not yet adapted itself to the consequences of divorce, and that till the adaptation takes place every woman who uses the freedom the law accords her must be her own social justification," he is enthralled by his new wife (434). Through a series of unforeseen circumstances, his ease with her status will be challenged, but ultimately restored, and he will find his house occupied by visitors in the form of two ex-husbands, with whom he will form a kind of brotherly bond.

At the beginning of "The Other Two," the hallway, a public space, and the drawing room, "where one receives formal visits" ("Fulness" 14), seem to conform to the description of their function in "Fulness," and do not seem to be particularly contested spaces. The hall is a place where "everyone passes in going in and out" ("Fulness" 14), but in this story, this very public space begins to take on a particular significance and to define the source of anxiety that permeates the story. The marriage contract between Alice and her first husband, Haskett, has been dissolved, but the divorce settlement allows him to visit their daughter on a regular basis. Due to the illness of Alice's daughter, Waythorn is forced to admit her former husband to his house. However, the prospect of seeing Haskett in his home fills him with dread:

> Waythorn, the next morning, went down earlier than usual. Haskett was not likely to come till the afternoon, but the instinct of light drove him forth. He meant to stay away all day—he had thoughts of dining at his club. As his door closed behind him he reflected that before he opened it again it would have admitted another man who had as much right to enter as himself, and the thought filled him with a physical repugnance. (436-37)

Although Waythorn finds himself in this extremely uncomfortable position, created by progressive new ideas about divorce, he constructs a scenario of his twice-married wife's first marriage with Haskett. He

imagines Alice “chafing at her life, and secretly feeling that she belonged in a bigger place” while she endured a rather unfashionable ordinary life married to a man who wore “a made-up tie on an elastic” (444). As for Alice’s second marriage, it “was a passport to the set whose recognition she coveted” (434). However, the New York courts granted her a divorce from her second husband, Varick, supposedly based on adultery, the only basis for divorce in New York at that time. Waythorn is aware that his wife comes to him with a somewhat suspect past, partially enabled by progressive ideas regarding divorce, including liberal visitation rights, yet he retreats to a comfortable, conventional position on marriage: marriage is a contract and is based on ownership of his wife. As the story unfolds, it is clear that for Waythorn, his marriage has become part of a financial transaction.

Early in the story it is established that the newly-wed Mr. and Mrs. Waythorn are living in his house. There is no indication that the house has been decorated by her or that the objects contained within it are hers. He comments on how pretty his wife looks in his chair: “She looked singularly soft and girlish in her rosy pale dress against the dark leather of one of his bachelor armchairs” (439). Waythorn, in the first blush of marriage, believes he has preserved a kind of private, protective cocoon for himself and his wife. Soon after Waythorn and his wife return to his house after their honeymoon, he revels in the pride and intimacy of ownership. Waythorn yields to “the joy of possessorship.” “They were *his*, those white hands with their flitting motions, *his* the light haze of hair, the lips and eyes . . .” (440; emphasis added). Even though this story depicts a very progressive attitude toward divorce, vestiges of old ideas about the position of married women prevail. Waythorn thinks, somewhat angrily and cynically, that his wife has been too adept at erasing her identity as the wife of husband number one, Haskett: “If she had denied being married to Haskett she could hardly have stood more convicted of duplicity than in this obliteration of the self which had been his wife” (444-45). But it is this very obliteration of the self that is expressed in the old theory of coverture that new marriage laws and contracts have replaced.

Although Waythorn, Alice’s third husband, tries hard to possess fully both his wife and his house, he soon has to acknowledge both have or will be occupied by others. As the story progresses, Mr. Waythorn has to suffer the presence of his wife’s two former husbands in his hallway and eventually in his drawing room and library. However, it is in his library, in the spaces beyond the public rooms, where Alice Waythorn, in contrast to the woman in “Fulness,” claims her space. Wharton writes in “Fulness,” of inaccessible rooms: “beyond, far beyond, are other rooms, the handles of whose doors perhaps are

never turned" (14). Mr. Waythorn's library is breached by both former husbands, and they have formed a rather curious bond. Waythorn and husband number one, Haskett, are "enclosed in the intimacy of their blended cigar smoke," when Varick, husband number two, enters the library (451). Alice, upon coming home, effortlessly and confidently opens the door to the library. She turns one of the handles of the doors described in "Fulness" as "perhaps [. . .] never turned," especially I might venture to say, by a woman. As Waythorn touches the handle to go to the dining room to talk business with Varick, the door opens from without and Alice enters. At this moment she passes into male space and claims this space as her own. Unlike Waythorn, who "stood on the threshold nervously pulling off his gloves" (443) when he previously encountered Haskett in his library, Mrs. Waythorn "stood drawing off her gloves, propitiatory and graceful, diffusing about her a sense of ease and familiarity in which the situation lost its grotesqueness" (452). She then interrupts male business and presides over the feminine ritual of serving tea. It is her footstep that crosses the threshold, and she now controls her life and that of her current husband and her two previous husbands.

The library is the private space accorded to a gentleman in his own house, and it is of particular note that the door Alice opens is the door to Waythorn's library. It is significant that this pivotal scene takes place on the threshold of the library. As Mrs. Waythorn moves through the door to her husband's library she occupies male space and defies conventional expectations of a married woman's containment. Liisa Stephenson writes about the significance of libraries in Wharton's fiction and comments: "When a woman is introduced to the scene, the library becomes a site of unpredictability or conflict" (1100). Alice, however, acts in a manner that is predictable, at least for her—she controls her husbands and the space they occupy. This breaching of what Waythorn believed to be the private space of his hall and his library leads to a reconsideration of his ownership, not just of his house, but of his wife as well. While previously he had thought of his exclusive right to his wife—she "was all his"—he now considers that he owns "a third of a wife" (450). It is at this point that the economic terms of the marriage contract are made most obvious. But the way in which Alice redefines marriage has little to do with economics. She is not bound by marriage contract or marriage unity, since it is made clear that she freely moves not just through space but through the confines of multiple marriages. She is neither defined nor contained by marriage. She has managed to control two previous husbands and one current one.

Her transcendence of both concepts of marriage is exemplified by the passage into the library and the ease with which she opens the door.

Although the library is not specifically mentioned in the description of a house full of rooms, it can be assumed that it is one of the "other rooms," in this case, the inner sanctum of the male homeowner. This turning of the door handle and movement into a male space is important, especially for a woman. Victoria Coulson describes the house as an "arena of choice and control" where the "possibility of self-fulfillment" and "self-expression" exists (146). That Alice Waythorn is able to manage three husbands and control the activities and space in the library is all the more significant since she is living in Mr. Waythorn's house. It is not her house, but she has forged a significant space in it. She was able to turn the handle of the door, and she knew just where she wanted to go.

The relationship of women to space and to the architectural features of houses, particularly thresholds and doors, helps to shape the stories discussed in this essay. Recent scholarship on the importance of space in Wharton's writing, especially as it relates to women, attests to the importance of carefully examining the spaces women occupy. In "The Bachelor Girl and the Body Politic," Linda Watts comments on the "material and spatial terms that characterize and constrain women's lives" (188). Her reading of space is in relation to *The House of Mirth,* but such a consideration can apply to any number of works as I have demonstrated in my reading of Wharton's short fiction. Laura Rattray situates her discussion of space in the context of divorce reform and increasing tolerance of divorce, claiming that while Wharton "proved at times remarkably dismissive of women and women's rights" she "employs images of imprisonment and entrapment to such devastating effect" (6). While I agree, and have demonstrated that images of constraint, imprisonment, and entrapment abound, I focus on women's movement through these spaces and across thresholds in the context of marriage, separation, divorce, and remarriage and on each character's relationship to the concept of marriage as contract or unity.

In "The Fulness of Life," a woman given the chance to cross the threshold and to live for all eternity with her soulmate opts to wait instead for her husband, a very unsatisfying mate, to join her in the afterlife. This decision takes place on a threshold upon which she is pictured sitting at the end of the story. This space signifies her resigned state and also the recuperation of a traditional, albeit unsatisfactory, marriage defined by both contract and unity.

Julia Westall is in the position of the wanderer, due to her intermediate status, married, but on the verge of being divorced. In her present state, she does not have access to the rooms "far beyond," "the handles of whose doors perhaps are never turned." As she seeks to deal with her impending divorce, she does not know where the unopened doors

lead. She is pictured wandering throughout her house, into the streets without a clear destination, and finally, almost inadvertently, to her former husband's house, a space representing married life. The idea of marriage simply as a contract proves to be untenable for Julia. She finds, to her surprise, that marriage as a contract is superseded by the condition of unity.

Mrs. Lidcote is provided with a view from her hotel window, which represents an escape from the past, but she retreats to a little room in Florence and to a little space in her mind that is likened to a prison (86). She herself states, the door from this room cannot be opened even by an angel. She is locked in the prison of divorce as it was defined and constituted in her past. She cannot cross the threshold to a new life. Unlike the woman in "Fulness," she has no marriage to return to, even in the afterlife. Unmoored to any matrimonial status, she is, ironically, wholly defined and contained by matrimonial status. The sometimes conflicting concepts of marital contract and marital unity have no application in her life. Yet, she is controlled by them no less than the woman in "Fulness," who will relive the condition of her marriage for all eternity.

Alice Waythorn, on the other hand, moves through the "great house full of rooms" at will. In fact, she commands the spaces, even the library, a space designated as male. As a divorced woman she freely turns the handles of the doors and crosses their thresholds. She has clearly redefined the spaces traversed by a married woman as described in "Fulness." She is the only female character who seems to have overcome the double bind, to use MacComb's description, of being "*defined*" and/or "*contained*" by matrimonial status (230). Further, she is the only woman free from the concept of marriage as contract and marriage as unity.

Whether picturing divorced or married women, Wharton uses the spaces of the home to define and reflect the lives of women in her fiction. Even though the laws governing divorce were changing and society's attitudes toward divorce were becoming more liberal, women are still largely represented in terms of their matrimonial status. Unlike Wharton who designed a home, The Mount, with an eye toward privacy and liberation for a married woman, the women in these stories must negotiate spaces designed for, not by, them.

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Rifles and Broad Shoulders: *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and Hemingway's Shifting Perspective on Gender

Richard Reisinger

Few authors have garnered a larger reputation for gender stereotyping and issues surrounding representations of "maleness" and "femaleness" than Ernest Hemingway. Undoubtedly one of the titans of Modernist literature, Hemingway has, nonetheless, garnered a large body of criticism surrounding his more reductive portrayals of his female characters and his tendencies to imbue his male heroes with an overwhelming sense of (toxic) stereotypical masculinity. Scholarship, especially that which is concerned with gender representation, abounds with references to the sexually promiscuous Lady Brett Ashley of *The Sun Also Rises* and the subservient attitude of Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms,* whom Hemingway "valorizes" because she "abandons her military hospital for life as a wife at home in neutral Switzerland" (Moreland 372). Also frequently discussed are the multitudinous representations of the Hemingway code hero, generally characterized by stereotypically masculine traits, such as an unwillingness to outwardly show emotion and a mentality that demands they expect life to get hard and must tough it out with a stoic attitude. Such criticism is valid in the field of Hemingway studies, but due, in part, to the relative popularity of his earlier novels, whose scholarship tends to outnumber scholarship of his later works, which offer more moments in which Hemingway experiments with the concept of more fluid gender roles.

Critics have not ignored Hemingway's shifting viewpoints altogether. Marc Hewson addresses "the recuperation of Ernest Hemingway as a writer sensitive to problems of gender and sexuality" as "almost a critical commonplace" but immediately complicates his own assertion by noting that "some earlier novels and stories have been less instrumental in their revaluation . . . because they have been seemingly more difficult to fit into a new conception of his work" (170). Such a critical situation is, to a degree, understandable; Hemingway's earlier work, as noted before, is rife with examples of more constraining representations of the genders. However, Hewson hints at a prescient point: if we are to approach Hemingway with the attitude of reevaluating his work, we cannot ignore the majority of it, especially considering that

his more famous titles came early in his career. *The Garden of Eden*, often referenced by critics interested in this line of criticism, was posthumously edited and published; without including career-making works like *The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms,* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, critics can hardly claim to be thorough in their reevaluation of the writer.

Hemingway's real-life attitudes, much like that of his authorial persona, experienced several shifts throughout his life, but especially during his journalistic involvement in the Spanish Civil War (an experience that would later inform his writing of *For Whom the Bell Tolls)*. Critic Michael K. Solow notes that "During the Spanish Civil War what Hemingway *thought* he understood about the world underwent a significant evolution that was 'not so simple.' The author's inner war of contending perspectives found expression in his longest, most complex novel" (104). Additionally, Marc Hewson writes that "we might profitably view [*For Whom the Bell Tolls*] as the result of Hemingway's growing need to reassess, through writing, his interaction with stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity—his own and others" (172). These critics are correct in pointing to this era as a transitional period for both Hemingway the man and the fictional worlds he created; in fact, Hemingway's writing during this time is of great value in discerning his gradual shift in the way he perceived the role of the sexes within his fiction.

It is clear, then, that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* deserves more critical attention in that it functions as a clear indicator of the transition in Hemingway's work and in the writer himself, and that an extended look at the novel reveals a distinct shift in the formulation of gender norms in relation to the Hemingway Code Hero archetype. Despite the presence of indicators in earlier work (Frederic Henry comes to mind, and one can argue that Jake's emasculation fits into this dialogue, as well), this transition is clearly displayed and foregrounded in the author's Spanish Civil War novel to a degree that preceding works do not match. In response, this article will discuss war and nationalistic violence (represented in the novel through the Spanish Civil War) as a force that demands adherence to societal gender roles of those involved in it, including the majority of the novel's characters, and, in doing so, will expand gender-oriented critical conversation of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* to include both Robert Jordan and Pilar. Through this new lens, Robert Jordan's adherence to the Hemingway Code Hero archetype is shown to be a mere facade in that he does not comfortably conform to the "masculine" role expected of him. Likewise, Pilar (a character that has, surprisingly, been ignored within much of the scholarly dialogue) clearly reveals Hemingway's willingness to experiment with the tradi-

tional gender roles of both his contemporary setting and that of his fiction.

It is important to begin a discussion surrounding the essential fallibility of a polarized conceptualization of gender roles within a theoretical context. Judith Butler's and Jack Halberstam's work on prescriptive gender roles, for example, is critical to understand as a backdrop to the ongoing scholarly conversations surrounding the extreme examples of gender dynamics in Hemingway's body of work. Butler's discussion of "juridical systems of power" that "*produce* the subject they subsequently come to represent" and her assertion that "subjects regulated by such structures are . . . formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" (Butler 4), coupled with Halberstam's paradox of the masculine female, one that Halberstam contends "can only be tolerated within the narrative of blossoming womanhood" and is perceived as a "social and familial threat" (Halberstam 6) are undeniably important when one considers the "unacceptability" of female masculinity, the constricting nature of societal gender constructs, and the pressure to perform in order to fit into these expectations.

Butler and Halberstam are helpful in establishing the nature of gender stereotyping in more typical or everyday settings; their ideas certainly inform this analysis in that they identify systems of power and the very real context upon which this scholarship is inherently built, but, they do not address more severe or pressured environments within the work. We must consider what Butler and Halberstam say and how it is modified or worsened by the volatile environment in which Hemingway's characters find themselves. Several scholars have written on warfare and the way gendered norms function within that context, and many center upon the perceived link between militarism, violence, and notions of masculinity. For example, in an article discussing the psychological, gendered motivations behind American warfare, Victor Meladze points to Theodore Roosevelt's "vision of manhood" as articulated in his speech entitled "The Strenuous Life"; in his "conflation of imagery to masculine identity, military power, and sacrificial war," Meladze argues, Roosevelt became "the character template" for all U.S. presidents during "times of national and international crisis" while simultaneously signaling the United States' future "need to stave off maternal engulfment anxieties through militarization" (97). Although his argument is based primarily in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Meladze inextricably links warfare to gender in that many acts of aggression can be linked to "a nation's loss of its sense of masculinity," which is seen "at an unconscious level . . . as a collective death" and subsequently acted upon through warfare, read by Meladze

as an effort to "effect masculine potency and defend against castration anxieties" (88). In essence, violent acts of warfare are linked to deeply rooted fears of loss of masculinity. It is natural, then, to assume that the training of soldiers and the act of soldiering would carry with it expectations of adherence to some norm of masculinity.

Meladze is not the first to point out a link between Theodore Roosevelt's presidential persona and Hemingway's writing; celebrated Hemingway biographer Michael Reynolds references it several times throughout *The Young Hemingway* as a major component of Hemingway's upbringing. Reynolds notes that, prior to Hemingway's involvement at the Italian Front of World War I, "Roosevelt was in the very air he breathed," that "Hemingway absorbed much of Roosevelt's enthusiasm, determination and interests" (28). Roosevelt's words, according to Reynolds, taught the young author "that a man should not allow fear to master him" (33) and inspired him "to become physically fit, resourceful, and self-reliant" (232). By combining these two readings, one can see that Roosevelt not only inspired major components of Hemingway's personality and fiction but also instilled in Hemingway an image of what war should be. Meladze merely points to Roosevelt's effect upon the nation; Reynold's biography is critical in linking Meladze's assertions to the development of Hemingway as a writer and man.

James Do and Steven Samuels explore the link between military training and what they term "masculine-warrior narratives." They note a historical tradition of military training as a "rite of passage, where *men* learn toughness, transform bodies, *construct masculinities*, and *eliminate what is considered effeminate*" (26, emphasis mine). Training breeds warriors who adhere to a particular role through which they may "prove" their manhood through participation in combat, which allows them the "opportunity to demonstrate not only masculinity but also heroism" (26). In this construction, masculinity is inherently tied to violence, to the ability to perform feats of strength and brutality, to be a "hero" by winning a war which, according to Meladze, is fought over the notion of lost masculinity. War, then, can be seen as a masculine space, an endless cycle in which warriors are trained to be tough so that they can fight to keep their masculinity, which is then taught to the next generation of soldiers.

Yet this myth of masculinity is itself limiting and artificial. Do and Samuels note that basic training exists to take in cadets, many of whom have no combat experience, and to "fundamentally alter their individual sense of identity" (27) and "socialize them into gendered roles based on assumptions of what men and women can and cannot do" (29). In response, we must question what it is that men are assumed to

be able to do, a question best addressed by Alex Vernon's article "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway." He references Hemingway's idea that the "greatest gift a soldier can acquire" is the ability to "suspend your imagination and live completely in the very second of the present minute with no before and no after" (37). Using this idea as a frame, Vernon relates his understanding that "military and war experiences affect a soldier's sense of gender identity" (37) and that because women were kept at home and thus "remained ignorant of the facts" while "enthusiastically supporting the war . . . [they] appeared to men to celebrate and enjoy images of the self-sacrificing male soldier" (45). What I mean to underscore here is the sense that a male soldier, a supposed emblem of masculinity, is really built upon self-denial, that conformity to a particular gender role (seen here as the masculine soldier) is inherently a constricting situation, one that hearkens to Halberstam's contention that "heroic masculinities depend absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities" (1). In other words, in order to perform as a "true" masculine soldier, male warriors must suppress their personalities.

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the Spanish Civil War functions as the force that heightens the perceived need for Hemingway's male characters to fit into prescriptive gender roles. In Robert Jordan, Anselmo, Pablo, and the other male soldiers, a need to be realistic, to put away fantasy, poetry, and emotion in favor of the harsh realism that war demands is apparent. In this sense, I view the performances of masculinity as extensions and progenitors of the violence inherent in warfare: the violence functions not only as a backdrop but as a symbol of the violence of enforced gender normativity.

One of the few critics to specifically discuss gender roles in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hewson, centers his conversation upon Robert Jordan. His article is important within the dialogue surrounding this book in that it represents the first attempt to push back against critics who dismiss the novel and brings attention to the nuance surrounding the protagonist. His attention to Jordan as an atypical Hemingway protagonist is important, but he focuses solely upon sexuality; Hewson spends the majority of his discussion on the sex scenes between Robert and Maria and ultimately reduces Jordan's atypicality to the fact that he represents a "move beyond the type of male stoicism that marked [Hemingway's] earlier protagonists" (181). True, Jordan's ability to break out of stoicism is important, but this does not show itself strictly within scenes of sexuality. If we link his stoicism only to romantic moments, we cannot easily claim that he represents a transition away from Jake Barnes or Frederic Henry. As such, it is important to note that Jordan's stoicism is more a facade than anything else, a *perpetually* and

carefully constructed act of a man who needs to play the part of a soldier in order to be respected by those he fights alongside.

Robert Jordan, at first, appears to be very much like many typical Hemingway warrior protagonists in that he struggles with interior demons but ultimately decides that he must push them back in order to face reality with courage and grace. Robert is unique, however, in that he does not naturally fit the role. In many instances throughout the novel, for example, Jordan's interior monologue reveals a man who desperately *wants* to feel optimistic, to feel something, but who feels regretfully obligated to shove those feelings aside rather than risk diminishing his affected masculinity. This runs counter to previous protagonists; Jake Barnes, especially, maintains a cynical attitude throughout *The Sun Also Rises* and completes his own personal journey by willingly cutting out any positive romantic fantasies. Jordan's personal journey, though, is opposite; as the novel progresses, he indulges more and more in romantic fantasies.

In a particularly poignant scene toward the end of the novel, Robert Jordan analyzes the chances of surviving the battle in which he blows the bridge: "[The fascists] can't attack any other country until they finish with us and they'll never finish with us . . . No you must not expect victory here, not for several years maybe . . . you must not get illusions about it now" (432). He later notes that he is getting "very pompous in the early morning" and immediately directs himself to "look there what's coming now" (432). These moments are demonstrative of Robert's struggle to fit into the facade of the masculine soldier; one gets the sense that he is struggling to maintain discipline, that as much as he wants to plan for the future and to be optimistic, the environment of war demands strict adherence to stark realism. His attention to his immediate surroundings, then, can be read as a distraction, a way to pull him out of his own head and back into the "heroic" role.

Similarly, Robert struggles with the taking of human life. On two or three separate occasions throughout the novel, Robert forces himself to avert his eyes from someone he knows he must kill. While, in typical Hemingway fashion, the reason for this aversion is left to the reader to determine, one gets the sense that it is due, primarily, to an overwhelming sense of emotion, a recognition of the humanity of the future victim. In an extended paragraph toward the end of the novel, Robert watches his future victim, a sentry, as he smokes. What Robert notices is, outwardly, mundane: references are made to the sentry's clothing, his "sunken cheeks," the fact that he had not shaved, and the fact that "he looked sleepy." Nonetheless, Robert feels the need to take his glasses down, noting that he "won't look at him again" (433). Juxtaposed against Anselmo's tearful reaction to a subsequent murder

and assertion that "we have to kill them and we kill them" (436), it is heavily implied that these men have to crush their own emotion down to make room for the strict efficiency and stoic reaction to the tragedies of war. Essentially, the war is imposing upon them an extreme masculinity, a soldier-like lack of feeling that maps itself easily onto Hemingway's typical code hero. Unlike earlier Hemingway protagonists, though, these men do not easily accept the imposition.

This sense of immediacy and aversion to emotion can be seen in Robert's romance with Maria, as well. While Hewson successfully describes the breaking of traditional masculinity that is specific to the scenes of sexuality in the novel, he does not discuss Robert's struggle between romanticized love outside of the sleeping bag and his own sense of masculine duty to the war. His romance with Maria itself is based, largely, upon fantasy; much like Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley of *A Farewell to Arms*, the couple spends much of their time together weaving fictional accounts of their future married lives together. However, what is unique in this case is the constant breaking of the illusion through Robert's recognition of reality. In one scene, a fantasy surrounding a trip to the lakes of Madrid is interrupted by Robert's recognition that the water was drained "because it made a mark to sight from when the planes came over from bombing" (347). Similarly, notions of a book fair are coupled with the fact that books were stolen in the looting during the war. Subsequent to this discussion, Robert admits his love for Maria "in a complete embracing of all that would not be" (348). Even in an admission of romantic love, Hemingway's protagonist is tempered by a heavy dose of realism; he cannot allow himself the full enjoyment of an emotion because the war has required stoicism and realism, typically "masculine" traits exacerbated by the impending fatal violence. Robert, in my reading, is unable to completely adhere to the "masculine-warrior" ideal; these romantic imaginings represent moments in which his subordinated self breaks through his constructed warrior facade.

Robert Jordan is not the only character to challenge the gender roles found in Hemingway's fiction. While the extant criticism regarding gender and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has yielded discussion surrounding the admittedly complex protagonist, scholars have not yet fully explored Pilar as demonstrative of Hemingway's shifting viewpoints. Her positionality as a female soldier, coupled with descriptions of her physical appearance, reception in the camp, and fulfillment of her camp duties combine to create a character that, more than Robert, shows the ability to negotiate and subvert gender roles while simultaneously being subject to others. Hemingway imbues Pilar with several typically masculine characteristics; despite fulfilling some ste-

reotypically "feminine" duties, such as cooking for the soldiers, Pilar also negotiates the masculine sphere of action. Pilar's negotiation of a masculine space is in direct contrast to her male counterparts; her frequent transgression of gender norms allows her to avoid strict adherence to the "masculine-warrior" role and imbue in her character a sense of authority. Additionally, she displays many qualities that typically define a Hemingway code hero, an archetype that, for the majority of Hemingway's work, remains unabashedly relegated to male leads. As such, the remainder of this paper will explore the nuances of Pilar's subversion of typical gender roles; by exploring her positionality in relation to a typical Hemingway hero and contrasting it against Robert Jordan, Maria, and the other soldiers, my aim is to expand the critical conversation surrounding Hemingway's approach to gender roles to include Pilar.

Pilar's first appearance is preceded by a telling description of her from Rafael and is juxtaposed against the first appearance of Maria. Maria's appearance is typical of a Hemingway heroine: her physical appearance is described in detail, and it is clear from the description of her "straight mouth with full lips," hair that is "the golden brown of a grain field," and "beautiful face" that would have been made more beautiful "if they hadn't cropped her hair" (22) that her feminine beauty is a defining characteristic. Pilar's first appearance, however, is preceded by an admission that she "has a tongue that scalds and that bites like a bull whip," a description of her as being "old" and "of gypsy blood," and an anecdote about her having taken guns and ammunition from her husband while cursing at him (28-29). Robert's initial description of her is similar in that it highlights her stature: she's "as big as Pablo, as wide as she was tall" with "big but nice looking hands" (30). Pilar notes, a page later, that she and Robert "understand each other" (31). Juxtaposed against Maria's first appearance, it is clear that Pilar is not meant to be seen as fully, stereotypically feminine; her description places her more in line with the men of the unit and features a direct comparison between her stature and that of the unit's leader, her husband.

In her article, "Hemingway and Women at the Front: Blowing Bridges in *The Fifth Column*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and Other Works," Kim Moreland reads Pilar's introduction as "both revolutionary and conventional" and notes that Pilar is detailed as "massive, ugly, even masculine in appearance" (380). Moreland points to Pablo's assertion that Pilar has "the heart of a whore" (Hemingway 53) as well as frequent illusions to "gypsy blood" as explanation for her "sexual power and . . . supernatural ability to read the future and smell death" (Moreland 380). True, these rather reductive descriptions set her distinctly apart from

the other female presence of the novel, Maria, and reveal a particular abnormality in her presentation. However, I read these various methods of introduction not as reductive moves on Hemingway's part but as direct representations of masculine attitudes toward the transgression of standard gender roles.

Readers cannot overlook the fact that the narrative is embedded in Robert's point of view, that the events are anchored in his experience (the narrative style is third-person omniscient, and many events through the novel are presented alongside Robert's internalized monologue, making the narrative almost completely inseparable from Robert's way of seeing the world). This takes on even more meaning if we consider my assertion that Robert is affecting stereotypical masculinity because it makes us question the veracity of his reaction. If we are to accept that Jordan is torn between the idea of masculinity that he is to conform to and his own personality, then it is plausible to consider that his criticisms of Pilar's physique (or, at least, his fixation upon it when he first meets her) could be a part of his masculine facade. This idea gains further traction when we consider the negative commentary from other warriors, such as Pablo's comment on her heart; Pilar is described as a whore due to her more liberal approach to sex while male characters, including Robert, are never denigrated for their active sex lives. In any case, Pilar's presence is discomfiting to the wartime gender normativity, which is clear in that her chores reveal a lack of understanding as to what "place" she belongs to: is she meant to be cooking at camp, or is her place at the front with the men, discussing warfare and sex? We see her fulfill both roles throughout the novel.

Robert Jordan's complicated relationship with Pilar and all that she represents is expressed by his consistently referring to her as a gypsy. This classification is, generally speaking, separate and distinct from Pilar's gender identity, and is used to describe both her and a male soldier named Rafael. David Murad makes "being gypsy" the focus of a research article and discusses how "one of the driving themes in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is how sentiments . . . naturally interfere with duty to society" (91). In his reading, Murad links sentimentality to "being gypsy" and suggests, despite these traits being seen as "negative," that "Robert Jordan also envies the freedom from duty they suggest" (91). Once again, Pilar is given a classification that represents both release and confinement; her "gypsy" nature follows her around like a "descriptive marker, a figurative scarlet letter" (Murad 92) but also represents a freedom from the responsibility of conformity. Being gypsy, in Pilar's situation, represents simultaneous insider and outsider status. Murad, too, notes that Pilar is "more complex," that she "has the distinctive ability to move in and out of gypsy roles whenever she (or the

observer) chooses" (96). Murad's work underlines a distinction that is critical to this work, but one that, in my reading, goes beyond her status as a gypsy woman. Pilar's classification as gypsy mirrors and signals a deeper issue in her characterization: her relationship to gender norms and her ability to move in and out of them much like she can move in and out of her role as "gypsy." While others are repulsed by it (or, in Robert's case, enamored and confused by it), this classification does not limit Pilar in any true way beyond the harsh words of her compatriots.

These notes recall Halberstam's assertion that it is "difficult, if not impossible, to untangle masculinity from the oppression of women" (4) and that norms of masculinity require girls to be taught "restraint, punishment, and repression" and be modeled into "compliant forms of femininity" (6). Pilar, within the novel, is an anomaly, a direct challenge to the norms that rule the lives of the male soldiers. This accounts for Moreland's point that, while she is in the camp, Pilar "is almost always represented performing domestic activities—cooking, cleaning, sewing" (381); her engagement in said activities is not so much representative of her conformity to gender roles as it is indicative of what the male soldiers expect her to do. Readers should take into account Judith Butler's assertion that "the category of 'women' . . . is produced and restrained by . . . structures of power" (5). In essence, Pilar's campsite chores are relegated to her through social ordering; readers can view the campsite (a site of day-to-day living from which the soldiers depart in order to participate in war) as a microcosm of traditional social life. Thus, the structure of power, here represented by the male soldiers and led (sporadically) by Pablo, attempts (mostly unsuccessfully) to place upon Pilar the yoke of traditional feminism.

It must be noted, too, that Pilar declares herself leader at the campsite and Pablo, as Moreland notes, "grudgingly cedes his position" (381). While Moreland reads his subsequent assertion that, if Pilar is "a woman as well as a commander" she should make the company "something to eat" (Hemingway 57) as representative of Pablo "undermining her power" (Moreland 381), I see it, instead, as an attempt to impose feminine norms upon a woman who very clearly defies them. Pablo identifies her as both a woman and a commander, and the word "if" in this statement is particularly telling; *if* Pilar is a woman, she should make the soldiers something to eat, but there's hesitation there, a refusal to confidently declare Pilar a woman. Further support for this notion can be found in Hemingway's own reduction of Pablo's character; in crafting a male leader who is insufficient, untrustworthy, routinely pathetic, and incompetent, the author is making space for Pilar to be seen as the true authority. That this position of power is not

respected consistently within the narrative is irrelevant in the face of Pilar's consistent adherence to Hemingway code heroism.

In battle, specifically, Pilar negotiates the masculine space. Unlike Maria, who is consistently absent during scenes of warfare, Pilar is always present, generally holds weaponry (sometimes multiple guns, more than the men), and speaks to the men of the unit with authority and the harsh realism that Robert so clearly (and grudgingly) displays. In the last battle scene, she is seen multiple times touting three rifles, and the descriptions surrounding her physical appearance are, once again, directly in line with that of the men: riding a horse, she is seen "head bare, her shoulders broad," which is juxtaposed against Pablo, who is "sunk in his shoulders as he [rides]" (458). Additionally, she derides Primitivo's romanticism, claiming that he has "poetic memories" and that he should not let his "fear catch up with [him]" (444). Her stark realism, her willingness to shout at other soldiers, to hurry them, to tell others to dispense with romantic illusions and stick to reality, and her consistent soldier-like descriptions align her more readily to Robert and, by extension, to the Hemingway code hero archetype. As such, Pilar represents a typical "masculine" Hemingway hero; in many ways, she is more representative of images of masculine-warrior heroism than even Robert Jordan himself. Because we never see Pilar actually engage in battle (Hemingway only mentions the sounds of violence coming from her location), we also never see any weakness from her. Whereas we are clearly shown multiple occasions in which Robert has to suppress his personality, force himself to look away, or tell his male comrades to staunch their tears, we are never given any indication that Pilar must do the same. She is emotional at times (primarily in relation to Maria), stoic at others (in her performance of command), but her ability to show all aspects of her personality is demonstrative of her freedom contrasted against the emotional suppression that the men put themselves through.

In addressing gender issues, Butler and Halberstam each reveal the sociohistorical links to representations of gender and use these connections to theorize how reductive norms can be subverted. Butler notes that "the critical point of departure is *the historic present*" and one must "formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize" (8). Additionally, like Halberstam, Butler asserts the need to separate the ideas of gender and sex: "if gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any way" (10). Halberstam builds off this idea, noting that he aims to "produce a model of female masculinity that remarks on its multiple forms but also calls for new

and self-conscious affirmations of different gender taxonomies" (9). Ideally, these affirmations are built "not by subverting" or "taking up a position against" masculine power but instead by "refusing to engage" in "conventional masculinities" (9). In many ways, Pilar demonstrates that she cannot be constrained, that her personality is fixed not in her sex but in her own performance of gender norms from both conventional understandings. What I mean to say here is that Pilar's refusal to adhere wholly to societal ideals of "maleness" or "femaleness" is itself indicative of her refusal to engage in conventionality and thus represents her own resistance to the historic present's structures.

Stacey Guill's understanding that Hemingway "deliberately infused his characterizations of the women with . . . significant changes in . . . gender relations" (7) is directly relevant to this discussion of Pilar and Robert in that it admits Hemingway's awareness of gender normativity in and of itself. In other words, to be able to write characters who represent changes in gender stereotypes, Hemingway first had to be fully and completely aware of what that social change represented and what the original stereotypes were. This context affirms my readings of both Robert and Pilar and simultaneously opens up a conversation about just how much Hemingway himself believed in and perpetuated the gender norms that he is often accused of embracing and promulgating in his fiction. As Guill aptly notes, Hemingway clearly had an understanding of the society surrounding him. Why, then, does his fiction so clearly display his characters struggling with societal expectations of performance? More importantly, to what degree have readers accepted Hemingway as so infatuated with stereotypical patriarchal thinking in spite of his characters that so clearly break the mold and question the validity of a cultural set of gender norms?

Hemingway's deep awareness of gender norms implies an awareness of his transgression of these norms, as well. As such, it is plausible to suggest that Hemingway was aware of how well Pilar's character lines up with that of the traditional Hemingway code-hero archetype. Characters that adhere to this archetype are to be lauded, at least by Hemingway's standards, for their ability to be "immovable when threatened by either death or disaster" (Wilson 81) as well as their "honor and dignity" that demands "that suffering be handled with grace" (Wilson 90). In his book entitled *Write Like Hemingway*, R. Andrew Wilson describes a typical Hemingway code protagonist as "defined by the competition between his expectations of manhood and sport, womanhood and love, and the realities of a changing world" (98). In many ways, this describes Pilar: she consistently maneuvers between ideas of manhood and womanhood, allows herself feelings of love (towards, primarily, Maria) while also facing the realities of the war she is in-

volved in through traditionally "masculine" stoicism. Pilar refuses to perform, refuses to constrain herself into typical femininity; instead, she embraces her "masculine femininity" and is a key component in the various successes of Robert Jordan's group of soldiers. Compared to Robert Jordan, whom I argue is hesitant to fit into the traditional masculine hero role, Pilar may even be considered the "true" Hemingway hero of the novel, a shift in perspective that would absolutely highlight Hemingway's own shifting sensibilities pertaining to gender.

Pilar can be seen as an extension of Hemingway's willingness to transgress traditional gender norms in an effort to adhere to Modernist tendencies. Modernism sought to represent the realness of the world and capture a spirit of renewal, of change, that emerged after the first World War. By living in Paris during the 1920s and interacting with many authors and thinkers of his time, Hemingway had to have been aware of an undercurrent of questioning in relation to gender and sexuality. Thus, it is my contention that, in crafting Pilar, Hemingway revealed an ability to question and experiment with contemporary understandings of gender. This propensity would later reveal itself in more blunt gender experimentations in novels such as *The Garden of Eden*. Hemingway, despite frequent criticism of his reductive and stereotypical portrayals of gender, crafted in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* a female Hemingway hero, one that defied common understandings of gender roles present in both Hemingway's own bibliography and in society at large.

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Introduction to Catullus 63 and 64

Douglas McFarland

The prosaic titles of Catullus 63 and 64 belie the sophisticated subject matter and richly mannered texture of the two poems. Together they are fine examples of the striking creative output of the turbulent period of Rome's late Republic. In Poem 63 Catullus describes the ritual self-mutilation of Attis, a devotee of Cybele, the Phrygian (Anatolian) goddess of fertility. The cult of Cybele was first adopted by Rome during the second Punic War. In a frenetic spring ritual, novice priests would castrate themselves to serve Cybele, the Great Mother. Catullus has chosen to focus not on the violent act of the initiate but on its aftermath. An ecstatic call by Attis to his fellow eunuchs is followed on the next day by a dramatic soliloquy expressing his regret over his action. The poem concludes with the Cybele's lion violently driving Attis back to the Goddess's secluded grove.

Poem 64 reflects the style and conventions of the Alexandrian poets, who favored a variety of generic alternatives to Homeric epic that included, in this case, the epyllion or minor epic. The style is characterized by learned allusions, technical virtuosity, and an interest in emotional rather than heroic states of mind. The ostensible subject of Poem 64 is the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, but this merely provides a frame for the extensive narrative of the abandonment of Ariadne by her deceitful lover, Theseus. Stitched on the fabric of the marriage couch is the image of the deserted, forlorn, and enraged Ariadne. Her extended soliloquy at the approximate center of the poem provides the *omphallus* of its ring structure. The poem concludes with a return to the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis and a prophetic rendering of the future by the sisters of fate.

I have taken great liberties with the meter of Poem 63 in order to emphasize the voice of Attis. The poem is composed in galliambics, a relatively rare form consisting of two segments of eight syllables with a pronounced caesura. For Attis's animated call to his fellow eunuchs, I have chosen to use rhymed tetrameter couplets, modeled on the song of Comus in Milton's Masque at Ludlow Castle. For his extended soliloquy I have used a traditional blank verse iambic pentameter. All other lines are in hexameter. After Attis's rash act, pronoun references have been appropriately changed from masculine to feminine.

In Poem 64 I have substituted iambic pentameter for the Latin dactylic hexameter not only because it is the meter most conducive to English verse but also because the shortened line helps create a denser texture reflective of the mannered and compact elegance of Alexandrian poetry. Along with liberties taken with meter have come the inevitable liberties in syntax, and hence the result is not a line to line translation.

Catullus 63

Born by swift ship cross seas deep and remote,
With quickened pace Attis touched the Phrygian grove,
And entering Cybele's tree bound sylvan bower,
Goaded by the frenzy of a flickering mind,
With sharp flint, severed the weight from his groin.
Knowing his member and manhood at once defaced,
As fresh drops of blood yet stained the darkened soil,
Her snow white hands took up the smooth faced drum,
(Your drum, Magna Mater, the drum of your mysteries),
And with soft fingers striking the stretched bull's hide, 10
Rose up to sing frenzied words to her just altered tribe:
"Come, Gallae, together with me,
Come now my scattered flock with me.
To Dindymen, to Cybele,
Our Domina, come let us fly.
Like some remnant, an exiled band,
Will chase after a conjured land,
So guided by my ecstatic lead,
You have followed on the fierce salt sea.
Spite for Venus, the need to be free, 20
These made you prune your virility.
Come now cheer our Magna Mater,
Let her feel your madcap caper,
Let dawdling thoughts to glee give way,
Skip to her Phrygian hide-a-way,
Where cymbals crash, where drums resound,
Where the Phryx blows the Bacchic round,
Where ivy bound girls unchecked soar,
And madness through feral veins pours.
Come now, my followers, prick 30

Your bodies and to dancing be quick."
When the mad hymn of this womanly priest did cease,
The throbbing tongues of her crazed crew let loose howls,
And cymbals answered the beat of smooth faced drums;
With quickened steps the wild band sped to grassy Ida.
Panting, gulping down air, mad and unhinged, Attis
Danced to the thumping pulse midst the crepuscular grove.
Like heifers freed from the restraint of iron yokes,
The hysterical herd leapt behind wild Attis.
Reaching the house of their Magna Mater, 40
Famished, exhausted, tottering, longing for rest,
The Bacchic crowd felt sleep vanquish weak weary eyes,
As madness succumbed to slumber's soft touch.
When with the radiant eyes of his golden face
Sol scanned the white aether, the hard earth, and cruel sea,
And his vibrant steeds drove off the shadows of night,
Morpheus fled the wasted body of Attis.
Sleep's Grace, Pasithea, welcomed his spent form,
Enfolding the devotee in her trembling lap.
And here in the softening quiet of her embrace, 50
Yesterday's fantastical frenzy faded away.
Yet Attis still recalled the disfiguring stroke,
Picturing her manhood's member forever displaced.
With a seething mind, she sought again the shallows,
And looking out at the vast sea with eyes that wept,
Pitifully, as if in mourning, she spoke these words:
"O Fatherland, my begetter, my sire,
Like a base shameless slave, frantic
To sever his bonds, to break his Master's chain,
This pitiful boy shook free from your grasp, 60
Seeking the shadowed groves of Ida,
To live in snow and the cold haunts of beasts,
Furious to draw near their hidden lairs.
O where might you be, my forsaken home?
Now while my rabid madness slackens,
My eyes ache to see again my father's world.
To this remote grove shall I be taken?
My homeland, my wealth, my friends, my parents,
The forum where I discoursed with men;
And the gym where I trained with men; 70
And the arena where I competed with men;
All these, will I never see these again?
Pitiful Attis must you wail like a girl?

What passages of life have I not felt?
An adolescent, a boy, a young man,
The pride of the gym, resplendent with oil,
My doorway crowded, my threshold warm,
My home bound round with flowered garlands.
Whenever the sun arose, from my bed I leapt. 80
Yet now, will I become Cybele's slave girl,
A Maenad, with torn branch, a sterile half-man,
The denizen of Ida whose greenery is cloaked in snow,
To spend my life under the looming Phrygian hills
Where the trembling doe hides, the wild boar lurks?
My wound throbs and my perversity brings shame."
Fever-like these words rushed through her rose lips,
Bearing its strange account to the ears of the gods.
Then Magna Mother loosened her lion's leash,
And whipping the savage predator, spoke these words: 90
"Come, creature, fill with dread my own half-man,
Strike her with madness; drive her back to this grove.
Like some feeble girl she would flee my potent rule.
Lash your back with your own tail; feel your own blows,
Make this realm resound with your bellowing roars.
Spread your mane, my savage pet, cross your rippling neck."
Her grim order given, she released the pent up beast.
With fervor he spurred himself into quick action,
Advancing, snarling, randomly breaking off branches,
Til he reached the shoreline's frothing white foam, 100
And spied the fragile Attis along the marble sea.
The Mater's lion charged with rage. And the eunuch
Madly fled to his Mater's darkened grove.
There she spent the long span of her strange new life.
Great Goddess, Cybele, Domina of Dindymus,
Let all your fury be far from my house.
Inflame others; others drive mad.

Catullus 64

Pine boards honed from wood of Pelian mount,
Are once said to have crossed Neptune's waters
To Phasidean stream and realms of Aeetes,
When choice youth, the hard oak of Argive spawn,
Craving to snatch from Colchis the golden fleece,

Dared race their swift ship through briny seas,
Sweeping the deep blue waters with bleached fir.
Pallas who possesses the high citadel,
Built a craft to fly on the smooth breeze,
Joining soft pine skrate to curved hardwood ribs. 10
Then Argo's prow first felt Amphitrite's
Realm; his rough beak ploughed her resistant plain,
As oars churned white foam cross mutable sea.
Rapt with wonder wild sea faces rose up:
The Nereides, from a whirlpool's white spume.
On that day, no other, mortal eyes first
Gazed on the naked bodies of sea nymphs,
Lifting rose nipples from the swirling tide.
The eager eyes of Peleus fixed upon
Thetis, a watery deathless creature.
He burned with mortal love, and she too felt
The prick of passion in her timeless heart. 20
The sea god father then granted Thetis
Be joined to Peleus in marriage bands.
You born in that longed for age of heroes,
Progeny of noble wombs, I now greet;
Know I will invoke you often in my song.
Peleus, whom Hymen has blessed with joyful signs,
Staunch pillar of Thessaly, to whom
The father of gods himself has granted his care,
Did Thetis, loveliest of nymphs, not welcome you? 30
Did Tethys not grant his grandchild's marriage bed,
And Oceanus too, who circles the round globe?
When dawn arrives at the anxious hour,
Enchantment fills the groom's royal rooms.
All Thessaly flocks to the gathering,
With gifts in hand and faces joyous.
Cieros lies empty; Pithian Tempe too,
And Crannon's homes and walls of Larrisa.
But crowds fill Pharsalia and Pharsalian halls.
Fields are left untilled; bullocks' necks grow soft.
Curved rakes fail to cut back lowly vines. 40
The earth is left unturned by bulls' bent plough.
Pruning hooks fail to thin out leafy trees.
Rust roughens the face of abandoned tools.
Yet the royal palace, wherever it stretched,
Glistens with resplendent gold and silver.
Polished ivories enrich regal chairs

And table tops glimmer with the light of
Translucent cups; the majestic house basks
In the splendor of glorious treasure.
At the center sits the nuptial couch,
Embellished with Indian ivory, 50
Its cloth cover tinted with purple dye.
Ancient heroes grace its woven tapestry,
Their virtues rendered with marvelous skill.
Casting eyes from the wave struck shore of Naxos,
Ariadne beholds her Theseus
Quickly fading into distant waters.
Her wild lover's heart still seethes with eager
Passion; emerging from beguiling sleep,
Not yet does she understand his deceit.
But soon she senses her abandonment 60
On lonely shore, senses that Theseus
Carelessly flees cross oar-beaten waves,
Tossing empty vows to the inconstant stream.
Along the shoreline strewn with green seaweed,
Like a Bacchante sister caught in stone,
The daughter of Minos stares with mournful
Eyes, wavering on her own tormenting sea.
A slender band fails to hold her golden braids,
And a light shift falls to reveal her unveiled
Form, and smooth bindings no longer contain
Milk white breasts. These wrappings dance and play 70
Around her bare feet in the swirling salty froth.
Not to woven locks nor flowing frock,
But to you, Theseus, she anxiously clings,
While her soul lies shattered in broken pieces.
Sad girl, whom Erycina once drove mad
With tireless grief, sowing in heart's furrows
Stinging torments and thorns of desire,
In that time when cruel Theseus set out,
Departing the curved shore of Piraeus, 80
For the Cretan palace of an unjust king.
Once Athens, assailed by foul pestilence,
Offered prime young men and glorious maids
As ritual meal for the Minotaur,
The payment due for slain Androgeos.
With the narrow walls of his city beset
By evil, Theseus chose to offer
His own body so that the living dead

Of Crecops' city not be sent to Crete.
Thus sailing on swift craft with favoring winds, 90
He came to the proud rooms of grand Minos.
Hungry eyes of the royal maid fed on Theseus,
A virgin maid still held in her mother's
Soft arms, from a chaste couch exuding sweet
Fragrance, like myrtles risen on Spartan
Streams or the flowers of varied colors
Begotten on the breath of springtime winds.
Nor did she turn her burning eyes away
Before her light's flame caught fire, consuming
Her core and plunging heat into her bones.
Oh sacred wicked boy, yes Cupid you, 100
Who drive passions deep within the heart,
You who mix fire and ice, hate and love
In a lover's soul; and you his mother,
Ruling Golgos and leafy Idalium,
With this girl you had your guileful way,
Stirring waves of desire in virgin breast.
Hushed sighs arose from doomed Ariadne.
How deep was the dread she felt in her weary
Heart for this glorious stranger and how often
Her maiden cheek turned pale olive brown, 110
When Theseus intent to meet the bull,
Spoke of risking death to garner praise.
Silent prayers and not unworthy gifts,
Nor in vain did she offer to the gods.
Just as on the mountain ridge of Taurus,
A coniferous pine wet with resin,
Or a hard solid oak with quaking limbs,
Its roots ripped free by a monstrous twisting
Wind, falls and destroys all in its path,
Just so did Theseus bring the beast to ground, 120
As it twisted its horns in the still breeze.
Then Theseus unscathed and filled with pride,
Guided his winding steps back with slender thread
Lest the mazy pathways of the bull's home
Confuse his track through its torturous turns.
Why should I digress from my beginning?
Why should I recollect these episodes?
How the daughter cast aside the face
Of her father, the embrace of a sister, 130
And lastly of her mother, who gladdens

Yet grieves for her love sick Ariadne;
How she chose before all these her sweet love
Of Theseus; or how conveyed by ship
She came to the foamy shores of Naxos;
Or how with her eyes overcome by sleep,
She was abandoned by her soulless spouse?
They tell us Ariadne with a furious burning
Heart poured out deep and resounding cries.
She climbed atop a steep and broken ridge, 140
Mournfully gazing out across the sea.
And then running through the lapping waves,
Lifting her soft sheath to expose bare calves,
With chill sobs coming from her tear drenched face,
The grieving lover spoke her final lament:
"So this your way, my own faithless liar?
This your way, my deceitful scoundrel?
To abandon me on this forsaken shore,
Fetched far from homeland's pious hearth?
So this your way, to leave and to forget 150
The will of neglected divinities,
To carry homeward only bewitching lies?
Could nothing turn you from your cruel mind's
Scheme? Did you feel nothing, no desire
To render merciful your unkind heart?
Not this recompense did you once promise
With your coaxing words. Not this portion
Did you proffer with a warm, beguiling voice.
But the nuptial bed and marriage hymns.
Those gifts the winds now scatter and expunge. 160
Let no woman rely on a man's oath;
Let no woman presume a faithful tongue;
As long as a man's lust craves possession,
He fears nothing to swear, nothing to hold back.
But once he has satisfied his appetite,
No words, no oaths does he care to recall.
When you spun in a tempest of ruin,
I freed you; rather lose a half-brother
Than fail a sly lover on his death day.
Now must I be broken, offered up as spoil
For birds and beasts; no mound to mark my grave? 170
What lioness gave you suck in dark den?
What sea spewed you up from its foaming waves?
What Syrtis, what rapacious Scylla, what vast

Charybdis, bore you? This the reward
For the sweet life I awarded you?
If your heart had never felt our marriage true,
Because you bristled at my aged father's
Hard will, you could have led me to your land,
Where I might have pleased you with woman's work,
Softening your shining feet with clear water,
Spreading purple coverlets cross your bed. 180
But why do I complain in stupid rage
To senseless dumb winds that cannot hear me,
Nor have voices to answer my sorrow?
My black snake already tosses midst sea waves;
And no mortal visits this empty strand.
Fortune exults in my unwitnessed pain,
Begrudging ears to take in my complaint.
All powerful Jove, would that Attic ships
Had not been anchored off Cnosian shore. 190
Would that Theseus, eager to seize the prize
For slaying Minotaur, the Cretan bull,
Had not tied his ship on Minoan strand.
Would that this evil one, whose cruel plotting
Was hidden beneath his cool handsome poise,
Had not been welcomed as my sire's guest friend.
Where can I go; on what hope can I lean?
The wide abyss of the truculent sea
Denies me the mountains of Idaeos.
Dare I hope for deliverance by Minos,
The father I left stained with half-sibling blood? 200
Nor have I succor from a faithful spouse,
For Theseus now bends oars cross the sea.
No rooftops rise on this desolate isle.
No pathways run along the shoreline's edge.
No plan of flight! No hope to embrace!
Just this mute world and a solitary death.
Even so my eyes have not yet grown dim.
My senses will not lapse nor body fail
Before I have begged the gods for revenge, 210
Praying in my final hour for their goodwill.
You who punish the crimes of men with vengeful
Lashings; you whose brows wreathed with snakes
That portend anger from your hissing breast,
Come, Eumenides, and hear the mad grief
That I am driven helplessly to pronounce

From the innermost regions of my bones.
I burn and am blinded with bitter rage.
Since my grievances rise from the depths
Of an unfeigned heart, do not let my grief 220
Remain unanswered; but with that resolve
That led Theseus to abandon me here,
Alone to myself, with that same resolve,
Let him defile himself and his foul brood."
After she poured forth these sorrowful words,
Begging punishment for her lover's cruelty,
Heaven's ruler nodded divine assent,
A signal that startled both earth and sea
And shook the firmament's flickering stars.
Enveloped within his mind's blinding fog, 230
Theseus carelessly cast aside
Appeals he once held with firm purpose,
Failing to raise in Erectheum port
Fair signs to comfort an anxious parent.
They say when Aegeus once conceded
His son's departure from Athenian walls,
He embraced his boy and made this request:
"Sole son, more cherished than lengthening years,
Whom I must abandon to Fortune's whims,
Only return in my declining days, 240
Lest Fortune and your own fervent longing
Take you from me; my unwilling
Feeble eyes have not yet been satisfied
With your dear image; thus joylessly
I will send you off, but not before
I give vent to my soul's mournful complaints,
Befouling my white hair with earth and dust.
Let me raise a sail darkened with Spanish rust,
Its linen cloth a marker of your woeful voyage,
To reflect my grieving soul, my kindled heart. 250
But if the goddess of the sanctuary
At Itonus, she who safeguards the house
Of Erecthus, should grant that your right hand
Be splattered with the blood of the bull,
Do not let this command be forgotten,
Nor obliterated by time's winged pace.
As soon as your eyes take in our dear hills,
Let your crew depose the funeral flag,
And hoist with twisted rope your white sails,

So that my eyes might speedily rejoice." 260
His father's appeals once steadfastly held,
Now abandoned Theseus, just as clouds
Struck by gales of wind relinquish
The bronze summit of a snow white mountain.
When Aegeus climbed the high citadel,
His anxious eyes wet with quickening tears,
He saw the funereal cloth billow.
Filled with grief the father hurled himself
From the lofty summit, imagining
The harsh fate Theseus, his son, had met.
Thus fierce Theseus returned to a home 270
Defiled by a father's meaningless death.
That same grief he had thoughtlessly bestowed
On the daughter of Minos, he now suffered.
Ariadne still stared with dismal eyes
At her lover's swift receding ship;
Her torn soul swirled midst waves of despair.
But then Bacchus, god of boundaries breached,
Came cavorting with a band of converts,
Satyrs and Nysian born Silenoi.
Bristling with desire they pursue Ariadne. 280
The wild pack raged in Bacchic frenzy,
Twisting loose necks in every direction,
Frantically chanting Euhoe, Euhoe.
Some shook thyrsi, spears tipped with leafy vines.
Others tossed limbs of dismembered bullocks.
Others girded their waists with coiled snakes.
And still others crowded round osier baskets,
Exalting the sacred objects within,
In rites a novice hungers to know.
Some beat on leather hides with outstretched hands. 290
Others pounded out rhythms on bronze cymbals.
Horns bellowed and Phrygian flutes whistled
The wine god's barbarous incantations.
Splendidly stitched these many figures graced
The marriage couch with intricate designs.
Thessaly's youth, with eyes sated, made way
For the procession of divinities.
Just as Zephyrus ruffles the placid sea,
Arousing tilting waves with morning breeze,
When Dawn arises beneath the threshold 300
Of the roving sun; then driven by the soft

Air the waves slowly advance and murmur
With the beat of gentle laughter, till crowding
More and more with the rising of the wind,
And swimming in the purple light, they shine;
Thus did the mortals depart the royal house,
Each homeward with rambling and scattered pace.
First Chiron from atop Pelion mount
Came bearing sylvan gifts of Thessaly,
Whatever meadows, whatever high peaks 310
Bring forth along the waves of Peneus,
Flowers tended by soft, fruitful winds.
Blooms woven into garlands unarranged
The Centaur offered; their sweet fragrance
Brought smiles to the celebratory halls.
Then Penios arrived from verdant Tempe,
Tempe, encircled by green sylvan woods.
The river god abandoned Minios
To dance amongst the nuptial crowd.
There he stood with forest green in hand: 320
Uprooted lofty beech; straight trunked laurel;
Nodding Platan; poplar, as Ovid tells,
The supple sister of Phaeton once shot
With flames; and finally golden cypress.
Penios bound together their pliant limbs
That he might make green the vestibule walls.
Ingenious Prometheus next appeared,
Scared with faint marks of ancient penalty;
Once with flint chains holding his limbs in check,
His torso hung in payment from high cliff. 330
Jove then presented himself with sacred spouse
And brood, handing the sky to you alone
Phoebus and freeing Artemis, your twin,
To inhabit the mountains of Idrus.
Brother and sister both spurned Peleus,
And disdained Thetis her nuptial day.
After polished chairs received immortal limbs,
Tables were piled high with a banquet feast.
With their infirm bodies trembling with age,
The Parcae began to sing truth telling songs. 340
On each side their limbs were draped in white cloth,
Encircled round the hem with purple trim.
Rose fillets settled atop snow white crowns,
As fateful fingers took up their eternal task.

The left hand held the distaff with soft wool
Bundled round; the right hand drew the fibers,
And lightly with upturned palm fashioned the threads.
In turns, the right hand with thumb pointed down,
Spun the spindle held by weighted flywheel;
The tugging teeth smoothed the work, nipping 350
Wooly bits that were clinging to its dry lips.
Before their feet sat wicker baskets,
Guarding the soft fleece of the shining wool.
While prodding this bulk of wool, the Sisters
Sang in clear voices this divine prophecy,
That time will not render false imaginings.
You who augment your wealth with great virtue,
The protectors of Emathia,
And most dear to Jove, the son of Ops,
Listen to the faithful tales these Sisters 360
Spin out; You whom the sacred fates follow,
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
Hesperus, the evening star, will soon appear,
Granting the wishes that the bridegroom craves;
And with that fortunate star, Thetis will come,
Pouring our passions with soul bending love,
Joining you in the languid joys of the bed,
Spreading her soft arms round your oaken neck.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
No house ever sheltered such lovers, 370
No love ever joined lovers in such a pact,
As now awaits Thetis and Peleus.
  Run, spindles, drawing threads of time, run:
Born to you will be a son, Achilles,
Fearless warrior, never with back turned
Will this stout-hearted one fear his enemies;
Always assured victory in running games,
Outracing the flaming feet of the swift deer.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
No warrior will dare face your raging son; 380
When the Phrygian plain will be soaked red
With Teucrian blood; then the walls of Troy,
Besieged in endless war, will at last collapse
And the son of lying Pelops will triumph,
Laying waste to Troy’s holy citadel.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
Attesting to his dire strength and famed deeds,

At the graves of their sons, mothers will wail;
Their maternal hair unbound and unkempt,
They will beat withered breasts with freshly bruised hands. 390
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
Just as a reaper, mowing down thick ears
of grain, will harvest the golden ripe fields
Under the hot sun; so too will your son
Crop Trojan bodies with his deadly tool.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
The waves of Scamander will bear witness
To his strength; the waves would flow to Hellespont,
But their path will be choked with lifeless bodies,
Their waters warmed by thick mingling of blood. 400
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
Spoils of rage will persist even in death,
When his polished high tomb will receive
The snow white limbs of the pole-axed maiden.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
For as soon as fate will grant the Achaeans
Chance to loosen Neptune's protective hold,
His rounded tomb will be soaked with dark blood
Of Polyxenia, who like a beast,
Succumbing to the two edged ritual blade, 410
Will pitch her headless body on buckling knees.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
Bring love's eager desires to fruition;
Let the groom take the bride in glad union;
Let the bride be given without delay.
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run:
Attending the girl at the next dawn's light,
Her nurse will not bind yesterday's ribbon;
Her mother will not scold a chaste maiden's
Empty bed, fearing loss of grandchild. 420
  Run, spindles, drawing the threads of time, run.
The Sisters with felicities foretold,
Now sing a joyful epithalamium.
In former ages, piety not yet spurned,
The Gods sat before heroes' chaste homes,
Pleased to delight in mortal gatherings.
Jove himself from his shining temple,
When the year had come for sacred feast days,
Watched a hecatomb of bulls fall to ground.
Bacchus once drove his celebrant woman, 430

With hair unbound and shouting “euhoe,”
To the pinnacle of Mount Parnassus;
And a crowd from Delphi rushed headlong
To receive the god with smoking altars.
Often in grief bearing wars, the god of rage,
Mavors, or the goddess of swift Triton,
Perhaps the virago, Ramnusian,
Would fill mortals with immortal anger.
But after unspeakable crimes befouled
The earth; when the ravenous cast Justice 440
Aside; brothers bathed hands in brother’s blood;
Sons neglected to mourn deceased parents;
A father wished for the death of his son,
To snatch the flower of his maiden bride;
Mothers who dared teach their sons wickedness,
Unafraid to stain the gods of their hearths;
When speakable and unspeakable fell
Into a confusion of foul madness,
The gods turned their righteous gaze aside,
Disdaining to attend our gatherings,
Nor let our day’s bright light their presence touch.

About the Author

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“Playing the World’s Game”: John le Carré’s *Silverview*

Robert Lance Snyder

Posthumously published novels, of which hundreds exist, are never a sure thing. If in manuscript form they are incomplete or exist in multiple drafts, noted Alexandra Alter in 2009 when posthumous releases by David Foster Wallace, Vladimir Nabokov, William Styron, Kurt Vonnegut, and Ralph Ellison were pending, such texts can raise “thorny questions about author intent.” Although these works may achieve sales success owing to cadres of devoted readers, not infrequently they are artistic disappointments when measured against the living author’s *oeuvre*. Some, however, become highly respected capstones, among them Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Charles Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), Mark Twain’s *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* (1925), Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* (1941), Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* (1967), and Stieg Larsson’s *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (2005-07). Most of these existed in more or less final versions before their authors’ deaths, while others were completed by family members, trusted friends, or fellow writers based on partial manuscripts. In a few instances—John Kennedy Toole’s *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980) comes to mind—literary recognition came belatedly to novelists who, like Kafka as well, were unpublished at the time of their passing. In contrast to Toole, who committed suicide at age thirty-one, John le Carré died soon after his eighty-ninth birthday with twenty-five celebrated novels to his credit. Exactly ten months after his death, the posthumous *Silverview* was released by Viking on 12 October 2021.

According to Nick Cornwell, le Carré’s youngest son, who has published four fictional narratives of his own under the pseudonym Nick Harkaway, *Silverview* was begun just after his father’s *A Delicate Truth* (2013). The reworked holograph, says Cornwell in an Afterword, was complete as drafted by le Carré and required no “syncretic textual knitting” but only, deploying a tradecraft term in espionage made famous by his father, a “clandestine brush pass” to clean up the “usual bloopers of the typescript stage” (213). Having promised before his father’s death to usher it into print, the son avers that as it came into his hands

Silverview, "like *A Delicate Truth*, [. . .] was a kind of perfect reflection on [le Carré's] previous work—a song of experience—and yet fully its own narrative, with its own emotional power and its own concerns" (213). In what follows I want to audit Nick Cornwell's claim that "*Silverview* does something that no other le Carré novel ever has"—namely, shows a fragmented Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6) "filled with its own political factions [. . .] and ultimately not sure, any more, that it can justify itself." In *Silverview*, he adds, "the spies of Britain have, like many of us, lost their certainty about what the country means, and who we are to ourselves" (214), even though they remain caught up in "playing the world's game" (60). The logical way to launch this inquiry, assuming some measure of organic coherence or progression in an author's career, is with a brief overview of *A Delicate Truth* as an antecedent to le Carré's posthumous novel.[1]

Longer than *Silverview* by 100 pages, le Carré's twenty-third book offers a blistering critique of the corporatism that had emerged in England when the responsibility for national security was being outsourced to private defense contractors after the Bush-Blair era. Opposing the venality and self-serving machinations of this "Deep State" are three honorable men of conscience who dare to speak what in his unpaginated "Acknowledgements" le Carré calls "a delicate truth to power": Toby Bell, a "gifted, state-educated only child of pious artisan parents from the south coast of England who knew no politics but Labour" (47); Christopher (Kit) Probyn, a middle-ranking "low flyer" in the Foreign Office (93); and David Jebediah (Jeb) Owens, a Welsh soldier in British Special Forces who participated in "a privately funded stealth operation" (88). All suffer reprisals—in the case of Owens, death—for seeking to expose the escalation of governmental secrecy amid the adventurism of covert counterterrorism initiatives abroad. While patriots like Bell and Probyn meet with only marginal success in their efforts at derailing this network of Mammonism, opportunists like Giles Oakley attain new levels of power and influence before escaping from the scramble for plausible deniability in the political sphere. *A Delicate Truth* portrays MI6 as preempted by a corrupt transatlantic alliance pursuant to a post-9/11 "War on Terror," but it does not depict a Service "filled with its own political factions [. . .] and ultimately not sure, any more, that it can justify itself." It would appear, then, that after this novel le Carré began to sense that SIS had lost its way in the new millennium and, while clinging to a rapidly vanishing idyll of England's imperial past, was rotting from within as a result of its marginalization on the world stage.

A central character in *Silverview*, Deborah (*née* Garton) Avon, who is dying from terminal cancer, perfectly represents this condition of

internal rot. The daughter of a Colonel in Her Majesty's Service who was decorated with the Military Cross for landing with the first wave at Normandy (125), Deborah became MI6's "star Middle Eastern analyst" during her working life (61). In those years, because of her esteemed status, SIS agreed to set up a secure fiber-optic link between her Edwardian house named Silverview in East Anglia and a high-security military base five miles away that in the days of "Shock & Awe" devoted itself around the clock to "Strangelove stuff. Contingency planning for Armageddon" (59-60). Recently, however, she has discovered that her husband Edward, a multilingual Polish idealist formerly employed by MI6 as an agent in Belgrade during the Bosnian War, has been "sniffing around her strong room" or Service-provided "lair" in the house's semi-basement, possibly for as long as ten years (184-85, 150). Deborah Avon's response to this security threat is to send a long letter hand-delivered by her daughter Lily to Stewart Proctor, who at age fifty-five is SIS's Head of Domestic Security and "Witchfinder-in-Chief" (54), apprising him of the lapse. What Proctor discovers in the course of his investigation is a horde of "wildcat proposals Deborah's think-tank was putting out in the run-up to the second Iraq War." Based on her reactionary politics, these scenarios included the "[s]imultaneous bombing of Islamic capital cities, gifting of Gaza and South Lebanon to Israel, targeted assassination programmes for heads of state, [and] enormous secret armies of international mercenaries under false flags sowing mayhem across the region in the name of people we didn't like" (184). Obviously this luminary of the British espiocracy has committed herself through arms-length work with quangos to "a giddy late-life romp though the wild woods of colonial fantasy" (189).

Further evidence of the Service's current-day corporate mentality appears in *Silverview*'s next-to-last chapter when Stewart Proctor is summoned to MI6's Vauxhall Cross headquarters to discuss a crisis that has arisen with Whitehall regarding Edward Avon's supposed leaking of state secrets. Also attending the emergency meeting in Vice Chief Quentin Battenby's top-floor office "panelled in senior-directors-grade burr elm," the black knots of which "resembled bullet holes," is Teresa, "formidable head of the Service's Legal Department," who after slapping a confidential dossier on the desk announces that "what we're looking at here is an unparalleled five-star clusterfuck" (181-82, 183).[2] For his part Battenby, of the same MI6 intake group as Proctor but whose "celestial rise" is owing to his talent for equivocation before parliamentary oversight committees, declines to panic (182). After hearing all the evidence regarding Edward Avon's hypothetical threat to the realm, the monotone Battenby reaches the wholly predictable conclusion that "for the good of the Service at large [. . .] what

we're looking at here is damage limitation." Proctor then hears, like "a committee voice in rehearsal," the Vice Chief add: "'We shall have to take a very strong line with [Avon] indeed. [. . .] Our terms will have to be'—he seemed reluctant to use the words—'absolute, draconian and non-negotiable'" (190). So much, then, for leadership like that of George Smiley in le Carré's Cold War novels. Smiley's latter-day successors are merely suave bureaucrats with manicured fingernails and vacant gazes who are content with managing the appearance of things on the home front.

Roughly the same can be said of MI6 as a corporate entity when fifty or sixty of its faithful are marshalled for attendance at Deborah Avon's obsequies. Just prior to her demise Deborah had declared over dinner that "Christianity for me is not so much about religion as about values we hold dear. And the sacrifices we make to preserve them" (124), despite the fact that her think-tank hatches plans for effecting the equivalent of genocide in the Middle East. That clandestine activity, however, does not deter Harry Knight, a "Senior Official" factotum presiding at Deborah's scripted funeral, from extolling her "love of country," her "determination to put duty above self," and her "love above all of service. Of the Service" (153, 168). These three values, of course, are the default *summum bonum* for a governmental agency that ever since the Cold War's end, in le Carré's view, had forfeited its sense of purpose and mission with the advent of a much-ballyhooed New World Order. It is fitting, then, that the High Church rites commemorating Deborah Avon's passing should end, as she mandated, with the reading (barely audible) of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, fantasist of British colonialism and the "White Man's Burden," by her lovingly devoted but independently minded daughter Lily, single mother of a mixed-race two-year-old son.[3]

All of the foregoing confirms Nick Cornwell's judgment that *Silverview* depicts how "the spies of Britain have [. . .] lost their certainty about what the country means, and who we are to ourselves." Le Carré's indirect approach to his tale, however, is framed by the interaction between Edward Avon and Julian Lawndsley, both of whom as the offspring of errant fathers are variations on a familiar le Carréan motif. A naturalized British citizen, Edward initially claims that his "dear father was a not-very-talented art dealer of great charm" who "escaped from Vienna when it was already too late and [. . .] never lost his gratitude to England" (75). Later readers learn a far different story about Edward's progenitor from a former agent-runner named Philip responsible for Edward under his code-name of Florian in Warsaw. Reveals the retired spymaster to Stephen Proctor in the course of the latter's investigation: "The father was a [. . .] shit. Far-out Catholic of

some sort, blazing Fascist, thought the Nazis were the best thing going. Kissed their arses, helped them with their deportations, fingered Jews in hiding and finished up with a nice desk job, packing them off to the camps in droves" (92). When at age fourteen Edward learned the truth about his father, who was lynched in Poland's countryside for his betrayal of the nation, he according to Philip "romanced about him" while becoming a fervid "cause chap" opposed on principle to religious conviction of any stripe (93, 91). Roughly paralleling this backstory is that of thirty-three-year-old Julian, *Silverview*'s narratological center of consciousness, whose womanizing father, Reverend Henry Kenneth Lawndsley, died ignominiously at age fifty after recanting his Anglican faith from the pulpit. Upon his father's death, though he had aspired to a university education, Julian became a high-flying City trader "in order to pay off his father's debts and put bread on his mother's table" (20). Both men, although separated by a generation, are casualties of their familial descent, such that when first introduced they are poised to become trusted friends.

The alliance commences when each man discovers in the other an affinity based upon simple trust. For Julian Lawndsley, who at one point "speculates whether he ha[d] discovered in himself a secret need for another father figure" but "decides that one ha[d] been quite enough" (28), the developing relationship entails his exposure to the world of ideas. After a "profligate past" as a "demon trader" in London brokering yet "another dicey, socially useless financial coup" (112, 40, 67), Lawndsley has "forsaken the glitter of gold for the scent of old paper" by moving to a seaside town in East Anglia and opening a bookshop (67). Unequipped with the specialized knowledge required for such a venture, Julian is captivated when Edward Avon visits his struggling establishment one rainy evening and proposes that the shop's renovated basement might be devoted to a "Republic of Literature" (24). Before broaching his suggestion, Edward lauds W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn: An English Pilgrimage*, a quirky German novel of 1995 first translated into English in 1998, as an introduction to intellectual inquiry. Receptive to the proposal by an older man and former friend of his father who, when questioned, characterizes himself as "a British mongrel, retired, a former academic of no merit and one of life's odd-job men" (16), the neophyte bookseller soon finds himself caught up in Avon's vision of "a purposefully selected shrine to the most challenging minds of our time—and of all time" (23). For his part the Polish émigré, amid his loveless marriage to a dying wife, discovers in Julian a valued confidante whose shop's computer he can use not only to search for hard-to-find additions to the Republic of Literature but also to communicate with leftist political activists abroad. Edward trusts Julian as

well to hand-deliver a confidential letter to a lady in London, supposedly a former mistress, who once championed the Palestinian cause at rallies. A shift in the novel comes, however, when at its midpoint le Carré devotes a lengthy chapter to the espionage background of Edward Avon as recounted by his former handlers Philip and Joan in Stephen Proctor's interview with them.

Besides fleshing out Edward's career, the interlude captures the sense of futility and belatedness on the part of agent-runners who were MI6's "golden couple" twenty-five years before (86). The *curriculum vitae* of the then young man code-named Florian that they sketch for Proctor includes his love affair with an exiled ballerina named Ania, whose family was instrumental in the Polish resistance to Russian occupation, and the sudden collapse of Florian's network in Warsaw. When a shattered Edward arrived back in England, according to his former controllers, Deborah Garton, who at the time "was pretty much the Service's Queen of Europe," went out of her way to reaffirm and rehabilitate him (98-99). As a "cause chap" in Philip's characterization (91), Edward then was dispatched to a rapidly disintegrating Yugoslavia where he witnessed the bloody horrors—"[m]utilations, crucifixions, impalings, random and wholesale massacres, women and children a specialty"—among Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Bosniaks all "squabbling over Big Daddy Tito's Will" (100, 99). The carnage became personal for the reactivated Florian when the Serbs overran a Bosniak village in the hills, a place he had adopted, and killed an unaligned Jordanian doctor and his adolescent son for rendering medical aid to Muslims. From that point onward a stricken and demoralized Edward, shipped back to England once more, became dedicated to the physician's surviving wife named Salma, as *Silverview*'s ending makes clear. After Stephen Proctor concludes his interrogatory with Joan and Philip, in a passage that projects le Carré's skepticism about "playing the world's game," the latter draws Proctor aside to admit: "[W]e didn't do much to alter the course of human history, did we? [. . .] As one old spy to another, I reckon I'd have been more use running a boys' club" (111).

As though to confirm that judgment, the novel elaborates a bizarre and vaguely Dickensian dinner at Deborah Avon's mansion to which she invites Julian Lawndsley, followed by the charade of her funeral service, before recounting a farewell meeting between Julian and Edward at Orford over twenty miles away. That the desolate Suffolk setting is pivotal to *Silverview* can be inferred from Viking's decision to feature a photograph of two men, one wearing Edward Avon's trademark Homburg hat, walking together along the outpost's concrete-block-reinforced seawall (see fig. 1).

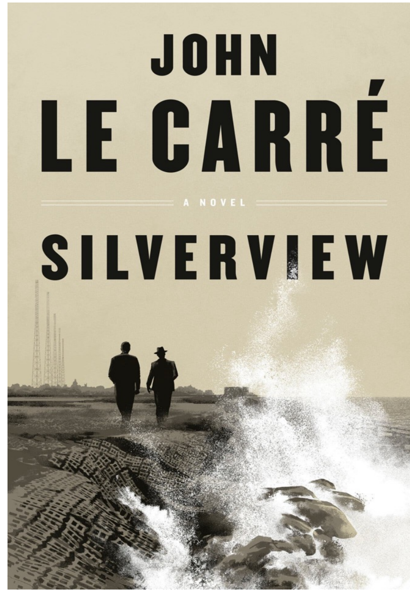

Fig. 1

Cover of *Silverview*. Jacket design by Paul Buckley. Jacket illustration by Matthew Taylor. Used with permission.

On the offshore horizon beyond the town's quay, Julian notices not the local bird life but rather

> the remains of our own civilisation after its destruction in some future catastrophe. And there they stood: distant forests of abandoned aerials rising out of the mist, abandoned hangars, barracks, accommodation blocks and control rooms, pagodas on elephantine legs for stress-testing atom bombs, with curved roofs but no walls in case the worst happens. And, at his feet, a warning to him to stick to marked paths or reckon with unexploded ordnance. (159)

The description, pure invention on le Carré's part, conjures a post-apocalyptic future for England as the consequence of Great Britain's having cooperated with the United States and NATO in permitting the construction of strategic bases on its soil, fitted out with underground nuclear silos, that specialized in Armageddon scenarios during the Cold War. The novel's fifth chapter describes such a facility, visited by Stephen Proctor during his investigation of a security breach, devoted to "thinking the unthinkable round the clock" (59). The clear sugges-

tion of the passage quoted above is that the eventual toll of participating in global brinksmanship is unavoidable.

Much to his credit, le Carré's posthumous novel does not end pessimistically. On the evening of his wife Deborah's death Edward had reached a "determination" about his future life that he apparently communicated to daughter Lily (149). At Orford the former agent in Poland and Bosnia confides that "I am in the past now, Julian. I can do no harm" (162). The last twenty or so pages of *Silverview* elaborate the well-meant attempts by Proctor, for whom the "very idea of a consuming passion [was] bewilder[ing]" (197), to offer Edward his Agency-approved nondisclosure agreement. Too evasive for those surveilling him, however, the indefatigable Polish émigré escapes "to find his Salma," as Lily tells Julian on the narrative's final page (208). While exulting in Edward's escape from the forces that would silence him, readers recall the gist of Florian's polemical dispatches to Middle Eastern subscription-only newsletters as summarized by Proctor to Vice Chief Battenby:

> America's determination to manage the Middle East at all costs, its habit of launching a new war every time it needs to deal with the effects of the last one it launched. NATO as a leftover Cold War relic doing more harm than good. And poor, toothless, leaderless Britain tagging along behind because it still dreams of greatness and doesn't know what else to dream about. (188)

That this indictment is wholly consistent with the geopolitical thrust of the last two novels le Carré published before his death attests to the seamlessness of *Silverview* as part of its author's critique of the covert sphere's code of expediency.[4]

The first of these narratives, *A Legacy of Spies* (2017), focuses on retired MI6 agent Peter Guillam, once George Smiley's protégé, who in his eighties is summoned back to London from his remote Brittany farm to sift through classified files pertaining to Operation Windfall, which resulted in the deaths of Alec Leamas and Elizabeth Gold as recounted in le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (1963). What Guillam gradually discovers is his complicity as a former "secret warrior" in "play[ing] the world's game" (7, 257), the latter trope carried over from the manuscript of *Silverview*. Duped by Smiley more than fifty years before, his former disciple now finds himself confronted by A. Butterfield, a "fresh-faced, bespectacled, English public schoolboy of indefinable age" who with his tenacious colleague Laura serves as legal adviser to the Chief of Service (15). Faced with a parliamentary inquiry prompted by the threat of a civil lawsuit, SIS, as Butterfield

cynically explains to Guillam, is engaged in "The historic blame game that is the current rage. Our new national sport. Today's blameless generation versus your guilty one. Who will atone for our fathers' sins, even if they weren't sins at the time?" (31). Consistent with the posthumous novel's depiction of the Service as a self-protective bureaucracy, *A Legacy of Spies* limns it as riddled by mendacity, all the more evident when Laura tells Guillam that "Once we have the truth, we'll know how to doctor it" (58). Meanwhile she and Butterfield are intent on making the octogenarian a scapegoat for MI6's past skulduggery. No fool, however compromised he is portrayed as being, Guillam eludes arraignment by escaping back to Brittany before he is made a dupe of what *Our Kind of Traitor* (2010) indicts as the "top-down corporate rot" of the "Whitehall-Westminster jungle" (119, 133).

Agent Running in the Field (2019), le Carré's twenty-fifth novel, emphasizes less the craven nature of a factionalized SIS than its belatedness in the face of new geopolitical realities. Narrated in the first person by a former case officer who ran agents in Moscow, Prague, Bucharest, Budapest, Tbilisi, Trieste, Helsinki, and Tallinn, Nat (no last name given) at age forty-seven expects to be "declared redundant" upon receiving home leave (2). Instead the "Office" assigns him to a Camden-based substation called the Haven that deals with "resettled defectors of nil value and fifth-rate informants on the skids" (23). Nat accepts the demotion because he is now devoted to strengthening his marriage to Prudence, a *pro bono* human-rights lawyer, and his strained relationship with college-aged daughter Stephanie. In this context, as singles champion at his badminton club, Nat is challenged to a match by a gawky stranger in his mid-twenties named Edward Stanley Shannon. After they become regular opponents on the court, Shannon unburdens himself in a diatribe against "Britain's departure from the European Union in the time of Donald Trump, and Britain's consequent unqualified dependence on the United States in an era when the US is heading straight down the road to institutional racism and neo-fascism" (55). Only later do readers and Nat alike learn that Ed Shannon is a conscience-stricken MI5 digital specialist who has blunderingly offered classified information to the Russians about a covert Anglo-American operation aimed at "undermining the social democratic institutions of the European Union and dismantling [the West's] international trading tariffs" (244-45). Before then, however, the Office mandarins subject Nat to an inquisition regarding Shannon as a whistleblower before the SIS veteran with wife Prue orchestrate Ed and newlywed partner Florence's flight abroad to avoid prosecution in England. As its author's last novel before his death, *Agent Running*

in the Field thus celebrates those individuals of conscience who defy England's morally bankrupt security establishment.

As framed by the novels composed before and after it, *Silverview* bears out the claim that it projects le Carré's skepticism that his nation's Secret Intelligence Service can any longer justify itself. Roughly the same trim length as his early narratives before the more expansive Karla trilogy, the posthumous book has fared well commercially. According to *Publishers Weekly*, at the end of its first week of release *Silverview* ranked #6 on the fiction list with 15,719 copies sold, 504 more than *Agent Running in the Field* but 11,592 fewer than *A Legacy of Spies* during a comparable period (Maher). Reviews on the whole have been largely summative, stopping short of making firm evaluative judgments. Two, however, articulate issues that future literary critics may find themselves addressing. *Silverview*, according to Dan Stewart, "resembles a jigsaw puzzle" that "feels unfinished." He asserts: "The real mystery of *Silverview* is why le Carré never published it during his lifetime." Manuel Roig-Franzia, noting Nick Cornwell's comment that the work was not so much "incomplete" as "withheld" (212), posits that *Silverview*, while "less complex than [le Carré's] greatest works," yet builds on the earlier themes—"betrayal, mendacity, bureaucratic inanity and our willingness to accept black-and-white explanations of a gray world." A final verdict, as George Smiley might have said in his decades-long fictional incarnation, will be reached only in the fullness of time.

Notes

1. For a fuller discussion of *A Delicate Truth*, see my *John le Carré's Post-Cold War Fiction* (128-39).

2. The colorful touch of inventive profanity apparently resonated with le Carré because *Agent Running in the Field* reprises it (see 55).

3. Upon Deborah Avon's first seeing her grandson, Lily discloses earlier, "she called him her little black Sambo[,] and Dad went ballistic. So did I" (132).

4. My use of the term "covert sphere" derives from Timothy Melley's outstanding book of the same title.

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Robert Lance Snyder retired as Professor Emeritus of English from the University of West Georgia. In addition to a recent book on John le Carré, he is the author of *Eric Ambler's Novels: Critiquing Modernity* (2020) and forty journal articles on the fiction of Graham Greene, Adam Hall, Geoffrey Household, Len Deighton, Francis Clifford, Olen Steinhauer, Dashiell Hammett, Charles McCarry, Frederick Forsyth, Jim Thompson, David Goodis, Stella Rimington, Patrick Hamilton, James M. Cain, Dorothy B. Hughes, Ian McEwan, Ross Macdonald, Dan Fesperman, Patricia Highsmith, Cornell Woolrich, and Paula Hawkins. He serves as the invited Advisory Author for a volume of *Contemporary Literary Cricism* on le Carré, forthcoming from Layman Poupard Publishing.

Video Games and American Culture: How Ideology Influences Virtual Worlds. By Aaron A. Toscano. Lexington Books, 2020. 149 pp. $100.00 (hardcover).

In recent decades approaches to critical discussions of video games often occupy one of two positions. Either they champion a self-righteous crusade against video games as a root cause of real-world violence or they disregard the cultural significance of video games altogether, treating them without context and as disconnected from larger spheres of cultural meaning. In *Video Games and American Culture: How Ideology Influences Virtual Worlds*, Aaron Toscano presents a third option. Drawing upon cultural studies, rhetorical analysis, and social construction of technology (SCOT) research, he argues that "video games are products of the culture from which they come" (10). Critically, Toscano recognizes that violent video games do not engender a culture of violence, but that a culture that values violence produces violent media. In so arguing, he asks readers not to fall into the trap of scapegoating violent video games for the problems of real-world violence. Instead, his book legitimates a cultural studies approach to video game criticism that interprets video games as "cultural repositories" capable of unconsciously reproducing ideology and thus available for critique (35). As Toscano insists, his "book is more about American culture than a survey of video games," seeking to diagnose the ways American ideology saturates games with contradictory values and moral commitments reminiscent of Orwellian "double-think" (2).

In chapter one, "Approaches to Video Game Studies," Toscano outlines his method, differentiating his cultural studies, SCOT-influenced approach to discussing video games from the prevailing "procedural rhetoric" approach favored by many modern video game researchers, an approach that he argues privileges a position of "technological determinism" (26). Examining works from video games scholars Jesper Juul, Ian Bogost, Simon Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Jonah Heide Smith, and Susan Pajares Tosca, he shows how "three major works in contemporary game studies systematically avoid gender analysis" and "broader cultural studies analysis on video games" (10, 30). Though a seemingly polemical chapter, Toscano grants that researchers cannot cover every topic in their projects, acknowledging the foundational importance of these scholars' works for video game research, while insisting that scholars must move beyond them.

In chapter two, "The Specious Link Surrounding Video Games and Violence," Toscano compiles empirical data on trends in youth-related violent crime and on video game sales, demonstrating that crime

rates have decreased dramatically since the 1990s while video game sales have skyrocketed. He then examines the rhetorical strategies of Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. Anderson, two psychologists who have campaigned prominently in protest of violent video games and violent media in general, and who maintain that studies that indeed demonstrate temporary increases in aggression after exposure to violent media also demonstrate that violent media is to blame for instances of real-world violence (44-45).

In chapter three, "The Video Game as Political Scapegoat," Toscano diagnoses the psychology behind the desire to scapegoat violent video games as a cause of societal ills, drawing upon the history of "scapegoating" and its significance for religion while also exploring what makes video games (as a popular form of "children's media") attractive as a scapegoating target. The desire to reduce complex issues into overly simplistic dilemmas with a clearly identifiable source is what Toscano argues is at the heart of these moral panics, coupled with a knee-jerk affective response to manipulative rhetoric that insists that children are in danger.

With chapter four, "Games of Conquest," Toscano begins looking more specifically at certain video games as texts that valorize "the American cultural values of power, empire, and competition" (73). In Toscano's view, video game studies perspectives that grant gamers full authority over the meaning making process of play fail to acknowledge how cultural ideologies embedded in the game during its creation necessarily present a hard limit for how much freedom players are allowed (73). Providing a brief overview of how capitalist society valorizes competition in everything from education to sporting events, Toscano draws connections between competition and conquest as parallel values, looking specifically at the video game franchise *Civilization* and how its systems advocate both manifest destiny and laissez-faire democracy as optimal pursuits for playing a "winner-take-all" game (88). Decisions made on the software level during the development of a video game delimit what strategies are available to players (often in line with what the developer's own ideological commitments are) and can even unconsciously coerce players in specific ways in the name of competitive optimization.

In chapter five, "The Male Gaze in Gaming," Toscano addresses the prevalence of patriarchal ideology in video games and in gaming culture, looking both at the lessons of "Gamergate" and at the depiction of female characters in popular game franchises such as *Tomb Raider* and *Grand Theft Auto*. "Video games," Toscano argues, "consciously and unconsciously reflect phallocentric desires," allowing (often male) gamers to indulge in power fantasies in which they assume the identi-

ties of a god-like, hypermasculine hero who gets to exert his will over the virtual world and the many hypersexualized female non-player characters (NPCs) who inhabit it (94). These male heroes often are allowed to indulge in blatantly sexist and hyperviolent activities with impunity, as "video games sanitize the real-world potential for injury or death," and murdering a sex-worker in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* often incurs no in-game legal repercussions (and the game even rewards players by letting them retrieve their money after having paid for sex) (100, 103). Even in examples like *Tomb Raider*, in which the player avatar is a hypersexualized Lara Croft rather than a more traditionally hypermasculine protagonist, the male gaze lingers in the (often male) gamer's desire to control Croft's body as sexualized "eye candy" during gameplay (97).

Lastly, in chapter six, "Video Games and the Neoliberal Hero," Toscano explores the ways in which many video games "allow gamers to indulge in the fantasy of the American Dream," often putting players in a position of starting "from nothing" and providing them avenues through which to become gods by bootstrapping in worlds often exemplary of de-regulated, neoliberal fantasy playgrounds (113). CJ, the protagonist of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas,* is Toscano's main example, beginning the game with nothing but a bike and the tank-top on his back to later achieving extreme financial excess (115). As Toscano points out, "In the *Grand Theft Auto (GTA)* series, players make tremendous amounts of money and never pay taxes, yet the roads are paved, police stay employed, and someone cleans up all the dead bodies and destroyed cars left behind," indicating a world in which the benefits of modern society are taken as a given and for which the individual need not make any concessions (119). Similarly, games like *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag* and game franchises like *Fallout* gloss over the deadly complications of their fully de-regulated pirate utopias or post-apocalyptic wastelands, instead choosing to reward "entrepreneurial" and "industrious" gamers with hidden treasure and increasingly bigger weapons (124, 127). Toscano ends by reiterating that his cultural studies approach to critiquing video games is not mutually exclusive to a procedural rhetoric approach, and that in the future scholars should pursue both avenues of games studies rather than continuing to avoid the cultural studies route as they traditionally have.

The strength of Toscano's handling of various cultural, critical, and media subjects throughout this book lies in the simplicity of his argument's foundation (that "video games are products of the culture from which they come"), and with his constant reintroduction of this assertion and how it informs his position on the subject at hand, whether it be questions of real-world violence or ideological reproductions

of patriarchal and neoliberal worldviews. In addition to arguing for the relevance of cultural studies approaches to video game research, Toscano helpfully demonstrates what this approach looks like through his handling of franchises like *Civilization* and *Grand Theft Auto*, providing a blueprint that future game studies scholars interested in a cultural studies approach might build on. In the moments where the text comes close to making seemingly universal claims about video games as a medium, Toscano wisely qualifies his claims as referring to specific games that showcase larger trends in gaming culture, anticipating objections that make examples of video games that don't perform the ideological work he is critical of here. Toscano's approach thus leaves the door open for future discussions of when and why certain games may not fit into the larger trends he identifies, or even how the video game industry may be transforming in contrast to many of these longstanding trends. The blend of various critical approaches at play in this book is especially on display when Toscano handles both empirical data/statistics and rhetorical analysis of the claims based on such data, as he does in chapter two's discussion of the various attempts critics have made to draw connections between violent video games and real-world violence. Toscano's work provides a promising look into what game studies can look like when scholars embrace an interdisciplinary approach to video game criticism and move beyond anxieties about the legitimacy of cultural studies approaches to video game research.

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Wonderworks: Literary Invention and the Science of Stories. By Angus Fletcher. Simon & Schuster, 2021. xii + 449 pp. $19.99 (paperback).

Three questions haunt literature studies as discipline. What is literature good for? What good comes out of analyzing literature? What does analyzing literary texts even mean? At different points in time, scholars of literary studies have responded to each question in different ways. Those who believe that literature is a part of and a reflection

of society have pushed for different ways of examining themes and representation of society in texts. Those who think of literature as pleasure have provoked interest in the way this pleasure is evoked. Amidst these diverse pursuits of politics, ethics, form, and meaning in literature, Angus Fletcher's *Wonderworks: Literary Invention and the Science of Stories* is a refreshing look at the uses of literature in terms of its impact on the functioning of the brain, emotional awareness, and one's capacity to cope with everyday life. In the process of uncovering the working of twenty-five literary devices and techniques, Fletcher has opened up new ways of doing literary history, of connecting literary texts across time and space in ways that suggest new possibilities in praxis of world literature or comparative literature, of foregrounding a new relationship between the reader and the text, and of updating traditional discourse about literature as an abstract, undefinable entity by connecting it with the contemporary rhetoric of technology and innovation in ways that leave one dazzled. Each of these contributions merits some discussion.

Fletcher's framing of literary devices is psychological. It is not a formal intervention. For instance, satire, in the way he frames it, is not a genre but a supplier of "Socratic up aboveness and pain-quenching neuropharmacologies" (79) in our brain to help us laugh at something with others. Instead of dwelling on the textual dimensions of how irony unfolds the meaning of a satirical text (or lets the meaning remain suspended), Fletcher calls the genre of satire a "serenity elevator": by reading a work of satire, readers give themselves an opportunity to "lift [themselves] out of [their] mortal troubles and . . . woes" (81). It helps one laugh at oneself and in the process "releases feel-good neuro-opioids and drops our blood level of cortisol, diminishing stress. And in the long-term, laughing at ourselves reduces anxiety, nurtures emotional resilience, and helps us bond with other people" (79). The book is full of such concepts that take a literary form or device and turn it into a psychological mechanism and an inspiration for readers of literature to do better, think better, and live better.

Fletcher's genius does not lie in the way he connects the abstract humanism of reading with concrete neuroscience alone. His method is an interesting exercise in literary history as well. Literary history now seems to be a long lost project in the sense of attempting a cohesive chronological account and narrative of who wrote what, when, and under which conditions, put together by an omniscient and well-read scholar-historian. Now such information is easily available online. Literary history is now a collaborative effort with experts working on different super-specific subjects. However, reading Fletcher reminds one of the old magisterial yet absolutely credible voice of the literary

historian: he connects works—including films—from different periods and regions. The first chapter about the idea of the narrator's voice as one of the earliest innovations in storytelling has *The Iliad* as an example and goes on to include *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Beloved*, Ridley Scott's film *Gladiator* and the recent series *Gray's Anatomy* and *Game of Thrones*.

Connecting such diverse texts across time and space may sound ludicrous but Fletcher has a method in place: the method of connection-making suggests new possibilities in praxis of world literature or comparative literature. None of these texts he puts together as samples of the power of narratorial voice might be obviously similar to each other but Fletcher finds in them the property of the "feeling of connection to a cosmic human community" (41) helping the reader gather courage, feel inspired, and overcome fear. In another instance, Fletcher discusses free indirect discourse as a literary technology. Largely associated with Jane Austen, free indirect discourse, as Fletcher frames it, is the intermingling of two or more voices flowing in the satirist's performance of ventriloquy. But Fletcher finds it in Horace, *The Canterbury Tales*, and recent works of romance fiction such as Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto*, Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife*, Nicole Krauss's *The History of Love*, André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name* and so on. This mode of comparison does something more than establish similarities.

The narrative that Fletcher weaves to bind these diverse texts foregrounds a new relationship between the reader and the text. In this narrative, Austen's deploying of irony through free indirect discourse works in a specific way on readers: they may not be able to express it and literary critics too may point towards it in terms of formal or socio-political implications of the technique but seen in the light of the new reader and text connections, the actual impact materializes in the readers' brains. What he says about free indirect discourse works as a good representation of Fletcher's approach with all twenty-five literary techniques:

> [It] draws us into experiencing an intimate human connection alongside a wry detachment from the greater world. Which is to say: it opens our heart to other people without duping us into mistaking our own desires for the laws of reality.
>
> This neural duality is very healthy. It gives us all the psychological benefits of love—joy, energy, enthusiasm for life—while protecting us from the heartbreak suffered by romantic Quixotes. It helps us care—*with* care.

> And this isn't the only neural benefit of reading Austen. As psychologists have recently discovered, the free indirect style of *Emma* fosters a very different kind of love than *Pamela* does. Richardson's love technology makes our brain feel that Pamela is an extension of our own feelings; Austen's invention encourages our brain to recognize that Emma loves different things, in different ways, than we do. That is, unlike Richardson's novels, Austen's novels don't motivate us to embrace other people as versions of ourselves. Instead, Austen's stylistic fusion of intimate disclosure and ironic detachment inspires us to embrace other people while acknowledging that those people have their own distinct needs and desires. So, when we read *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, or *Emma*, our neural circuitry is guided into loving others for who they are, not for what we want them to be. (180, italics original)

While pleasures of reading Austen are certainly many—and an opportunity to laugh at the stupid things that love can make one do might be the only one sufficient to keep one going back to Austen—Fletcher's listing of neural benefits recalibrates what readers do with a text (or how texts work on the readers).

Finally, Fletcher's most engaging contribution to drawing attention to the relevance of reading literature lies in syncing the idiom of technology and innovation with uses of literature. In this sensibility, producing (and thereby consuming) literature is not a pastime but a technology that looks inward to help humanity survive (unlike the regular notion of gadgets and applications as technology that help one address the problems of the outside world).

To return to the questions asked of literature studies as a discipline, I would argue that Angus Fletcher's book, written for an audience much wider than scholars of literature studies, certainly helps in reading and understanding literature as a value in itself. If Plato's *Republic* does not have space for poets, what chance do literary critics stand in contemporary society and politics? It is in this context that one would want to appreciate *Wonderworks* as a great exposition of literature emerging from outside the discipline of literature studies. Its premise is that literature is beneficial, even medicinally. It is beneficial but not just in the broad, humanistic sense of the term. It helps in specific psychological ways, working on emotions, moods, attitudes, holding up. It is also a fragment of a larger project on recovering insights into practice of literature wiped out by philosophers who thought of sophistry as rhetoric and thereby as wordplay. The maligning of literature as twice removed from reality, speaking of angry gods, and misleading people

continues in the way literature is perceived. Fletcher points out that this maligning has a very specific history: it emerged when philosophers chose to focus on the argument rather than the way an argument is made, thereby erasing the possibilities of conscious attention to the way literary technologies develop. He claims that there are thousands of such literary technologies waiting to be uncovered. One hopes that this trajectory is further pursued not just by those collaborating with him on the science and art of storytelling but by readers, champions, and scholars of literature everywhere.

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Flat-World Fiction: Digital Humanity in Early Twenty-First-Century America. By Liliana M. Naydan. University of Georgia Press, 2021. x + 230 pp. $30.95 (paperback).

The internet and technology in general open up a world of possibilities to users. New experiences, new points of view, and the freedom to post or create whatever you wish are all made possible thanks to the internet and advancements such as texting, video chat, and more. It's highly unlikely that these statements are anything new to most readers. Such concepts are commonly accepted and claims to the contrary are few and far between. Yet a contrary position is exactly what author Liliana M. Naydan presents in her recent book, *Flat-World Fiction: Digital Humanity in Early Twenty-First-Century America*. In the aforementioned work, Naydan looks at an array of speculative fiction pieces by contemporary authors who concern themselves with the internet and the digital world at large. As Naydan puts it, these authors "negotiate with false notions that technological progress equals American or human progress [. . .] They also negotiate with the increasing prevalence of digital devices and media, both of which metaphorically digitize humanity and which Friedman sees as metaphorically flattening the world" (179). This idea of flattening is, as the title might indicate, a major concern of the work and the authors discussed within. While common sense might lead one to believe that the plethora of experiences and opinions found online foster diversity, Naydan explores lit-

erature that demonstrates the flattening that can occur when freedom of expression is assumed on online platforms where capitalist systems and government interests often control the flow of information. This flattening can also refer to the way that the dissociative nature of presenting one's self online can lead to out-of-character or immoral behavior. As Naydan explains at the very opening of the text: "This book addresses representations of the digital revolution and the social and ethical concerns that it created and continues to create in mainstream literary American fiction and fiction written about the United States" (1). Furthermore, the literary works Naydan discusses often contain critiques of the way in which the digital world fosters misinformation. In explicating this issue, Naydan points to another "flatness": "[. . .] the rise of flat earthers due to YouTube highlights a second noteworthy paradox of the times: the notion that an increase in access to information produces a more educated or intelligent society or a better United States when it paradoxically may not" (5). These various forms of flattening are all addressed by the author in turn, in her analyses of contemporary speculative works by such writers as Thomas Pynchon, Jonathan Safran Foer, Mohsin Hamid, and more.

The specific authors and works covered in the first chapter of *Flat World Fiction* include both Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story* and Kristen Roupenian's "Cat Person." This is a sensible place for Naydan to begin as the connecting thread between the analyses of the two aforementioned texts is the way in which people form relationships with technology. Naydan pays special attention to the way in which Roupenian's protagonists, Robert and Margot, interact over text. They might view texting as a tool to maintain their relationship, but Naydan notes that this is not the case:

> Roupenian intimates that the paradoxical condition that the digital-age lovers inhabit—a condition in which they both know one another and utterly lack knowledge about one another—fuels the formation of assumptions, stereotypes, and categorizations of behavior that are largely rooted in screen-mediated representations of reality, which complement the false reality that text messages create. (35)

In this case, the flattening that occurs is the over-simplification of identity and a lack of nuance in understanding between parties. In other words, while the couple involved may believe that technology maintains or enhances their relationship, the reality is that the methods of communication enabled by technological advancement cause misunderstandings that will likely result in relationship problems later

on. Naydan also notes how such simplifications or flattenings of identity or personhood are explored at length in Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story.* To demonstrate this, Naydan points to the character of Joshie who "reflects the U.S. obsession with youth through the cutting-edge dechronification treatments he undergoes, adopts youthful ways of being [. . .] living in a room filled with science fiction books that look like an adolescent's, and by speaking and writing as a digital citizen" (27). Here the digital world and technology enable Joshie to construct a cultivated identity for himself that reads like a flat stereotype. In presenting this example from Shteyngart's piece alongside the relationship between the characters of Robert and Margot in Kristen Roupenian's "Cat Person," Naydan illustrates how technology might inadvertently simplify a complex person without their knowledge or else be used to purposefully simplify one's self to fit a specific concept or ideal.

The second chapter explores similar concepts in Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge* and Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* with a greater focus on American history and technological development. Naydan's coverage of Pynchon's work is particularly insightful and addresses issues of warmongering, capitalism, nostalgia, productivity, patriotism, and terrorism. Naydan opens by introducing Pynchon's piece with the following: "As a meditation on the historical significance of the 9/11 terrorist attack and arguably Pynchon's most robust consideration of modern technology, *Bleeding Edge* hypothesizes that the internet resembles the rocket. It is a brainchild of the Cold War that might provide Americans with an opportunity for transcendence or self-destruction" (47). Naydan adds detail with a plethora of textual examples that depict characters lured in by a sense of nostalgia and unwittingly persuaded to support nationalist and capitalist interests that they might not have otherwise endorsed. The aforementioned subject of 9/11 and associated ideas of terrorism are intertwined with nostalgia for the divisive mentalities and justifications prevalent during the Cold-War era. This concept is not only active throughout Pynchon's text, but also in Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad.* Naydan notes that according to Egan's piece, "[. . .] the primary driving forces in the dramatic technological and broader national transformations [. . .] include twentieth-century American capitalism that seeks to retain U.S. prominence through technological development and other means and twenty-first-century Islamist terrorism as a violent response to American capitalism" (65).

While chapter three also focuses on American culture, it does so specifically in reference to tradition and time as found in religious practices or institutions, along with the concepts of nostalgia and perceived morality. Naydan addresses religion and the digital world pri-

marily while exploring Joshua Ferris's *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour* and nostalgia in her discussion of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Here I Am*. Ferris's work in particular portrays American culture as rife with religious fervor and associated compulsions. However, Naydan notes that these zealous compulsions and seemingly religious obsessions have attached themselves to technology: "Ferris portrays ways in which religious impulses persist as part of American identities, particularly for Americans who deify digital devices and media [. . .] Ferris [. . .] spotlights ways in which digital devices and media provide opportunities for the transcendence of everyday physical experience while disconnecting individuals from communities" (78). Naydan includes Ferris's many critiques of the digital devices worshipped by oblivious Americans, from a lack of connection with their surroundings to an inability to question the morality of behaviors performed on or influenced by those on digital devices or social media platforms: "Foer complements his critique of the degradation of dialogue at the hands of digitization with an interrogation of the effect digitization has on ethical sensibilities [. . .] He suggests that [. . .] the digital age creates new kinds of ethical dilemmas" via the "narrator's narration of Jacob's thoughts about his family's reliance on digital devices and media" (98).

Although chapter four is certainly still concerned with American life and the digital world, the specific area of concern therein is cybercapitalism. To examine critiques of cybercapitalism in literature, Naydan turns to Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis* and Dave Eggers's *The Circle*. DeLillo, Naydan explains,

> flattens or blurs distinctions between [. . .] elements of existence in his text to underscore the fact that superficial approaches to seeing and reading as digital technology encourages them have material effects that serve global capitalism alone. For instance, he portrays professional and personal endeavors as indistinguishable to showcase the way in which the disappearance of a work-life balance for Americans serves corporations, not people. (119)

Naydan connects DeLillo's work with that of Eggers by exploring the lives of those who serve global capitalism. Eggers demonstrates that "humans who serve corporate interests and merge with digital devices or outright become equivalent to them emerge as increasingly less capable of creating meaningful as opposed to superficial, digital-age connections with one another" (137). Due to these insightful analyses of the human psyche and economics, *Flat-World Fiction* would be an

excellent resource for scholars in those fields looking to write on connections between their own subjects and contemporary literature.

Chapter five, the final chapter excluding the conclusion, shifts focus and discusses the complexities of national divisions and concepts of connectedness or globalization. Naydan looks at the way these ideas are explored in Zadie Smith's "Meet the President!" and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. Naydan foregoes looking at globalization in a straight-forward manner or as a single, independent variable. Instead, she unpacks globalization in the aforementioned texts alongside other variables, from the psychological to the governmental. For example, Naydan writes that Smith "characterizes the global and the digital as a threat to humanity and humane impulses, which, ideally national governments should exhibit" (154) while "Hamid showcases different approaches to negotiating the addictive nature of digital technology in his fiction" (165).

As a whole, *Flat-World Fiction: Digital Humanity in Early Twenty-First-Century America* is a collection of well-explored analyses of contemporary texts that speak to the digital world and its effect on society and the individual. Naydan's explication of the technological flattening of identity may interest not only academics in literary studies, but also those in media studies or cultural studies exploring human-technology interactions and the representation or curation of the digital self. Furthermore, the detailed sections on class, national identity, terrorism, and moral inclination may be of use to academics in economics and philosophy. While *Flat-World Fiction* is a text meant to explore a few, specific pieces of contemporary science fiction, the book as a whole has many applications thanks to Naydan's detail and depth.

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