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San José Studies embarks on its twelfth year of publication in 1986. The current issue closes 1985 and introduces a new editor. Each of the previous editors performed their tasks so well that grateful accolades and well earned advancement awaited after each had served little more than five years: Arlene Okerlund became and remains dean of the School of Humanities and the Arts at San Jose State University and Selma R. Burkcom is now associate dean in the Office of Faculty Affairs. We are fortunate to have had their leadership and that of Ellen C. Weaver, associate editor since 1975 and professor of biological sciences here.

The new editor, Fauneil J. Rinn, brings to the journal a background in professional journalism as well as academia. Professor of political science at San Jose State since 1971, she was copy editor for the Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times and edited publications for Public Administration Clearing House in Chicago before coming here in 1960. Currently she is an executive editor of College Teaching. To help her attract and evaluate a range of articles, fiction, and poetry, Harold J. DeBey, professor of chemistry at SJSU, and Allison Heisch, associate professor here in the Department of English and the American Studies and Humanities Programs, will be the new associate editors, joining Billie Barnes Jensen, professor of history and American studies at SJSU, an associate editor for more than a decade.

O.C. Williams, professor emeritus of English and Humanities, will continue to supply wise counsel and excellent management from his post as chair of the Committee of Trustees, where he has served since the beginning.
Robert H. Woodward  
1925–1985

Professor Robert H. Woodward’s sudden and unexpected death this past August has deeply grieved the many friends who came to know him during his 30 years at San Jose State University. He served the University effectively in many capacities.

We honor Bob especially for his service to San José Studies. He was a member of the founding committee of this journal, co-directed preparation of our five-year indexes, and co-edited the 1975 special Steinbeck issue. Ten years later he compiled the descriptive catalogue that was the Winter, 1985, issue. He served on our Board of Trustees from the beginning in 1974 and had been board secretary since 1979. But there are, as well, other compelling reasons to pay him tribute.

When the University Club was able to burn its mortgage last spring and take full ownership of its house on Eighth Street, members knew that Bob had made that important step possible during his years as their treasurer and president.

From 1974, Bob devoted his intelligence, tact, and organizing skills to the School of Humanities and the Arts, serving as acting dean and as associate dean to Deans Faus, Bruinsma, and Okerlund. He well understood university procedures. Gentle and kind, he seldom raised his voice but, rather, his quiet humor lightened the air wherever he was.
Bob came from two years at Indiana University to join the Department of English here. As chair at a period of great growth, 1962–1966, he brought to the job his good judgment and sense of order, establishing procedures that the department has continued to use. As graduate advisor in English, 1970–74, he made the necessary changes that have kept the program running smoothly ever since.

A generation of teachers and students used Bob’s freshman composition text, _The Craft of Prose_. He researched and published extensively on the lives and works of Harold Frederic, Jack London, and other American writers of the century’s turn. And he was a Hemingway aficionado. Like Hemingway, he loved his cats. (Bob’s were Tiger and Princess.) During World War II, he volunteered to serve as a paratrooper precisely _because_ he was afraid of heights. Maybe that kind of response in himself was another reason for his liking Hemingway so much.

Bob considered it an honor to have been able to earn a doctorate, to be a published scholar, to be a teacher, and to be part of the university community. These attitudes found reflection in his quiet dignity.

Bob Woodward will be very much missed by his friends and colleagues.
ARTICLES
Politics and the Movies: The Early Thirties

Terry Christensen

THE advent of sound in 1927 laid the groundwork for an extraordinary period in the history of American film. By 1930, 23,000 movie theaters—the most ever in the U.S.—were screening films for an average of 90 million people a week, a figure surpassed only in the late Forties. Hollywood was churning out over 500 films a year to meet this incredible demand, an output made possible by the factory-like production methods of the ever-growing studios, which also owned the theaters they were servicing.

The massive demand and huge volume of films resulted in a diversity of content and subject matter matched only by the late Sixties and early Seventies, by which time both production volume and audiences had shrunk to less than half the peak of the Thirties. The simple need for movies to feed the system may account in part for the number of political films produced during the early Thirties because the demand for stories may have made producers more willing to take a chance on message movies.

But it was also an intensely political era, with the Great Depression plunging the nation to the depths and Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal coming to the rescue. The turmoil left its mark on the movies. The Depression brought a questioning of traditional values, of faith in the rewards for hard work, and of the fairness of the whole American system. This questioning showed up in a number of social issue films of the early Thirties. At first, these films were cynical and despairing, offering no hope for salvation. But soon they grew more optimistic, offering simple solutions that usually suggested reliance on a strong leader. Some hinted at fascism, but others seemed to promote FDR’s New Deal and, in fact, once the New Deal was entrenched, the output of social criticism and political films by Hollywood almost ceased.

American film-makers were growing more aware of their power, too,
and as the decade progressed, they flirted more directly with politics and politicians. Still, they worried about government regulation of their industry and so pushed self-censorship to its peak. At the same time, a coherent political left was emerging in Hollywood through the organization of unions, a phenomenon much dreaded by the studio bosses and one that laid the foundation for political activity and controversy later in the decade.

But the Thirties started more simply and gently with righteous social issue movies, cynical films about politics, and the establishment of musicals and gangster movies as genres.

Social Cynicism

One of the first big hits of the sound era was a political movie intended by its producer to be "a great work for peace," bringing "home the wastefulness of war." Over a hundred million people have seen All Quiet on the Western Front (1930), a hit then and now with audiences and critics alike. The New York Times, noting the devastating effect the film's battle sounds had on audiences, ranked it among the best movies of 1930. The film industry must have liked it, too, because it won Academy Awards for best picture and best direction, marking the beginning of a dynasty of Oscars for message movies.

It seems hard to believe now that a film with the evils of war as its theme could have been such a hit. Taken from Erich Maria Remarque's novel, the film told the story of a German soldier in World War I. It was a disillusioned view of the war, clearly pacifist and anti-war in its message. In a way, it was a replay of the greatest box office success of the silent era, The Big Parade (1925), and of the horrors of war portrayed by Birth Of A Nation (1915). All Quiet On The Western Front was more radical, however, because it focused not on an American victim of the war, but on a highly sympathetic German (played by American actor Lew Ayres), whose ghastly experiences were quite similar to those of the central character of The Big Parade. (See illustration) All Quiet went a little further than the earlier film, however, in that the soldiers at one point speculate on the causes of war, something easier done with the dialogue of a sound film than images and titles of a silent. One young soldier blames national leaders; another says it's pride; a third blames those who profit from war; a fourth opines that things just get out of hand. These messages seem surprisingly progressive today. But All Quiet was made for a nation fully committed to isolationism and the avoidance of foreign entanglements, so it was really just supporting a currently popular policy. All Quiet may also have seemed safe to conservative Hollywood producers because it criticized something distant, both historically and geographically.

The high-minded message of All Quiet On The Western Front was not so
Lew Ayres looks back toward home as the young German soldier in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), Universal.

National Film Archive, London
common or popular in the early Thirties as movies about low-life. The
gangster film was so well received that it became a genre during this
period. Movies like *Little Caesar* (1930) and *The Public Enemy* (1930) were
about crime and violence on the surface—and there’s no doubt that that’s
what sold tickets—but they also dealt with class and ethnic conflict and
showed an emerging cynicism about how well the American system was
working. Could the system save itself from the Depression? Could ethnic
minorities and the lower class count on the system to save them? The
gangster movies weren’t very hopeful; about the best you could do, they
seemed to say, was to stand up and die honorably, guns blazing. The
gangsters were outsiders, usually pushed to the extreme. If they were
punished in the end—as Hollywood’s own censors demanded—it wasn’t
until they’d first been seen with some sympathy, even admiration, and
the frequent suggestion that society made them what they were. “The
gangster film,” David Thomson has written, “pandered to the poor, the
dispossessed, the outcasts, allowing them to enjoy a vengeful destruc­
tiveness turned on the systems that had rejected them” while the endings
of the movies pretended to disapprove.² It should also be recalled that
W. C. Fields, Mae West, and the Marx Brothers were in their primes at this
time and that no nobody challenged traditional values, from morality to
authority, as much as they did.

Like the gunfire of the gangster movies, the songs and thudding tap
dances of the musical, the other popular genre of the early Thirties,
celebrated sound. And like the gangster movies, the musicals had a social
message, although a rather different one. Musicals presented, appropriately, the up-beat side of the Depression, which is not to say they
were just whistling in the dark. Rather, they were about the success that
could be obtained by groups of people working together to overcome
adversity. *Footlight Parade* (1933), *42nd Street* (1933), *The Gold Diggers Of
1933* and *1935* and other films portrayed groups pulling together,
although at least one critic has said that directors like the one played by
James Cagney in *Footlight Parade* were suggestive of dependence on a
strong leader like FDR.³ While the gangster films despaired, the musicals
were optimistic. Chorus girls and boys could become stars; we could all
make it if we tried, these movies seemed to say. Instead of giving up and
going out with a blast, like Little Caesar, we could work hard and succeed.
The system could be made to function and the barriers of class could be
surmounted, at least if we all submitted to the robotic choreography
contrived by the likes of Busby Berkeley.

Many of the gangster and musical films came from Warner Bros., which
has been called “the workingman’s studio,” not only because of the
audience it aimed for but also because of the content of the films, some of
which had more obvious and explicit social comment than most other
examples of the two popular genres. The head of the studio was Jack
Warner, probably the most liberal and political of all the studio bosses. He was a friend and ally of President Roosevelt and ardent supporter of the New Deal. Warner helped with FDR’s California campaign in 1932 and is said to have been offered a diplomatic appointment as a reward; later, FDR called on Warner for films to aid the war effort.

Given the known political predilections of Jack Warner, it seems likely that he personally approved the making of *I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang* (1932) in part because of its possible impact in a presidential year. This Warner Bros. production directed by Mervyn LeRoy (*Little Caesar*) was a deeply pessimistic and depressing study of the victimization of an innocent man by the American legal system. Paul Muni played the fugitive, driven further and further outside society and unable, despite his greatest efforts, to overcome the forces against him. Unlike most films of the era, *Chain Gang* made no attempt at a happy ending. The fugitive is a victim throughout. No wonder the film wasn’t a box office hit. Still, it was a modest success with audiences and critics, even though some objected to its simplistic caricatures of the insensitive people who drove the fugitive to desperation. With Academy Awards for best film and best actor (Muni), *Chain Gang* demonstrated again the willingness of the film industry to honor “serious” or “message” movies.

*Wild Boys Of The Road* (1933) took a similar view of victimization but concentrated on juvenile itinerants of the Depression, boys who hit the road when their parents had no work. Directed by William Wellman (*Public Enemy*), *Wild Boys* had a happy ending as a judge sets the boys straight. By 1933, Andrew Bergman argues, the nation was looking for such “benevolent authorities.” Hollywood provided them in the movies and Washington had FDR in the role, with the New Deal becoming a hero in both locales.

The “New Deal film par excellence,” according to Nick Roddick, was *Massacre* (1934), a Warner Bros. “crusade” movie about oppressed Indians and corrupt agents. The federal government, symbol of the New Deal, steps in to save the righteous Indians from their exploiters, just as it would step in to save the nation.

**Shysters and Saviors**

Explicitly political films—movies dealing with government and elected officials—nearly became a genre in the early Thirties, reflecting the nation’s dissatisfaction with the way it had been governed by Hoover’s complacent Republicans and its search for new solutions and a new leader. But these political films of the early Thirties were pretty cynical about the possibilities of any improvements. They projected the nation’s disillusionment, holding out little hope. Most of them presented politicians as crooks and shysters; only later were a few portrayed as saviors.
Several of these explicitly political movies were comedies, among them *Politics* (1931). The formidable Marie Dressler, then Hollywood’s number one box office draw, played the housekeeper of a politically ambitious society matron. But when Dressler criticizes the incumbent mayor, the women of the town draft her rather than her mistress (Polly Moran) to run against him, going on strike as part of their campaign. The withholding of their labor and their favors, along with the revelation that the mayor is a front for local gangsters, brings an election victory for the housekeeper, making *Politics* one of the most up-beat political films of the period. Its mildly feminist politics, with the happy ending assured by the solidarity of her sisters, was unusual for the early Thirties. The underlying message was that the people—even women—could win. But the critics didn’t dwell on that message; they praised the movie as a comedy.

The following year produced two more political comedies. *The Phantom President* (1932) was a musical comedy of little consequence, a tale of mistaken identity between a presidential candidate and an entertainer (George M. Cohan) with Claudette Colbert as the love interest. By contrast, *The Dark Horse* (1932) was a greater popular and critical success with a lot more to say about politics. A naive nobody played by Guy Kibbee, who would become a favorite casting choice for such parts, is nominated for governor and ruthlessly packaged by Warren William and Bette Davis. Among other things, the candidate is coached always to answer the press, “Yes—and again, no.” *Photoplay* called *The Dark Horse* “a grand political satire” and affirmed its message: “Politicians tell us it’s the truth as much as satire.” *The New York Times* liked it, too, suggesting that it was possibly based on President Warren G. Harding. The film still rings true to some extent, possibly because today we’re even more aware of the packaging of candidates. Its message was not all that different from that of *The Candidate* (1972); but funny as *The Dark Horse* made that message, it was nonetheless cynical: Politics was all “contrivance and deception,” not a very nice thing and certainly not a means of salvation.

The same year saw two more serious political films, *The Washington Merry-Go-Round* (1932) and *Washington Masquerade* (1932). In the former, reform Congressman Button Gwinnett Brown, played by Lee Tracy (later the President in 1964’s *The Best Man*) is elected and finds Washington saturated with corruption. When he speaks out, he’s unseated in a fraudulent recount. Then a sympathetic senator comes to his rescue. The senator is murdered, but the truth comes out and the evil boss who’s behind it all kills himself. Good triumphs and all is well. Much the same thing happens in *Washington Masquerade*. Lionel Barrymore, as Kansas Senator Jefferson Keane, “the People’s Choice,” fights “the Interests” who are behind a corrupt water project. (The movies have been obsessed with water rip-offs from the silents to 1974’s *Chinatown*, probably because
the film industry is based in Los Angeles where water and corruption are synonymous.) Anyway, the bad guys set an evil woman on Jefferson Keane. She seduces him, talking him into resigning, but in the end he saves his reputation and the country by testifying against "the Interests" before he dies.

Both of these Washington melodramas were modestly successful. The New York Times picked Washington Merry-Go-Round as one of the "notable productions" of 1932, a "sturdy melodrama," and called Washington Masquerade "a good report" on the nation's politics, a conclusion that was rather appalling, given the film's message. William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper magnate, had a rather different reaction to Washington Merry-Go-Round, however. Offended because the character of a publisher in the film looked like him, Hearst ordered his many publications to ban ads for films by the movie's producer, Walter Wanger.

Like the comedies, the melodramas presented politics as corrupt through and through, but they said something else as well. They had a solution: a good and courageous man. Button Gwinnett Brown in Washington Merry-Go-Round and Jefferson Keane in Washington Masquerade were both naive country boys who believed in Democracy and the American Way in a manner that the film-makers surely knew was corny, even in 1932. But the country boys took their chances and, in the end, they triumphed. The message was that the system worked and that it only took one good man (preferably from the country rather than the city) to make it function correctly. The vision was positive, but the films ignored the possibilities either that no such individual would be around or that he might not be strong enough to persevere and overcome the surrounding, systemic evil. Their evident faith was that there would always be one such man, a faith shared by many subsequent films about politics.

Gabriel Over The White House (1933) presented rather a different political solution to the troubles of the time. While its director, Gregory La Cava, is best remembered for his light comedies, Gabriel moves from whimsical fantasy to less amusing implications that a fascist leader could solve the nation's problems. Walter Wanger, its producer, was probably a greater influence than La Cava on the message of the movie. Wanger, who had served on President Wilson's staff at the Paris Peace Conference, was a friend of President Roosevelt and one of Hollywood's most political producers (The Washington Merry-Go-Round, The President Vanishes, Blockade). Wanger's project was aided and abetted by another great admirer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, publisher William Randolph Hearst. As noted, just a year before, Hearst had banned advertising for Wanger's movies in his newspapers and magazines, but their shared enthusiasm for Roosevelt and Hearst's interest in film-making brought them together for Gabriel. Hearst is said to have been instrumental in the
And the movie they made was truly remarkable. *Gabriel* is the story of a political hack named Jud Hammond (Walter Huston). He becomes president by cutting all the right deals and plans to stay in office by paying off all the right people with jobs and contracts, showing little interest in solving the problems of depression and crime faced by the country and dismissing unemployment as "a local problem." Then when he has an accident while taking a wild, speedy joy-ride in the country (symbolic of an economy out of control, says one critic), the angel Gabriel sees to it that the hack is transformed into a benevolent leader, fully committed to solving the nation's problems by the most efficient means possible. It turns out that this involves handing all the power over to him. Using radio as his communication medium (a technique FDR was just beginning to exploit at the time), Jud inspires the nation, gets the powers he wants from Congress, which he then suspends, and proceeds to feed the hungry, eradicate unemployment, and end crime by declaring martial law and sending out the army to destroy the gangsters (the only cause of crime) by putting them before firing squads without benefit of trial. He then turns to the problem of war and solves that, too, by bullying the rest of the world into joining the United States in disarmament. When the other nations comply, he blows up the Navy. Once the problems of the nation and the world are solved, the angel Gabriel disposes of the President, presumably to protect us from dictatorship, and all is well.

*Gabriel* premiered just before President Roosevelt took office. It was an instant hit, becoming one of the big box office draws of 1933 and winning critical approval. "For its uncannily prophetic foreshadowing of the spirit of President Roosevelt's first month in office ... for putting into film what scores of millions think our government should do," gushed *Photoplay*, "this will unquestionably be one of this year's most talked-of pictures." *The New York Times*, *Variety*, and *The Hollywood Reporter* loved it, too, although, like *Photoplay*, other critics tended to think President Hammond's projects were "to put it mildly, highly imaginative."

When MGM boss Louis B. Mayer and Will Hays, the man the studios had hired to make sure the content of their films was safe, saw an early screening of *Gabriel*, they were appalled, not because of its fascist implication, but because they were staunch Republicans and they saw the film as pro-Roosevelt. Hays warned that the film would cause "affront" and Mayer took *Gabriel* in hand, reshooting some scenes and revising others to tone it down a bit. Mayer and Hays thought President Hammond was rather too much like Warren G. Harding, a hack if there ever was one and a popular target. As Mayer and Hays feared, members of Congress were outraged—not surprisingly, since the film made Congress irrelevant. The State Department didn't like *Gabriel*, either, and reputedly requested that the war scenes be cut. President Roosevelt, on the other hand, enjoyed

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the film and saw it several times.

Film scholars looking at the movie today see it as a clear expression of a nation longing for strong leadership and lurching towards fascism. Their case is strengthened because William Randolph Hearst, a fascist sympathizer, was a principal backer of the film. Certainly the movie proposed a dictatorship, albeit a benevolent one, and the police in the movie do behave in a distinctly fascist manner. But this view is probably an exaggeration of the intentions of the film-makers, who most likely merely wanted to praise and encourage President Roosevelt and amuse the audience. In most ways, Gabriel was like other American political films: it saw politics as dirty, dominated by shysters, and redeemable only by a miracle, such as the intervention of an angel. And as in other American political films, a single individual saved the nation. The masses were helpless and impotent. Gabriel was different from the other films, however, because it willingly, if perhaps comically, accepted the overthrow of even the pretense of democracy. In the preceding films, no such overthrow was even a vague possibility. Perhaps this made Gabriel fascist or perhaps it was a more realistic perception of the magnitude of the crisis the nation faced.

Producer Wanger followed Gabriel with The President Vanishes (1934), a more benign and less successful film with a more clearly leftist bias, perhaps clarifying his intent in Gabriel. The threat in The President Vanishes comes from the right when a coalition of big business, corrupt politicians, and fascist Grey Shirts plots to drag the U.S. into a war in Europe to make profits for the arms industry. Their mass public relations program nearly succeeds, but they are foiled when the President (Arthur Byron) fakes his own kidnapping and disappears on the very day Congress is set to declare war. Public sympathy turns to the President, and when he returns the country is mobilized for peace. While The President Vanishes was an overtly antifascist film, its covert message continued the pessimism about the functioning of American democracy. The public was easily manipulated first one way, then the other. Unlike the earlier movies, the truth wasn’t important in this film. The idea was that we can’t put our trust in the people because they’re too dumb to know what the truth is. Better to put our trust in a strong and benevolent leader, the film said. Once again, as in so many American political films, one man saved the day.

Although critics were less enthusiastic about The President Vanishes than they had been about Gabriel, Otis Ferguson of The New Republic called The President Vanishes “a healthy influence,” and reactions elsewhere were almost as intense as they had been to Gabriel. Audiences cheered in some theatres. Munitions dealers, on the other hand, called The President Vanishes “peace propaganda” and tried to have it suppressed, succeeding only in delaying its opening.
Other Visions

Although these films were in some respects radical, they were conservative in their faith in a strong leader rather than in the people collectively. In this sense, they were not much of an advance from D. W. Griffith’s attitude towards Abraham Lincoln in *Birth Of A Nation* (1915). It was King Vidor, the maker of *The Big Parade* (1925) and *The Crowd* (1928), who presented the alternative vision in the most radical film of the Thirties, *Our Daily Bread* (1934).

Improbably inspired by a *Reader’s Digest* article on collective farms, Vidor’s film (co-authored by Elizabeth Hall) is a story of the itinerant unemployed of the Depression. An all-American couple, Tom and Mary, take over a bankrupt farm after fleeing the hopeless life of unemployment in the city. At first, they try to make a go of it by themselves, but when other migrants wander in, they turn the farm into a co-op. Each of the other itinerants, it turns out, has a useful skill to offer—blacksmith, baker, cobbler, etc. Soon the pooling of skills creates a thriving little community, but it is nearly subverted by the arrival from the sinful city of a blonde temptress who lures Tom away from the collective endeavor. His conscience brings him back and the farm is saved when its irrigation problems are solved by a cooperative effort to build a ditch. The opening of the ditch is the film’s climax and its only great cinematic moment, done in a movingly dramatic montage sequence obviously influenced by Russian films such as *Potemkin* (1925).

The solidly collective politics of *Our Daily Bread* put it well out of the American mainstream, yet it was consistent with other films of the era in two ways. First, it was anti-urban. It said that the solution to the problems of the people was a return to the land and to rural values, a solution that was not realistic in the dust bowl days of the Depression. Furthermore, threats to *Our Daily Bread*’s rural enterprise were from city forces: a banker and the blond seductress. Secondly and more disappointingly, the film, despite its collective rhetoric, insisted on the need for a leader. The members of the co-op talk it over and decide they need “a strong boss,” settling by acclamation (not formal election) on Tom, the film’s FDR-figure, according to Andrew Bergman.9

Despite these lapses, *Our Daily Bread* is an impressive and unusual film. Remarkably, it was a modest success at the box office and even won some critical approval. *The New York Times* declared it “a brilliant declaration of faith in the importance of cinema as a social instrument . . . a social document of amazing vitality and emotional impact,” and concluded that “it is impossible to overestimate the significance of the new work.”10 Others called it “timely . . . worthwhile . . . satisfactory entertainment.”11 Most agreed on its worthiness but correctly pointed out that the acting and writing were turgid at best. Today it is the spirit of the film that holds
up, especially in the dazzling sequence where the people dig a long irrigation ditch together and then watch in triumph as the rushing water wets their parched land.

Vidor had great difficulty funding his production and went deeply into debt to get his limited budget together. The studios refused him and so did the banks—not surprisingly because the banks with their threats of foreclosure were the bad guys in the film. The progressive politics of Our Daily Bread thus became a limitation on its production qualities. Its politics also gave the film problems in finding an audience. Despite some good reviews, the right wing press gave it a hard time. The Hearst papers denounced it as “pinko,” and the Los Angeles Times refused to accept advertising for it. But it won awards from the League of Nations and the Soviet Union and eventually found enough of an audience to turn a small profit.

For all the difficulties and criticism, the political message of Our Daily Bread was not much more aggressive than that of some Depression musicals. It was a somewhat more explicit statement about pulling together in times of adversity and recognizing each individual’s contribution. But because of a weak script and cast, it hasn’t held up so well as the musicals except, of course, for the irrigation ditch sequence, a production number that would have done a less rigid Busby Berkeley proud. Still, Our Daily Bread and the musicals were about the only films that manifested faith in the people and in collective action. More typically, Hollywood relied on strong leaders and the people were seen and feared as a mob, stupid and sheeplike, as in Gabriel and The President Vanishes.

Indeed, the people do turn into lynch mobs in The Fury (1936) and They Won’t Forget (1937), victimizing innocent men. In They Won’t Forget, directed by Mervyn LeRoy (I Am A Fugitive From A Chain Gang and Little Caesar) and written by Robert Rossen and Abel Kandel, a cynical politician, smarmily played by Claude Rains, takes advantage of the mob’s anger to further his own ambitions; the press also comes in for harsh criticism for exploiting and enflaming the situation. The day is almost saved by a benign governor who pardons the wrongly-convicted victim, who is lynched anyway.

These films are deeply pessimistic both about the public and about the criminal justice system, which is shown as not working well at all. Yet they were meant to be progressive films, part of a national campaign against lynching, which had reached a sickeningly high rate in the early Thirties. But their message is as antagonistic to collective action per se as it is to lynching. For despite America’s revolutionary and democratic heritage and all the “we the people” rhetoric, American film-makers have a deep-seated fear of their audiences. Group endeavor is rarely depicted in the positive manner of Our Daily Bread. More often, the group turns into a lynch mob or passively follows venal leaders.
These movie themes may have reflected the American establishment's genuine fear of revolution in the Thirties when the Depression put the masses on the move. Left-wing movements and organizing reached a high point. Roosevelt's New Deal was, in some ways, a concession to these forces and, in others, an effort to by them off, thus preventing revolution. And the movies played their part in all this by consistently discouraging and almost never positively encouraging collective movements that challenged the nation's basic political and economic structures.

Besides their anti-mob message, *The Fury* and *They Won't Forget* are also reminders of Hollywood's avoidance of racial issues, in part a result of the tumultuous response to D. W. Griffith's racist epic *Birth of a Nation* (1915). It would seem logical for movies about lynchings to be anti-racist, which was probably their intent. But Hollywood caution impelled the filmmakers to choose white victims for both films, despite the fact that most real-life lynching victims were black. Maybe white victims were better box office for a mostly white audience, especially when one of them was Spencer Tracy (*The Fury*). Certainly, it was easier to elicit white sympathy for white victims. There is, however, a black character in *They Won't Forget*, a janitor who is bullied by white officials but refuses to give false testimony against the accused. The character is a straight black stereotype of the era, rolling his eyes in fear and slurring his speech. But at least he behaves honorably, which is more than can be said for most of the white characters in the film. While movie-makers generally avoided the subject of race so thoroughly that blacks appeared only as servants, it's worth noting that John Ford's *Arrowsmith* (1931), written by Sidney Howard, included a dignified black doctor who was treated sympathetically. But then he's Caribbean, not Afro-American.

Two other films of the era, *Black Fury* (1935) and *Black Legion* (1936) portray American working men led into misadventure by crooks. In *Black Fury*, a miner (Paul Muni) is duped into leading a strike by agents of a company that stands to make a profit by breaking up the strike. And in *Black Legion*, Humphrey Bogart joins a KKK-like, anti-foreigner group that turns out to be a profit-making venture for its organizer. Both films play on the foolishness of the people and how easily they can be misled. Both also manifest what Andrew Bergman labels the era's interest in "finding fall guys" or behind-the-scenes manipulators to blame for its problems. The strike-breaking company in *Black Fury*, the self-serving organizer in *Black Legion*, the munitions manufacturers in *The President Vanished* took the blame for all the problems of the Depression, an explanation that Bergman rightly argues was too simple.
Meanwhile, the politics of movie-making was getting more complex, and movie-makers were getting more political. In the early Thirties, some studios like Warner Bros. and Hearst-owned Cosmopolitan were enthusiastically pro-FDR, while other movie moguls like Louis B. Mayer at MGM stayed militantly Republican. These leanings and the disagreement with MGM about *Gabriel Over The White House* may have led Hearst to shift his Cosmopolitan studio's affiliation to Warners.

In 1934, the studios intervened in politics more blatantly than ever before or perhaps since. Upton Sinclair, the socialist novelist, had won the Democratic party nomination for governor of California and was running on a radical platform. He might have been elected except for a combined film and print media smear, the biggest up to that time. Led by the Hearst press, the state's right-wing newspapers accused Sinclair of communism, homosexuality, atheism, and just about everything else they could dream up. They were joined by the studios, which produced anti-Sinclair trailers that looked like newsreels and screened them in their theaters all over the state.

The Sinclair campaign and the New Deal divided Hollywood deeply for the first time, but it was only the beginning of divisions to follow. Film workers wanted unions but the producers resisted; no wonder their films showed a mistrust of mobs and rarely dealt with labor relations. Communism reached its height of popularity in the Thirties, too. The party grew in membership and Communists were elected to office in some parts of the country. This trend showed up in Hollywood, as Depression-radicalized liberals signed on with the C.P., and Communist organizers made Hollywood unions a special target. Sympathy for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, which broke out in 1936, also became a rallying point for the Hollywood left. All this brought left-wing activity in the film industry to its peak in the Thirties, although it was muted by wide support for FDR (from the left to the Hearsts), a growing fear of the Nazis, and, eventually, abhorrence of Soviet totalitarianism. These leftist leanings, however, rarely showed up on the screen.

Any effort to express left-wing politics on film might well have been quashed by Hollywood's self-censors anyway. The Hays Office was established by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) in 1922 (originally as the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America) after the Fatty Arbuckle sex scandals. The office was to monitor and censor film content, partly as a public relations gesture and partly out of fear of government censorship. Headed by Will H. Hays, a conservative Republican and former member of President Warren G. Harding's cabinet, the MPAA changed in the early Thirties from a toothless symbol of self-regulation to something more sinister because more powerful.
Concern about the social impact of films had been increasing for some time, but the films of the early Thirties brought that concern to fever pitch. The gangster movies were a special worry, with the establishment alleging that they encouraged the lower classes to rebel. There was equal concern about sexual mores. As a consequence, the MPAA introduced the Production Code of 1930. Although it was only advisory, the Code was meant to clamp down on movies about sex, violence, and social issues. It strictly prohibited sympathetic portraits of criminals and sinners. Problems were to be solved with moral answers; happy endings were permissible only when characters reformed; the unregenerate had to be punished. "No picture shall be produced," the Code declared, "which will lower the standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin." Revenge, drug addiction and dealing, miscegenation, venereal disease, sex "perversion," and profanity were prohibited; moral marriages were to be the ideal. Nothing "subversive," such as realistic portraits of slum living, was to be shown.

Then, just as the advisory code was toughened up, came Mae West, the Marx Brothers, and the heyday of the gangster film. The Marx Brothers' disrespect for authority and their hilariously successful con men and Mae West's lecherous, unmarried ladies gave deep offense to blue noses all over the nation. West's *She Done Him Wrong* (1933), Archie Mayo's *Convention City* (1933), featuring extramarital fun and games at a salesmen's convention, and Walter Wanger's *Gabriel Over The White House* especially alarmed Will Hays, who warned against making films about sex, violence, or politics that might give offense. He might as well have said not to make films that were in any way critical of American society, because even the mildest criticism always offends some one.

Hays wasn't the only one reacting censoriously to films. Catholic moralists formed the Legion of Decency in 1933 to fight immorality in the movies and boasted that they'd signed up eleven million supporters by the following year. The Legion's advocacy of national controls led the MPAA to try to pre-empt such action by creating the Production Code Administration (PCA), headed by Joseph Breen, who served under Will Hays. (The PCA is also referred to as the Hays or Breen Office.) The intent was for Hollywood to censor itself. Although the rule was frequently ignored, scripts were to be okayed by the PCA in advance and there were penalties for violation of the Code, which was given in detail. The explicit depiction of arson and the use of dynamite, for example, were prohibited. The result, of course, was to mute movies with violence, sex, or social criticism, however great their artistic merits might be. The founding of the Code, Robert Sklar has written, "seriously curtailed the permissible range and depth of Hollywood films for years to come," and helps explain the notable decline in the number of political films after 1934.
Movies about gangsters, social issues, and politics were rare in the mid-Thirties, although Hollywood found a way to meet its quota of violent films by shifting to law men (often G-men) as heroes. Joan Mellon observes that images of men grew less varied, with characters mostly confined to proving that "through hard work anyone could go from rags to riches." Women, on the other hand, did somewhat better. The advent of sound had helped, giving rise to the fast-talking, witty characters played by actresses like Katharine Hepburn, Carole Lombard, and Rosalind Russell in sophisticated comedies as well as working-women films, reflecting the fact that more women were working because of the needs brought on by the Depression. But the Production Code, Molly Haskell asserts, "was probably at least as responsible as the Depression for getting women out of the bedroom and into the office . . . Under threat from the Hays Office, women were no longer able to languish in satin on a chaise longue and subsist on passion; they were forced to do something, and a whole generation of working women came into being." Characters played by Joan Crawford and Jean Arthur used their brains and showed skill and determination. Unfortunately, they usually got their comeuppance at the end of the movies: they are subjugated, they quit work, marry, break down and cry. But despite the endings, the women did struggle and achieve and "the images we retain of them," Haskell continues, "are not those of subjugation or humiliation; rather we remember their intermediate victories." But progress in sexual politics was not matched by progress in politics in general after about 1934. Few political films were made after that little burst in the early Thirties. There were the anti-lynching movies (The Fury, They Won't Forget), the movies about duped working men (Black Legion, Black Fury), Cecil B. De Mille's nation-building epics (The Plainsman and Union Pacific), and an occasional comedy like First Lady (1937) in which Kay Francis as the president's wife is the power behind the scenes. But there was nothing to match Gabriel, Our Daily Bread, or the other political films of the beginning of the decade.

Thus one of Hollywood's most political periods came to an abrupt end. By 1934, the worst of the Depression was over and Roosevelt and his New Deal were well established, so possibly Hollywood's mild interest in politics had been sated. It's more likely, however, that the strengthening of the Hays Office and the Production Code had a chilling effect. Not until 1939 did politics hit the silver screen again. That year marked the beginning of another of Hollywood's most political eras, as the nation and the film industry shifted their attention to international politics and the impending war.
Notes

5 Nick Roddick, *A New Deal In Entertainment*, London: British Film Institute, 1933.
6 *Photoplay*, August 1932.
7 Bergman, p. xvi.
8 *Photoplay*, June 1983.
9 Bergman, pp. 78–79.
11 *Film Daily*, 8 August 1934.
Expressionism and Nosferatu

C RITICS have discussed certain Expressionist features of F. W. Murnau’s Nosferatu (1922, based on Bram Stoker’s novel Dracula [1897]),¹ but none has conceived of it as a fully Expressionist work. One reason for this is that most critics’ understanding of the Expressionist movement, in drama as well as in film, is superficial. For them a film such as The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) is Expressionistic less for what it means than for how it looks with its “oppressively murky artificial sets.”² And for Robin Wood, a discussion of Expressionism in Nosferatu need only be limited to a catalogue of its stylistic manifestations in the film, in other words to how the film looks:

The first shot of the vampire’s castle jutting up from the rock, the strange geometrical patterning of arch-forms out of which Nosferatu emerges to meet [Hutter], the use of “unnatural” camera angles as in the shot from the hold of the ship, the trick effects [the speeded-up coach; the shots in negative], the huge shadow as Nosferatu ascends the stairs to [Ellen’s] room, the shadow of his fingers clenching into a fist upon her heart.

(p. 9)

Expressionism is primarily a drama of the mind, however, whether on stage or on screen. It is concerned with the essence, not the surface, of reality; therefore it, more than other styles, must be defined, not by its own surface characteristics but by the essence they seek to embody. Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel describe Expressionism as “essentially a movement designed to get away from actuality and to satisfy the desire to probe seemingly fundamental truths of human nature and society by presenting them through fantasy and dramatized mysticism.”³ Expressionism gets away from actuality through a retreat

Bert Cardullo
into the mind and at the same time, paradoxically, through a projection of that mind onto the world. Expressionism externalizes, “expresses,” what is inside the mind, it makes “outer” what is “inner.” If Impressionism could be said to be the subjective rendering of the visible world, Expressionism is the subjective expression of an inner world, a vision. Many Expressionist plays, dating back to Strindberg’s To Damascus (1898), a progenitor of the movement, have been called “Ich-dramas,” dramas of the “I,” the self, on a journey through the mind’s inner reaches and the world’s outer ones. Many Expressionist works are either explicitly or implicitly political: they react against the social tyranny of the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the political tyranny of demagogues, on the other.

Nosferatu’s Expressionism has been overlooked, I believe, largely because of its natural, rather than fantastic, settings: the landscape of the Carpathian mountains, the narrow streets and closely packed houses of a small town on the Baltic Sea (where Murnau shot what we are to take as Bremen, Germany, in 1838, a significant time as will later be shown). But the film may be regarded as Hutter’s (Jonathan Harker in Stoker’s Dracula) “Ich-drama”; and the two other main characters, Ellen, his wife (Nina in the novel), and Nosferatu (Dracula in the novel), may be seen as aspects of Hutter’s self. Hutter is no conscious, active rebel against society, as are many Expressionist heroes, themselves often extensions of their creators. He is, rather, a passive instrument of Murnau’s mythic design; himself no rebel, Murnau doesn’t make a rebel of his alter ego Hutter. A witness to or observer of the German sociopolitical scene, Murnau makes Hutter a witness to or observer of the relationship between Ellen and Nosferatu. Hutter himself is “narrated” by a fictitious contemporary of his who serves as a surrogate for Murnau, by a historian whose diary provides the story of Hutter’s trip to Transylvania and Nosferatu’s descent on Bremen. Professor Van Helsing is Dracula’s nemesis in Stoker’s novel; Van Helsing plays only a small part in Murnau’s film (he’s renamed Professor Bulwer). He is obviously not Nosferatu’s antagonist: both Annie (Lucy in the novel) and Ellen ask that the Professor be called, once Nosferatu has made his presence felt in Bremen, but the Professor does not go to them and in fact can do nothing to stop Nosferatu. Murnau reduces Van Helsing’s role significantly so that Ellen can become simultaneously Nosferatu’s destroyer and his victim.

Hutter is clearly linked to Ellen, as an aspect of himself, through marriage. They have recently been married, seem happy—the film begins with Hutter picking flowers for his wife—and together symbolize the bourgeois “correctness” of the Weimar Republic, during which Nosferatu was made. He is a clerk in a real estate office in their home town of Bremen. His boss, Knock (Renfield in the novel), asks him to close a property deal—for a house directly opposite his and Ellen’s—with Graf
Orlok, known as Nosferatu, of Transylvania. Surprisingly, Hutter is more than happy to go, even though the trip will take him away for months from his bride. He seems exultant when he tells Ellen that she cannot travel with him, that she must not risk the danger of crossing the Carpathian mountains. This is the first indication we get, on a mythic or symbolic level (not a psychological one), of Hutter's attraction-repulsion, love-hate, for his wife, for his own bourgeois existence. In place of this humdrum, stifling existence, he gets to travel on horseback to a remote and different place and to do business with a count. His journey will become less a journey away from Bremen than into himself and as much a linking up with Nosferatu as a leave-taking from Ellen.

Hutter is linked to Nosferatu, as an aspect of himself, through business. Hutter works for Knock, who is obviously demented and acts under the long-range influence of Nosferatu; ostensibly, Hutter volunteers to make the long trip to Graf Orlok's castle in order to improve his own position in the real estate office at the same time that he earns his commission. Nosferatu symbolizes the tyrant, about whose depiction in a group of German films from 1920–1924 Siegfried Kracauer has written:

In this film type, the Germans of the time—a people still unbalanced, still free to choose its regime—nursed no illusions about the possible consequences of tyranny; on the contrary, they indulged in detailing its crimes and [the] sufferings it inflicted. Was their imagination kindled by the fear of bolshevism? Or did they call upon these frightful visions to exorcise lusts which, they sensed, were their own and now threatened to possess them? (It is, at any rate, a strange coincidence that, hardly more than a decade later, Nazi Germany was to put into practice that very mixture of physical and mental tortures which the German screen then pictured.)

In 1921–1922, when Nosferatu was made, Germany was going through a period of great instability, the result of its defeat in World War I and the overthrow of its traditional monarchy. The new German government was an attempt at democracy, but many officials of the Weimar Republic had rightist political leanings. At the same time, Bolshevism was taking root in Germany. The country was thrown into economic and social plight after the collapse of the currency: bread lines began forming and riots broke out everywhere. Kracauer comments, "The Germans obviously held [at this point] that they had no choice other than the cataclysm of anarchy or a tyrannical regime (p. 88)."

If Bram Stoker's Dracula was a novel of Victorian sexual repression, Murnau's Nosferatu is a film of Weimar-Republic autocratic repression. At
one end, in Bremen, there is Ellen, a pallid, emaciated figure who stands for the weakness, the shakiness, of German democracy in the early 1920s and whose recent marriage to Hutter represents their attempt to fall into line with the surface order of bourgeois life in Bremen, with its closely packed houses, carefully charted streets, tightly knit families, and fastidiously kept living quarters. At the other end, in Transylvania, there is Nosferatu, himself a pallid, emaciated figure who, in his shadowiness, stands for the subterranean impulse in the German people of the time toward autocracy: he represents their skeleton in the closet, as it were, ready to emerge and declare itself at any moment. Nosferatu lives alone in his huge castle; it is as if, in his will to absolute power, he has become the sole inhabitant of his realm: he rules all, he is all. Appropriately, Nosferatu emerges only at night, sleeping by day in an earth-filled coffin located in a crypt beneath his castle—he also sleeps in such a coffin in the hold of the ship that carries him to Bremen.

Robin Wood has noted that the arch is a visual leitmotif in the film, that it is used by Murnau “particularly to characterize the vampire as a repressed force who is always emerging from under arches or arch-shapes that seem to be trying unsuccessfully to press down upon him, often forming a background of darkness (p. 7).” (Wood sees Nosferatu, however, as a symbol of repressed sexuality rather than repressed tyranny.) The arch is also used to link Nosferatu with Hutter. There is an arch over the bed in which Hutter sleeps at the inn, just before he enters the vampire’s domain. When he enters Nosferatu’s castle, Hutter passes under a large arch, just as, when Nosferatu enters Bremen after disembarking from the ship “Demeter,” he walks beneath a large arch. When they meet for the first time, Nosferatu emerges from one arch, Hutter from another; they face each other under yet another arch. Nosferatu’s crypt is arched, and when Hutter descends into it to find the vampire’s coffin, he passes under a huge, oppressive overhang of rock. There are some other scenes in which arches connect Nosferatu with Hutter. At the end of the dinner scene, for example, when Nosferatu is excited by the blood from Hutter’s finger (which he cut while trying to slice some bread), the arch in the background strongly resembles the one from which he first emerged. When Hutter awakens the next day at sunrise, he is still beneath an arch of sorts—the arched ceiling of his room. He eats breakfast in front of an arch, goes outdoors through an arched doorway, passes under a dark arch that takes up the entire foreground of the image, then sits down to write a letter to Ellen under the arches of a small pavilion. He is even standing under an arch when he calls to the postman (on horseback) to come pick up his letter. Hutter’s daytime movement through this series of arches is later mirrored by Nosferatu’s nighttime passage under several arches on his way to suck the sleeping Hutter’s blood.
In between the “democracy” of Ellen/Bremen and the “demagogy” of Nosferatu/Transylvania, or beyond them both, lies anarchy, symbolized by the rough terrain, raw or uncontrolled nature, over which Hutter must travel in order to reach Nosferatu’s castle. Along the way, he will ride up and down hills, across woods, and through mists and rushing water; he will encounter “spooked” horses (pursued by a jackal), wolves, and eerie birds. The choice for Murnau’s Expressionist hero is between a fragile, yet suffocating democracy on the one hand and a steady, yet equally oppressive tyranny on the other hand, with anarchy the route between these two poles. Ellen and Bremen are his projection, his “mindscreen,” just as are Nosferatu and Transylvania. As for the trick photography (the speeded-up coach, the incredibly rapid loading of a carriage with earth-filled coffins), the shots in negative, the odd camera angles, the “supernaturally” opening doors in the castle, and the “supernaturally” propelled ship that takes Nosferatu to Bremen (or rather, “supernaturally” manned sailing ship, the entire crew of which Nosferatu has destroyed), one explanation is that not only are these “endistancing devices” separating the vampire’s world from that of the German town, as Gilberto Perez Guillermo believes (p. 153), but also that these devices are the work of Murnau’s/the Expressionist hero’s consciousness. To underline this point, Murnau has Hutter insist in a letter to Ellen from Transylvania that, even though the frightening things happening to him seem real, they are all part of a dream. The hero’s consciousness projects onto the tyrant’s world the extraordinary power that it imagines this world to have. Low-angle shots, for instance, make Nosferatu loom up in the frame, and shots in negative suggest that this despot has the ability, not only to speed up motion, but also to reverse the usual positions of light and shadow on objects. That Murnau filmed Nosferatu “in the world,” on location and not in the studio, lends the scenes of trick photography and “supernatural” motion a reality, a convincinglyness, that they would otherwise not have: these scenes seem to be not merely the products of someone’s febrile mind, as they would seem had they been shot within the confines of a studio, but the products of an entire world at the mercy of an omnipotent, nearly godly, tyrant.

Returning to the subject of Hutter’s symbolic attraction-repulsion or love-hate toward his wife, toward both his own tidy bourgeois existence and the precarious democratic structure that supports it, it should be noted that, unlike the Expressionist dramatists, who wrote more or less for a coterie audience, Murnau set his story, not in the present, but in what Lane Roth calls “the safety of the past” (p. 311), where the more “democratic” or popular audience could, if it chose, ignore the film’s contemporary sociopolitical implications. Thus, whenever this paper mentions Bremen, Germany, in 1838, one should transpose its social and political order to the Bremen of 1922. For example, Hutter runs from
Ellen to Nosferatu, and thus to the promise of financial gain and career advancement. This move makes sense, given the seriously troubled German economy in 1922; Germany as a whole was similarly to run over to Hitler’s side ten years later when he artificially stimulated the country’s economy with his war machine. Hutter has the same love-hate toward Nosferatu, however, that he has toward his wife. Even though he discovers that the count is a vampire and has in fact assaulted him, Hutter does not try to destroy him (as the count was destroyed in the novel by being beheaded and having a stake driven through his heart). When Hutter sees Nosferatu lying asleep in his coffin during the day, he can only draw back in horror—the same reaction he has when, near the end of the film, Ellen tells him of the vampire’s designs on her. Despite the fact that Nosferatu would suck the life out of Hutter and his wife, just as a tyrant would suck the life out of his people, Hutter can do nothing to oppose him. Hutter seems repulsed by yet drawn to an aspect of himself that he sees in Nosferatu. He hates the bourgeois in himself, he is suspicious of the capitalistic democracy that would promote the middle class, but he races back to Ellen from Transylvania. He hates the tyrant in himself, he is suspicious of the “benevolent” dictator who promises to make life better for all the people, yet he does not kill Nosferatu; in effect, he allows the count to make the voyage by ship to Bremen.

It is as if Hutter has deliberately sought out the tyrant Nosferatu, so as to make him aware of Ellen’s existence. Nosferatu wants her the instant Hutter shows him her miniature, and Ellen seems to want him. Two incidents suggest this. Hutter returns to Bremen the same way he arrived in Transylvania—by land; the vampire travels to Bremen by sea. When we get a shot of Ellen awaiting her husband’s return, however, she is looking out to sea. At one point we see her sleepwalking on her balcony; suddenly she collapses, declaring as she does so, “He’s coming, I must go to meet him.” Murnau implies that she means Nosferatu, because he cuts to her, not from a shot of Hutter on horseback, but from one of the ship with the vampire aboard it. Ellen seems attracted to Nosferatu at the same time that she is repulsed by him. She allows him to ravish her, to suck her blood, and to destroy himself in the process: she intentionally keeps him at her side until dawn, at which moment the rays of the sun cause him to dissolve into nothingness. Nosferatu is similarly attracted to Ellen at the same time that he is repulsed by her. All the while he is making love to her in his way, is sucking her blood, he is draining her of life. She dies, and he vanishes into the air.

Nosferatu has taken with him many of the burghers of Bremen, who have died of the plague spread by rats that have made the journey from Transylvania with him. He is repeatedly associated with these rats—they swarm from his earth-filled coffins in the hold of the ship. Indeed, he himself looks like a rat with his long and pointed, hairy ears, his claws,
and his fangs; and he moves like one, especially along the streets of Bremen, skulking and sidling in his fear of being set upon by the citizens. In the Expressionist hero Hutter’s mind, the tyrant is both a bloodsucker—a parasite—and a spreader of infectious disease, of a political philosophy that is at once deadly and contagious. Thus Hutter projects Nosferatu as a vampire who looks and moves like a rat and who in effect leads a large pack of rats, his “army,” the extension of his will. At least two critics have written of the supposed ambiguous nature of the plague in this film: it is spread by rats, yet the vampire’s marks are on the victims’ necks, as if Nosferatu had visited each one personally (Perez Guillermo, p. 153; Wood, p. 8). I am arguing that the “ambiguity” is intentional on Murnau’s/Hutter’s part, that Nosferatu is meant to appear as both rat and vampire, infecter and bloodsucker. Only Hutter seems to have knowledge of the presence of Nosferatu in town, although the tyrant has been afraid that both Hutter and the townspeople would discover him. Yet Hutter, the generator of the apocalyptic vision, stands passively by as Nosferatu decimates much of the population of bourgeois Bremen. The tyrant destroys them, then one of them—Ellen—sacrifices herself to destroy him. Hutter has watched the bourgeois in himself cancel out, and be cancelled out by, the autocrat in himself. He has pitted social tyranny—the bourgeoisie in its conformity and hegemony—against political tyranny—the tyrant in his isolation and omnipotence. The frightened bourgeoisie, on whose fears any tyrant feeds in a time of economic and social unrest (as Hitler was to feed on the fears of the German middle class), itself helps to pull the tyrant down in the end, to take the life out of him. The Expressionist hero Hutter has witnessed the destruction of the two aspects of himself, each of which he both loves and hates: the democratic bourgeois that he is and the “benevolent” dictator that he would be; his will to equality and his will to power.

Hutter is the Expressionist hero as passive bourgeois, not as active intellectual or artist; as a representative of the people, not as their antagonist. He stands, not apart from society, but as a part of it. There is no escape for him into visionary ecstasy, as there might be for the Expressionist rebel, or into art, as there was for the Expressionist creators themselves. He makes no pronouncements concerning the creation of the “New Man,” nor does he offer a prescriptive aesthetics. He is left at the end to mourn the loss of himself, the Nosferatu who is gone (along with his agent and Hutter’s boss, Knock, who expires back in jail the moment he senses that Nosferatu has perished), and the Ellen who is dead. A title declares that there were no more deaths from the plague and that happiness was regained, but the camera does not return to the streets of Bremen. We are left with the overwhelming impression of destruction, of loss; a shot of Hutter mourning over Ellen’s body is followed by the last
shot of the film, which appears to be the product of Hutter's memory: an image of Nosferatu's now vacant castle jutting up into the sky.

The title of Murnau's next film, Der letzte Mann (The Last Man, 1924, incorrectly translated as The Last Laugh in America), could as well be the title of Nosferatu. The later work contains Expressionistic elements, but they are fused to a realistic base. We have gone from Hutter's nightmare vision in Nosferatu to Emil Jannings' nightmares in Der letzte Mann, from the tragic division of one character to the pathetic oneness of another, from the end of the world to a happy ending. Murnau's escape, as Expressionist filmmaker, from the potential artistic dead end of Nosferatu was to re-create the everyday world in Der letzte Mann and put into it a character in a dead end, from which he would be rescued by a dream-come-true: the inheritance, from an American, of a large sum of money. For Murnau, the antidote to Expressionistic nightmare was the opposite extreme: realistic fantasy.

Notes

I refer the interested reader to my article "Expressionism and the Real Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," *Film Criticism*, VI (Winter 1982), pp. 28–34. The quotation in this sentence is taken from Gilberto Perez Guillermo, "Murnau's Nosferatu," *Sight and Sound*, p. 150.


This anarchy is also symbolized by Hutter's boss and Nosferatu's agent, Knock, who becomes so demented that he reverts to erratic, animal-like behavior once he escapes into the countryside from his madman's prison cell. He swings down from rooftops like an ape, crouches behind a tree stump, then hops along like a frog or toad. In addition, like the "vampire plant," the Venus' flytrap, whose powers Dr. Bulwer demonstrates to his students, Knock catches and eats insects for his nourishment.
ARTISTS, critics, and the general public may not take philosophers and philosophy seriously in some contexts, and yet in other instances depend rather heavily on them. Recently a good student of mine stopped me on campus and challenged the importance and relevance of aesthetics or philosophy of art to anything that artists are doing. The student, who had a background in art as well as in philosophy, said that artists themselves have no interest in aesthetics or criticism, and that they laugh at both. By contrast, a young artist, who took my metaphysics course last year in order to get clearer about the concepts of space and time with which he was working, asked me to evaluate a piece of philosophical-sounding prose which he had written to explain some of his pieces. Carter Ratcliff, a critic for Art in America, has observed that most art-critical terms are either taken from local art chit-chat or extracted from books by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Jean Piaget, and Walter Benjamin, all of whom I would call philosophers. Last month I met an art critic who is soon to publish a book on computers and art. We had just finished looking at Milton Komisar’s excellent light sculpture which was showing at the San Jose Museum of Art, and she said that she had looked in vain for much of value in the works of various philosophers of art. Yet a current best-seller in the art community, a biography of Robert Irwin, stresses the connections between Irwin’s work and the philosophical writings of Wittgenstein and Edmund Husserl.

Perhaps what is disliked is philosophers meddling in art. What right do philosophers and, for that matter, critics have interpreting and evaluating works of art? From some artists’ point of view, the philosopher of art is at
least three removes from reality. According to these artists, the reality of art is the process of producing the work of art. Therefore, for them, the product is one remove from art. After that, there is the critic’s discussion of the art work. Then finally we come to the philosopher’s discussion of the principles of interpretation and evaluation that would be used by the critic. Some philosophers have encouraged this “parasite” view in recent years. For instance, Monroe Beardsley portrays the philosophy of art as philosophy of criticism and accordingly titles his main work, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*.\(^1\) One could even argue that it is a myth that philosophers of art analyze criticism, because they mainly spend their time analyzing and refuting each other’s theories, a practice that seems even more parasitical.

In this essay, I would like to begin to dispel these negative attitudes and show how philosophy of art is important to both the artist and the critic, by reviewing the context of the debate between philosophy and art and situating this within the current controversy over interpretation of art.

It is ironic that philosophers of art have been accused of being three removes from reality. Plato presents one of the first theories of art in Book X of the *Republic* in which Socrates says that the representational artist, by which he meant most sculptors, painters, and poets of his time, merely captures the surface image of objects in the physical world. These objects themselves were merely reflections of the eternal, unchanging Forms. For instance, the artist who paints a bed gives us only one perspective of an object which itself is only a bed-maker’s attempt to realize the true or ideal bed that he perceives in or through his mind. Plato uses this example as a way of showing the foolishness of those who thought that a poet like Homer could actually teach the Greeks things about military affairs, the gods, education, or morality. Poets, like painters, are only good at capturing the surface appearances of things. Since knowledge, for Plato, was knowledge of the essence of things and since you could only know the essences by knowing the eternal Forms, art could not give us any knowledge of things. For some artists that would be all right, except that Plato also believed that art appeals to the baser side of our natures. Not only does it fail to give us the knowledge it promises, but it encourages us to indulge in the childish pleasure of being deceived or in the womanish pleasure of giving in to our emotions of sorrow, pity, and fear. If it is proper not to exhibit one’s emotions in public, why should it cease to be so in the theater or in front of a painting? Thus, since art serves no useful purpose, it should be banished from the city. Plato admits at the end of Book X that there has been an ancient enmity between artists and philosophers which may be the source of some of his own harshness toward art; and since he himself has gained pleasure from art and indeed practiced some of the poetic art in his dialogues, he calls on the defenders of art to arise and show why it should not be excluded from the ideal city.
Aristotle seems to answer this call when, in the *Poetics*, he argues that Homer and the writers of tragedy can serve a useful purpose in society. The tragedian gives us knowledge because tragedy is essentially an imitation of the essential characteristics of human actions. Moreover, Aristotle believes that the experience of pity and fear that we feel in the theater is good for us, partly because it is tempered by this knowledge and partly because it provides an escape mechanism for pent-up stress and frustration. He even argues that art gets at universal truths more effectively than history, since history merely deals with particular things, while art gets at the essence of things. Therefore, art joins philosophy and science in having cognitive value.

If Aristotle is right, art and philosophy can be allies in the search for truths about the nature of reality and the essence of things. Whereas the philosopher carries out his researches by asking questions in the form "What is the essence of X" and then talking about the ways we talk about and experience X, the artist pursues the nature of X through a reflection on the way we look at X or on the way that X looks to us. Consequently it is not surprising that there are many parallels between the works of philosophers and the works of visual artists. John Constable, Claude Monet, Paul Cezanne, and Mark Rothko were each trying to say something about the nature of reality. Constable saw art as on a similar plane to that of physics: his clouds were so meteorologically correct that they can still be recognized and identified. In part, Constable believed that what is real is whatever can be understood by natural science. Monet, by contrast, sought to represent the way we perceive light prior to any scientific reflection. His art was similar to the philosophy of Ernst Mach who believed that all knowledge is based on our sensations and that we can never know things in themselves as they are independently of our sensations. Cezanne was closer to his contemporary Husserl. Like Husserl, Cezanne believed that we could find the essences of things within our own experience by way of careful examination. Both sought this underlying structure beneath the surface of impressions. Finally, Rothko used paint to take us away from the reality of the physical world to the emotional colors of the mystic vision. His view paralleled Martin Heidegger's demand that we cast aside traditional metaphysics so that we can return to the ground of Being itself.

Recently the American philosopher of art, Arthur Danto, has argued that art can have no meaning outside the context of art theory and the art historical tradition. This theoretical context is provided by the art world which includes not only artists but also art historians, art critics, museum curators, art purchasers, docents, and, last but not least, philosophers of art. In part, my comments here are influenced by this view of the symbiotic rather than parasitical relationship between philosophy and art. Danto observes that the old theory that art must imitate reality, which
dominated the visual arts until post-impressionism, was replaced by a new theory that art works are realities which imitate nothing. One thing that the new theory of art, Reality Theory as Danto calls it, makes us aware of is art's ability to transform ordinary objects into art works. Since under Reality Theory something need not be an imitation to be a work of art, it could even be the thing itself. Plato can then be refuted by art itself. Whereas Plato said that a painting of a bed is less real than the bed it paints, Robert Rauschenberg took an actual bed, painted it, and put it in a museum so that it became an art work. What makes it an artwork and what distinguishes it from a bed that is not an artwork are the institution of the art world and the theories that form an essential part of that institution. It becomes an artwork partly because it is placed in a museum but also partly because it is a reflection on Plato's theory of art. Because it is a reflection on a theory it has cognitive value, and therefore it refutes Plato's view that art can give us no theoretical knowledge. In the 1970s George Dickie, influenced possibly by Danto, came up with the following definition of art: something is a work of art if and only if it has two characteristics: it is an artifact (i.e. an object made or transformed by a human being) and it is offered by some person or persons in the artworld as a candidate for appreciation. Danto's and Dickie's views are today referred to collectively as the institutional theory of art, and this is an extremely influential view in contemporary philosophy of art.

Let us turn now to the specific topic of interpretation. How can philosophy shed some light on how we ought to interpret art works? The question at issue is a common one for the docent or teacher or parent; what should we do when asked “What does this mean?”? Let us consider first, what we probably would do, using Vincent Van Gogh's famous painting “Bedroom at Arles.” We might point out geometrical relationships in the two-dimensional plane of the painting which the viewer might not at first see. We might note the peculiar representation of three dimensions in this painting. If we were viewing the original, or a very good reproduction, we might observe the technique in the application of paint, the choice of colors, and any unusual color patterns. But we would not simply stick with the physical or perceptual characteristics of the painting. We would probably go on to show how these various aspects of the painting function in relation to an overall intention, for instance that Vincent Van Gogh wishes to use intense and bright colors to express a mood of manic joy, joy on the verge of madness. So far we have not referred to the historical origins of the painting or Van Gogh's personal life, but we could do that now. Some quotations from his letters to his brother Theo might be appropriate here. Perhaps we might recall to the viewer that Van Gogh was so distraught that he cut off one of his ears. Also we might bring in the art historical context. Van Gogh can usefully be seen as someone who is influenced by
Vincent van Gogh—bedroom at Arles
National Museum Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam.
but is also reacting against the impressionists. He can also be seen as a forerunner to the expressionist tradition with its new emphasis on emotion. We might say something like, "Van Gogh was the finest of the post-impressionists" and back this statement up with a comparison of Van Gogh to Paul Gauguin, showing that Van Gogh's exploration of his own emotion was much more intense and much less given to self-delusion than Gauguin's. Description, evaluation, comparison: all of these might come under the general heading of interpretation. All of these are things we might do, but what things ought we to do?

A well developed debate in the field of literary criticism concerning the nature of interpretation can be transferred almost wholly to the problems of interpreting painting. There are three competing views of interpretation in this tradition, to which I shall attempt to add a fourth. All four views can be seen in terms of different ways in which we temporally experience the world. I will discuss this experiencing in relation to Augustine's theory of time. Augustine asks in Book XI of his *Confessions* how time could be measured when the past no longer is, the future is not yet, and the present itself cannot have any length. One cannot speak of the present hundred years, the present hour, or even the present second, since in each case there is time stretching before and behind. But we do measure time, and so we must measure it while it is passing from the future through the present and into the past. But where are the future and the past? The past is there in our memory, in pictures, and in old buildings, all of which are actually in the present. Similarly our thoughts about what we are going to do or what we hope for in the future are in the present. We cannot see into the future; we can only see signs that indicate or predict future events. Thus rather than saying that there are three times: past, present, and future, it is more proper to say that there are three presents: the present of past things, the present of present things, and the present of future things. These types of present correspond to three psychological states: memory, perception, and expectation. So when we measure time, we must be measuring the mind itself or the relationship between these three presents or the impressions made on the mind by the passing of time. God can see the real future, yet God exists in eternity, not time.

It may clarify this theory to think of it in relation to George Orwell's *1984*. Orwell's novel can be seen as a prediction of the future. In that sense it was partially true but mostly wrong, for it is now 1984 and we do not yet live in an Orwellian society. Yet Orwell's book is still relevant because it is about a future we could still experience. That is, it is still true that Orwell's book explored the future even though some of its predictions did not turn out to be true. It explored the present-as-future, and it is still meaningful today because it still is exploring an aspect of our present, the future aspect. So there are now two 1984's, the real 1984 of last year
and the Orwellian 1984 of the future, which influences the way we experience not only our recollections of last year but our projections into the future. The three views of interpretation I will discuss emphasize three aspects of time: the present-as-present, the present-as-past, and the past-as-past (ignoring Augustine’s argument). Finally my own view takes interpretation to contain all three elements of St. Augustine’s theory of time: the present-as-present, the present-as-past, and the present-as-future.

As indicated, the first view of interpretation emphasizes the present-as-present. This is the New Criticism. For the New Critic, interpretation of a work of art should be entirely dependent on what the viewer immediately sees in front of him in the work of art. On this view we should never appeal to the biography of the author or refer to the historical epoch in which the artist was living in order to understand the work. When this theory of criticism is applied to art, it says that we should only be concerned about the relations between lines and colors on the painted surface. It is associated with what Danto has called the Reality Theory of art. It denies that historical context plays an important role in determining the meaning of a work of art. In the visual arts this position was defended by Clive Bell at the beginning of the century. Bell said that art is essentially significant form and that significant form is a matter of relations between lines and colors. For Bell, works of art could represent things, but what they represent is really irrelevant to our understanding and evaluation. Thus the better works of art tend to be abstract or quasi-abstract: Cezanne and Vasili Kandinsky make good examples. The theory that art should be viewed in terms of the properties which it directly presents to us has been reaffirmed since the late forties by Monroe Beardsley, most famously in “The Intentional Fallacy” coauthored by William K. Wimsatt, Jr. Beardsley has recently taken his position to the extreme of saying that whether or not a work of art was produced by a computer should be irrelevant to our interpretation and evaluation of it. Bell and Beardsley both emphasize the present-as-present. We are to look at the art work without taking into account any of the past or future characteristics of the work. They emphasize the actual sensations we have while experiencing the work of art before us.

Against Beardsley it could be argued along Danto’s lines that an artwork cannot have meaning outside of an institutional context and that the institutional context includes the history of art prior to the work’s creation. Turning back to the visual arts, we find that a photograph by Alfred Stieglitz called “The Steerage” [see illustration] has an enriched meaning when we know that Steiglitz was angered at the class division that he perceived on a transatlantic voyage. The divisions of the photograph represent this conflict.

In the second view, Hans Gadamer has argued for interpreting works
Alfred Stieglitz—The Steerage
photograph used by permission of Georgia O’Keeffe
not only in terms of their present context but also in terms of their historical context. He emphasizes the present-as-past as well as the present-as-present. Following Heidegger, Gadamer believes that humanity’s essence is historical, that man is essentially a being who lives in history and is aware of himself as living in history. Also following Heidegger, he believes that interpretation of a text involves a kind of self-understanding. Because of his emphasis on both the present-as-past and the present-as-present, Gadamer has been interpreted by some as a relativist about interpretation. He is certainly an historicist, since he believes that meaning is historical in the sense that it depends on a history of interpretations of the text leading to this current interpretation. The interpreter inevitably comes to the text with his or her own methods, presuppositions, and prejudices. But Gadamer goes further than this: he believes that the text’s application to us is part of our understanding of the text. We could not understand it fully or deeply unless it has real significance to us.

Gadamer believes that he can escape the charge of total relativism. Total relativism would be the position that a work can mean whatever the reader wants it to mean, that one person’s interpretation is as good as someone else’s. For Gadamer the best interpretations of texts are authentic in the sense that the interpreter tries to open up a dialogue with the text, fully aware of his or her own prejudices or cultural horizon. Ideally, in this process of dialogue there can be a kind of fusion of the interpreter’s horizon of meaning with that of the text. This is furthered if the reader is aware of the history of interpretations of the text and of the historical context of the text itself. The understanding of a work of art is not merely a matter of archaeology, nor is it merely a matter of taking the work as though it suddenly appeared in the present: it involves both of these activities fused together. Looking at the Stieglitz we can imagine that we might suddenly see it more clearly in the light of a recent experience, say a trip to India where we encountered much poverty. Such an experience might cause us to point out different aspects of the photograph as of interest.

The third theory that I want to consider is that of E. D. Hirsch. Hirsch’s 1967 book *Validity in Interpretation* seeks to undermine both Beardsley’s and Gadamer’s points of view. His main thesis is that we should go back to the old common sense view that the meaning of a work is whatever the author intended it to mean. Hirsch believes that without this theory there is no way to validate interpretations. If the meaning of a work is the author’s intended meaning, then we can check it against the author’s intentions or at least against our best theories concerning what those intentions were. Against Beardsley he argues that meaning is “an affair of consciousness not of words,” since “Almost any word sequence can, under the conventions of language, legitimately represent more than one
complex of meaning.\textsuperscript{10} Against Gadamer, he argues that if a text is an infinite series of possibilities then it has no determinate meaning at all. Moreover, he believes that Gadamer's historicist relativism reduces to absolute relativism if we take into account that communication is often as difficult between individuals in one culture as it is between people in different historical epochs. Also Hirsch believes that Gadamer confuses the concept of significance with that of meaning. For Hirsch the object of interpretation is meaning, whereas the object of evaluation is significance. Significance is a function of the relation of the reader to the text or work.

In general Hirsch takes the view that art is to be interpreted in terms of the past. However, he does not see that the only past is the present-as-past. He seems to believe that he can take the standpoint of eternity or God and see the past as it really was. Hirsch is right to protest against the banishment of the author or artist from our understanding of literary and artistic works. Gadamer does fail to take sufficient account of the experience of intimacy between the reader and the writer that can often occur in the act of artistic communication. But Hirsch fails in turn to establish that there can be perfectly clear criteria for distinguishing objectively correct and incorrect interpretations of works of art. Moreover, the distinction between significance and meaning is precisely what Gadamer and friends intend to reject, and so to say that they fail to make the distinction is to miss the point.

I want now to present a fourth theory of interpretation and apply it specifically to works of visual art, especially painting. My own view is similar to Gadamer's in that it emphasizes the fusion of horizons. However, I would like to combine all three elements of our experience of time in our understanding of interpretation. These three elements are the present-as-past, the present-as-present, and the present-as-future. The notion of the present-as-future is not referred to in any of the theories I have discussed so far, although it is implied in some of Gadamer's thought. And yet this is the element of creativity in art, and creativity is perhaps what our experience of art is all about.

Think of the present-as-future in terms of the old debate between Plato and Aristotle over the existence of eternal Forms. Plato believed that the ideal Forms existed outside of this world and outside of time itself. And yet, as he himself realized, there were many problems with the theory. For instance, how are things in this world going to have any contact with these unchanging Forms? Second, can't the capacity of students to learn something new be explained in other ways? In response, Aristotle posited that there are no Forms separate from this world, but rather that essences were things contained in the structure of the experienced world itself. He understood the relationship between particular things and universals in terms of the concept of potentiality and actuality. A sapling
is potentially a full-grown tree. When it becomes a mature tree it is fully actual as a tree. Thus each sapling contains within itself its future, but not necessarily the future which will indeed happen. The sapling’s future as potentiality is idealized, but it is not an ideal that is divorced from reality since becoming a mature tree is what saplings generally accomplish. On the other hand the sapling may die before reaching full maturity: this would not be inconsistent with the theory. Aristotle’s concept of potentiality is similar to what I understand as the present-as-future aspect of our experience of any object. We may look at a young man or woman and picture them in their full maturity. This is seeing the future in him or her. It is not the same as prophecy, although prophetic skills may be based in part on this skill.

Now let us apply this theory of potentiality to the experience of art. An artwork expresses or represents something. We see it as doing so, just as we see it as responding to contemporary problems both in the world in general and in art in particular. Aristotle is no doubt right that art works express and represent universals in the world. In that sense they capture and express the potentiality of our experienced world, especially when they are successful. However, I cannot agree with Plato or Aristotle that these universals or essences are themselves unchanging. Following Heidegger and Gadamer, it seems more reasonable to say that they too are historical. Insofar as art reveals something potential about the world as we experience it, it makes statements that are metaphysical, i.e. statements about the ultimate nature of reality. And insofar as it does this, it makes statements about the ideal. To interpret art in terms of the present-as-future is to understand the way that it projects toward an ideal or realm of ideals. That realm of ideals probably does not have a reality in itself outside of the cultural products that project it. The reality of the ideas that art projects is rather a function of the relationship between art and the world. This is not to say that art must meet any classical standards. The ideal being projected may be asymmetrical or it may even be a realm of possibility which we would prefer to avoid as in Nazi art. Nor am I saying that art must project and depict a possible future state of society. That would be a case of confusing the present-as-future with the future itself. If this view is correct, it follows that when we look at a work of art we should be concerned not only with fusing our own horizon with that of the artist or with that of the artwork as present, but that through these we also see how art can open up into the future. This is to say that an important part of our experience of art lies in the way that it opens up our self-experience in a new way and in a new direction. The question we should ask a work of art is not only what did it mean or what does it mean now in the context of contemporary conventions of meaning, or even what is its significance to me, but also, how can it operate as a path pointing the way to future perception, conception, action, or creation; in
short, what could it mean? Insofar as the critic is supposed to help us reach
the fullest possible aesthetic experience, he or she must also make us
aware of this aspect of the artistic experience, what I have called the
metaphysical aspect of art.

I doubt that I can prove what I have just said, although the view should
be attractive to those who are already sympathetic to Gadamer's position.
This proposed view has the advantage over Gadamer's theory of not
over-emphasizing tradition and prejudice. It is also preferable to the
institutional theory of art in that it suggests a possible theory of art that
stresses the anti-institutional character of much artwork. The institutional
theory of art cannot account for the artist who is creative in opposition to
the artworld. True, the institutional theory allows anyone to designate
him-or-herself as a member of the artworld. But this is artificial to the
extent that Dickie ignores the anti-artworld character of Duchamp's
works. I can also appeal to certain kinds of common experience that tend
to support my view. First, there is the special attraction that contemporary
art has for us. The art viewer is not exclusively attracted to contemporary
art but such work generally has a unique place in his or her
consciousness. This would be explained by the fact that contemporary art
is particularly good at capturing and creating the present-as-future of our
own time. Second, there is the experience of exuberance when we
suddenly see or understand a work or series of works. This exuberance
can overflow into our own creative activity. I often feel like going home
and doing something creative after I have seen an excellent movie or an
exciting museum show. This experience indicates that the work, whatever its date of origin, has succeeded in opening up the present-as-future in my field of experience. Another experience that can be appealed to is the way that an older work of art can suddenly take on new life and meaning when compared to newer works in a similar style or dealing with a similar visual problem. For instance, looking at contemporary graffiti art from New York City has brought me recently to a new appreciation of the abstract expressionism of the 1950s. What is happening here? All of the aspects of a work of art—its present-as-past, present-as-present, and present-as-future—change with time. So a work can lose its aura of potentiality and become tired and old, until a new set of considerations or new works cause us to see it in a new light. It isn't just that we can now see the Rauschenberg as a forerunner to graffiti art but that we can see it new once again. An excellent work of art is one that has a constantly renewable field of potentiality and hence can constantly or at least repeatedly present our experienced world to us again as potentiality towards an ideal.

Why has this aspect of interpretation been neglected by philosophers
of art? Most philosophers are concerned with knowledge and hence with
objectivity. Our confrontation with the present-as-present can be tied
down in terms of sense data language. Our confrontation with the present-as-past can be tied down to factual reports and historical documents. However, the encounter with the present-as-future cannot be understood in terms of one of the classic theories of knowledge. For that reason, I cannot offer clear practical advice to the critic or the artist beyond the general injunction to be aware of all three aspects of our experience of things as existing in time, particularly the aspect of the present-as-future. With the awareness of this aspect of art and of its interpretation, we come to see how art shares with philosophy a similar task, the task of metaphysics.

Notes

1 New York, 1958.
2 see Gombrich, E. H. Art and Illusion 1962.
7 See Ballerini, Julia “The Incomplete Camera Man,” Art in America, Jan. 1984 pp. 107-113 for a discussion of this point.
10 ibid. p. 4
POETRY
Snake

He has the spine left, little else.
That spine, encased, he moves; wills
it from its nest under the willow that fell
two winters back. Out he comes.

He is lithe. He articules a self
among the fern-heads. Twigs touch
the scales of him and with his tongue
he touches back, speaking no syllable.

Then was there a time he had four legs?
Oh, primitive belief! If in the garden
there was one perfect beast, he
was it: he is oneness. Intact.

Tactile. Not capable of idle embrace,
not capable of words or greed, who
eats once for a month, who has
golden eyes, pebbles, pool-damp,

and a wonderful back that is garlanded
in patterned scales, each a warm
detail. This beauty can't be
a punishment. We're the punished ones,

fumbling and insatiate. All thumbs.
Thumb genitals and extremities.
The posture he holds to the day's sun
is pure yoga. Let us imitate Snake.
Because beauty mattered...

Because beauty mattered
because gentleness
they met in darkness & said
nothing at first
because silence mattered,

but then because wind
spoke up in sibilants
soft through the dark
loft where they lay
touching without speech

& birds the wind had stirred
found sounds for unease
—nest-grass crackling
the corners of eaves,
the down-dry skeletons

of last year's nestlings—
the lovers too did
find vowels for touch
consonants for kisses
a verb for nakedness,

two phrases for pain, that
merged as they joined
& the wind died, & birds
in the loft, in the eaves
stilled gently again.
Waterchild

Through the cells, he breathes.
Neither huffs nor puffs. His mouth does not burble yet.
His lungs do not dilate. But air animates his blood,
air you put there, mother: air in the water, air in the dark.
In the dark, because of you, mother, he breathes,
and in the veins, air sings.

That is the right air: country air, moon air.
Dark of the moon in cavern keep. The kind of melody
strummed at wagonside by boys and men without fires, without
war.
Or with mandolin in candleshine. Or with fingertips
on matchboxes by a pleased insomniac, or with fingertips
on the heads of drums.

He dreams. Air is dream.
Dark air too is dream, makes fish-dreams: sharks.
Catfish, bearded ones, barbelled and hoar. Eels on the floor.
Nets of kelp. Buoyant things that swing in the dark on strong
strands of waterweed, yellow gelatin, slimy to touch.
In the songs, squeaks of sense.

And over him where he cannot see
—outside, that is, on your skin—leaves slip
from trees till the lake surface—your flesh, mother—is gold
designed,
waiting it out till he is born. To be deprived
of moon air for air of yours—sense streams—.touches
that make cry, touches that sing.
Dorothy

Who was careless. Who cared less about her own life has left it. Sunday she went.

Her children weep. The flesh that bore them Catholic is still, unrecognizably foreign.

Mass will be, Mass will be said, they say to friends and relatives, to neighbors from
the neighboring hill gardens,
Won’t you come? Mother would like it we’re sure if you did.

All that chemotherapy. All those trips on Wednesdays down town to the hospital in taxis,

all that hopelessness: the older boy is bearing up worst of all, who’d have guessed?

And the girl washes and washes bedclothes because who was careless, who cared less about her life

has lost it. No, no rosary.
We and mother had pretty much given up on the strict part of it.

The Pritchard plot in the Jesuit Mission Church graveyard among all those roses—she’ll bring up

roses now instead of sons? Who’d have thought it? Pray for her and us now in the smallness of not enough.
Recruit

To have fed
his insatiate
mouth: she looks now to the product made:

slow-paced, his green afternoons
proceed, and on the short calendar in his head
he ticks them off: August will end
in chords like an apotheosis from Lohengrin,
and the scenes that for all his years
have held him to the natural lap of home
will break—trails to swept earth,
parade grounds for streams, squad-bay
for the shelter of a boy’s room . . .

He waits.

He exercises his arms and legs.
He practices, with a genuine gun, the rudiments
of marksmanship. The radio says that overseas
the apartment houses are being felled by bombs:
in fireballs, parapets and floors dissolve;
that nearer home, thatched roofs and jungle trees
run blood,
while outside his window the maple leaves
and the box elder leaves begin their autumn fade.
His naked body desires ardently its uniform.

Wednesday.
Thursday, he runs the track at the high school where he failed to graduate. Underfoot it's a sponge. He does three miles in under fifteen, as is appropriate in the military. The green nylon shorts stick to his soaking groin. He flees all suggestions of sentiment. Friday. Saturday. Sunday, they'll make him a shrimp feed. His sister will come down from her holiness commune. His brothers will be star-torn.

Will she, who most should, for whom all things are done, believe in the beauty of her sacrificial son? He will be immersed. He will dissolve in the fireball of service. Will she see —as he by his own will becomes one with the many— how, for her pride's sake as for his own, he reaches out in his youth to this rude rite of manhood? Soon, Monday, and soon

Monday gone.

Love-food never denied him
has built her the corpus of the Marine.
Camp Coward

—To the failures rejecting and rejected from boot camp

You will proceed
under your own orders
to this place: dry grasses
that have survived the summer's spells of disorder.
Here, we have bivouacs. We have mountains
in morning fog-capes that you will like and recognize.
We have spiders that blink in their medallions for an hour,
and afternoons that burn the fog away. Also,
in the tall spikes—lightning-struck—of firs, we provide
a glamour of chicken-hawks.

After your climb
and upon your arrival,
you will report to our empty squad-bays
maintained in utter disarray, that day by day
lean further off our trails and onto the rubble of shale slopes.
When you first stand at ease in our woods, banana slugs
will approach.
Should you then sleep, slug chevrons
will decorate your fatigues, and overhead
scrub jays will parody war games. A limited
heap of food awaits—mostly berries and roots.

It is so arranged
that the only orders heard
will be taxonomic—those Orders ranked
above the Families and below the Classes: these may exemplify:
in the Plant Kingdom, conifers; among Animals, yourselves
as primates.
These classifications are both scientific and natural. Under
the tossing firs, a disturbance of erstwhile soldiers,
a weary rumble; its language, minimal.
Above the distress of the rejects,
wind-clauses.
In our encampment
the only orders, hierarchic,
shall be the ancient choirs of angels,
neither commissioned nor non-commissioned.
Here we have no lieutenants, no colonels, no chaplains. No mess sergeants, no drill instructors. We have powers
and dominions,
but they are civil (or celestial).
We may read their messages to us if starlight is sufficient
or, if the impulse moves us, in deep moonlight.

Are we a penalty?
Are we a privilege?
We are a detour and a hospice.
We are here time-serving for you whose time-serving contracts
are voided.
In the fields of men your failures are notorious. Wilderness
observes no failures. Like you, we are private,
and will never be promoted. Until you are willing
to show your shaven heads and pitted faces,
we are to you running water, foliage, yellow-jacket;
a den, a litter-layer, a benediction.
On The Refugee Train to Recife

You lay on me your mouth, the cilia
of child hair, the limbs like silk.
Young daughter fallen heavy on my neck,
I fear the birds will peck out your eyes,
strip your skin. I fear from you milk will run
that animals will mount you to drink.
On my shoulder you babble in your sleep.

We ride the long train, Miseria, standing up
from the parched plain to the polluted beach.
We've fled the No Rain . . . we've fled
our drought for theirs. In the aisles
there's barely room to speak. Beans and rice,
beans and rice, and jerked beef,
is what the tracks say to the train.

Don't wake: What will you do there
with your parched flesh but sell it cheap
for sugarcane, for beans and rice, to men
for parched comforts and dried beef?
I see you dressed as adequate
sacrifice at an unholy feast. The Host
looms over us then like a sick beast.

Dementia: Over your hair you'll wear
a mass veil of lacework, a filigree
behind which your face, tinted, roseate,
will hide like a breast in lingerie
while your mouth like a nipple on the breast
drools Pater Nosters and sweet Aves
to the dim lechers in the sacristy,

and when Death rushes you, as Death will,
you'll be reborn for me on a river reach
among the strider bugs and fingerlings;
by rivermen be brought to me in a sling,
your legs one flesh from toes to crotch,
ever to be forced again, and your sex
a virgin tube down which music rings.
Sunrise at the Temple of Dawn

The sky sighs, loosens,
rolls over. Its silk
sheet slides on the gloss
of its skin, disclosing half
the gilt-bronze back beneath, one
gilt hip, long gilt thighs. One arm
of it floats across our bed, unlocks
the waterlilies of your eyes.

You sigh, fasten one bronze arm across
the marble monument that holds down my heart.
The river's hem begins to sparkle
with boatmen's cries. Soon their long siliques
will glide along the river's glass, every crease
in it adding gold
threads to its body-brown
tissue. Soon the sun
will flare, slowly melt downward
over the birthday-candle wax
of the Temple of Dawn's towers.
From afar, those towers will appear
to be Meissen porcelain
candlesticks magnificently carved
into wedding-cake poses. Only when you're there
will the entire temple rise tier on tier
in its confectionary ribbons, whorls,
cornices and flutings, and your eye, involved
in flowery facets
that might be shellwork
or might be jewels,
will perceive it actually
is porcelain—plates, saucers,
cups, salt cellars, pin dishes,
water-color pans— as the sun fills
them with light. When the same sun
wholly fills our bed, it will disclose
us still swimming in its tank of gilded wine,
my mouth fused to the glaze of your mouth,
for today we will not be in time
at the Temple of Dawn to watch the sun rise.

Bangkok, December 1981
View from a Window at Takayama

Manet's eyes would have leaned down, as my eye leans, through the window's slats onto the scene below, 'umbrellas in the street.' He would have painted the slats. They are important. They make the surface of the painting coincide with the fine-grained surface of the canvas; they stress the near-round form of the umbrellas; they provide tension. Most of the umbrellas are black. This, too, is important. They point up the occasional greens, browns, coral reds. From time to time a single head, unadorned but with a wimple of beetle-shiny hair, appears in cameo against the black silk shell of the umbrella; better, yet, two lovers. Against the harp-string tautness of autumn rain, their ivory bodies would have the softness of furs against cut glass, mirrors, crystal chandeliers. That is why, when I speak of the man across the table, I will observe how delicate his lashes are, as filmy as their shadows on the brows of his cheeks, will note how they melt or seem to melt as the steam from his teabowl lays its lacquers on their threads, just as I have seen the wood of his flesh turn to pearl in the agate breath that rises after the bath, and have touched his skin with my own wax skin as he gleamed like that.
FICTION
Duck Season

F.A. Hart

The first time I saw Percy, he was sitting front right—no, second from the front row, second from the right hand side—in my freshman comp class. Sitting bolt upright, legs crossed demurely knee on knee, angular big-knuckled long-fingered hands folded demurely on the tablet arm in front of him, the edge of the fists just up on the edge of the notebook in a way that, in memory, makes me feel the pressure of the hard plastic coated notebook cover in the skin of my own hands, as though I were doing it myself.

I see him much more sharply in memory than I did at the time, like a dream that you remember in fits and snatches until you start to retell it. I have told myself this story a dozen or a hundred times, and every time it becomes more complete. Am I making it up? Embellishing it, hanging tinsel and popcorn and Underwriter Laboratory approved-safe candles on its boughs, and tassels on its boobs, until it becomes my own dream instead of Percy's death? I don't think so. I don't know, though.

All else aside, the first day of class is not the best time for any teacher to notice fine points. We are tense at such times. Our years flow in semianurnal tides, our lives cut into four and a half—four and a half—three-months chunks by the peculiar cycle of the semester system, the intellectual menstruation of taking on water with every set of class lists, the parturition of final exams. I have been known to get savage cramps during the last week of classes in December and May, cramps that—Phyllis Schlafly to the contrary notwithstanding—have nothing to do with my own biology.

So I stood in my tasteful (white, soft folds, subdued pattern of half-bold colors) teacherdress at the chalk tray, smiling dimly at Percy and the four or five edgy girls at the other side of the room—all of them there early, before the rush—sliding my eyes across them as they slid their eyes with nervous tact across me. I was not too nervous to sympathize with them, though that was only my second year at Fresno A&M. They were wondering, behind their sixteen-to-nineteen-year-old squints, if the
model for the semester was going to be more like rape than menses or pregnancy. She's going to have four and a half months to do us in, they were—whether they knew it or not—thinking. Jesus.

I watched them flinch and shuffle on their fannies as I told them they were going to write that first day—all but Percy, who held his head high now that class was going and seemed to be giving a curt, calm, tiny nod of approval as I said the word "diagnostic," and flipped his notebook open to blank paper, keeping his eyes on mine. He was not the only black in the class. No female blacks, just him and Andre. Andre sat in the far back left corner—my left—sprawled almost out of his chair, long meaty legs gangling past the chair in front of him in the signature slouch of the black athlete, would-be or real. Percy, damn his black hide, sat like an account exec at Merrill, Lynch. He sat at the end of the hour until all the other students had gone and the next class was pawing the linoleum in the corridor like cattle at the mouth of a round-up chute waiting to be let in—he sat smiling, back erect, checking and re-checking his essay, waiting to put his name on it till I held my hand out and smiled in front of him. As he wrote he said, "Sorry, Mrs. Woodward, I—"

"Miss," I said.

"I . . .," he said. "Miss Woodward. Sorry to take so long. I do want to tell you how grateful I am to be in this class." Flourish with the pen on the last letter of his name, shuffle of the papers together and into my hand. "I'm really looking forward to improving my writing."

Standing, gathering books.

"That's a good way to start . . . Perceval?" I was looking at his paper.

"Percy, Miss Woodward. See you Wednesday."

That's my line, I thought. I smiled, and we edged separately through the inward belch from the hallway of bodies for the next teacher to deal with.

I was sitting on the cafeteria patio a couple of hours later when I saw him again. The polyester slacks and the plaid shortsleeved shirt on his lean, erect body still looked pressed, as neat as the models in a Sears back-to-school ad, as he walked through the God-awful glare and heat of Fresno late August across concrete that made you snowblind if you looked at it too long.

I had been eating my patty melt with one hand and surreptitiously checking the underside of my left breast for the lump I thought I had felt there that morning, getting ready for school. I dropped the hand away—I knew I'd been fantasizing the God damned mass, anyway—and put it to the sandwich and the sandwich to my mouth as Percy passed without looking at me; and then further, westbound, he passed the black students' table, the one they had painted a year or two before I came to Fresno, painted with black and green and purple stripes and made their turf as part of God knows what campus dispute.
Andre wasn’t at the table but would have fit in. All the students there looked up as Percy went by, he not looking at them either. Their faces stayed blank as they watched him, and then when he was well away they turned and one girl smirked and said something that made the others laugh and punch her shoulders. I wiped the fingers of my right hand carefully; kept in my left the sandwich, dwindled now by the hammering of the sun and/or my ingestion to greasy crusts; went on chewing; and reached down to the folder of essays on the table bench next to me. I flipped it open, and read the first few lines of Percy’s, which was still on top.

"I think the most interesting thing about me, the thing that it’s most fun to explain to other people," Percy wrote, "is that my parents are white." Son of a cue ball, I thought. I shuffled my fanny a little on its plastic bench. "I was born..." The words went on, in the manner of student essays since man first descended from the trees and the dorm rooms, and I turned to the inevitable ersatz punchline at the bottom of the back of the page: "You see, I am adopted." I smiled after Percy—he was gone, but in that direction—and avoided meeting the eyes of any of the blacks at the painted table, and bit and pulled my head sideways to tear off two-thirds of the last chunk of rye crust in my fingers, dropped the stump on my plate, and suppressed the impulse to flip the wrong finger at the group of black buddies who had, evidently, thought Percy unright for his color.

As I walked across campus to our first-day Department meeting, Gary Enders—one of Us, a teacher—angled towards me from the right, took my arm and squeezed gently as if he were guiding me, grinned, and said, "Don’t worry, Sue, the meeting—" I lurched against him as though I’d twisted a heel, and knocked his fingers off my forearm. The greasy little bastard had been grabbing my forearm every time I got within four feet of him for a year at that point, and I really wanted to see if I could, without saying anything, make him nervous enough about me to... Well, I just didn’t like the paw games, that’s all. But teachers plan ahead, too. It would take me four more years to get tenure; Gary would have tenure for two years before I did; Gary would get to vote on whether I got retained and then tenured for those two years; Gary—half-unbuttoned shirt, hairless chest, pewter-ankh-on-neckchain and all—counted.

He staggered away from me, smiling and startled, and put his arm around my back to steady me. "You okay?" he said. Oh, f... shit, I thought. "Sure," I said, "I—" I lurched again, teachershoe into his instep.

"God, I’m sorry," I said, "I’ve been taking these pills for a yeast infection I’ve got and they must be affecting my balance. You okay?"

"Oh, hell, yes," he said. We were still moving, Gary with a pronounced limp. "You poor kid." His speculative look faded into blandness as he decided not to ask about the yeast infection. I was really sorry. I’d been
getting ready to tell him I was having an affair with a baker. We walked the rest of the way to the meeting in what passed for amiable silence.

I would not have mentioned the meeting at all—in memory, now, many years after the fact, it blurs into inconsequence, I actually remember nothing specific about it, what appears behind my forehead when I try to visualize it is a Manet blur of plaid short-sleeved shirts and bored, mostly male faces—I don’t think I could ever make clear to anyone who had not attended one, I mean concretely proven clear, the fact that our meetings in that department at Fresno A&M had all the real intellectual value of an unusually vapid Tupperware party and all the compulsive intellectual pretension of the election of a pope. Gary must have been at it—he walked to it with me—and (and this is what matters here) it must have been there that we first discussed Aaron Stillman.

Aaron Stillman, like Percy and Andre and the jokers at the black table, was, as our grandmothers (or some of them) used to say, Of Color. Black as an ace pilot in the Nigerian Air Force. Exconvict, fiction writer, tall, dashiki-clad, honest-to-Gertrude shaved head. And, Lord only knows why (unless it was, like the rest of us, to earn a living), applicant for a job in our Department.

I know I remember Gary at the evening party/interview session—a few weeks later, judging by my memory of the weather—when we all met Aaron. It was in the deep dusk fading to night around our department chairman’s swimming pool, and I remember Aaron standing, wine cooler in jelly glass in his right hand, feet braced apart, dashiki stiff with starch and subcultural import, surrounded by a shifting and edgy ring of pink teachers and the occasional spouse. He stood with calm taut dignity like a tree or an Urban League totem carved especially to honor our liberalism; his inquisitors (myself included, probably) looked like dwarves in search of a toadstool to sit on.

I was in the ring, close enough that I could have reached out and supported Aaron by his forearm if he’d needed it, when Gary said, “You like to hunt?”

“I used to, actually,” Aaron said after a pause during which he swiveled his face toward Gary and looked at him kindly, “but I don’t do a whole lot any more. It’s kind of part of my parole I shouldn’t own guns. I was doing five to seven for armed robbery.”

“Oh, right,” Gary said. He looked out across the swimming pool, but found no help there. “Fresno’s not a bad place to live if you like to hunt,” he said hopefully. “You like to camp?”

Aaron’s smile was broadening and his mouth opening to, I’m sure, try to get Gary off the hook when Carl Hall, our chairman, said over my shoulder, “You like to hunt, Gary?”

“Oh, sure,” Gary said. “I can’t. . . . I mean I was just asking Aaron. . . .”

“Wait—” Carl said, and disappeared toward the house. Gary and
Aaron and I looked at each other helplessly, and I started to ask Aaron where he was from, but Gary said, "Boy, it sure is hot still, I don't think I'll ever . . . ," and then Carl said, behind me again, "Look at this."

I turned, and he was holding a dead duck. It lay across his two hands, feathers visibly muddy even by the patchy light of Carl's poolside Malibus, head dangling and quivering slightly at the end of its neck in what appeared to be imperfect rigor mortis. We all looked at it until I broke and said, "It looks like a dead duck, Carl."

"You're damned right it's a dead duck, Sue, I just thought Gary might know where I could get it stuffed and mounted. The damned thing was floating in our pool last weekend, I mean swimming, and I have enough trouble with the filter system without getting it full of duck shit, and when I tried to chase it out I think it had a coronary. You know. So do you?" He looked hopefully at all three of us.

"Do we what?" Aaron said.

"Know where I can get it mounted? I mean my study is kind of bare at the moment, I—we just moved in here, you know . . . ."

Gary laughed nervously and started to mumble some damned thing or other. I reached out toward Aaron, took his wine cooler out of his hand and drank what was left of it, put it back in his hand and said, "Gee, Aaron, let me refill that for you." I took him by the elbow and led him toward the drink table. The last I saw of the duck, then, was Carl putting it in Gary's outstretched hands.

All I remember of my conversation with Aaron over the ginger ale and K-Mart gin and jug red (odd, isn't it, that after two decades of teaching, making my students remember things in four and a half month chunks, my memory has become a set of separate visual and tactile vignettes?)—all I remember of what we said to each other until just before we left the drink table was what we didn't talk about. I kept wanting to ask him what I should try to do to help students like Andre and Percy, and of course I didn't ask him that. I also didn't (I'm quite confident, dim though my memory is) ask him how to cook chitlins, or where the best fried chicken restaurants were around the country.

I did notice, though, that it took—seemed to take—an effort of will for him to not stand with his back toward the pool and the Caucasian horde that had assembled to meet him. After we had refilled our drinks for the second time without being interrupted by any of his other hosts and hostesses, I said, "Will you take this job? I think they'll offer it to you."

I was standing looking up at him, my arms crossed under my breasts to hug against a gathering nighttime chill, my glass just in front of my lips, poised at the top of a propped arm.

He looked at me with more clearly focused eyes than I had seen on him all evening. "You think I should?"

I hesitated, then thought, The hell with it. I set my drink down on the
table, leaned back against the house wall, brushed my hair back off a
temple. "I don't think you'd like it here," I said.
Some thought flicked across his eyes and mouth—something I didn't
understand until about five minutes later. Then all he said was, "You?"
"Like it?"
"Right," he said.
I was still looking at his eyes, into them, through them, and I knew my
downturned and broadening smile was answering for me, so what I said
was, "Look over there," and pointed with my chin back the way we had
come.
A clump of two or three more faculty and wives had joined Gary and
Carl and the duck. The duck rode under Carl's arm, Gary having
somehow rid himself of it; Gary was bouncing his eyes back and forth
between Carl over there, and the two of us by the house; Carl's wife was
eyeing us, too, while talking to them in little animated bursts, like a defec­tive machine gun. Aaron looked, as I had told him to, then looked back at
me.
"Ah don' have to like it, now do I?"
"It helps," I said, "I think."
He hesitated again, then said, "You mind if I ask you somethin' real
personal? I mean tell you somethin' real personal?"
My entire body, every cell of it, every muscle and synapse and follicle,
went quite still. No, I thought, come on now, he can't. . . .
"No, I don't mind," I said.
"Why don't you show me . . . just step insahd for a minute. You don't
want me to say it right here."
Anger was rising somewhere down near my spine, but I had already
asked for it, and the smile was on my middle class, female, Caucasian,
liberal cheeks, and I could feel my eyes narrowing as he opened the
screen door and I stepped through ahead of him, belly tightening and
calves stiff with anticipation. We were in a laundry room. I took two quick
strides away from him and put my fanny against the dryer and turned and
said, "Yes?"
He still had his fingers on the screen door. He let it close all the way,
softly, but stayed next to it, crossed his arms on his chest and, I swear to
God, blushed. It wasn't color, his skin was much too dark to show it, it was
something about the corners of his eyes. He looked down at his shoes,
shuffled them once, then looked me in the eye.
"I'm probably being real stupid," he said—the ghetto accent had
disappeared from his pronunciation, but not from his grammar—"but all
of a sudden it sounded like we were really talking out there. You know?
The thing is, I know damned well you couldn't like it here hardly at all. I
was talkin' to . . . what the hell's his name, the one with the funny lookin'
cross on—
"Gary," I said, and I could feel my stomach unknotting.

"Ole Gary and I were talkin' a bit ago, and he pointed you out to me. Said some kind of complicated shit to me I didn't really follow at all. I finally figured out he was tellin' me you les. You know."

I would have gotten angry at Aaron, except that he was, beyond any possible doubt, not asking me anything. The slide back to slurred and grammarless speech was not the only way he had of showing embarrassment. I was enraged at Gary, naturally, but it was Aaron's half-averted eyes I was looking into. So it was shame I felt, more than anger, at that moment.

I averted my eyes too when I felt the one tear leak over my lower eyelid and start the jerky wet trek down my left cheek. "No," I said as soon as I thought my voice would be under control. "No, you don't have to like it."

"Ah'm really sorry, Sue. I mean shit, it was a stupid thing for me to—"

"Aaron," I said, "how many years did you spend inside?"

I could see a curtain drop somewhere halfway back inside his eyeballs, but he was at least looking directly at me now, with full attention. "Three years, two months, nahnten days."

"What I'm trying to say to you," I said, "and I hope you'll believe me about both these things. Believe this. First, thank you for telling me about"—despite my very best efforts, the next word came out in a snarl—"Gary. I am grateful to you . . . that you wanted me to know. Second, I hope you do come here. They'll offer you the job, I think." You're an idiot, I thought to myself. But the fear began to skin over with something nicer when I saw that, although no tear ran down his lean, brown, masculine cheek, they were forming above both of his lower lids. He said, finally, "Ah'll keep it in mind . . . . Is Sue what you like? To be called?"

"Susan," I said firmly.

"Ah'll keep it in mind, Susan."

The look we got from Gary, Carl, Mrs. Carl, and almost everyone else as we stepped back out the laundry room door put a spring in my step that lasted for weeks.

Aaron did take the job, and we did. . . . Actually, most of that isn't part of what this, now, that I'm trying to tell you, is about. Just a bit of it is, but I'll get to it. I never did ask Aaron about Percy, because by the time he was back in Fresno the following year, employed and one of Us, department meetings and all, the whole Percy thing had gotten. . . .

The first thing I really knew was that, two thirds of the way through the semester, in that freshman comp class, he disappeared. Didn't come to class for two weeks or so, then turned up at my office to apologize for missing so much class and to ask if he could still make up the assignments and—I noticed, without wanting to—shuffle his feet more than once and
talk mostly at the floor instead of at me. Shit, I thought.

I also noticed, and tried to understand, the fact that his clothes—Percy’s
taste in clothes had changed. No more neatly pressed plaid—now it was
loose not overly clean sweat-shirts with sleeves hacked off; cutoff levis
just once, though by that time it was chill, windy, threatening-to-rain
Fresno fall, and he looked miserable with cold (not in my office, in class
the one day he appeared after the two-week absence). The end of the
semester came without his making up any of the work, and the last I saw
of him before I heard that he’d committed suicide was the day I turned in
final grades.

That last sight was of him walking past the library, hands in pockets of
his neatly pressed slacks, arms huddled against his sides for warmth (it
seemed) because he had on the sleeveless sweatshirt. I was sitting, eating
again, and could watch him out of sight. The back of his sweatshirt, dark
and arched across his hunched shoulders, bore no motto. The informa-
tion, months later, that he had died in a one-car freeway accident, driving
into a concrete overpass pillar at six AM on a bright, clear, dry Sunday
spring morning in no traffic at all—that fact, summarized in flawless
grammar but with a typo or two, appeared in a small item that I caught by
accident in the newspaper.

Aaron arrived the following fall, and part of what I loved about him was
my own kind of plastic guilt: if he and I could be friends, really friends, I
could feel all right about not asking him what the hell I should have done
that might have made Percy do more than shuffle his feet and bullshit me
and drift away toward the freeway. Plastic guilt is, after all, the most
durable kind. I came damn close to asking Aaron, a couple of times,
spilling the whole irritating and embarrassing set of memories. And I
never did. And I’m glad.

I’ve got just one picture of Aaron that I took one day during the one fall
he was here. We had gone on a picnic, and I had given him a joke present
and made him pose for me with it, and the light caught it beautifully in
just one of the shots I took—a cheap brass ankh on a good gold chain,
glowing against his black skin halfway down his chest. The joke pose he
struck with it is indescribable. The picnic had consisted mainly of wine,
and we had gotten quite giggly and started teasing each other, and in
some joke he made, he said, “Listen, Sister Sue—” The pause only lasted a
moment. But it—that pause, looking into my eyes, smile shrinking and
softening and shifting to a laugh—was the nicest thing he, or possibly
anyone, has ever said to me.
ARTICLES
Too little attention is paid to the customs of traditional societies by outsiders who study, work, or merely travel there. But when the situation concerns one culture's trying to establish a government among the people of another, the possibilities for inefficiency and even strife are immense—unless the foreign administrators learn about and adjust to the customs that seem so strange. The United States is in just such a situation with American Samoa.

When a country colonizes, it is taken for granted that the bureaucratic concepts of the more powerful country will be transferred to the colony, whether those ideas work in the new setting or not. The fact that the territories of the United States are supervised by the Department of the Interior points to two of the main problems of administering American Samoa. First, except for the Native Americans, the United States has not had a lengthy tradition of managing people whose culture is dissimilar to its own. Second, the process of blending the native way of life with the American lifestyle can be difficult. The Samoans are a proud and reverent people and hold to many of the traditional values of their past, which are often in conflict with American values.

American Samoa is an unincorporated and unorganized territorial possession of the United States—important mainly for strategic reasons. It belongs to the United States but is not included within any state. Because the United States Congress has not expressly extended to American Samoa the provisions of the United States Constitution, the
island possession is an unincorporated territory. However, the Constitution authorizes Congress to make rules and regulations for United States territories. The administering federal agency is the Office of Territorial and International Affairs, Department of the Interior.

The Samoan Islands of the central Pacific Ocean are located 4,500 miles southwest of California (170° 42' W, 14° 18' S). American Samoa consists of seven islands. The largest, Tutuila, is dominated by the capital of Pago Pago. Aunu’u Island and the three islands of Ta’u, Olosega, and Ofu (known collectively as the Manu’a Archipelago) are comparatively untouched by the twentieth century. Swains Island is a coral atoll lying 280 miles to the northwest. Rose Atoll is an uninhabited national wildlife refuge lying 250 miles to the east. The land area of all seven islands is only 76.2 square miles. It is the only United States territory south of the equator.

American Samoa is separate from Western Samoa, an independent nine-island country. Western Samoa achieved independence on January 1, 1962, thus becoming the first independent Polynesian state to be established in contemporary times. American Samoa and Western Samoa are located 80 miles apart.

I. The Culture of American Samoa

Culture is a society’s way of life, the way that society interprets and perceives the world, and how it manages its internal affairs. Edward Tyler states, “Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.”5 Most of culture is learned behavior; as people develop techniques to adapt to their environment, situations are defined for the individual, and people are taught the standards of behavior.

A people’s customs, beliefs, values, and technology are interdependent. Changes in one area invariably affect other areas, sometimes throwing the entire system off balance. According to Guy Peters, “Culture is subject to change, and there is a constant interaction of culture and politics that redefines the role of government.”6 While Samoans are in a state of confusion, as they vacillate between the traditional and the new, they are in danger of losing the security of their old ways and the benefits of the new. A sympathetic understanding of the traditional Samoan ways will make the clash between the old and the new less abrasive. Not incidentally it can help ease the transition to American society by those Samoans who have come to the United States. More Samoans live in California and Hawaii than in American Samoa.
American Samoans

The people of Samoa are among the last remaining full-blooded Polynesians. Residents of American Samoa, who numbered approximately 32,297 in 1980,7 are classified as American nationals. Aviata Fa’alevao, Attorney General of American Samoa, explains:

Its people, i.e. those born in American Samoa, are regarded as U.S. Nationals, but not U.S. citizens. See 8 USCA Section 1408 (1) . . . [They] have all the same rights and privileges of United States citizens, except that they cannot vote in [federal] elections. 8

The United States immigration laws define “alien” and “national.” An “alien” is any person not a citizen or national of the United States. A “national of the United States” is defined as “a citizen of the United States or a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to this country.” 9

Nationals acquire most of the protections that accrue to citizens. According to J. Plano and M. Greenberg, “By granting the status of nationals to a people, Congress identifies them as belonging to and entitled to the protection of the United States, particularly for purposes of international relations.” 10

Many Samoans fear their customs’ decay because of western influences. Unfortunately, the demise of simple island life would mean the breakdown of those ties that bind the tribal community together, and former ways of living may give way to new behavior adapted to the changing environment. Clothes, food, language, religion, rules, values, political beliefs, and professions could change. No wonder Samoans worry about retaining their identity. They are concerned with teaching their children Samoan customs, and they cling steadfastly to the Samoan culture. They appreciate the relaxed, easy, casual environment of their islands, support cultural preservation, and are not willing to accept a pressurized society. Mainland Americans working or visiting Samoa need to know these Samoan attitudes.

Family

Most Samoans live today almost as they have lived for centuries. In the villages, in the marketplace, in public offices, and even in the governor’s office, men wear the traditional ankle-length lavalava (wrap-around skirts) with sandals. Women wear a puleta (fitted tunic blouse) over a lavalava. They observe centuries-old Samoan ceremonies, honor their chiefs, and love their children.
The extended family household, including several generations of people, is the basic socio-economic unit of Samoan society, with the average number of persons per household being eight. These eight often include at least one grandparent, a mother and father, an uncle or aunt, and several children. Twenty years ago, Samoan women who survived to the end of their reproductive period (from fifteen years of age to forty-four years) had an average of more than seven children. Now, a common saying on the islands is, "As you should space your coconut trees, so space your children."

The general custom is for male family members to live where their father lives or lived. Upon marriage, it is the woman who usually moves from her father's home to the home of her husband's father. Generally, a newly married couple does not move into its own home, but becomes part of an already existing family.

Samoans, it is important to note, are a very mobile people. They may move several times, alternating between the home of brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so forth. They visit each other often, and visits regularly extend into temporary living arrangements. In Fay Calkins' book, *My Samoan Chief*, her husband is quoted as saying:

> In our big families children are not attached to one mother. They are attached to many. I had four adopted mothers myself. I seldom lived with my own. It is a whole community of relatives, not one person, that gives our children security. Desertion and adoption don't bother them a bit.

Parents allow their children to live with other families because of economic difficulties or discipline problems.

Native village life is communal, with all property shared within the family. This sharing often encompasses most of the village, because families are large and even distant relatives count as family. Margaret Mead's description of the traditional Samoan extended family is as accurate today as it was more than 50 years ago.

Samoan social structure is built around the *aiga*, the extended kin group, which varies in size between 20 and 300 relatives. Within the sphere of the *aiga* is an extensive "banking" network. These family members assemble for every *fa'alavelave* (family complication or trouble). *Fa'alavelaves* include weddings, first birthdays, twenty-first birthdays, and crisis events such as funerals. At these events, relatives contribute differing amounts of money or food. For a marriage, furniture may be given, or, in the case of a funeral, money for a coffin may be donated. The sum presented at a *fa'alavelave* is dependent upon the person's relationship to the family member concerned. Contributions range from $250 to as little as $30 on each occasion. This money may be looked upon
as an investment, or insurance. When family members are involved in a crisis situation, they receive aid.

Goods and services are also passed inside of the aiga. Because of the wide range of skills available in groups of this size, members who have performed their obligations within the family can receive significant economic benefits. Those skillful at building may provide labor, those who are able fishermen may supply fish, women who sew or weave make clothes, and those who have access to discounts for goods and services pass these savings on. The Samoan recognizes the value of having many relatives with a variety of talents who can be called upon in times of need.

The reasons for the persistence of the aiga are numerous. It offers individuals an identity that is reinforced during celebrations or life crises. Considerable resources are exchanged daily among its members. For a lower income group, the savings are of consequence, besides the fact that they are untaxed. Finally, the aiga offers stability and reduces the vulnerability of its members.

Fales (Houses)

Samoans are proud of the villages from which they originated and where they abide. For example, some feel superior because they were born in Fagatogo, the commercial center of American Samoa. Others feel special because they are from Nuuuli, which is near the main road and has several new structures. The villagers of Vailoatai are elevated because they recently received an award for the cleanest village. These villages are comprised of varying numbers of fales, dwelling places.

The typical Samoan house on the islands has no walls or fixed partitions. Living in eternal summer, Samoans find walls unnecessary. Sometimes screens of cloth are strung up to provide a measure of privacy. The thatched roof is supported on posts and is either round (fale tele) or elliptical (fale afolau). The roof frame is an elaborate network, covered with sugar-cane thatch. Collapsible blinds of plaited coconut leaves can be let down during inclement weather. The floor is raised and covered with pebbles or white coral pieces and then covered with mats. There are very few furnishings. Cleaning and maintenance are at a minimum.

Samoans erect separate buildings to serve the functions of each counterpart of the American room. The main fale is used for sleeping, visiting, and craftwork. The kitchen is a small cooking fale with an umu (ground level oven of rocks and leaves). This is usually away from the main fale, in order to keep smoke, noise, and insects at a distance. Men cook the one hot meal of the day. Bathing and laundry are done outdoors. Most villages obtain water from a stream, although some areas are beginning to receive piped-in water. These families use outdoor shower
stalls. Most villages still have outhouses.

Guest fales are separate structures of the same design, built to provide accommodations for traveling friends of the village. The meeting house is generally the largest fale. Within this fale, the matais (chiefs) of all families meet one day a week to conduct village business. At this level, most of Samoa's judicial proceedings take place. Crimes are settled by levying fines of food, forcing formal apologies, or sometimes administering physical beating authorized by the matais. Decision making is dominated by the customary and traditional consensus system (fa'a Samoa: "The Samoan Way"). Within the meeting fale, long discussions are held by the matais on all types of problems until a consensus is reached. There is no recourse to the modern court system. It is within the posts of these meeting fales that day-to-day administration is accomplished.

In a few villages, the matai, and perhaps a few ranking family members, will reside in a non-Samoan house of wood with a corrugated iron roof. These structures are regarded as status symbols.

Church

The church is very important to Samoans. In 1970, virtually every Samoan acknowledged and observed some form of sectarian Christian belief. By 1985, this has changed little. A family unit maintains much of its identity and stability through the church of its village. The people of each village generally attend one church.

On a typical Sunday, a visitor traveling through Tutuila is impressed with the Sunday atmosphere. Hymns can be heard all day long throughout the island. Being in the choir is an honor to the Samoans, and they practice for several hours before and after the actual church service. Choirs also sing at the airport to greet incoming and departing planes. Most of the people wear white to religious services. It seems almost "heavenly" to walk or ride through the streets and see so many dressed in white, with the stirring hymns in the air.

Religious denominations represented are the Christian Congregational Church of Samoa (formerly the London Missionary Society), Roman Catholic Church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Church of the Nazarene, Assemblies of God, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Congregationalists are the largest denomination. Each village establishes its own rules for deciding which church will be attended, how much money should be contributed, and what the fines will be for non-attendance. Many matais require that all go to church, and if someone is absent there is a monetary fine, food penalty, or perhaps a beating. Therefore, there is a high percentage of regular attendance, even among the young. Church activities reinforce and maintain traditional Samoan culture.
Church services are conducted in the Samoan language. During the ceremonies, children sit quietly under the watchful eyes of adults. They often present plays during the Christmas holidays and participate in White Sunday celebrations. White Sunday is the second Sunday of October and is "children's day," where the young are catered to and indulged.

Most Sunday services are followed by a traditional feast. No work is done on Sundays; it is a day for church, eating, sleeping, and visiting. Often the men spend the late afternoon in the meeting fale discussing church and village problems.

**Sharing versus Stealing**

Stealing is a western term. It is never to be used in connection with a Samoan, particularly among Samoan relatives. In the legal sense of the word, stealing was not known until after white people began to arrive on the island in 1830.15

Samoans have an unwritten rule of, "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine." A person can take something belonging to another at any time. This can be with or without the latter's knowledge or permission. There is usually agreement that the original owner may later appropriate something belonging to the first taker.

The tribal philosophy is that all property and material goods belong to the entire family. Borrowing is also an unacceptable word because this concept still implies possession. Margaret Mead describes this situation in her classic work on Samoa by saying, "Privacy of possessions is virtually impossible."16

Even the concept of food portions is different from the western norm. Portions are extremely large, and guests may not settle for a small amount but must take the entire dish home.

Samoans do not work hard to obtain an abundance of material things. Their homes have little furniture or decoration. This is, no doubt, at least partially attributable to the fact that additional material goods would have to be surrendered to any passing relative who fancied them. It is difficult for Americans to understand these Samoan attitudes toward acquisition and ownership.

People are expected to be generous with food, or anything else that seems desirable, even housing. A consequence is that Samoans are almost always propertyless and, therefore, happy to partake of whatever anyone else happens to have at the moment. Unfortunately, there is often a conflict with the law. Should a Samoan "use" another's car, an American patrolman may not understand the traditional custom and consider the act auto theft or burglary. Many Samoans have been jailed by their own local police as a result of a clash between American and Samoan customs.
Samoans are not prepared to cope in a society where food and housing are not free and where competition flourishes, such as in the American system. An understanding of the Samoan value system is mandatory if any bureaucracy in American Samoa is to succeed.

Unwritten Customs

Unwritten Samoan customs have become habits of life over many generations. They are strictly adhered to on the islands. Because of their continued importance, one interested in Samoa should be familiar with these aspects of Samoan conduct. The following are examples of some of these "manners," not all of which are foreign to American ways:

- The high chief's light should be the first one on at night, before that of any other homes in the village.
- Food left from the tray of the high chief should not be eaten by any member of the family, who is not a blood relation of the High Chief, except his wife.
- Do not speak standing in any home or in the guest house if there are visitors or friends sitting down.
- If you are serving food you should eat last.
- Treat visitors to the best of food and bedding.
- Share your food with your neighbors.
- Wear no turban, headband, or any other cover on your head while you are passing the high chief's guest house.
- No one is allowed to carry a goat on his shoulder or use an umbrella in going through a village where a noted high chief or king resides.
- Do not eat standing at any time, even in your own home.17

In Samoan culture, it is expected that one show respect—even if it means telling lies. It is polite to agree with one's superiors, and it is a way of showing respect.18

Matai System

Every home has a matai, or chief. The matai is generally a man. His authority extends to all of the people living within his household, and he is given respectful obedience. While his concerns include the family's performance of domestic tasks and its members' cooperative behavior, he also apportions land for farming or residential use. The control and
disposition of land provide the economic basis of the chief's power. The matai regulates his family's relations with other village families, and it is he who decides which family members will live within the household. In fact, he has the power to expel anyone who threatens the cohesiveness of the group.\(^{19}\)

In recent times, there have been two types of matais. The old hereditary leaders are still considered the head of the aiga (extended family) and command great respect. Their functions, however, are primarily ceremonial, and they are referred to as ali'i matai. The new leaders and the real sources of authority are the tulafale matais, "talking chiefs." Although heredity is still a qualification, the status of tulafale matai is achieved through family election.

Besides being popular and having the ability to make a good speech, a prospective matai must demonstrate the following qualifications:

. . . He should be a lineal member of the family and his ancestors have held the title he is about to receive. He should show interest in the affairs of the family while he is serving his Matai and the village chief council. He should be endowed with wisdom and of good judgment. He should be intelligent, and have a desire to continue to learn. He must be true, tolerant, diligent, humble and kind. He is expected to protect the interest of his family and village, even at the peril of his life. Having no set salary, and since he receives no votes bought with his friends' money, he is not bribed or inclined to favoritism. Honor and service to his fellow men are his pride and only goals.

. . . The Matai's most honored duty is to keep the ties of brotherhood and fellowship ever strengthened among his family, village and people.\(^{20}\)

Political organization rests largely upon the local extended family and upon the village hierarchy. Members of several families join together in dealing with common local problems. Samoan society has a complexity of association, loyalties, alliances, and obligations. These often conflict when the Samoans are deciding upon some type of political action. They may be torn by opposing claims and loyalties.

In modern, achievement-oriented countries, a person's job within an administration is, in the absence of discrimination, determined by ability. The norms call for advancement to be determined by individual merit, not status. In the traditional society of Samoa, however, administrative jobs are conferred on the basis of ascriptive, or time-honored, criteria. The matai's position as a leader is determined because of unchangeable hereditary qualities that have no necessary relation to individual talent.
The example of the *matai* is a good illustration of how knowledge of Samoan culture can forestall tactless blunders—and worse—on the part of mainland Americans in their dealings with Samoans. Accommodation to traditional ways need not mean simple copying, but rather an awareness of where differences might cause hard feelings and refusal to cooperate. To pass automatically over the *matai* in favor of a police force appointment for the top scorer on a civil service test, for example, would alienate the traditionalists and thus make law enforcement more difficult.

II. Administrative Problems of American Samoa

There are genuine deficiencies in American Samoa’s government. But if the United States is to be of real help in correcting these deficiencies, its public administrators must get more in accord with Samoan traditions. Otherwise, the ignoring of or even resistance to United States efforts will continue. What are the prime administrative deficiencies and how might changes in U.S. attitudes or practices help?

*Labor Force*

Since the United States took possession of American Samoa, private industry has developed. Tuna canneries, a watch factory, a dairy products plant, and a Coca Cola bottling company have provided jobs for Samoans. Also, the government itself has hired the largest portion of wage labor employees. Government employees include teachers, health service workers, public works employees, communication workers, and clerical workers in a variety of agencies. However, as Samoans began receiving cash, many emigrated to Hawaii and the United States mainland. Because of greater prosperity, western ideas, better transportation, and better education, it was now possible for Samoans to leave the islands in search of better job opportunities or advanced education.

Cless Young, an administrator of the American Samoa Community College, said in an interview that 75 per cent of the territory’s high school graduates have migrated, thus decreasing American Samoa’s potential skilled labor force.²¹

The government of American Samoa, which until 1978 was known locally as GAS, is now called American Samoan Government (ASG). It provides more than one-half of the jobs in the territory. More than 5,200 Samoans—one of every six people on the islands—work for the government. Sound personnel practices are critical to the effectiveness of this as of any administrative operation. Strengthening the competency of public employees is of course a primary goal of good public administration, for public affairs can be conducted only as well as the adeptness of those whose function it is to carry out governmental policy. As George
Kennan has asserted, “Let me control personnel, and I will ultimately control policy. For the part of the machine that recruits and hires and fires and promotes people can soon control the entire shape of the institution.” Herbert Simon, Donald Smithburg, and Victor Thompson write:

In the long run, the organization can change its whole character by its control over the admission of new employees and over the processes that gradually condition them during the period they are in it.

But American Samoa lacks trained administrative and office personnel. The government suffers from an unskilled and untrained labor force. Many government workers do not meet even minimum job qualifications.

Declining enrollments and fiscal reductions have produced a surplus of teachers on the mainland. With salary incentives and the enticement of a job opportunity on a tropical island, perhaps a group of skilled business and finance educators could be recruited to American Samoa, on a temporary basis of approximately two to four years, for the purpose of teaching necessary skills. If Samoans are trained, American Samoa could then be managed by Samoans. Administrators have come to Samoa for short periods as contract employees with grandiose ideas, and failed.

It is the author’s opinion that classroom teachers and educators are needed more than managers. With qualified teachers, Samoans can be trained to become effective government administrators, accountants, clerks, and teachers themselves. Jobs would be filled with Samoans who would have the cultural identity, and therefore the desire, to make Samoa work for Samoans. There would be a balance between Samoan conventions (fa’a Samoa) and necessary business skills. It would be more appealing to remain in Samoa if the talented knew they would have the opportunity to achieve top level jobs, adequate salaries, and, ultimately, a higher standard of living.

**High Turnover of Administration in Upper Management**

Papalagis, white people, come to American Samoa on two-year contracts. Many initiate new programs that, on paper, appear to be serviceable but rarely become fully implemented. Most contract employees from the mainland find Samoa’s tropical humidity and its lack of modern conveniences constraining. Cultural differences also account for dissatisfaction. In 1956, American Samoa had 45 contract employees; by 1978, there were 170 middle and upper management contract positions.
According to GAS officials, high turnover among contract employees has adversely affected the overall government operations. In fiscal years 1976 and 1977, turnover was approximately 65 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively. Contracts are normally for 2 years and can be renewed with mutual agreements. However, most contract employees stay for 2 years or less.25

The General Accounting Office has encouraged the American Samoan government to correct this problem by hiring fewer contract employees, but so far this advice has not been followed. So the old programs are terminated and new ones commenced. There is no continuity; little is accomplished; almost nothing is built upon. During a four-year period from 1974 through 1978, for example, the position of treasurer/director of Administrative Services had been filled by seven persons.26

Trainers, not administrators, are needed in Samoa so that the Samoans themselves can take over shortly. The thrust of the assignments ought to be to train, strengthen, and prepare local Samoans to manage successfully.

**Fiscal Weakness**

Appropriate public administration requires a government to be accountable for expenditures. According to Harry D. Kerrigan, "Accounting is a methodology for recording, classifying, summarizing and interpreting in a significant manner and in terms of money, transactions and other financial events."37 And Robert Lee and Ronald Johnson write, "Accounting ... provides for accountability in that transactions records are used to hold persons and organizations responsible for public funds."28 An agency’s accounting information system provides information on the relationship between that agency’s financial transactions and the congressional appropriation "to provide proof that they were in accordance with the legal requirements of appropriations acts."29

To the extent that a system even exists, the government of American Samoa has weak accounting. Records are frequently incomplete, and there is an absence of effective fiscal controls and audit trails.

Improvements are needed in the fiscal responsibility arenas of American Samoa’s governmental operations. With its own elected governor and legislature providing a wide range of public services, it is necessary to have an efficient, well-run public administrative operation. In reviewing the present system of operation, it is evident that weaknesses exist in almost all areas of administration, of which the fiscal and personnel functions are critical. Various United States governmental
reports and audits have verified that weaknesses in these areas exist. It is essential that the fiscal and budgetary operations be improved by establishing generally accepted accounting and budgetary systems throughout the American Samoan government. The need to centralize such systems is essential in order to standardize the budget practices and financial reporting of all agencies and programs of the government. Only in this way can financial credibility be established and program accountability maintained. This task is not a simple one, as competent personnel are required to accomplish it. More specifically, it requires skilled and trained Samoan people to carry out the functions of government.

In the past, an abundance of outsiders has been utilized in the government process. However, as noted, most of these serve only a short period of time, thus precluding continuity. Initially, outsiders may very well be recruited on a temporary basis to aid in the design, establishment, and implementation of government systems. In the end, however, it is the Samoan people who must eventually learn these systems and carry out the functions of government.

Transplanting bureaucracy bears a relationship to introducing any kind of exotica to another culture. Recognition of and adaptation to the local environment are needed or a plant will not grow, let alone flourish. Until the United States applies that lesson to its dealings with American Samoa, little progress can be expected in solving the territory’s severe management problems.

Notes

1 The scope of the author’s research extends from government documents and interviews on the mainland to the added dimension of fieldwork and investigation in American Samoa. Discussions with governmental officials, including the governor and lieutenant governor, business leaders, and citizens, were advantageous. Examination of available government reports was also useful. However, it should be noted that, frequently, appropriate records did not exist. While accumulating information, the author was repeatedly frustrated with the significant fact that comprehensive financial statements had not been
prepared by various agencies. When her inquiry led her to federal agencies in San Francisco and Washington, D.C., she learned that officials do not know the precise amounts of revenues, expenditures, or transactions of government operations in American Samoa. She has since become a consultant for the Department of the Interior, Office of International and Territorial Affairs.

2 The Panama Canal Zone was under the Department of the Army.


7 Statement to the author by officials of The Pacific Basin Development Council, telephone conversations, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 19, 1985. The 1980 census is the most recent population count.

8 Personal letter to the author from Aviata Fa’alevao, Attorney General, American Samoa, dated October 14, 1980.


13 Margaret Mead, Coming of Age in Samoa (New York: Random House, 1953).


15 A Dutchman, Commander Jacob Roggeveen, was the first white man known to visit Samoa. Although he arrived there in June, 1722, very little of Samoa’s history was recorded until 1830 when John Williams, a missionary from the London Missionary Society, arrived.

16 Mead, p. 125.


19 Persons being expelled from one household will generally have
several alternate places to move. Although not dependent upon residence in one particular place, they may lose friends, employment, and property rights if they choose to leave.

20 Su‘apa‘ia, p. 118.
21 Statement to the author by Cless Young, interview, Pago Pago, A. S., January 3, 1980.
25 Ibid., p. 49.
26 Ibid. p. 50.
29 Ibid., p. 258.
Entrepreneur of the 3rd World: An Interview with Governor Yuki Shmull of Peleliu

Ted C. Hinckley

In typical media fashion, Third World nations receive little coverage unless they are caught up in the Cold War or beset by some sensational tragedy. During the summer of 1985, Palau, or the Republic of Belau (either name is correct, although the latter is more formal), was suddenly thrust into the headlines when that emerging nation's President Hauro Remeliik was assassinated. What the press generally failed to mention was how successfully this youthful Micronesian republic weathered that crisis. Although Palau has been nurtured into existence largely by the United States, its continued political and economic health is anything but certain. If this tiny archipelago nation, located approximately 500 miles east of the Philippines, is to survive and prosper, it will be determined by citizens like Yuki Shmull, governor of the republic's major southern island, Peleliu.

Shmull represents a tradition as familiar to Americans as the family auto and the Fourth of July. Like Abe Lincoln and Harry Truman, his interest in government grew in considerable measure from his commercial endeavors. Indeed, entrepreneurial ambition and the relationship between profits and politics are virtually world wide. Although Shmull was defeated when he ran for the Palauan senate, he continues to serve as governor of Peleliu. His car rental firm and Koror retail store
GOVERNOR YUKI SHMULL

Governor Shmull and amphibious tank abandoned during Japanese retreat near the end of World War II.

photo by Phillip Persky

keep him busy when his public duties ease up. This interview was conducted at his Koror business establishment in the summer of 1984.

Q. Governor Shmull, you have not always possessed this attractive store, nor did you inherit the title "Governor." Help me to understand your beginnings.

A. I was born in Peleliu on the 23rd of September, 1939. You will recall that was the same month that the Second World War began in Europe. That global war would directly affect my family, and in a singular way it continues to affect me and the people of Palau to this day.

Q. And your early memories of your parents?

A. My father was a general provider, a man who raised pigs, planted tapioca, and made copra. My parents worked very hard. Although I cannot recall that either of them was what you might call "a religious person," I do remember that some of our relatives were Modekngei, a Palauan religious cult believing in spirit after death. The arrival of what we now sometimes call the Pacific War—the Second World War conflict between the United States and Japan—almost completely shattered the simple village life of my boyhood.

Q. When did the Pacific War first touch you, and what were your parents' relations with the Japanese?

A. My parents only very rarely talked about the Japanese. Their society did not mix with ours. It may have been 1942 when I saw my first real
Japanese. I dimly recall that my parents were anxious because these were uniformed soldiers, and instead of building roads they were running around in the rough terrain. It perplexed us at first. Then we realized they were training for battle. The older people grew increasingly apprehensive; war was coming to our beautiful island of Peleliu.

Q. Did you hear anything about the likely invader, the Americans?
A. We sure did. Americans, we were informed, had long noses, were cruel, and if they caught us they would tie us to two horses and have us pulled apart. As time passed, the tension mounted. I don’t recall precisely when the first American planes came over, but there was a lot of shooting. My father told us, “There is going to be a big fight. We must move away.” Because we had just moved into a new house at Peleliu, all of us were very upset that we had to leave. But our fear of death was even greater. My father told us not to ask any questions but do as we were told. We waited until a dark night, for we did not want the long-nosed Americans to catch us, and then in small boats made our way to the Rock Islands [1944]. I imagine the reason father was sure that Peleliu would get hit very hard was that he had seen the heavily fortified headquarters and communications building constructed by the Japanese. Had we not left, all of us would probably have been killed.

Q. Where did you go?
A. To the Rock Islands. My parents were determined that I should obtain some kind of schooling. Even there the people organized some classes. We were not in the Rock Islands very long when American airplanes came zooming over. There was a lot of shooting. I remember hearing people talking about one American plane being hit by anti-aircraft fire, catching fire, and falling burning into the sea.

Q. What happened to your family when the actual 1944 amphibious invasion occurred at Peleliu?
A. By that time the sounds of fighting were daily; American aircraft were a familiar sight. For some reason my parents thought we would be safer on Babelthuap [Palau’s major island]. I will never forget that as our little boat passed Koror the fire and smoke seemed to be everywhere, probably from fuel tanks that had been set afire. I noticed that women on board the boat began to cry and some people thought the end had come. All we had were the clothes on our backs—everything had been left behind. As soon as we got ashore we scattered into small family groups for safety. The sight of all that destruction made me fearful for my beloved Peliliu. What was happening there?

Q. You had no information on the terrible fighting going on at Peleliu?
A. None, except vague reports that it was all like a volcano. We were
isolated on Babelthuap. Fortunately a relative let us work on his land to grow our foods, otherwise we would have starved.

Q. What was your first contact with the Americans?
A. This did not occur for some time. After the Marines had succeeded in establishing themselves at Peleliu, they left lots of Japanese soldiers cut off in other Palauan islands. I remember the Japanese survivors asked the Palauans to go out and do the fishing. They believed the color of our skin would save us from being strafed by American airplanes. Unfortunately some Palauans did get shot by these planes. One day American airplanes came over and dropped some leaflets. I think the Americans were trying to inform us that the war was over.

Q. Do you recall any final memories of the beleaguered Japanese?
A. Yes, I do. They were pathetic. Their food had run out and some of them asked us to sponsor them. There were many Japanese, and Palau's normal food distribution system had long since broken down. It was fortunate that the Americans rather quickly evacuated the Japanese. Some of the older Palauans had grown quite hostile toward them. There was no great rejoicing among the Japanese, for some thought they were going home to starvation, leaving one bad situation for an even worse one. A few even left their babies here, they were so certain they would starve in their devastated home islands.

Q. When did you actually see your first long-nosed American?
A. He was a sailor who operated the navy motor boat transporting us from the island of Babelthuap to Koror. He did not frighten me, fortunately. Much of the island had been cleaned up by the U.S. Army. When we arrived there was a town of quonset huts awaiting us. I recall how proud the chief was and his boastful comment, "Now look at that."

Q. How did you react to all the awful battlefield destruction, the blasted trees, and scorched ground left over from the bloody fighting between the defending Japanese and the Marine invaders?
A. I was more interested in the new school quonset huts awaiting me.

Q. How much of your education did you obtain at Peleliu?
A. I attended first through sixth grade there. All the instruction was in Palauan, and our teachers instructed us only half-time during the first few months. The other half of their day was spent getting instruction as to what they were to teach. After sixth grade a few of us were selected to go to Koror for intermediate school. This group included girls as well as boys. I was here at Koror for three years. Then I heard of the PICS program—Pacific Islands Central School—at Truk. I really wanted to go there. I was lucky and finished two years at PICS. My teachers encouraged me to go on to Guam. "Get your real American high school diploma," they told me—which I did in June,
1960. At Agana, Guam, during the sixties, while attending George Washington High School, I lived with a white family, Dr. Shook and his wife. They were teachers and greatly encouraged me to improve my use of the English language. After high school I went on to the College of Guam, what is today the University of Guam.

Q. Was it at the College of Guam where you decided to someday become a businessman?
A. It was at the College of Guam and later the University of Guam. My interest in business grew through my part-time job while going to school.

Q. How did you and your wife support yourselves at this time?
A. We had to work very hard, and I remember having two part-time jobs one time in order to make ends meet.

Q. When did you finish your work at the College of Guam?
A. December, 1973. After two years at Guam my wife and I returned to Palau. My wife had been offered a good job as a court reporter. I was able to find work with the government at the Property and Supply office and later on in a private company in general merchandise business. In 1972 we had an opportunity to advance our education by moving to Los Angeles. I attended Woodbury College while my wife attended Bryan College of Court Reporting. Los Angeles impressed us as a big city with many cars, big buildings, and good highway systems. In the fall of 1973 I returned to the University of Guam for one semester and received my degree in Business Administration.

Q. But you came back to California and remained in Los Angeles until 1977. How did you support your family?
A. By getting odd jobs here and there. When I returned to Palau in 1977 my former boss with Atkins-Kroll, which had branch offices in Saipan (Microl Corporation), offered me a job as their field representative at Koror. I put in close to two years with them as a general merchandiser. I also learned how to handle insurance and auto sales. It was never easy, for the competition both here in Koror and from the outside was tough. Finally in 1979 Microl Corporation decided they were not getting an adequate return on their investment and determined to pull out of Koror. I made an offer to buy all the company's office equipment, cars, and office furniture, and started a car rental business. It was a big gamble. My savings were limited.

Q. Didn't you need a large building for those cars?
A. No, that's one of the advantages of the car rental business. They can sit outside in the heavy rain. A relative in Guam asked me if I wanted some extra business, "Can you be the distributor for the Pacific Daily News?" Luckily I didn't say "No." As you can see, this store sells general merchandise. It continues to be essentially a one-man
operation. I hire students during the summer, and from time to time employ apprentice learners from the high school; they get academic credit as well as pay. At last I hired three permanent employees to handle the car rental, newspaper distribution, gift shop, and small fish market. It was in 1982 that I decided to open a gift shop to promote local crafts and products. This is doing well. It also helps Palauans and promotes our country. The gift shop has introduced me to many outsiders, some of them important people. I am not getting rich, but it is a comfortable living. As you can imagine, the customers’ demands are always changing, so I must stay awake to what they want.

Q. When and how did you get involved in Palauan politics? I must say, that any emerging nation which has written and revised several constitutions in five years has to be aroused over public issues.

A. In 1980 I decided to run for the national Senate seat from Peleliu. There were four candidates; it was a close race, but I lost.

Q. When did you decide to try for one of Palau’s sixteen governorships?

A. In 1982 I was asked to run for Governor from Peleliu. I was the front man for a group opposing the existing procedure for selection of delegates to write the Peleliu constitution. The Palau national constitution states that the establishment of state government must follow the Palau tradition, or the democratic principle. This had not always been followed; the peoples’ wishes had not been heard. The group that I represented used the courts to block this [departure from tradition] by obtaining a referendum. I spoke out for Peleliu; I wanted it to have a strong and fair representation. I really was not interested in serving as governor, for the demands of running my business were growing. I could not say “No.” My campaign had to be managed by my friends, for I was not even in Micronesia [because] the difficult question of tuna fishing rights required that I attend an important meeting in Honolulu. Through their tuna fishing negotiation in Honolulu, Peleliu realized $15,000 as its share last year from the fishing right fee. I came home just two days before the election. Fortunately I won the election.

Q. Do you regret taking on this burden?

A. Not at all. I am glad that I was elected to serve my people, especially at this very critical stage under our constitutional government.

Q. Do you think it was a mistake for the Republic of Belau to separate from what is emerging as the Federated States of Micronesia?

A. There was no way separation could have been avoided. Our language is different. Our customs are different. We are a hardworking people. We want more education for our children. Palauans are a more progressive type.
Q. What are the biggest challenges facing the new government?
A. Ever since I took office in January, 1983, the biggest problem is the financial condition of our new country. During 1983 we worked with a budget similar to the 1982 budget; that budget was still in place. Yet we lacked the money to make it work. This restriction directly affects state government. Peleliu has very limited resources.

Q. What have you done to remedy this handicap?
A. When people think of Peleliu, they invariably recall the terrible battle that occurred there. Here on my desk I have a copy of your colleague's excellent account of that battle, the new book by Professor Harry Gailey. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, is everywhere recognized for the gigantic struggle that occurred there in your Civil War: the Battle of Gettysburg. My island's Battle of Peleliu has that same kind of identity. People all over the Pacific can tell you about the awful Battle of Peleliu and the brave Marines and Japanese who fought there. It is for this reason that I think we should make it our island's major tourist attraction.

Q. How do you propose to go about this?
A. The first thing we must do is to save the relics from the battlefield, to keep the weapons and various objects from the fighting right here on the island where everyone can view them. Second, we must very carefully mark the various historic sites—Professor Gailey's book points them out quite well. Finally, we need to clear trails and make the entire area attractive to tourists from Japan and the United States who wish to see the caves and burial grounds. It all takes money, and we have too little.

Q. Are you getting any assistance in this effort?
A. The U.S. Seabee team here in Palau has been very cooperative in restoring the war monuments, and so has the navy in Guam, specifically Rear Admiral Bruce DeMars and Commodore Dale Hagen, who replaced DeMars. Helping with this restoration campaign have been veterans of the 1st Marine Division. In 1983 they contacted me about constructing a monument commemorating the 1944 Peleliu amphibious assault. It was their request that caused me to directly approach the island landowners about what land would be most appropriate for a memorial. In early September of 1983, seven of the Marines, three with wives, arrived here. They received a royal treatment, for they had a precious secret: what actually happened during that famous battle. Remember that the native men had been evacuated—none of them were there during the fighting. Now these old men—very young men in 1944—could hear what took place.

Q. Did you tape these conversations?
A. Sad to say, I didn't. We were all very excited; of course we escorted these seven Marines to the battle area. We examined many spots
looking for a proper memorial site. The Japanese had already erected a shrine near the main road. When I suggested a site on a ridge behind the Japanese monument, the veterans asked, "Who won the battle? We don't want to be behind their monument." We walked up higher and discovered a beautiful point overlooking Horseshoe Valley. One of them had been wounded not too far from there in the fighting at Bloody Nose Ridge. When I commented that this was near the site selected by the Army's 323 Infantry, the same veteran commented, "The Marines took the island, the Army merely cleaned it up." The veterans talked together for awhile, then they voted and unanimously agreed, "This is where we will construct a memorial for the Marines who fought the Battle of Peleliu."

Q. What has happened since then?

A. It occurred to me that the U.S.S. Peleliu, a Navy amphibious assault ship, should also join in the fortieth anniversary of the battle in 1984. A few years earlier when the ship had been commissioned, the people of Peleliu had sent a bag of sand from the beach in Peleliu and sea shells from our island to the ceremony. Charlie Matsutaro, who is now Palau/Guam liaison officer on Guam, represented Peleliu people at the commissioning ceremony of the ship in May, 1980. Admiral DeMars and Commodore Hagan promised me they would do their best to enable the fine new ship to visit us. I simply ignored the question of whether the vessel had nuclear materials aboard, for like everyone else on that island I knew there would never again be a fortieth anniversary of our special place in history. Peleliuans really wanted that ship to come to their island, especially the older people who experienced life during the war in Peleliu.

Q. I'll bet they really pulled the cork out.

A. Yes, it was a tremendous event when that warship arrived. Aboard her was one veteran, Staff Sgt. Schultz. Some of the ship's Marines camped on the airstrip at night just to get that feeling [of how it was] during wartime. On the night of February 8, the officers and men began to come ashore—of course they soon outnumbered the Peleliuans. We had intended to host them. Maybe it was just as well that for the next two days they hosted us. On February 8th there was a colorful ceremony—Navy band, Navy brass from Hawaii, and the Republic of Belau's Vice-President. It was some day! The U.S.S. Peleliu could not dock, so its helicopters were almost continuously in use. Also aboard the U.S.S. Peleliu with the U.S. Marine Corps unit was a young Palauan U.S. Marine Sergeant from the island of Angaur—Marine Sgt. William Edward.

Q. Are the monuments being preserved?

A. They certainly are. On September 15th of this year we hope to have an even bigger celebration. Palauans my age think this is very
important; what the young people are thinking is difficult to tell. For me it is a reminder that we must fight for peace. It is also vital for Peleliu's economic progress.

Q. About a year ago your local copra plant shut down leaving about 60 people unemployed. What is Peleliu's economic future?
A. Our soil is poor; we must rely on our beautiful and historic island to attract tourists. We must also develop our fishing opportunities.

Q. Finally, Governor Shmull, what would you like to see in this Republic by the beginning of the next century?
A. After I look at the rest of the world, I ask myself, "Can't we learn from others' mistakes?" Western influence has radically changed Hawaii and Guam, some of it for the better, some bad. If we destroy our own heritage, our natural beauty we have only ourselves to blame. We must have outside investment, but we must weigh the pros and cons. At present we are building more hotels. I am worried whether they can get enough occupants to fill up all their rooms. Our new air terminal is going to be a splendid achievement; but, like the hotels, can all this be paid for? We need more statistical data to chart the future. But I am optimistic. Like our national flag, the full moon means good luck. We Palauans believe you have a happy time when you have a full moon. Whoever heard of a full moon that is not right side up?
Micronesian and American Education: Academic Colonialism On The Wane

Dirk Anthony Ballendorf and James L. Craig

EDUCATION in Micronesia—the formal transferring of knowledge from one generation to the next through a western school system—although introduced after World War II, continues to present serious problems for both educators and the clients themselves. Soon Micronesians will embark upon an entirely new political relationship with the United States that will bring them much further into the general American educational scheme. Increasing numbers of Micronesian students are already coming to the United States to participate in various programs of postsecondary education. What are some of these educational problems in the islands? What obstacles face Micronesians studying in the U.S.? And what might be done about these difficulties to assist both teachers and students in the original acquisition of knowledge and the transfer of learning? An understanding of the culture of Micronesia will go a long way in helping answer those questions.

Micronesia is a collection of island groups lying in the North Pacific Ocean. (see map) Geographically, Micronesia includes the Marianas, Carolines, Marshalls, Kiribati (Gilbert Islands), and Nauru. Culturally, Micronesia includes generally the same groups, although there is a heavy Polynesian influence at Kapingamarangi Atoll, which is near the equator south of Truk and Ponape, and a Melanesian influence at Tobi Island in Palau. Some ethnographers have considered Tuvalu (Ellice Islands) to be culturally Micronesian. Politically, since World War II, Micronesia is usually considered as being synonymous with the U.S. Trust Territory of...
The collection of islands that make up Micronesia is shown above. While considered a geographic whole, culturally, Polynesian influence is notable in some areas near the equator and Melanesian influence can be seen at Tobi island in Palau.

The Pacific Islands (TTPI). This includes the Marshalls, the Carolines, and all of the Marianas except Guam, which is an unincorporated territory of the United States. There have been four successive colonial administrations in Micronesia: Spanish, 1521 to 1898; German, 1899 to 1914; Japanese, 1914 to 1944; and American, 1944 to the present. In 1978, following ten years of future political status negotiations, a transitional administration began under the Americans which led to the emergence of four separate political entities: (1) The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, (2) The Republic of Belau (Palau), (3) The Federated States of Micronesia, and (4) The Republic of the Marshall Islands. When the Compacts of Free Association for these latter three new governments are approved by the United States Congress and signed by the President, the Trusteeship will formally come to an end, an event expected within the next few years. The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas will not require a Compact of Free Association, since it will be a U.S. Commonwealth—a closer status than that decided upon by the other three.

Formalized, western-style schools are not new in Micronesia. The Spanish started a school in Guam in 1668. The Germans established both missionary schools and government schools during their
administration, and the Japanese had a large and well-developed system which eventually became compulsory. The Americans introduced a universal system after World War II, which included boys and girls and which was patterned after community systems on the U.S. mainland. By 1969, the year that formal political status negotiations between Micronesians and Americans began, more than $24,000,000 had been spent on education in the Trust Territory. American policy was to educate the Micronesians in the fundamental American model and tradition.

But in Micronesia this educational system presents a culture and a social structure that are radically different from those of its clients. Herein lies the fundamental problem: this disjunction between institution and person is bound to have some ill effects on the participants. At the very heart of the educational process is the sociology of knowledge in Micronesia; how knowledge, per se, is viewed, valued, and regulated is central. To examine the traditional Micronesian concept of knowledge might help to clarify some of the difficulties experienced by Micronesian students. This model of knowledge can also be used to explicate some of the real differences between the old and the new educational systems.

Traditionally, Micronesians lived in almost perfect harmony with their island environments. Education was not separated from life. Useful, practical things such as fishing, weaving, and subsistence agricultural practices were learned almost exclusively; all people participated in religious ceremonies, economic processes, and cultural affairs, and participation was to begin at the rather vague time when an individual felt ready. Readiness was determined by each person. The arrival and imposition of western forms of education changed these traditions. The Spanish, Germans, and Japanese, as well as Americans, all introduced schools that promulgated a specialized curriculum and separated education from the rest of life.

In traditional Micronesia, knowledge was largely private property and was also considered finite; in westernized Micronesia, knowledge was introduced as public property and as infinite in nature. The traditional oral culture of the islands, which Donald Shuster refers to as "the culture of the word," was gradually displaced by the introduced written cultures of the west and Japan, referred to as "the culture of the book." Micronesians possessing certain traditional knowledge hold it carefully and do not share it openly or arbitrarily. Every person has a particular role to play in the society, and the knowledge necessary to play that role is carefully ascribed. The Palauans have a saying that embodies the concept: "Ng kora osechel a mengur el digara melkolk el mora melkolk!" which means: "Some knowledge, like the milk of the coconut, passes from darkness to darkness!" The possessors of knowledge are consulted as a matter of course by others when the need arises; thus, the lasher of
house-rafters or the master outrigger-builder are sought when needed. Other members of society will not attempt to copy him, but rather will defer to his expertise; nor will he broadcast himself as a giver of free advice. Of course, the persisting and constant introduction of book knowledge is changing these traditional attitudes and practices, but the residue of the traditional scheme impedes smooth and rapid change. This change process should be seen as a continuum of experience which began with the first introduction of books and the written word and goes right down to the latest developments in business, commerce, and the social processes in the islands.

Contrast western emphasis on the printed word and its wide dissemination with the following: When the time comes for the possessor of traditional, practical knowledge to pass it along to others, a complicated process for the careful selection of a successor is undertaken. The heir is selected by consensus, according to clan and family status, as well as ability. This process may take many years to complete. Even after the selection is made and the apprenticeship begins, the master will not tell all that he knows. There is always an area for discovery, development, innovation, and creativity on the part of the next expert, and the new expert will not exercise full authority until the old master dies. In this way, the knowledge is handed down, as well as developed, adapted, and modified from one generation to the next. Historical knowledge of the tradition is treated similarly. Only certain people know the chants, songs, and stories of the emergence of the clan structures and power blocks. Of course, there will be different versions in these matters; and arguments arise, sometimes leading to violence, but all know whose prerogative it is to debate. The concept of knowledge is thus one of power and status to be guarded carefully rather than distributed freely. It can be seen that this construct of knowledge is antithetical to the western view, so that students attempting to make the cross-over would find few familiar referents.

This traditional view of knowledge, coupled with the traditional learning style of identification, prolonged observation, imitation, and cooperative participation have given rise to a particular orientation toward education. Communication, as an educative process, takes place along hierarchical lines from superordinate to subordinate. The search for knowledge is viewed as the pursuit of a definitive answer or explanation from a higher authority rather than a secondary analysis or critical dialogue.

There are other basic differences between the old and the new, the evolutionary and the created. For example, competitiveness and motivation take different forms in traditional Micronesia. The individual is taught to give way to the group. People do not compare themselves to others, for this would lead to bitterness and resentment—or even
violence—and this would be intolerable given the limited island living space. Besides, there are always greater or lesser people in the community without the necessity of competitive definition. Motivation in Micronesia, unlike western forms, is born not of a desire to succeed, but rather of a desire not to fail. This implies a passive and deferring learning style where risks are not taken lest one fail. In the classroom this is reflected in the non-questioning, non-responsive behavior often exhibited by Micronesian students.

When the United States became the Trustee for Micronesia after World War II, one of the articles in the agreement stipulated that the administering power would do all it could to promote the social development of the people. This mandate meant, in effect, that there would be American models of social institutions introduced, which began almost immediately, albeit slowly. As the years of the Trusteeship passed, Americans learned more and more about the meaning of social development in Micronesia and about some of the inherent differences between the islands' and the mainland's interpretations of such development. This learning process is still under way.

An example of such a difference in social behavior is seen when students are called upon in class to answer questions asked by the teacher. American students will commonly throw up their hands in response to questions in order to compete and show their knowledge, but Micronesian students will not. Superficially, it appears as though Americans are bold while Micronesian are shy. However, the fact is that in Micronesian cultures social position is ascribed, not achieved. To be socially acceptable in Micronesia, one does not call attention to oneself, but rather awaits the response of others first before speaking. In Micronesia there is no particular cultural pay-off for achievement.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a massive scholarship program was instituted by the United States to make higher education available to a large segment of the younger population. Scholarships for Trust Territory students were squeezed from operating funds during the 1950s and were available to only a few selected students. By the 1960s line-item budgets for scholarships were common and grew steadily. The Annual Report for educational expenditures in 1962 lists $59,825 for scholarships. By 1969 this figure had risen to $745,245. By 1977, with dramatic increases in funding for scholarships, the figure was reported to be a total of $14,528,188. Some of the American institutions that have participated in this program with various projects over the years have been San José State University, the University of Hawaii, the Oregon College of Education, and the University of Guam. The beneficiaries of this large program are much in evidence today. More than any other segment of the population, they reflect the confusion between American and Micronesian notions of social development.
programs were transferred into what became known as "T.T. scholarships," for Trust Territory. In typical fashion, the programs were developed by non-Micronesians, oftentimes with insufficient understanding of the socio-cultural problems that might result. Although initially, and sporadically thereafter, some academic achievement standards, such as high school transcripts, were applied as selection criteria, no standardized tests were used, nor have any been developed for use, in these programs. What most often transpired were that funds were simply awarded to those who made application and "family status" was often the only functional criterion. Once the students left the Trust Territory there was little or no attempt at accountability. Scholarships would be renewed year after year in spite of failing grades, and sometimes students switched both college and course of study and continued on scholarship.15

For their part, many of the colleges that received the students offered little real help, despite their good intentions.16 Most American college counselors did not seem to understand the Micronesians well, and even those who did could apparently do little to place students differently within the systems. In only one known instance did one practicing college student services counselor visit the islands on a full-time basis.17 Despite the knowledge that the Micronesian students as a group required more counseling than any other foreign student group,18 few colleges and universities have the necessary resources to send their counseling staffs on fact-finding tours.19 Many of the receiving schools were small, often religion-affiliated, and were glad to get the scholarship money provided by the Trust Territory. By the late 1970s an average of $4,000 per Micronesian student per year was available,20 and these schools often had—and still have—Micronesians in sufficient numbers to help an otherwise falling academic economy.

Of the great numbers who attended colleges and universities, Francis X. Hezel's data21 as well as a special study undertaken in 1980 by the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam22 suggest that about 40 per cent failed to complete their degree programs. The reasons for this drop-out rate—which is comparable to that in the United States—can be partially determined by empirical analyses. These two above-mentioned studies attempt this sort of analysis. Reasons for the drop-out rate were low or failing grades, insufficient or mis-managed financial resources, and inability to adjust to the mainland environment—often manifested in fighting and anti-social behavior. But other analyses of a softer, subtler, and more social nature are also needed.

People who live and work in Micronesia emphasize the size of the area and the distances involved in travel throughout the region. They delight in the expressions of wonderment on visitors' faces when it is pointed out
that when someone at Majuro, in the Marshall Islands, calls upon someone at the University of Guam to assist him, it is roughly analogous to someone in a small school district in Long Island, New York, calling to ask a professor from the University of Wyoming to drop in for a few days. Yet although the vast distances of open sea have been an important factor in the development of Micronesian cultures and societies, it is the land—or rather the lack of it—that has been the strongest shaping force. The concept and reality of limited land have provided the fundamental impetus for the development and adaption of the basic social institutions of Micronesia.

The organizational principles of a culture or a society are given their form by the adaptive necessities of particular environmental settings, and in Micronesia that means small discrete patches of land and meager resources. A good deal of the limited amount of land available was used for subsistence agriculture in precontact Micronesia. The limited land, long stretches of open sea between islands, and relatively crowded communities combined to form societies and cultures with strongly defined and enforced customs, mores, values, and belief systems. The point is that members are quite clear as to their place in the scheme of things, and complex lineages among persons and groups define, both implicitly and explicitly, the relationships among them. Nat J. Colletta’s description of the Ponapean way of life is illustrative:

Ponapeans view their world relationally and holistically. Their approach to the world involves a more encompassing multidirective associational mental style. First-cause explanation is a marked feature of their logical make-up. There is little extensive secondary analysis. . . . There is little separation of the subjective being from the objective world. . . . There is little stress on a universal moral order for judging all behavior, only specific events, encounters, and relationships (situations) isolated in time and space with meager collective or generalizable value. Reality is for the moment, the situation, and not for all men at all times in all places. There is little individualized image of self among the Ponapeans. . . . personal identity is rooted in the communal social order.

When Micronesians leave their islands for higher education abroad, they also leave behind this sense of place and belonging. They enter a social context that not only fails to give them definition but also encourages the expression of one’s own needs and desires, one’s individuality. With the old constraints on behavior removed, with no familiar social structure to define morality, appropriate behaviors, or social and personal relationships, the Micronesians abroad often face a
crisis. Within the social context of the islands, control was clear, enforced, and external; in the new context, control is unclear, sporadic, and expected to be much more internal than external. The result, not infrequently, is a loss of a sense of security and the realization that a strange, if not confusing, world must be confronted: a world that does not simply recognize a person for who he is, but rather judges a person by what he is and what he does. Status and competence are no longer linked directly and inherited, but are largely separate and competitive.

The problems thus created for the Micronesians studying abroad are particularly acute. It is more than culture shock, for that implies the impact of the new; the reaction is drawn from the loss of the familiar. The schools, colleges, and universities have taken them in as a family might, but because the western traditional educational concept of in loco parentis is passé, the schools have tended to take the responsibility only for the students' education. With no clear or recognizable source of external control and with underdeveloped internal mechanisms of control, the Micronesian student abroad may fall into patterns of behavior that preclude academic success.

Much of Micronesia today is, in reality, a created rather than an evolved society. It is an arbitrary structure serving a vision developed mainly in alien places instead of an evolutionary structure serving the emerging needs of an indigenous population. Part of this process of attempting to create a new society has involved switching models from one culture to another, switching from the traditional to the modern. This societal switch or change should more accurately be termed a superimposition, as the old society has not been replaced; rather, the attempt has been made to make it irrelevant. To fully understand the sorts of pressures and stresses placed on Micronesians caught up in this process, it is necessary to look closely at these differences between the old and the new. Education, as we have attempted to point out here, is an appropriate vehicle for such study because the disjunctions between the old and the new forms in terms of inferences from behaviors will cast light on underlying structures and principles that define the lives of people in Micronesia. The anthropologist Solon Kimball points out that

Ordinarily the educational system reflects the social ordering found in social class and other institutions. It also expresses the cultural values and practices characteristic of these diverse and divergent social groupings. In this sense education exhibits a marked congruency with other aspects of social life and culture. This affirms the interconnections between institutions and behaviors (asserting neither determinancy nor causality).

Formal education differs from other institutions in its crucial responsibility to transmit, consciously, designated
segments of the heritage in order to reflect and perpetuate the existing system.\textsuperscript{28}

Although no complete data are available,\textsuperscript{29} many of the Trust Territory scholarship recipients returned to their islands without their degrees. They returned to their remote islands to tell stories of their college adventures, and herein lies an interesting and important social phenomenon of traditional Micronesia. Status accrues to these returnees whether or not they earned a degree and whether or not they did well at the school. In traditional Micronesia, as in isolated societies everywhere, relatively high status is awarded to those who leave and return with interesting stories and experiences to tell. This fact constitutes one of the prime traditional definitions of education: to go away and come back. It has its roots in the days of European exploitation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when ship captains impressed or recruited islanders as seamen. This practice continued through the nineteenth century whaling days when many Micronesians were taken aboard ships for distant voyages.\textsuperscript{30} Today, for many Micronesians, there is no real difference between a young man who ships aboard a freighter for a two-year voyage to distant lands and returns and the young man who goes off to a small college in Weeping Water, Nebraska, for two years and returns. Both have been educated, both have interesting stories to tell, and both are worthy of respect.\textsuperscript{31}

Despite their acceptance on return, Micronesian students are troubled by this lack of congruency among society, culture, and educational process. Throughout the course of numerous personal interviews with Micronesian students and former students, the predominant student expression was one of puzzlement and confusion.\textsuperscript{32} There is often a lack of understanding about what education is supposed to do for them, and what they are supposed to do and be, in order to fit in. As David Nevin observed in his study of education in Micronesia:

When you tour Micronesia to look at education, you see the dilemma laid out in full. It becomes ever more clear that while people see education as the avenue to the new success, their understanding of the interlocking nature of modern western society is so slight that they remain blind to the plain fact that their own society contains so little that is capable of supporting the new ways. Surely it is the cruelest irony that it is education itself that exacerbates their blind hopes, as year by year it trains their children away from the old culture and toward an ambiguous academic form that is supposed to be consistent—in some unknown way—with the modern world and with its advantages.\textsuperscript{33}
Our concern in attempting this brief articulation of some elements of education in Micronesia is not to discourage, disparage, or inhibit the continued educational development in the islands or the sustained provision of access to postsecondary education outside of Micronesia. It is rather a desire to encourage a sensitivity to the fundamental problems and to see educational development in Micronesia become more consistent and relevant, to provide bridges and not barriers between the modern world and the world into which Micronesians are growing up. The first step toward some kind of consistency—and one which is not destructively exacerbating—is to obtain assessments of the situation in order to accurately and specifically define problem areas. We have tried to do this here by pointing out that one aspect of the situation is the difference between the old and the new which frames the sort of pressures placed on Micronesian students caught up in the educational process. This is a vital distinction if educational innovations are to be effective. Perhaps a final and capping irony is that the “new” education has been sold so well that when some innovative attempts have been made to draw from traditional forms and apply them in the classroom, these attempts have been rejected as “not real education.”

The Micronesians themselves must make or render the ultimate adaptations necessary to provide for a blend of their traditional culture with the challenges, demands, and realities of the modern world. Higher education should attempt to support rather than hinder such efforts. Moreover, it is not only for the Micronesians themselves to make the necessary adjustments. Their problems of too much unassimilated higher education are the result of much indiscriminate lavishness in outside financial support. Continued external support for higher education should impose some conditions on educational aid, and most likely will. Educational programs of all kinds by and for Micronesians should be the result of sensitive negotiations and not a blind application of pre-packaged and available external programs. The external institutions should recognize the often temporary nature of their predominance and should actively support the growth and development of the Micronesian postsecondary institutions. There will be a continued role for outside academic consultation in Micronesia for a long time to come, but the day of the academic colonial is coming to a close.

Given the foregoing discussion, we now return to the question posed at the beginning: what, specifically, might be done to help the situation? We offer the following suggestions, realizing that they will need continued refinement and adjustment to particular situations and circumstances. We intend them only as a point of departure for further and continuing discussion.

First, teachers coming into Micronesia from the outside, on all levels, should have a thorough training and orientation before beginning their
work, and this orientation should include training in the local languages.

Second, Micronesians going abroad for further education should spend several weeks in special orientation to the culture of the host country before going abroad.

Third, all student services college counselors of the receiving colleges on the U.S. mainland should have the chance to visit Micronesia personally before undertaking taking their counseling activities with Micronesian students and be assisted in considering the special needs of the Micronesian.

Fourth, all negotiations between Micronesian institutions and outside institutions should include the maximum number of Micronesian specialists, who should optimize the use of the Micronesian institutions' internal resources, such as physical plant facilities, teaching approaches and methods, and curriculum.

Last, programs of educational exchange should be longer term than only one year and funding should be considered to accommodate such longer time frames. Year-to-year funding is simply inadequate when dealing with the special needs of Micronesian students.

These specific recommendations while comprehensive are not exhaustive. However, if these alone were the guiding principles in the planning of future programs in education for Micronesians, those programs would be far more relevant, effective, and efficient.

Notes

1 This length for the Spanish period needs to be qualified. Actually, although the Spanish had legitimate claim to the area from the time Magellan first landed at Guam in 1521, they did not effectively begin administration until 1668 with the arrival of the Spanish Jesuit Missionary Fray Diego Luis de Sanvitores, and then only in the Marianas, particularly Guam. The rest of the islands had limited exposure to


3 Carano and Sanchez, *op. cit.*


8 Much other learning went on in Micronesian societies which was not strictly "useful or practical" in nature, such as: "games, dancing, singing, feasting, which was more or less secular." Of course, there was religious, or spiritual, ritual taught among the people as well. Personal correspondence: John L. Fischer, Department of Anthropology, Tulane University, August 22, 1984; see also: J. L. Fischer, *The Eastern Carolines* (New Haven: the HRAF Press, 1956).

9 "Japanese" might not be considered strictly western; however, the Japanese system of education, especially since the Meiji period, was constructed along the highly structured and organized models of the west; see: Ezra Vogel, *Japan as No. 1* (Harvard University Press: 1979); and Murray Thomas and T. Neville Postlethwaite, eds., *Schooling in the Pacific Islands* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984).

10 Shuster, *op. cit.*


13 Official files, TTPI Education Department, Saipan. There have been other universities participating as well, but these four have had extended contracts. Trust Territory, Annual Reports, Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 1951-1974, and Summary of Student Financial Aid Resources, TTPI Department of Education, Saipan, November, 1977, are the sources for the figures on scholarship funding.


15 Francis X. Hezel, "The Education Explosion in Truk," Pacific Studies, 2 (2), 1978, p. 167-185. Each former TTPI District and present new state has a scholarship committee. Sometimes these are attached to the Board of Education. Various past and present members have attested to these practices and have been openly critical of them in some cases.


17 Dr. Jack Duensing of Suomi College, Hancock, Michigan, visited three Micronesian states in 1978.


19 Other colleges have sent various administrators and recruiters to the Micronesian states as part of contractual arrangements; included among these have been San José State University, the Oregon College of Education, the University of Hawaii, the Chaminade University of Hawaii, and the University of Guam.

20 Official Files, TTPI Education Department, op. cit.


22 Workman, et. al., op. cit.

23 Two excellent general works on Micronesian anthropology are: Andrew P. Vayda, Peoples and Cultures of the Pacific: An Anthropological Reader (New York, Natural History Press: 1968); and William H. Alkire, An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of the Pacific and Micronesia

Nevin, *op. cit.*


The MARC study on degree completion offers the latest data, but this was drawn from the states of Ponape and Kosrae only.

An excellent historical study on this phenomenon is: Michael D. Lieber (ed.), *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*, ASAO Monograph, No. 5 (University of Hawaii Press, 1977).

Of course, education, generally, should be seen as broader than only formalized instruction at a college or university. This is certainly true in Micronesia as well. However, young people will equate almost any adventure which takes them away from their island with a formalized program of education, if they are able to return and relate their stories.


Palauan students enrolled in a University of Guam extension class in 1983 were asked to write some essays in the Palauan language. Most protested, saying that a real education is conducted in English. D. A. Ballendorf, ED294: *History of Education in Micronesia*, Koror, UOG extension, summer, 1983.

36 GAO, *ibid.*
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