AMERICAN STUDIES

IN **SCANDINAVIA**

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Content Index

Editors' Note

Leo Marx, a giant within the field of American Studies passed away on March 8, 2022, at the age of 102.

For years, eminent historian David Nye considered Marx a mentor and a friend and, in his own way, helped countless colleagues and students during his long career in Scandinavia. As such, the lineage from Leo Marx to Scandinavian scholars within American Studies is strong and it is only fitting and proper that Nye's reflections on Marx and his legacy lead *American Studies in Scandinavia 55:1*.

Nye first met Leo Marx as a student at Amherst College in the 1960s and brought many of Marx's ideas (as well as Marx himself) to Scandinavia after he founded the Center for American Studies in Denmark in 1992. By then, Marx's work had both shaped and helped transform the field.

After World War II, Leo Marx's generation of American Studies scholars utilized a true interdisciplinary approach to study what Henry Nash Smith called, "American culture and society, past and present, as a whole." In Marx's recollection, American Studies was then a "holistic, affirmative, nationalistic project primarily aimed at identifying and documenting the distinctive features of the culture and society chiefly created by white European settlers in the territory now comprising the US."

Consensus, not conflict, was the object of study, but researchers of this generation *were* all critical of a United States that did not live up to American egalitarian ideals. Thus, the obvious chasm between American "egalitarian rights and principles" and American political practice in the Vietnam era, brought about a reconfiguration of American Studies. This fissure in the "conception and practice of American Studies" – what Marx in 2005 called "the great divide" – led younger American Studies scholars of the Vietnam era to bring the sharp differences of "gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual preference" into focus. The "great divide," opened the "literary canon" to "hitherto ignored or excluded cohorts of writers" and posed important questions about the very definition of "American."

As an example, Janice Radway in her Presidential Address to the American Studies Association in 1998 challenged the idea that: "bounded territories are naturally *dis*connected, that cultures are isomorphically tied to those spaces, and that identities follow necessarily and unitarily from them." To Radway, American Studies was more about the United States' imperial impact at home and abroad than consensus and character within American borders. Decades later, the centrality of imperialism and Atlantic World racial hierarchies to contemporary American Studies is obvious, but maintaining an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach within the field remains as important as ever.

In a response to Radway's address, Nye argued for the need to understand the multitude of American identity categories

"in relation to each other" while continuing to research the interdisciplinary potential of literature, environmental issues, "business, technology" and "formal politics," to name a few subjects. As Nye demonstrates in this issue's opening essay, Leo Marx's work helps concretize such a vision.

In "Leo Marx's Legacy," David Nye shows how Marx's always evolving work is still crucial to understanding key challenges in both the scholarly literature and the world. Nye argues for the importance of interdisciplinarity to engage with major societal challenges and illustrates how Marx pushed American Studies to "understand literature as an expression of cultural values, to study landscapes as conflicted ideological expressions, and to examine the ways that technologies embody fantasies of power." As evidenced by Nye's essay, and his dedication in *American Technological Sublime* ("to Leo Marx, Sublime teacher"), Marx's approach to American Studies continues to inspire.

For decades, Leo Marx's ideas have also shaped pieces in the pages of *American Studies in Scandinavia* (David Nye co-edited the journal between 1996 and 2003), and this issue is no different. This issue includes further reflections on the relationship between nature and literature in American Studies as Susan Savage Lee's "Literary Border Crossing and Cultural Belonging in Frederick Schiller Faust's The Gentle Gunman" shows. Lee's text is an excellent transnational study that embraces a broader definition of "American" and shows the breadth and development of the field. Analyzing *The Gentle Gunman*'s use of early 20th century popular genres such "as the western, the gauchesque, and the detective story", Lee asks questions of modernity (as opposed to the seemingly "unmodernized, virgin land" of the pampas), storytelling, media, and masculinity to show that literary border crossing can expand worldviews of both fictional and real-life actors.

American Studies in Scandinavia 55:1 also includes Lovro Skopljanac's inspiring study of memory and literature based on extensive research in an American college town. Skopljanac's article demonstrates that to American readers, a "coherent kernel of memory", related to "narrative episodes, quotations, and descriptions," remains "readily accessible to recall" long after reading literature. Based on 100 interviews, Skopljanac argues that "it is not the specific texts" that make authors memorable, but their "specific way of writing" where "unusual and incongruous characters and plot occurrences" help American readers remember while also using literature as a mirror for their own lived experience.

Lastly, in "In the Womb of Utopia," Jenny Bonnevier explores feminist science fiction and demonstrates the importance of thinking with and through ideas of the future, as "an important gesture of resistance." These utopias, Bonnevier argues, "can help feminists frame their responses to assisted reproductive technologies" and think about a future not already colonized by the present. With the hope of a future even better than

the one currently imagined, *American Studies in Scandinavia* will now transition to the editorship of excellent Norwegian-based scholars such as Dr. Justin Parks and Aurora Eide. Before then, please join me in thanking Henry King, Anne Mørk, Jay Cannon, and Claus Rosenkrantz Hansen for the extraordinary care and passion they have brought to our editorial work since 2019. Thanks also to guest editors Marianne Kongerslev, Clara Juncker and Niels Bjerre Poulsen, as well as former editor Janne Lahti, and a host of kind, constructive peer reviewers. Your talents have helped elevate every issue.

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Leo Marx's Legacy

Abstract: An assessment of Leo Marx's career, from his youth in New York and Paris, Harvard education, and military service in World War II, to the major themes in his scholarship during 65 years of teaching at Minnesota, Amherst College, and MIT. Best known for his The Machine in the Garden, Marx was one of the founding scholars of American Studies, but he also made seminal contributions to the History of Technology and the environmental humanities. His work is a useful legacy for scholars assessing technological solutions proposed to deal with ecological crises.

Key words: American Studies, biography, environmental humanities, Harvard, historiography, Leo Marx, literature, MIT, nature, pastoralism, technology

Leo Marx, one of the founders of American Studies, passed away on March 8, 2022. He taught for 65 years, at the University of Minnesota, Amherst College, and MIT, where he continued co-teaching a seminar until he was 95. This essay examines his cultural context, education, central concepts, and influence. The focus is not only his most famous work, *The Machine in the Garden*,[1] but also the later publications. Marx made an important contribution to the study of civil religion.[2] He co-edited books on the railroad in American art and on the history of technology,[3] and when 80 he co-authored, *Earth, Air, Fire, Water: Humanistic Studies of the Environment.*[4] Early American Studies scholars took considerable interest in technology and in landscape, but after c. 1975 the field shifted its focus, and Marx was more influential in other disciplines, particularly in departments of Science, Technology and Society (STS).[5]

Marx also helped to develop and define American Studies outside the United States.

He spent a Fulbright year in Britain in the 1950s, and during the next half century he lectured at universities in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Scandinavia, including several visits to Denmark. As Philip Gleason has argued, the origin of American Studies abroad is closely related to World War II.[6] Before 1945, few European universities offered courses on the United States. During the Cold War, the Fulbright Program sent thousands of scholars on transatlantic exchanges, including many in the new field of American Studies. The field developed rapidly in Europe after c 1950, and Leo Marx was a central figure in that history.

Education

Marx was born on a kitchen table in Manhattan in 1919, and he grew up in New York City between the world wars. At first, the family benefitted from the booming economy of the 1920s, but in 1925 their situation became less stable after his father's sudden heart attack and death. For the next eight years his family moved peripatetically between various rented apartments in New York and Paris, where his mother's sister lived. She had married a veteran of the Great War who had been awarded the *Croix de Guerre* and later became a director at the Ritz Hotel.[7] Young Leo attended French public schools in 1926 and during several other years as late as 1934.

1   Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

2   Leo Marx "'Noble Shit:' The Uncivil Response of American Writers to Civil Religion in America." *The Massachusetts Review* 14: 4 (Autumn, 1973), 709-739.

3   Susan Danly and Leo Marx, eds. *The Railroad in American Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988).

4   Jill Ker Conway, Kenneth Keniston, and Leo Marx, *Earth, Air, Fire, Water: Humanistic Studies of the Environment.* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

5   See David E. Nye, "The Rapprochement of Technology Studies and American Studies." 2010, ed. John Carlos Rowe, *A Concise Companion to American Studies.* Vol. 1. Oxford: Wiley–Blackwell, 320–333.

6   Philip Gleason, "World War II and the Development of American Studies," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1984).

7   I am indebted to Professor Marx for sharing information about his early life.

He was too young to frequent the famous Ritz bar, where he might have seen Fitzgerald or Hemingway. But he became fluent in French and acquired some understanding of European life and manners. In New York, he attended George Washington High School at 181st Street, and on graduation he was admitted to Harvard College.

As a freshman, he studied a core curriculum that emphasized the western tradition from ancient Greece to the late nineteenth century, both in history and in literature. When it came time to choose a major, he selected a Harvard program that combined English literature and history. In those days, American literature was a small part of the curriculum, and he was first immersed in British literature from Beowulf to the Victorians. But he soon found himself drawn to American literature and particularly to the teaching of F. O. Matthiessen. This was before Matthiessen published *American Renaissance*, which was as important to American Studies in the 1940s as Marx's work would be a generation later.[8] (In 1983 Marx wrote an affectionate reconsideration of Matthiessen that reveals much about their relationship.[9]) On the history side, Leo had a thorough grounding in US history from the Puritans to the New Deal. The teacher who influenced him most was Perry Miller, whose work transformed the understanding

Portrait of Leo Marx in his prime.

of the American seventeenth century and demonstrated how fundamental the Puritans were to comprehending American culture. Marx would combine ideas from Matthiessen and Miller in *The Machine in the Garden*. Matthiessen traced a pattern of themes, symbols, and problems that energized major American writers of the nineteenth century, developing a form of close reading that kept the cultural context in view. Miller helped Marx to see the connections between the Puritans and the nineteenth century, as later explained in Miller's justly famous *Errand into the Wilderness.*[10]

8   F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941)

9   Leo Marx, "Double Consciousness and the Cultural Politics of F. O. Mathiessen," *Monthly Review,* Vol. 34, No. 9: February 1983.

10   Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

Marx completed his BA in history and literature in 1941. Before he could go on to graduate school, he served in the Navy during World War II as the captain of a 110-foot wooden-hulled, twin-engined submarine chaser. While cruising the Pacific doubtless made him a better reader of Melville, this may not have been the most important aspect of that experience. In the Navy he had to get along with a wide variety of people. Anyone who met him in later life could see that he had the common touch. He could meet anyone and have an interesting conversation. He never condescended or put on airs. Perhaps he was always like that, but the Navy gave him a broad experience of human nature. He and his fiancé Jane Pike, a Radcliffe graduate whom he married in 1943, exchanged hundreds of letters which record their wartime experiences. One hopes the family will make them available to scholars.[11]

After the war, Marx returned to Harvard to begin a Ph.D. On his first day back a new faculty member, Henry Nash Smith, asked him to be his teaching assistant. This was four years before Smith published *Virgin Land*, a work closely related in theme to Marx's dissertation, which later evolved into *The Machine in the Garden*.[12] Smith was interested in popular novels and the mythologies they expressed. He saw Mark Twin, for example, as a writer who emerged out of popular culture and synthesized it with elements of high culture to create a distinctly American form of writing. The two men became close, and one might claim, a bit reductively, that the so-called "myth and symbol" school originated at Harvard when Matthiessen, Smith, and Marx were there together in the late 1940s.

Context

When Marx arrived at Harvard as a freshman in the late 1930s, one of the first things he did was to join a protest against General Franco, in support of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War. He was on the left side of New Deal politics, and he remained consistently on the Left throughout his life. He once remarked that his family is distantly related to Karl Marx, a connection that clearly pleased him. One of his teachers at Harvard, Daniel Boorstin, was a member of the Communist Party in the late 1930s, and Matthiessen was a socialist. (He was also a homosexual, but no one then spoke of it.) These Harvard academics were not a doctrinaire card-carrying cadre of the Communist Party, however. They believed in evolutionary change toward a socialist welfare state, and such a state seemed to be emerging during the New Deal. From that perspective, this evolution slowed during the Eisenhower era, but it seemed to revive during the 1960s.

To put this another way, Marx belonged to a hopeful generation who thought the forces of history were moving toward a better world. They were not naïve. They had lived through the Depression and World War II, and

11   These letters remain with the Marx family. Most of his papers are archived at MIT: https://archivesspace.mit.edu/repositories/2/resources/1161

12   Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

during Marx's graduate training the Red Scare began and carried on for the better part of a decade. In the convoluted paranoid thinking of the time, someone like Marx who was on the Left before the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union was considered "a premature anti-fascist." Despite McCarthyism, American history seemed to that generation to be a story of growing equality, greater prosperity, and more inclusiveness. That generation strongly believed in the value of education to open the doors to personal success and in the power of education to effect social change. Marx was Jewish, which meant that European members of his extended family had been in danger of being sent to concentration camps. Moreover, Jewish people in America during the 1920s and 1930s experienced open discrimination. They were excluded from certain clubs, and universities had Jewish admission quotas. A comedian could then get a big laugh if he told a Jewish joke. This situation was changing for the better before World War II, but every Jewish intellectual had thought about the injustice of discrimination, and this helps explain why Jewish academics generally supported the Civil Rights Movement, including American Studies scholars like Marx, Alan Trachtenberg, Allen Guttmann, Daniel Aaron, Oscar Handlin, Bernard Bailyn, Richard Hofstadter, Alfred Kazin, Larry Levine, and Irving Howe. They were drawn to American Studies and more specifically the subjects of slavery, persecution, immigration, and economic inequality. Such ideological positions were hardly cost-free in the conservative 1950s. One reason Marx took his first full-time teaching position at the University of Minnesota was that it was a liberal university that consistently defended free speech. He taught there from 1949 until 1958.

At that time, in English departments the New Critics were in their ascendancy. Marx was not one of them, but he shared some of their preferences. He was trained to make close readings and to respect the integrity of the literary text, and Marx was never drawn to the biographical fallacy, in which works of literature are explained largely through reference to the author's life. In teaching American literature, he seldom spent much time on biographies of individual authors. But he argued that to understand literature the cultural context had to be considered. He also made a point of including the study of African American literature in his teaching, showing for example that pastoralism was an important element in Richard Wright's autobiographical *Black Boy* or in Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*. He studied how certain tropes, symbols, and images persisted from one writer to the next, an idea that later would be called "intertextuality," and he showed that this practice bridged cultural divides of race, class, and gender. Marx never accepted the idea that particular symbols were basic to all story telling or the idea that the key to understanding literature lay in Jungian or Freudian psychology. He did not embrace any universalizing theory that claimed to be valid for all cultures. Rather, Marx argued for cultural specificity. The pastoral in ancient Rome was not the same as the pastoral in eighteenth-century Britain or the pastoral in nineteenth-century America. He

had learned from Miller and Matthiessen that history mattered and that cultures differed. The literary work was best treated not as the expression of one life but as a cultural and historical text.

Concepts

Consider then Marx's publications as studies of long-term cultural patterns. What remains useful in this work? At least five aspects remain vital today for American Studies.

1. The first is the value of an interdisciplinary approach. *The Machine in the Garden* is not about literature alone. It gives considerable space to political speeches by George Perkins Marsh, Daniel Webster, and Edward Everett, to Thomas Jefferson's writings on landscape, and to the *Report on Manufacturers* prepared by Alexander Hamilton and Tenche Coxe. Those who criticize Marx for focusing on canonical literature misrepresent his work. There is also a section analyzing the meaning of alienation in the works of Karl Marx and Thomas Carlyle, and the application of this concept to US society in the nineteenth century. Marx also drew on the works of Freud and Erich Fromm. And to explicate the idea of pastoralism, Marx went back to Virgil and to poetic conventions in British literature. He also included a knowledgeable discussion of American landscape paintings. He anticipated what later research on the environmental crisis demonstrated, that working in isolated disciplines is inadequate to deal with broad topics such as nature or technology, which are better comprehended using an interdisciplinary approach.

2. Literature has consequences. The early American Studies movement realized that literature was not a mirror of society. Drawing on the then new field of anthropology, its scholars argued that each culture has central narratives – or myths – that knit society together and express its core values and central contradictions. *The Machine in the Garden* concerns narratives of the conflict between new technologies and nature. That conflict of values and ideas has further intensified, and Marx's analysis can easily be extended to analyze literary works written decades after it appeared. For example, Louise Erdrich's novel, *Tracks*, contains a central scene in which a logging company cuts down the forest inhabited by a Native American tribe.[13] To the loggers, trees are a resource to be exploited, and they move relentlessly from one site to another, leaving ruined land behind. The Native Americans see the forest as their home, a living ecological system of which they are a part. This conflict of the machine in the garden, told from the Native American perspective, shows how dominant cultural narratives have extra-literary consequences. It is the scholar's duty to write and teach with this understanding in mind. Recurrent stories express intractable cultural contradictions. People act in accord with the narratives they believe in, as also is the case in the conflict over the existence of global warming.

13   Louise Erdrich, Tracks. New York: Harper and Row, 1988. Discussed in David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 88-90.

3. Landscape is not neutral; it expresses moral values. Jefferson knew this, as did Emerson or Willa Cather or F. Scot Fitzgerald. Marx's essay on "The American Revolution and the American Landscape" remains thought-provoking,[14] and its line of thought is further developed in a late essay that shows how landscape ideologies may pander to the desire to separate culture from nature.[15] Marx's work can also inform studies of how computer programs seek to copy and/or replace nature, creating digital worlds with a morality embedded within them. The landscapes of on-line gaming provide a simplified vision of human history, in which military strategy is central. There are values and narratives embedded in computer games such as SimCity, in the digitized presentation of new houses by real estate agents, or in virtual reality. These landscapes restructure human relations and naturalize the domination of what remains of the natural world. In short, landscape has become an even more central concern than it was in 1964 when *The Machine in the Garden* appeared.

4. Moreover, Americans typically have not one conception of landscape but shift between contradictory conceptions, depending on context. As Marx explained it in 1988, "the outlook of any individual also may be said to consist of several overlapping, partly conflicting belief systems" that are in a constant dialogue. Culture is not unified but pluralistic, and its "multilayered, fragmented character has made problematic the very existence of anything like a single, coherent, unified, national culture."[16] With this understanding in mind, Marx wrote "The American Ideology of Space" that outlines the three contrasting conceptions of primitivism, pastoralism, and utilitarianism.[17] Most Americans at times idealize wilderness, or untouched nature, which in the 1960s led to the creation of "wilderness areas" where no roads, houses, or permanent human presence is tolerated. Establishing a bureaucracy to preside over wilderness might seem self-contradictory, but the designated wilderness areas in the United States are larger than Germany and Belgium combined. Yet even though many Americans champion wilderness, the dominant conception of nature is utilitarian, treating nature as raw material awaiting exploitation and improvement, in mines, dams, highways, and other building projects. This utilitarianism was inscribed on the landscape, in the form of the grid system of land division that commodifies the entire nation as identical

14   Leo Marx, "The American Revolution and the American Landscape," delivered as a lecture at the University of Virginia in 1974. Available at https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/BicentenUSA11.pdf?x91208

15   Leo Marx, "The Pandering Landscape: On the Illusory Separateness of American Nature." *Nature's Nation, Revisited: American Concepts of Nature from Wonder to Ecological Crisis*. Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2003, 30-42.

16   Leo Marx, "Introduction," in his *The Pilot and the Passenger: Essays on Literature, Technology, and Culture in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), x-xi.

17   Leo Marx, "The American Ideology of Space," *Denatured Visions. Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century.* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 62-78. See also Leo Marx, "The Idea of Nature in America," Dædalus 137:2 (2008), 8-21.

squares. Attempting to find a compromise between the extremes of wilderness and utilitarianism, many Americans want to live in what Marx termed the pastoral middle landscape. When surveyed, a majority say they prefer to live in a small town or in the countryside, even if many must settle for suburbia. Marx's essay suggests how these three incompatible conceptions of nature are expressed in conflicted landscapes.[18]

5. Another of Marx's fruitful concepts is that of the "technological sublime," discussed for 12 pages in *The Machine in the Garden*, and ten pages in Perry Miller's *The Life of the Mind in America*.[19] It proves useful when trying to understand why a new technology could strike a crowd dumb with awe, for example when seeing for the first time a railroad, a skyscraper, or an airplane.[20] Americans were not the only people awed by such experiences, but they sought out and celebrated them, and they made the technological sublime central to their national identity.[21] One might argue that it became a form of false consciousness, a kind of hubris. The power and the complexity of the machine became a trope for the power of the nation, and the

triumphs over space (for example in bridges, dams, skyscrapers, and rockets) seemed to exemplify not only the force of human reason and its ability to subdue nature, but also the greatness of the United States. The technological sublime remains a vital part of American culture, and during the last quarter century it has emerged in the guise of virtual reality, advanced telescopes, drone photography, and extraterrestrial rovers.[22]

In summary, Marx pushed American Studies to be interdisciplinary, to understand literature as an expression of cultural values, to study landscapes as conflicted ideological expressions, and to examine the ways that technologies embody fantasies of power.

Teacher

I first heard about *The Machine in the Garden* when a freshman at Amherst College. It was reviewed in the local newspaper, and I bought it as a Christmas present for my father, as he was interested in the history of technology. I did not expect to read it myself, and I did not take a course with Leo Marx until the following year.

Amherst College prides itself on a low student-faculty ratio, but Marx's survey of American literature was so popular that he taught in the largest lecture room on campus. About 150 students took the course every year, and since the college admitted 300 freshman each year, that meant about half of all Amherst students took his course.

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18   See David E. Nye, *Conflicted American Landscapes.* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021).

19   Marx, *The Machine in the Garden,* 195-207; Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America,* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), 295–306.

20   David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime.* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994).

21   David E. Nye, *Seven Sublimes.* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2022), 20-30.

22   Ibid., 136-138, 148, passim.

Marx was a compelling speaker who did not tire you out. The more you listened, the more interested you became. He had a mesmerizing voice and a deceptively informal style. He began by speaking almost conversationally, but gradually his tone became elevated. He became dramatic, especially when reading passages from Whitman, Melville, or whatever author was under discussion. His explications became passionate. Many people read his work because he was a fascinating speaker, and it would be difficult to find a professor of American literature who heard him speak and subsequently never read *The Machine in the Garden.* The obituary for Marx in *The New York Times* quoted Harvard Professor Lawrence Buell, himself a seminal author on ecology and literature, who declared *The Machine in the Garden* to be "the best book ever written about the place of nature in American literary thought."[23]

In his survey course, Marx lectured on the Puritans, natural depravity, attempts to define "what is an American," the pastoral dreams of the new republic, Thoreau's theory of civil disobedience, the madness of Ahab in *Moby Dick*, and Whitman's barbaric yawp heard over the rooftops of the world. To students, this literature also seemed to be a meta-commentary on the 1960s, though these connections were not Marx's focus. The Pentagon generals fixated on the domino theory and Vietnam were our Ahabs. The
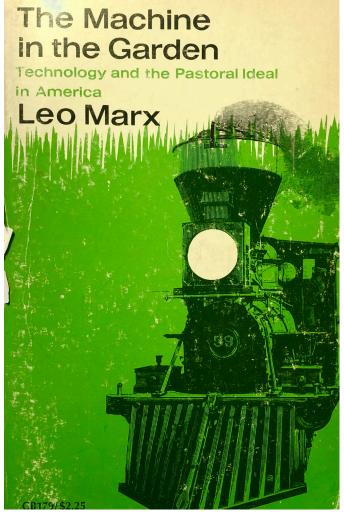
leaders of the Civil Rights and anti-war movements were our Thoreaus, and Bob Dylan was our approximation of Whitman. Our best hope, it seemed, was to survive the coming apocalypse as the Ishmaels of our generation. The survey course made such an impression that Marx's seminars were oversubscribed.

Marx refined his writing through teaching. The ideas had first been nurtured at Harvard in the 1940s, but he continually reworked and refined his thoughts. In seminars he presented close readings of texts and refined them in dialogue with students. He was a good listener as well as an inspiring speaker, and he often began a seminar by gathering questions from the class and then organizing them into an outline. This is harder to do than it looks. Through dialogue, he found compelling ways to make his arguments. He was not forced to rush into print to get tenure, as is the unhappy practice today. *The Machine in the Garden* became a landmark book partly because its arguments were honed in the classroom, and because he was able to give it time. Aside from that book, his forte was the carefully crafted essay.

The graduating seniors each year selected one teacher as an honorary member of the class, and in 1968 that honor was bestowed on Leo Marx. His lecture examined the disruptive effects of technology on contemporary American society, including what President Eisenhower had termed "the military industrial complex," the war in Vietnam, and the tendency to assume that new machines could solve social and economic problems. He made considerable reference to Lewis

23   John Motyka, "Leo Marx, 102, Dies; Studied Clash of Nature and Culture in America," *The New York Times,* March 15, 2022.

Mumford's works, and to a wide range of works in sociology and philosophy, notably Martin Heidegger's understanding that the essence of technology lies in the mind not in the machine.

Influence

I took *The Machine in the Garden* to graduate school at the University of Minnesota, where Marx had once taught and still was highly regarded at its Center for American Studies. Only in graduate school did I fully understand how interdisciplinary his book was. At Amherst, the combination of history, literature, fine art, psychology, and the social sciences had seemed natural, but the Minnesota faculty did not all share such a commitment to interdisciplinarity. The New Criticism was still strong in the English Department, and I had to defend the "myth and symbol" approach and to find arguments for the very idea of American Studies itself. To my surprise, I discovered many useful arguments in paragraphs of *The Machine in the Garden* that had not seemed important before. I began to understand the book's role in shaping American Studies. It offered a model for how to combine sweeping analysis with close readings. It was genuinely interdisciplinary. While it focused on literature, the methods could be appropriated for more historically focused work. The book also provided a blueprint for how to teach American literature, and many survey courses were based on it, both in the United States and abroad.

Paperback book cover, The Machine in the Garden.

By the time I completed graduate school in the middle 1970s, however, academic fashions were changing. The field of American Studies began to emphasize social history more than literature. Sacvan Bercovitch argued that myths and symbols would best be understood in terms of ideology.[24] Fredric Jameson interested many young scholars in revisionist forms of Marxism, and Hayden

24   Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

White's *Metahistory* challenged the use of realism as the template for writing history.[25] Using such new methods, the next generation of scholars focused on racial injustice, class tensions, and gender.

These matters were not excluded from the American Studies I had known at Amherst, and they were in harmony with the tradition of social engagement that Marx represented. But each academic movement establishes itself by attacking those who went before. The so-called "myth and symbol school," which in fact never formally existed or called itself by that name, came under attack.[26] *The Machine in the Garden* was criticized because it dealt with male writers, because it had little to say about race, and because it primarily dealt with "great" or canonical works. Criticism that focuses on what is not in a book is always a bit suspect, for no book can cover everything. The relevant question is "Are the arguments and methods in a work viable when looking at other authors, or when studying class, race, gender, and popular culture?" They are. Marx's lectures and classes incorporated female and Black authors into his analysis of American literature, including the works of Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, Jean Toomer, Ralph Ellison,

and Richard Wright.[27] Both pastoralism and the idea of a "middle landscape" are present in the first chapters of Cather's *My Antonia* or Wright's *Black Boy* each of which contains some of the most lyrical pastoral passages in American literature. Furthermore, Marx's work is still useful when analyzing political speeches, popular novels, and historical documents.[28] In the Marx papers at MIT one finds items such as "The Unfinished Agenda of Martin Luther King, 1994" (Box 9) or "Ethical Issues in the Assessment of Science." (Box 8)[29]

The Machine in the Garden has outlasted its critics and remained in print for six decades. It is so well known that other books refer to it in their titles. In 1994 appeared *The Garden in the Machine* (Princeton), in 2004 *The Machine in Neptune's Garden* (Watson Science), and in 2001 *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place.* In 1991, the journalist Joel Garreau devoted a chapter of *Edge City* to "The Machine, the Garden, and Paradise."[30] One American Studies classmate from Amherst, Gordon Radley, became the president of Lucas Films. He told me in 1998 that *The Machine in the Garden* had influenced

25   Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.)

26   Günter H. Lenz *A Critical History of the New American Studies, 1970–1990* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2017.)

27   Marx's papers at MIT include folders on pastoralism in Jean Toomer and Willa Cather (Box 4), and on Cather (Box 7). See https://archivesspace.mit.edu/repositories/2/top_containers/34306

28   See Nye, *America as Second Creation:* on homesteading, 43-89; on mills and industries, 91-145; on canals and railroads, 147-204; on irrigation, 205-259.

29   https://archivesspace.mit.edu/repositories/2/resources/1161

30   Joel Garreau, *Edge City* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 362-372.

the Star Wars series of films. A comprehensive study would bring many such influences to light.

No reconsideration of Marx's influence should overlook his generosity to scholars and students. His doctoral students recall that he set high standards. A professor at MIT declared that "One could not ask for a kinder, gentler person to slice a young scholar's early writings to the bone." He recalled that Marx wrote extensive comments on his papers, and that, "He made me a better writer, a better thinker, and a better historian, and left similar marks on many others."[31] For half a century he read countless manuscripts and book proposals and had coffee with distraught PhD students and young faculty, coaxing out their ideas for discussion. As late as 2002 he convinced me that I needed an additional chapter in a book that I thought was complete. His method was gently Socratic, deftly asking questions and listening, seldom speaking at length. Many have acknowledged his help, including six authors who published after Marx was 84

years old.[32] Their books cover quite a range of topics, from English literature to global ethics, from cell technology to Paul Revere, from anthropology to literary Concord. Marx clearly knew about many things that he never put into his publications, and he was quick to comprehend the structural problems or gaps in a manuscript.

Marx's scholarship still speaks to present-day American studies, as attested to by a collection of essays published in Germany in 2014 on the fiftieth anniversary of *The Machine in the Garden*. These essays discuss antebellum factory literature, post-Civil War gardening, rural electrification, Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, the film *Jurassic Park*, Hollywood romantic comedies, and Native American novels. Many more topics could be added to this list. Alan Trachtenberg emphasized in his epilogue to that volume that in *The Machine in the Garden* "the machine remains dominant over the social order and its nostalgic echoes and hints of Jeffersonian democracy. The book tells one story after another of failure, failure of hope, of vision, of imagination of

31   David Mindell, from https://news.mit.edu/2022/professor-emeritus-leo-marx-american-history-scholar-dies-0414

32   Giles Gunn, *Ideas to Live For: Toward a Global Ethics* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Hannah Landecker. *Culturing Life: How Cells Became Technologies.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Joseph Andrews, *Literary Concord Uncovered: Revealing Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, Hawthorne, and Fuller.* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2014); Michael M. J. Fischer, *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice.* (Duke University Press, 2003); Robert Martello, *Midnight Ride, Industrial Dawn: Paul Revere and the Development of American Enterprise.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

viable alternatives to the capitalist-industrial order in which the machine reigns."[33] Already in 1964 Marx was calling for new narratives, new tropes, and new symbols adequate to encompass the post-industrial order. His book ends with the words, "we require new symbols of possibility, and although the creation of those symbols is in some measure the responsibility of artists, it is in greater measure the responsibility of society. The machine's sudden entrance into the garden presents a problem that ultimately belongs not to art but to politics."[34]

Later Career
The need for new symbols of possibility and viable alternatives is even more urgent in the Anthropocene, where the machine has not only entered every garden but also the seas and the skies, penetrated the body, and linked the mind to digital media. As the last page of *The Machine in the Garden* intimated, after 1964 Marx would shift his focus gradually away from literature toward politics and history, especially after he moved to the program on Science, Technology, and Society at MIT in 1977. Unfortunately, his later writings have often been ignored by American Studies scholars, who lump his work together with other founders of the field and dismiss it as part of an "old" American Studies that focused

on national character, exceptionalism, and white men. This view of his work may seem to be reinforced by an article Marx wrote on the "Ur Theory of American Studies."[35] In it, he discussed the shift in attitudes from graduate students who "believed in America" during the 1950s to the more alienated, ambivalence views among young scholars after 1968. The Vietnam War, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the rise of feminism, the resistance of Native Americans to assimilation, and the increasing conservatism of national politics, taken together, led many Americanists to oppose the government and what was generally termed "the establishment." But recall that when Marx arrived at Harvard, one of the first things he did was to join a street demonstration against General Franco. He was a captain in the Navy during World War II, but he did not blindly "believe in America." He was outspoken in support of Civil Rights and in opposition to the Vietnam war. He was understood to be on the Left when elected president of the American Studies Association in 1976. Nevertheless, by that time the field was being strongly influenced by feminism, structuralism, deconstruction, and social science theories. By the 1990s, "New Americanists" described Marx's work in the past tense.

Yet Marx remained one of the most prominent humanists in the country. In 1972 he was elected to lifetime membership in the

33   Alan Trachtenberg, "Epilogue: Politics and Culture," in Eric Erbacher, Nicole Maruo-Schröder, Florian Sedlmeier, *Rereading the Machine in the Garden: Nature and Technology in American Culture.* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2014), 233.

34   *Marx, The Machine in the Garden,* 365.

35   Leo Marx, "On Recovering the 'Ur' Theory of American Studies," *American Literary History* 17: 1 (Spring, 2005), 118-134.

Leo Marx, January, 2011, standing at the front door of his house, aged 92.

American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and for some years he also chaired the American Literature Section of the Modern Language Association. His work remained influential abroad, and his writings reached scholars in many fields. When 69, he published *The Pilot and the Passenger*, a collection of nineteen essays written between 1950 and 1988.[36] These could all be classified as works in American literature or American studies. Moreover, that volume did not include essays that addressed other audiences. *The Massachusetts Review* published "On Heidegger's Conception of 'Technology' and Its Historical Validity," that lies within the fields of philosophy and the history of technology. Marx also ventured into the relationship between science and economics in an essay for *Technology in Society,* "Developing a national science culture under free trade: What kind of knowledge do we need?" The trajectory of his later career also emerged in an article for the *Journal of the History of Biology* on "Environmental degradation and the ambiguous social role of science and technology."[37] He was becoming a spokesperson for the emerging field of the environmental humanities.

In recognition of his life's work, in 2002 Marx received the Leonardo da Vinci Medal, the highest award given by the Society for the History of Technology, and in 2014 the Centennial Medal from Harvard University. The da Vinci Medal citation praises him as a scholar who "early cautioned against the Western tendency to equate progress with technology and who questioned critically whether technology really meant progress."[38] He attacked deterministic thinking about "the machine." As he explained in 2010 in "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept:"

36   Marx, *The Pilot and the Passenger.*

37   Leo Marx, "On Heidegger's Conception of "Technology" and Its Historical Validity," *The Massachusetts Review* 25: 4 (Winter 1984), 638-652; Leo Marx, "Developing a national science culture under free trade: What kind of knowledge do we need?" *Technology in Society* 11: 2, 1989, 203-211; Leo Marx, "Environmental degradation and the ambiguous social role of science and technology," *Journal of the History of Biology,* 25, (1992), 449–468.

38   "The Leonardo da Vinci Medal," *Technology and Culture,* 44:1 (2003), 125.

Technology, as such, makes nothing happen. By now, however, the concept has been endowed with a thing-like autonomy and a seemingly magical power of historical agency. We have made it an all-purpose agent of change. As compared with other means of reaching our social goals, the technological has come to seem the most feasible, practical, and economically viable. It relieves the citizenry of onerous decision-making obligations and intensifies their gathering sense of political impotence. The popular belief in technology as a—if not the—primary force shaping the future is matched by our increasing reliance on instrumental standards of judgment, and a corresponding neglect of moral and political standards, in making judgments about the direction of society.[39]

As global warming, species extinction, and pollution become more urgent problems, they demand the ability to see the choices accurately and to make informed decisions. However, the widespread belief in deterministic technology often paralyzes individual agency to overcome environmental crises. American Studies would do well to retain its early focus on landscape, and add to it the study of endangered species, energy transitions, information systems, the illusion of "technological fixes" for social problems, and the ethics of scientific research.

Few academic books remain in print for sixty years and sell several hundred thousand copies. *The Machine in the Garden* remains a compelling meditation on the disruptive role of technology in American society. It links the founding figures who taught Marx – Miller, Boorstin, Matthiessen, and Smith – with the generations of American Studies and STS scholars whom he taught and influenced. His later publications moved in new directions, as he became a critic of technological culture and a founding figure in the environmental humanities. In the Anthropocene, American Studies might build on that legacy.

39   Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept," *Technology and Culture,* 51:3 (July 2010), 577.

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Literary Border Crossing and Cultural Belonging in Frederick Schiller Faust's *The Gentle Gunman*

Key words: Western,
Frederick Faust,
gauchesque, border
crossing

Abstract: When Frederick Faust wrote *The Gentle Gunman,* locating it in Argentina, he did more than entertain American readers with new terrain in his western. By choosing to border-cross between the western and the Argentine gauchesque, he creates an opportunity to ask questions about the modernity of American and Argentine cultures and the national identities emphasized by both societies.

This article begins by analyzing the characteristics of the western and the gauchesque in Faust's novel. This article also provides an overview of the historical moment of the novel's creation, expectations of readers from the time period, and Faust's decision to eroticize the western's setting. By doing so, this article answers the question about the hero's displacement in a modern world that values class elitism above heroic characteristics. While scholars have analyzed different elements of Faust's life and works, they have not discussed his border-crossing between the literary genres of the western and the gauchesque, two genres that emphasis national identity. By focusing on Faust's border-crossing, it will become evident that Faust championed specific traits embodied by the cowboy and, in one case, the gaucho––all of which foster a sense of who belongs to the landscape and who does not.

I.

A 1927 *New York Times* article titled "Douglas Fairbanks Uses New Weapon, the Bolas," described Fairbanks's extensive training for his upcoming film *Over the Andes*, later renamed *The Gaucho*. In order to wield the bola with ease, Fairbanks solicited two experts from Argentina to train him. The *New York Times* contributor goes on to remark that the *bola* is "almost unknown to the North American Continent" and insists that Fairbanks's prior role as a Mexican (he was well known, for example, for playing Zorro in the 1920s *The Mark of Zorro*) did not help train him to "impersonate" a gaucho because Mexicans are as "unfamiliar [with the *bola*] as croquet to an American Indian or baseball to an Eskimo" (6). As a result, Fairbanks undertook extensive training––not to portray Argentine culture authentically, but rather to create "dramatic effect in the picture" (6).

Fairbanks's impersonation of foreign figures like the gaucho was not isolated, but rather part of an ongoing trend in American cinema and literature in the 1920s. While one-dimensional depictions of Native Americans and Mexicans had long appeared in westerns, in the 1920s, the figure of the gaucho was added to the genre. Despite Fairbanks's extensive training, his portrayal of the gaucho was influenced by images that had become familiar in depictions of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands––a region he had been engaged with since at least 1915 when he played a Texan in *Martyrs of the Alamo*. According to this logic, Fairbanks's gaucho was easily interchangeable with the Mexican vaqueros that appeared in other films from the same time period.

The Gaucho was not the only creative work to import the gaucho in the 1920s. For instance, three years prior to Fairbanks's film, in 1924, Frederick Schiller Faust–– writing under his *nom de plume*, Max Brand–– published *The Gentle Gunman*. *The Gentle Gunman* used the gaucho in order to render a frontier that seemed both familiar to and distinct from the U.S. *The Gentle Gunman* began as a serial originally titled "Argentine" in *Western Story Magazine*, a popular publication with a wide readership. As a result, Faust capitalized on the popularity of westerns, while he excited their audiences by reaching elsewhere for new frontiers. In doing so, he helped open the door for the future incorporation of the gaucho into the western genre. Through efforts like Faust's, Fairbanks's, and later, Herbert Childs's, in *Way of a Gaucho* (1948), the gaucho became an easily identifiable figure in westerns, somewhat familiar in its likeness to American cowboys and Mexican vaqueros, but exotic enough to seem new.

Although adventure stories on the frontier attracted Faust, he moved away from the familiar site of the U.S.-Mexico border even as he re-articulated the symbols of this border in his text that takes place in Argentina. Creating new border-crossing opportunities for American readers to enjoy became one method that forged a sense of belonging and national identity in 1920s readership. As a result, Faust chose to explore an Argentine literary tradition––the gauchesque––which by

the twentieth century had become a vehicle for Argentine nation-building much like the western. Because of the similar emphasis on nation-building in both the western and the gauchesque, Faust's choice to border-cross appears to encompass more than a chance to entertain readers. Rather, by choosing to border-cross between genres, Faust creates an opportunity to ask questions about the modernity of both American and Argentine cultures in ways that would not occur without this literary border crossing. He incorporates tendencies of both the western and the gauchesque––namely, the cowboy hero and the outlaw gaucho figure––to ask questions about the hero's displacement in a modern world that values class elitism above heroic characteristics like bravery, honesty, and frontier skills. While Ariana Huberman and Josefina Ludmer have discussed the gaucho genre, and William Bloodworth and Jon Tuska have examined Faust's contribution to the western genre, to date scholars have not provided a deep analysis of Faust's border-crossing between genres in *The Gentle Gunman*. This article seeks to fill that gap.

II.

In *The Gentle Gunman*, as with many of his other westerns, Faust actively considered reader interest as he wrote, in order to bolster his career. From the 1920s through the 1950s, Faust published hundreds of westerns and detective stories, despite his purported resistance to telling stories about "stinking cowboys" (Bloodworth 58). Because single-genre magazines were growing in popularity

(58), Faust understood the financial benefits of producing westerns. He published, on average, two short stories per issue of *Western Story Magazine*, sometimes under different pen names, including Max Brand (59). Pulps such as *Western Story Magazine* were "driven by market forces" because they discovered "exactly what it was that readers wanted in the way of literary entertainment" (23). Editors conducted surveys to ascertain which sorts of stories readers wanted to consume, and used these as a basis for their editorial decisions (Tuska and Piekarski 387). Faust did not write so much about "people who might exist, as he did of people the reader would like to believe could exist" (qtd. in Tuska and Piekarski 441). William Bloodworth argues that Faust offered a generous importation of "European lore, a faith in action that reduces the significance of both characterization and setting, and a strangely complex treatment of men and women" (178). Faust sought to create work that would sell. In order to appeal to his audience's desires, *The Gentle Gunman* incorporates themes from the most popular genres of the time period, such as the western, the gauchesque, and the detective story, although the novel relies more heavily upon the western and the gauchesque.

Because financial gain and consumer interest motivated Faust, he turned his attention to Argentina, a country that had been developing an economic relationship with the U.S since the nineteenth century. By the 1920s, this relationship between the U.S and Argentina had greatly changed, and it had led to increased interest in the South

American country by mainstream Americans. By 1910, for example, the U.S exported $40.4 million worth of goods to Argentina, which made Argentina the ninth largest recipient of American products (Sheinin 39). Furthermore, in Argentina, foreign companies controlled the most profitable industries, such as meatpacking, communication networks, and manufacturing (Bergquist 88). Historian David J. Goldberg calls the 1920s a "business-dominated decade" for the U.S, largely because of its control over foreign markets (8). By 1925, American companies like Standard Oil owned 143,000 hectares of land in the Argentine provinces of Jujuy and Salta, thus limiting Argentine control over its natural resources (Brennan and Pianetto 75). This included its human residents: when Standard Oil workers were ambushed, robbed, and killed while driving along a highway in 1926, Standard Oil executives took matters into their own hands by apprehending and flogging the suspects (76).

The control exercised by Standard Oil was not an anomaly in Argentina. Throughout the 1920s, U.S. investors took advantage of Argentina's economic decline (Alexander 157). American investors won concessions for high-power telegraph communications between New York and Buenos Aires and proposed major projects like the construction of an extensive grain elevator network and a steamship service between North and South America (Sheinin 45). By 1917, the U.S had also established virtual monopolies on Argentine lumber, agricultural machinery, and sewing machine exports (47). Foreign capitalists exercised "dominant [...] control over the transport, processing, and commercialization of export products," which left Argentines painfully dependent on American economic power (Bergquist 87).

American investment in Argentina eventually increased the interest of mainstream Americans in the South American nation's politics, economics, and popular culture. The same interest, however, caused many to view Argentina as a dependent and unformed nation. Although the 1920s exhibited profoundly nativist attitudes at the time, it was also, as historian Gary Dean Best insists, a period of great change that cast many Americans into a "sea of normlessness," or a lack of cohesive norms to follow, that encouraged them to look beyond the U.S for sources of exotic intrigue (xiii). Many liberal thinkers from the time period did advocate cultural pluralism. This intellectual turn, however, failed to eradicate prejudice (Selig 41). Instead, as Best notes, it led many Americans to exoticize foreign cultures and reduce their complexities to simple stereotypes (37). The fashion industry, for example, "found inspiration in the museums, borrowing [...] from the costumes of Arab chieftains, Chinese mandarins, guildsmen of medieval Japan, the tribes of the frozen Siberian tundras, the graves of ancient Peru, the ceramics of Mexico, and the Indians" in indiscriminate ways (37). In doing so, Americans sought distinction and originality in order to alleviate their sense of cultural *ennui.* Films like *The Cheat* (1915) and *Broken Blossoms* (1919), orientalist films on Chinese/Japanese themes respectively, also helped

Americans imagine exotic foreign cultures.

In *The Gentle Gunman*, Faust capitalized on the thirst for the exotic while retaining the familiar landscape of the frontier via the Argentine pampas. Bloodworth suggests that Faust imported mythology from abroad because he found the American West to be an infertile place for the imagination (180). In the novel, Faust echoes a reversal of Bloodworth's claims when he marries depictions of Argentine frontier life with the mythologized American West. According to Tuska and Piekarski, Faust researched gaucho culture (Tuska and Piekarski 378) to provide realistic portrayals of gaucho clothing, their saddles, and descriptions of the Argentine pampas.

To this end, Faust incorporates elements of the gauchesque, such as the outlaw gaucho figure, his love for family, and his fierce loyalty to those he loved, best characterized by works like José Hernández's *El Gaucho Martin Fierro* (1872) and Rafael Obligado's *Santos Vega* (1885). In twentieth-century gauchesque literature, the outlaw gaucho figure used by Faust had become passé. Elena Castedo-Ellerman draws attention to the difference between nineteenth-century works like Hernández's with this trope and twentieth-century portrayals of the gaucho when she suggests that "literary men have portrayed him [the gaucho] in different, sometimes contradictory ways … During the first half of the 19th century, Sarmiento, in *Facundo*, depicts the gaucho as a crass barbarian. During the second half of the century, however, novels in verse

idealize and idolize the gaucho" (13). Domingo Sarmiento portrayed the gaucho as holding back Argentina's progress as a nation in his polemical work *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (1845). By the early twentieth century, immigration had altered Argentina's landscape as a nation, thus forcing many Argentines to look to the past for cultural representation in the figure of the gaucho.

By the early twentieth century, writers' tendency to position the gaucho as a symbol of Argentine national identity instead of a hindrance to progress, as did Sarmiento, was prolific. Authors such as Leopoldo Lugones in *La Guerra gaucha* (1905) hailed the gaucho as the symbol of *argentinidad*, or what it means to be Argentine, that would help combat the social problems he connected to increased immigration. In *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), Ricardo Güiraldes expands upon Lugones's ideas when he shows modernized gauchos working on industrialized ranches owned by foreigners. To combat this loss of land, Argentines must embrace and model themselves after the noble, loyal, and hard-working working-class gauchos like Fabio Cáceres and Don Segundo. Because of the disparate manner of portraying the gaucho, Jason A. Bartles argues that the "gaucho genre is rather a space in which the gauchos are constantly appropriated and used to carry out a variety of ideological and aesthetic programs" (133).

While Faust incorporates the traits illuminated by Güiraldes in *Don Segundo Sombra*, he returns to a past portrayal of the pampas–– something reminiscent of *Facundo*––when he presents the pampas as an unmodernized,

virgin land ready to be cultivated. In this nostalgic portrayal of rural Argentina, it becomes obvious that Faust patterns his work as a fairly traditional western (Etulain 265) full of mythical figures and cultural ideology, rather than a work of historical accuracy. The romanticized and mythologized landscape is also a characteristic of both nineteenth and twentieth-century gauchesque works. Faust provides cultural familiarity and exotic differences to his readers who will recognize this nostalgic portrayal of the pampas from reading similar descriptions of the frontier in westerns. Yet, his nostalgic depiction of the pampas extends beyond mythologizing. Beverly J. Stoeltje argues that nostalgia is oftentimes used in depictions of the cowboy in order to look "back at a past period or event" and construct a "view that glamorizes it, removing the danger, disease, and death, and creating unity in the present" (52). By looking nostalgically into the past, Faust gives his protagonist, Dupont, a new but familiar romanticized place to explore and grow in ways that the contemporary industrialized west will not permit him. Faust's strategy to bring the site of gauchesque works––the Argentine pampas––into the western seemed to have been ultimately successful, as he later continued to explore the Argentine frontier in *Montana Rides* (1933).

III.

Despite the fact that the majority of *The Gentle Gunman* takes place in Argentina, Faust begins it in the U.S. in order to illuminate common traits of cowboy culture. Señor Valdivia, an Argentine landowner in the novel, attempts to do the same thing––albeit with ulterior motives. Valdivia buys Charles Dupont's horse so that it does not fall into the hands of the latter's rival. In order to express his gratitude and loyalty to Valdivia, Dupont agrees to help the landowner defeat El Tigre, Valdivia's gaucho nemesis. At first, Juan Carreno, Valdivia's simple-minded assistant, cannot understand his boss's intentions. Valdivia clarifies them to both Carreno and the reader when he states that "I have paid eight hundred pesos not for a horse, but for a man" (103). And later, Valdivia argues that:

Dupont is honest. Besides this, he will be made doubly formidable because he will know, my friend, that this task, if he undertakes it, is a well-nigh lost cause––a forlorn hope. Such desperate adventures are dear to the hearts of these northerners. Show them a great danger and for its own sake the danger becomes a delightful thing. Show them a north or a south pole surrounded by hundreds of leagues of terrible ice, of blizzards, of deadliest famine, and they cannot rest until they have pressed forward to find it. Hundreds die. They are forgotten. One man breaks through to victory. All the agony of a century of effort is overlooked because of one triumph. What use is all the labor and the peril? Of what advantage is the north pole or the south? None whatever! But the labor is its own reward simply because it is great [...] You will see in Charles Dupont that the great risk will appeal to him because of its greatness. (46)

Valdivia's speech illuminates the idealized characteristics that define American cowboys like Dupont, or what Stoeltje calls the "embodiment of American values" (50). Valdivia touches upon what these values might be when he refers to "northerners'" relentless self-sacrifice and rugged adventurism, no matter the cost of their efforts. Yet rather than admire those characteristics or even align them with gaucho culture, Valdivia scorns and exploits them: "I shall use him [...] as the knight in the old days used his sword. It saved his body. It also saved his soul" (42). Valdivia attempts to take advantage of the cowboy's admirable characteristics to dupe the novel's hero. At the same time, Valdivia and Dupont only manage to cross paths because of Dupont's current rootlessness. In his analysis of the cinematic western, Shai Biderman describes the cowboy as "outwardly and inwardly" manifesting "the notion of loneliness" (qtd. in McMahon and Csaki 13). Biderman considers this trait to be the most "conspicuous trademark of his [the cowboy's] character" (14). In addition to this, the cowboy tends to keep to himself (21). Douglas J. Den Uyl suggests that "perhaps no image is more symptomatic of the American western than the lone hero, abandoned by all, skillfully performing some act of courage in the cause of justice" (qtd. in McMahon and Csaki 31). These characteristics describe the essence of Dupont's interior being. Although Faust does not mention specific elements of modernization like Güiraldes does with industrialized ranching, he alludes to it when he begins his novel with a cowboy protagonist who is out of work and who has lost his horse––a hero all alone, looking for a cause. Valdivia's scheme works on Dupont because it is reminiscent of an idealized nineteenth-century American frontier where cowboys always have a place to belong.

Faust expands upon specific characteristics of cowboy culture and the western, such as frontier skills and the heroic acts of self-sacrifice mentioned by Uyl, before beginning to link these skills with gauchesque figures. Honest to a fault, Dupont, for example, wants to believe in others' honesty, and he spends the majority of the novel trusting Valdivia's heroism and the gaucho El Tigre's duplicity. According to Jon Tuska, loyalty, for Faust, was one of the greatest virtues, and "should a man lose that, he has lost everything" (375). Valdivia tells Dupont that twenty-five years before, he intended to marry a young girl, Dolores, from a neighboring estate. El Tigre allegedly could not stand to see Valdivia possess the woman, so he kidnapped and ran off with her into the pampas where she later died giving birth to their daughter, Francesca. In this story, Valdivia appeals to Dupont's values through narratives of unrequited love, the sullying of female purity, and injustice. Valdivia tells Carreno that "you do not know these [American] men, Carreno. It is impossible for you to conceive the iron of which they are made. He is now a madman––a crusader. To destroy El Tigre and bring the girl [Francesca] away is now his only thought" (52). As Valdivia's actions become more and more debased, Dupont's responses always reinforce the tenets of cowboy culture.

Through Valdivia's narrative about El Tigre, Faust incorporates one of the major symbols of nineteenth-century gauchesque narratives like *Martín Fierro*: the gaucho outlaw. Ariana Huberman explains that the term gaucho was first associated with "vagabonds who threatened the ranchers' lot" (15). In addition to this, some were considered gauchos "'malos' (outlaws, rural bandits), and others gauchos 'buenos' (patriotic soldiers, peasants, laborers)" (15). During the nineteenth century, the term gaucho came to refer to "country people," or those who worked in farming, with cattle, or mining (Huberman 15). As the organization of the Argentine state changed, the vagabond lifestyle of the gauchos was no longer possible (16). According to Huberman, economic changes in the latter part of the nineteenth century such as portioning of land, compulsory military draft, the arrival of the railroad, and immigrant labor forced "many gauchos to abandon their anarchic way of life" (16). With the death of the real-life gaucho, within the literature, he became a national icon. Faust utilizes one of the first representatives of the literary gaucho––the gaucho *malo*––with the figure of El Tigre. Yet, the gaucho outlaw resembles the cowboy himself: both are figures of loneliness who are self-sufficient and rugged men bent on righting a wrong. In *Cowboys, Gauchos, and Llaneros*, Richard W. Slatta argues that gauchos and cowboys function as symbols of "rugged individualism, unbending principle, and frontier spirit and courage" (95), evident in Faust's description of first Dupont and then later, El Tigre. By combining characters from westerns with those of the gauchesque, Faust attempts to create a multicultural world of both American and Argentine frontier figures.

As Faust slowly incorporates more gauchos into his novel, his protagonist finds few similarities between cowboy and gaucho culture––at first. As Brown notes, "notions of cultural difference readily become systems of judgment and coercion by which one group marks off and dominates others" (660). Dupont's response to gauchos verifies Brown's claims. When Dupont first sees gaucho cow herding techniques, for example, he rejects them, finding their ranching skills to be antiquated and inefficient in comparison to those learned by cowboys like himself in the U.S. In this part of the novel, Dupont fancies himself an expert on ranching because he supposedly possesses more knowledge than the gauchos on how to survive the frontier––even one that remains largely unknown to him. At one point, he remarks that "such a saddle as this could not be thrown on as a waddie throws his in the West of the States" (Faust 82-3). Dupont's perspective ignores the long history of the gauchos' life riding horseback. Slatta argues that gauchos spent so much time in the saddle that some "gauchos could barely walk" (96). Although the effectiveness of gaucho saddles seems self-evident given Slatta's point, Dupont considers them insufficient for withstanding long cattle drives, nor does he express any interest in learning more about them or using them himself. Dupont even extends this viewpoint to the animals that he manages. When he meets another American cowhand on the ranch, Jeff explains "what would a Hereford do in

this man's country? They'd get bored and die […] This here is a land of milk cows" (82-3). In depictions like these, Dupont views gaucho culture as feminized, weak, and unformed, an inferiority that trickles down to the prominent elements of ranching culture. In her analysis of Américo Paredes, Stoeltje illuminates Paredes's claims about frontiersman, such as this figure's association with machismo, and machismo's parallel to a sense of nationalism (52). Dupont evidences machismo tendencies when he manages to ride thirty unbroken horses, falling only once and therefore beating the records of Valdivia's gauchos. For Dupont, the gaucho's ranching skills cannot compare to those of a cowboy, thus showing Dupont's nationalist attitude at this point in the novel.

As the novel progresses, Dupont encounters more opportunities to explore gaucho culture on Valdivia's ranch; however, he continues to reduce their culture to superficial elements. When Valdivia kicks Dupont off the ranch as part of his plan to capture El Tigre, for example, Dupont pretends to be a gaucho in order to steal his horse Twilight and leave the ranch. The other gauchos, unable to see his face in the dark, fall for the disguise. Only when it is too late do they realize Dupont's true identity. In Huberman's analysis of gauchesque novels written by foreigners, she discusses characters' imitation of gaucho culture as a method of survival (47), which applies to Dupont to a certain degree. Dupont recognizes that without his horse, he cannot survive the frontier. Yet, his tone throughout this scene demonstrates

more than survival techniques. Rather, he approaches the situation with a degree of condescension. According to Kwame Dawes, certain novels are flawed by the heavy-handed application of Western values, prejudices, and belief systems (113). In this scene, Dupont's reduction of gaucho culture to a simple disguise demonstrates his inability to understand other cultures beyond what he can see through the lens of American values and cowboy culture. Essentialist generalizations like these depict "homogenous groups of heterogeneous people whose values, interests, ways of life, and moral and political commitments are internally plural and divergent" (qtd. in Matthes 355). Cynthia S. Hamilton argues that in general Faust's western heroes inhabit the role of "trickster, bluffing his way through the narrative, constantly fooling others who are more privileged by social class or opinion than he is" (qtd. in Bloodworth 62). Although Dupont certainly plays a trickster in this scene, at the same time, at this point in the text, he has not triumphed over class privilege or opinion. Rather, his pretend gaucho routine reduces gaucho culture to the laughable, rather than functioning as an example of the ideological and lifestyle similarities between cowboy and gaucho culture.

The theme of disguise evolves to include figurative ones that separate the novel's heroes from its villains. While Dupont's disguise, albeit a culturally insensitive one, functions as a means for Dupont to play the hero in capturing El Tigre, Valdivia's figurative disguise is meant to fool and defeat

Dupont. For this reason, Valdivia spends the entire novel cast as a duplicitous character. Although Dupont believes Valdivia to be El Tigre's victim, the other characters like El Tigre and eventually Carreno recognize him as the real threat. As Valdivia's villainous plan against Dupont and El Tigre comes to fruition, for example, he states, "Valdivia was closing a noose around the throat of Dupont as truly as any hangman. So felt Valdivia himself, and enjoyed a thrill of exquisite power" (Faust 127). As the theme of figurative disguises and duplicity takes the forefront of the novel, a characteristic of both western and gauchesque novels, the debate between modernization and barbarism emerges once again.
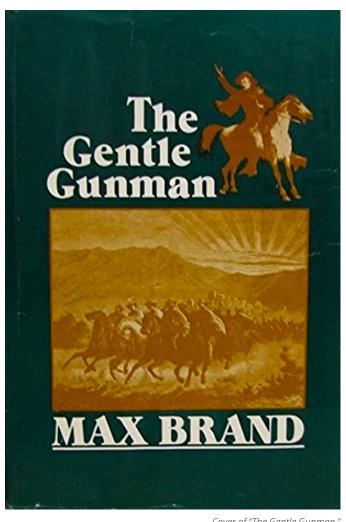
Besides his duplicity, the main traits of Valdivia's character link him to a nostalgia for an unmodernized past. While Dupont experiences a lack of belonging and cultural displacement because of modernization, Valdivia rejects elements of modern life, such as print culture, choosing to define himself instead through elements of a pre-industrialized past. The wealthy landowner tells Carreno "newspapers are the invention of the devil. They are intended to make the human race weak-minded" (38). Instead of relying on print culture, Valdivia repeatedly turns to oral stories in order to exert power over his enemies. The debate between oral versus print culture has always conjured up the dichotomy of civilization and barbarism. Yet, as Slatta explains, on the frontier oral traditions transmit important cultural information when other sources are not available (172). In fact, he compares oral traditions from *Martín Fierro* to cowboy stories and poetry, thus suggesting that both cultures subscribe to oral traditions regardless of Valdivia's beliefs. Yet, the fact that Valdivia relies on oral culture in a modern era serves to locate him within an unmodernized past despite his upper-class landowning status.

Faust's depiction of Valdivia's reliance on oral culture contrasts with the rise of print culture in Spanish America in the modern era. Stephen M. Hart explains that "It is well known that, throughout much of the nineteenth century in Spanish America, at least until the 1870s, the link between literature and high social office was an unbroken one" (165). Hart draws attention to famous figures like Domingo Sarmiento who played the role of both President and writer. During the period of 1880 to 1910, the development of the *folletín* allowed a literate urban proletariat to consume print culture before finally reaching the masses (167). According to the evolution of print culture in Spanish America, Valdivia should have embraced it as part of his role as an upper-class Argentine. When Faust depicts Valdivia as culturally backwards via his reliance one a simpler past, he uses these characteristics to pit Valdivia against culturally progressive characters like Carreno.

In contrast to characters like Dupont and Valdivia who have complicated relationships with modernity, characters like Carreno come to embrace it. Jennifer Tebbe argues that "people lived easily in the world of print, and print revealed the intersection of elite and general thought" (268). Tebbe also showcases

scholars like Catherine L. Covert's work with newspapers and this form of print culture's usefulness for understanding the past (268). Up until this point, Carreno, the simple-minded character who adores Valdivia's intelligence, willingly believes all of the landowner's fabrications. Motivated to help his employer, Carreno attempts to research Dupont's movements across the pampas by reading newspapers, thus temporarily substantiating Tebbe's argument about the world of print culture's relationship with different class groups. He then compares information garnered from print culture with that learned from oral narratives. The information is contradictory; however, Carreno ultimately believes the print narratives' contents, thus aligning him with notions of progress and forward thinking.

Faust's border-crossing illuminates the effects of a changing world on his characters who want to return to a nostalgic, mythical past. Jennifer L. McMahon and B. Steve Csaki argue that the "myth that westerns convey is both anchored in the history of the West and itself helped shape the historical settlement of the American frontier" (1). In her analysis of the gauchesque, Huberman describes a tendency in this body of literature to "idealize the *criollo* lifestyle that predated mass immigration, and where foreigners do not play an important role" (27). Both genres employ a degree of historical accuracy while largely mythologizing conquest and figures like the cowboy and the gaucho, respectively. In Faust's novel, Dupont and Valdivia both long for a mythologized past. Both Dupont's

Cover of "The Gentle Gunman."

and Valdivia's belief systems limit their understanding of the world––whether this is Dupont's lack of appreciation of and respect for gaucho culture or Valdivia's refusal to embrace print narratives. When their paths cross, the displacement caused by modernization allows the two characters to enact a mythical performance of a cowboy hero and a wealthy, corrupt rancher. In other words, Valdivia's obsessive desire to seek revenge against El Tigre forces him to play a mythical, almost romanticized foil to Dupont's cowboy

hero. Unlike Carreno who seeks truth through varied methods, Dupont and Valdivia can only view the world looking backward.

As Faust further explores the contrast between print culture and oral culture, he incorporates an opportunity for Dupont to expand upon his worldview through oral narratives. As McMahon and Csaki argue, the myth of the West present in westerns was forged out of both print and performance cultures (1), all of which Faust includes in *The Gentle Gunman*. Yet Dupont cannot appreciate oral narratives when he encounters them, which causes him to dismiss their authenticity in a similar way that he rejects gaucho culture. When Dupont witnesses a bank robbery in Nabor, for example, he critiques how the townspeople spread tall tales about the event: "no one hunted for truth. Every one was interested in the picturesque only" (155). As he immerses himself in Argentine life, Dupont comes to believe that oral storytelling merely entertains rather than informs people. He does not acknowledge the value of entertainment when telling tall tales, despite the fact that it is a part of cowboy culture too. In cowboy culture, according to Lee Clark Mitchell's analysis of *The Virginian*, telling tall tales helps cowboys triumph over villains using words, not bullets (67). Dupont neglects to view Argentine reliance on storytelling as a way to be included in a society that has otherwise undermined them via class difference. Nor does he recognize his own subscription to the "picturesque" when he plays the cowboy hero on the pampas. When Dupont rejects oral storytelling like this, he silences Argentines in what Heyd calls a "subversion of the original culture's voice" (38). In this instance, when Dupont rejects oral storytelling, he also rejects elements of cowboy culture that he seemingly longs to represent, such as the use of multiple formats for narratives.

IV.

Dupont's attitude regarding gaucho culture does not remain stable throughout *The Gentle Gunman*. Dupont's change in attitude regarding gaucho culture begins with his first sighting of El Tigre after the townspeople put the gaucho outlaw on display. In previous scenes with gauchos, Dupont homogenizes them, making them easy for him to later imitate. In this scene, however, Dupont denigrates working-class Argentines looking for a spectacle while uplifting heroic gauchos like El Tigre. After a colonel captures El Tigre and puts him in a cage in the city center, Dupont observes that "in all this crowd there was not one who appreciated the horror of showing such a man to a crowd and making a show out of his downfall. For, great though the sins of such a man might be, at least he was brave, and courage is a virtue which wipes out the worst of vices, to some extent" (166). Dupont's witnessing of El Tigre's inhumane imprisonment allows him to reconsider his opinion of gaucho culture. Richard Harvey Brown draws attention to the societal tendency of classifying different groups in order to enact "definitions of personhood, hierarchies of value, and forms of power" (659). These classifications are more than labels, but methods

for "organizing perceptions, knowledge, and moral relationships" (Brown 659). Dupont has spent the majority of the novel creating classifications that position gaucho culture as somehow less than cowboy culture. El Tigre's underdog status changes his mind. Like many westerns such as *The Virginian* and *Shane*, Faust champions the underdog and cowboys over the elite, landowning upper classes. Richard Slotkin argues that dime-novel Westerns after 1875 "abandoned Indian-war settings in favor of conflicts between 'outlaws' and 'detectives,' and the struggle between classes" (127). Faust's novel illustrates Slotkin's claims by using Dupont's changing worldview to cast working-class Argentines in an unwelcome light while uplifting chosen gaucho characters like El Tigre.

Faust now positions notions of class difference as the cause that distances the two men from mainstream Argentines. Dupont's observations about the people who flock to the spectacle engendered by Colonel Ramirez, the man who arrested El Tigre, prove this:

There were rich estancieros, the officials of the town, the bankers, the great men of the community, dressed in their best, proud of themselves, a little frightened at going into the presence of such a person as the colonel had so recently proved himself to be. They went in stiff and awed. They came out smiling, glancing to one another, exchanging pleased comments. Evidently the colonel was a man who knew how to receive others with a certain social grace. (167)

The upper classes that surround the colonel envision themselves as class-based superiors to outlaw gauchos like El Tigre. Yet Dupont refuses to view them as cultural superiors, but rather as corrupt elites willing to exploit their power to benefit themselves and those like them at the expense of worthy Argentines like El Tigre. When Faust depicts the Argentine upper classes as a unified mass, he utilizes cultural misrepresentation. Thomas Heyd describes misrepresentation as the appropriating of cultural goods by outsiders which can lead to people from small-scale societies entering "our imaginations in a caricatured fashion" (38). Ryan Cho explains that "elements of an appropriated culture are (intentionally or unintentionally) distorted and/or used as a gimmick or a costume when normally they would be treated with some respect" (59). Although Cho speaks of appropriated culture, Faust intentionally distorts the Argentine upper classes in order to champion the ideology of cowboy and gaucho cultural superiority.

As the issue of class-based difference takes precedence in the novel, Faust blames upper- class corruption for the displacement of gaucho figures like El Tigre. Tomás Errázuriz and Guillermo Giucci describe class-based divisions in their analysis of progress, technology, and class in the Southern Cone (74)––all of which have multifaceted origins and solutions. Faust, however, simplifies the solution to upper-class corruption when he unites two ideologies of the gaucho and the cowboy. As Josefina Ludmer argues, "the discussion of the gaucho's place and function in society and of

the type of relationships that may be established between him and the other, political and learned, sectors takes place within the genre" (110). In Faust's novel, El Tigre becomes a gaucho outlaw having been displaced by corrupt Argentine elites like Valdivia. As the novel progresses, however, Faust positions El Tigre within an ideology that pairs cowboy and gaucho heroes who seek to defeat the upper-class Argentine, Valdivia. Throughout the novel, Valdivia's scheme to get Dupont into El Tigre's camp has worked, yet when Dupont spends enough time with the gaucho outlaw after the latter's imprisonment and release, he begins to seriously doubt Valdivia's claims. Dupont states, "if I should find out afterward that you have lied to me––then, Valdivia, I swear to you that I would never rest, day or night, until I had put a bullet through your head. Because from what I have seen with my own eyes, this Milario [El Tigre] is a king among men. But I have your word against him. And I have trusted your word!" (195). Later, he states that:

> *What a thing it is to live with a man, eat with him, hear him open his mind, feel his trust like a hand on one's shoulder---and then betray him at the end! [...] If I am wrong, God strike me! I have done my best to be honest. But this thing more. You are rich, Valdivia [...] justice can be turned aside with money. There are great brains in the law which may be hired. (197)*

Faust links the belief systems shared by Dupont and El Tigre with their working-class status. For this reason, Dupont's speech touches upon the dishonesty exercised by upper-class Argentines like Valdivia, such as bribing corrupt lawmakers. Within the gauchesque, Ludmer notes that "The genre of the gaucho has definitively defined itself by what is low in order to define itself as Argentine" (36). Faust hits upon this element of the gauchesque when he shows the dysfunction of the upper classes that displaces gaucho heroes who represent all that is Argentine. This tendency appears as a repeated trope in westerns as well. Near the end of the novel, Carreno, another member of the working class who has likewise been previously tricked by Valdivia, uncovers the ways in which cowboys and gauchos resemble one another, thus further connecting him to Dupont's circle of worthy, soon-to-be expatriates.

The championing of working-class and lower-class characters like Carreno and El Tigre provides an ideological conclusion. Unlike their upper-class counterparts, figures like Carreno and El Tigre ultimately reflect the traits garnered from cowboy culture that Dupont holds most dear, such as hard work, honesty, and integrity. After Valdivia's defeat, for example, admirable, working-class Argentines, such as Carreno and El Tigre follow Dupont to San Francisco: "and as the ship drove on, they passed through the Golden Gate and came into view on the wide, blue waters of the Bay, dancing in the bright sun of California" (222). In contrast to Dupont's arrival in Argentina, which was accompanied by floods, a sinking ship, and a near-death experience, the American West is tranquil, sunny, and welcoming. By presenting

these vastly different scenes of arrival, Faust suggests that Argentina had been held back because of characters like Valdivia who abuse their class status to dominate the nation. In turn, mainstream Argentines like the spectators in the city center scene merely follow this corrupt example, thus reinforcing their own powerlessness.

At first, during Dupont's first adventures in Argentina, he cannot recognize any cultural similarities between cowboys and the gauchos he meets. When he begins to develop relationships of substance with characters like El Tigre and Carreno, however, he finally acknowledges the cultural similarities between cowboy culture and working-class gaucho culture. Additionally, the journey that the group makes to San Francisco seems to insist upon Argentine acculturation into the American frontier. Francoise Lionnet defines acculturation as a "process whereby all elements involved in the interaction would be changed by that encounter" (102). Lionnet refers to acculturation as two cultures changing when they interact with one another. Faust's novel illustrates Lionnet's claims. In *The Gentle Gunman*, Argentines like Carreno and El Tigre choose to radically alter their lives and circumstances, while Dupont learns to expand his view of cultural worth after discovering that gauchos are fundamentally similar enough to cowboys to accept them without reorientation.

V.

Although Faust does not provide an in-depth portrayal of gaucho culture or the literary gauchesque in his novel, he utilizes some elements of the gauchesque in order to border-cross and expand his protagonist's worldview. At the beginning of the novel, Dupont critiques gaucho culture, refusing to admit its similarities to cowboy culture or its worth on its own merits. Once he integrates himself into El Tigre's world, however, he begins to view gaucho culture in a much more positive light. Faust uses elements of the western and the gauchesque to illuminate the cultural displacement of mythologized figures like cowboys and gauchos. Once the two cultures unite, they successfully battle upper-class corruption by destroying Valdivia. Only through this unification can the cowboys, gauchos, and their friends restore their sense of belonging at the novel's close.

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WHAT AMERICAN READERS REMEMBER:

A Case Study

Abstract: This article describes an archive consisting of liter-
ary memories obtained via interviews from one hundred
contemporary readers of literature, sourced from a college
town in the United States. The memories were summarized
and studied in order to establish what readers tend to
remember as important and/or impressive in their everyday
reading of literature. The summaries include both quantita-
tive and qualitative data, which are presented in brief extracts
(tables) referring to facts such as recall of textual elements,
circumstances of reading, and most remembered texts and
authors. Characteristics of non-professional readers and
their readings are thus observed according to three distinct
sources of information: (a) the type of text they preferred;
(b) the context of their reading; (c) the textual elements they
found most memorable. All of these are considered in turn,
including more specific discussion on topics of attachments
to texts; the role of "classics"; and the readers' paracanon. The
study concludes with three main findings: (1) the participating
American readers are shown to have rich and diverse memo-
ries of literary works, (2) which usually consist of coherent
mental representations of the texts accompanied by some
sort of episodic memory attaching them to their lived expe-
rience, (3) and these representations mostly involve unusual
and incongruous characters and plot occurrences set against
the ground of narrative content, which might imply that liter-
ature is used as a form of simulation.

Introduction

The study presented here aims to make the hypothetical construct of the non-professional reader a little less hypothetical by providing empirical data about how real readers remember works of literature. The data was obtained by recording and analyzing individual volunteer readers who shared their memories of literary texts in anonymous, semi-structured interviews. There were three broad premises underpinning the study, which tie in with more general and important recent observations about how problematic it is to concentrate solely on professional readers of literature (see Pettersson 2012, Burke et al. 2016, Sandvoss 2017, Emre 2017, Felski 2011b and 2020b). The first such premise was that little of what is known about contemporary readers has been empirically verified (see Nell 1992, Jacobs 2015, McCarthy 2015, Bell et al. 2021). The second premise was that most of what is known about literature today derives from the authoritative opinions of critics and writers (professional readers), who form a small but very influential minority within the reading (re)public (see Warner 2004, Archer and Jockers 2016, Bourrier and Thelwall 2020). The third and most important premise was that non-professional readers differ from professional ones because they experience literature mostly on the basis of what they remember (and not what they continuously verify and question) about the literary texts which they have read (see Holland 1975, Burke 2008, Kuzmičová and Bálint 2019, Waller 2019).

Groups of readers which have been looked into the most include women (see Radway 1991, Hermes 1995, Long 2003), (post-)colonized people(s) (Benwell 2009), and poorly educated members of capitalist societies (Rose 2002; see Harkin 2005 for a general overview of reader-oriented criticism). However, while maintaining a welcome research focus (of feminist, post-colonial, and cultural studies, as in the examples above), all of these approaches in fact create their very own groups of readers who are elevated to a special status by being singled out according to their sex, nationality, general level of education, or other group-specific criteria. This may facilitate their cultural, political, and economic empowerment, but so far as it concerns literature and literary theory, it also has the detrimental effect of putting real, living readers into brackets according to their cultural identities, which also led Rita Felski to observe that "[o]ne reason for the nonimpact of audience studies on the mainstream of the humanities surely lies in its splicing of these audiences into very specific demographics" (2020: 4).

In order to avoid such "splicing", this study utilizes the all-encompassing non-professional reader, the sort of omnipresent "general" reader mentioned by Felski and described in other similar audience studies (Collinson 2009, Elfenbein 2018, Trower 2020). The relative lack of interest about non-professional readers is due to the fact that it is difficult for literary scholars – trained in working with texts, not people – to gather information about readers in general, especially without focusing on a

(textually identifiable) specific aspect of their identities or readings. For instance, following Bruno Latour, Felski proposes to focus mostly on emotions, perceptual changes, and affective bonds: "What would it mean to do justice to these responses [...]?" (2011a: 585). It is argued here that the best answer to this and similar questions is to be obtained by collecting general responses from a larger group of readers.

Therefore, this study's novel contribution is the de-prioritization of the literary text, which is a consequence of focusing on the readers' memories. As it will be shown, the importance of the text has to be reassessed in light of evidence about how contemporary readers conceptualize literature. So, instead of insisting on the primacy of the text and the canon, the study essentially invited the readers to report about their own notion of literature. The outcome shows that readers build up such a notion around those texts and their respective parts which were best remembered, for whatever textual or personal reasons. This is important because it may be argued that the readers' own memories of the texts, however imperfect and minute compared to the actual textual volume, *are* literature for them personally. So in studying individual memories of reading we are not just studying traces left by literature in readers' lives, but also how literature is organized into a coherent whole in the minds of contemporary (American) readers. These remembrances will be described and then examined in turn by focusing on their general and specific aspects (headings IV-IVc). Each

concept will show how the notion of literature itself is organized as a coalescence of memories which the readers retain after the text is long gone, therefore making it a simulacrum of literature itself.

Outline

The study's design consisted of semi-structured interviews with volunteer non-professional readers of literature in the United States. Its main aim was to identify what they remembered about the literary texts which they regarded as particularly memorable and important. For the purpose of the study, "non-professional readers" were defined as individuals who at the time of the interview were not employed in a profession that mandates reading literary texts. This group of readers may of course involve those whose previous or current training or profession enabled them to read critically and professionally in various ways (e.g., proofreading, teaching, or writing literature). But that does not change the fact that non-professional readership amounts to no less than 99% of the total number of readers in any given country today, and that their perception of literature – captured in their memories – should be of particular interest to the professional minority who aims to survey the totality of literature.

The design of the study and its key term may of course invite criticism, which should be acknowledged and addressed at the outset. Three potential problems which are easy enough to identify would relate to the sampling of the data, the issue of memory

vs. reality, and the subjective definition of professional readers(hip). These problems have been discussed by the author before the American study was even started (Škopljanac 2012), and the interested reader is invited to look into that discussion. Furthermore, breaking new conceptual ground is not feasible within the scope of a single paper as the study of literary memories itself involves a host of other methodological and theoretical issues which might be addressed first, stemming from literary phenomenology or the "different modes of encounter with fiction" (Carney and Robertson 2022). But most importantly, a broader critical overview will not be included here because it would detract from the main goal of this paper, which is to present the most pertinent data and the conclusions to be drawn from the underlying general study.

Data collection was conducted by the paper's author between 9/28/2016 and 11/23/2016 as part of a research project funded by the Fulbright Scholar Program. It aimed for one hundred interviews because a previous study conducted in Croatia with a similar number of subjects (N=90; Škopljanac 2014) showed that this was a safe threshold for ensuring "saturation": the recurrence of similar, mostly predictable answers to questions eliciting qualitative responses (Alasuutari 1995: 59). Although the readers' answers displayed a sufficient level of saturation (bordering on repetitiveness), the study does not in any way claim to produce a representative sample of the reading population of the USA. It was therefore possible to gather the data locally and circumstantially, within the town of State College, Pennsylvania. The town is home to the main campus of The Pennsylvania State University, which hosted the research, and consequently a large number of respondents were students, representing specific groups in terms of social class, age, and education. But to reiterate, although a large presence of a certain social group within the relatively small sample means that it is not representative of all American readers, this cohesive group actually helps to demonstrate the main thrust of the study: non-professional readers' memories are quite variable. This seems to hold true despite the similarities in education, which are more reflected in the choice of texts, and not so much in the actual memories about them. Or to put it differently, no definitive notion of a text or its author may be maintained among non-professional readers any more than it might be maintained among the professional ones (which is, of course, the *differentia specifica* of literary works).

Potential subjects were recruited by the study's author at various public locations with pertinent connections to reading literature, such as bookstores and libraries. After reading the Institutional Review Board form and giving their consent, they were asked the following five sets of open-ended questions:

I – Preparation: "Can you choose some works of literature (3-5 texts) that you remember well and that may have impressed you?"

II – Questions about the meaning and/or content of the texts: "What is the text about?"; "What was most memorable in the text for

you? ["Maybe it was a scene, a character, or a quote?"] ["Where in the text is this memorable part located?"] ["What, if anything, did you find most impressive?"] ["What is the genre of the text?"]

III – Questions on facts about the text and paratext: "Is there any part of the text that you could quote or paraphrase?"; "What do you know about the author?" ["Where in the text is this memorized part located?"] ["Have you watched the movie/play/etc. based on the book?"]

IV – Questions about the circumstances of reading: "When and where did you first read the book?"; "How many times did you read the book?"; "Where or from whom did you get the book?"; "What did the book look like?" ["Could you describe the room where you were reading?"] ["Do you remember what the person recommending the book told you at the time?"]

V – Conclusion: "Do you agree that all of your memories involve X, and if you do, why do you think that is so?" ["Do you think that the books you discussed have anything in common?"]

The interview was designed to resemble a conversation about books so the subjects would not feel like they were being tested. Question sets I and V always opened and closed the interview and were used only once per interview, whereas the others were used once per every text discussed. The questions in square brackets were posed if and when convenient, typically when there was

indication about additional details pertinent to the memories. All of the questions were designed to involve minimal interference by the interviewer, with the exception of the final set, where the "X" refers to a pattern of similar thoughts and ideas about all the books remembered by the same subject. Interestingly enough, the subjects almost invariably presented such a pattern in their answers, for instance about certain topics or motifs (such as overcoming hardship), or about being moved by the characters.

It should be clear that the questions were constructed to zero in on one's knowledge about a literary text when one is not in direct contact with it. This is arguably how literature *exists* in its everyday and private form, as opposed to it being refracted through the lenses of various institutions – such as the education system and the academia – or mediating practices such as book criticism and advertising. This model of inquiry was also used to safeguard the project from ending up as another reductive model, in which literary scholars create what Wolfgang Iser (1978) would call "ideal readers": hypothetical instances of readers who are an amalgamation of a group, within which no single reader's voice may be heard. However, this does not mean that all traces of institutional and group influence were absent from the memories, and anyone wanting to tease them out would do well to start with the overall choice of the books, which forms the touchstone of the study's results.

Results

A general remark about the results is that checking against the texts showed that the subjects' memories and comments were accurate about 90% of the time (the predictable exception were quotations, which really amounted to close paraphrases). This also shows that the subjects truly did talk about texts that they remembered well, or at least those parts of them that they could recall clearly. The data consists of about 40 hours of audio recordings, which means that the average interview was about 25 minutes long. That amounts to a very large number of data points, which will be reduced and presented here in selected snippets (Tables 1-10). The data points were chosen according to their potential to inform others about the study, but also to inform a potential subsequent discussion. The subjects were coded as "R[random number] (sex, age)," for instance R21 (F, 29). Their distribution by sex was roughly equal – 47 females and 53 males – while their average age was 42, and their median age 34. About a third of the sample was made up of college students, which means the whole sample was skewed towards younger readers, as table 1 attests. The average age at which the subjects first read the discussed books was 23, and this ranged from four years of age to 77. On average, the discussed books were read 18 years prior to the interview, while books that were first read within the previous year were discussed only 36 times. The latter texts may be considered to derive their memorableness in part from being so recent, but this recency effect was not much in evidence due to the phrasing of the initial question, which asked readers to name books well remembered *and* impressive (see Copeland et al. 2009 on the recency effect). Most respondents in fact demonstrated that their memories had positive emotional overtones, consistent with feeling impressed. In such cases, interviewees tended to freely mention other texts (especially by the same author) and authors in passing. Those instances were counted separately as "mentioned," and not "discussed," as shown in the following two tables, which also indicate whether they were counted once ("unique") or every time they appeared in the study ("non-unique"; this is also why the numbers in Table 2 do not add up exactly, as some texts and authors were mentioned multiple times):

Table 2: Unique texts and authors

	Texts	Authors
Discussed (unique)	250	212
Mentioned (unique)	32	36
Total	278	233

Table 1: Study participants

	19-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	Total
Female	21	9	2	7	5	3	0	47
Male	18	9	3	6	10	5	2	53
Total	39	18	5	13	15	8	2	100

Table 3: Repeated texts and authors

	Texts	Authors
Discussed (non-unique)	309	309
Mentioned (non-unique)	32	39
Total	341	348

All further mention of the number of texts and authors will refer only to the total of those discussed, which was 309 for both texts and authors. This text sample was predominately written originally in English (a little over four fifths), and their authors were mostly men (about three quarters). When it comes to genre, most of the

remembered texts were novels written since 1951: Therefore, the typical text remembered in the study would be a novel written in English by a male author (American or British) during the last two hundred years or so. This is reflected in the lists of most remembered texts and authors, defined here as those that were discussed at least three times (numbers in brackets refer only to "mentions"):

Table 4: Period of writing

Textual origin	Count	Percentage
Up to 1800	8	3
1801-1900	40	13
1901-1950	63	20
1951-2000	138	45
2001-	53	17
N/A	7	2

Table 5: Type of Text

Textual genre	Count	Percentage
Epic poem	4	1
Novel	243	78
Other	24	8
Play	6	2
Poem (collection)	6	2
Short story (collection)	21	7
N/A	5	2

Table 6: Most remembered texts

Harry Potter	6 (+1)	*A Tale of Two Cities*	3
1984	4	*Alice in Wonderland*	3
Moby Dick	4	*The Catcher in the Rye*	3
Slaughterhouse-Five	4	*The Grapes of Wrath*	3
The Great Gatsby	4	*The Picture of Dorian Gray*	3
The Lord of the Rings	4 (+1)	*To Kill a Mockingbird*	3

Table 7: Most remembered authors

Kurt Vonnegut	9	Hermann Hesse	4
John Steinbeck	7 (+3)	Oscar Wilde	4
J. K. Rowling	6 (+1)	Albert Camus	3
J. R. R. Tolkien	6 (+1)	Ayn Rand	3 (+1)
George Orwell	5	Harper Lee	3
Stephen King	5	Isaac Asimov	3 (+1)
Charles Dickens	4 (+1)	J. D. Salinger	3
Ernest Hemingway	4	Lewis Carroll	3
F. Scott Fitzgerald	4	Mark Twain	3
Herman Melville	4	Robert A. Heinlein	3

Next, the two following tables offer a very brief illustration of the circumstances of reading. The first one (Table 8) shows that the remembered texts had usually been read only once by the time the interview took place (the total count is 307 because of two omissions). The second one (Table 9) shows that subjects were usually able to recall where they had

read the discussed books (for the first time, if there were multiple readings), and that their answers can be summarized into seven categories:

Table 8: Number of readings of a text

	Count	Percentage
Read once	192	63
Read between once and twice	49	16
Read between twice and thrice	28	9
Read more than thrice	38	12

Table 9: Reading locations

Home	Library	Multiple	N/A	Other	School	Work
154	14	21	53	32	28	7

The data presented so far was extracted from question sets I and IV, which dealt with the paratext and the context of reading, and it was relatively straightforward to obtain. On the other hand, making sense of answers to question set II would require a more idiographic approach, which cannot be employed here due to textual constraints. Just as an example of what was left out, answers to the question which usually opened the discussion about a specific title ("What is the book/text about?") were broadly categorized into three descriptive categories – content, topic and impression – which could then be further parsed according to specific answers (for instance, content of a short story plot, or impression about the writing style of a poem). Instead of delving into that, the last snippet of data presented here concerns textual specifics, or more precisely the six categories of textual data most often discernible in the readers' answers:

Table 10: Recall of textual elements

	Count	Percentage
Episode	136	44
Quotation	46	15
Description	44	14
Writing style	33	11
Character	27	9
Historical information	7	2

A few brief notes prior to discussion: The "quotation" category refers to self-attributed quotes, including falsely attributed or significantly inaccurate ones. "Descriptions" include subjects' memories of objects, localities, settings – anything observable – as described in the texts. It does not include character descriptions, however, as in practice it turned out that such descriptions were always tightly connected to one's recollection of a specific character's actions, thoughts, behavior, history, etc. These recollections were classified under a separate "character" heading, although they often overlapped with "episodes" and "descriptions," and sometimes also with "quotations" when a quote was attributable to one of the characters. Such overlap between the categories underlines that the figures in Table 10 are to be taken more as interpretive estimates, unlike the precise indicators supplied by Tables 1-9.

Furthermore, "writing style" in most cases seemed to be a shorthand for a subject to express vague and general appreciation, along the lines of "I love[d] the style of the writing" of Tolstoy in *Anna Karenina*, as stated by R43 (F, 47). An example of a more complex and nuanced response to a writer's style came from R49 (F, 25), who was discussing Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun* and noted that the text was written in a "stream of consciousness style," and then made an elaborate comment on how the physical loss of the protagonist was mirrored in the novel's structure. This goes to show how, regardless of profession, similar reading styles based on thoughtful analysis may occur within professional and non-professional readings alike. But this is a minor point, as only about 1 in 10 of the answers mentioned style, with most readers focusing on the episodes of narrative texts, which clearly dominated their memories in a way similar to how they dominated contemporary literary production.

Discussion (general, kernels)
Due to lack of textual space, it is not possible to do justice to the readers' voices in the presentation of the most substantial results of the research. Nonetheless, the following discussion and conclusion will try to focus on the most robust and interesting findings stemming from their memories. The main takeaway from this data snapshot is that literary texts undergo the same fate as most other types of texts and textoids in the memories of non-professional readers. That is, readers forget the vast majority of what exactly they had read in a work of literature ("the surface form"), and what they retain in the long term is the textbase ("a mental representation of the ideas conveyed by the text, independent of the precise wording used and the situation model") and the situation model ("a memory representation for the situation described by a text apart from memories of the text itself"; see Radvansky 2008: 229-230). In the case of this study, the surface form refers to the recollection of "quotations" and "writing style." The textbase refers to the rest of the textual elements, dominated by "episodes" and "content" more broadly. The briefly mentioned "topic" category refers both to the textbase and to the situation model, which

would include "impressions" and all the other extra-textual elements being remembered by the readers. So, although most of the literary text is easily forgotten, there seems to remain a rather clear and coherent kernel of memory which is readily accessible to recall, and it involves mostly narrative episodes, quotations, and descriptions.

Another observation is that the recalled textual parts almost always made up a coherent whole in the subjects' memories. This means that the memories consisted of one or more aspects of the text which were closely related to each other, instead of being just randomly scattered pieces of information. The existence of this dense kernel of literary memory shows that non-professional readers are quite successful at making connections among textual elements and retaining them in memory. Andrew Elfenbein's book *The Gist of Reading* makes a similar claim in its very title, which can be invoked as the expanded version of the kernel which has just been identified: the gist of what has been read grows around the kernel of what has been remembered. Or, if you prefer a computer metaphor instead of a biological one: the kernel is always active in the memory, and therefore it enables the gist of reading to operate.

The way in which this kernel is formed may be corroborated by Elfenbein's claim that "[t]he more strongly readers can integrate what they read, moment by moment, with what they have already read in the same work and what they already know, the better chance they have of remembering and understanding

it. One of the most immediately apparent distinctions between skilled and less skilled readers is that skilled readers make such connections and less skilled do not" (2018, unpaginated). While the current study corroborates that distinction, it goes a step further to demonstrate that the "less skilled readers" are also proficient at retaining not just the general gist, but also a more specific kernel of what they found to be most memorable in a work. In fact, we we can reasonably expect almost everybody to be able to recall such memories when asked. This in turn allows us to qualify another conclusion that Elfenbein made when studying written literary memories of British nineteenth-century readers: "Readers remember either a generalized gist containing few specifics, or an event, character, setting, or quotation that, for personal reasons, has acquired an outsized importance" (2018, unpaginated). As Elfenbein's study also aimed to establish general conclusions about literary reading, the "readers" in both of his sentences seem to denote both his research subjects and readers in general. The twenty-first-century American reader from this study would fit well into Elfenbein's conclusion if we rephrase it: Readers tend to remember a kernel of information about a literary text which contains some of its specifics, mostly referring to the episodes, quotations, and descriptions (often involving characters) contained within it.

Discussion (reading circumstances and attachments)

As for the "personal reasons" – which Elfenbein claims led his readers to remember some textual elements better than others – this study accessed them indirectly in several ways, one of which were answers concerning the circumstances of reading. These included the time and place of the initial reading, as well as the circumstances in which the text was originally obtained, and they were generally remembered quite well. The time of reading was mostly expressed in year-long terms ("during college," "six or seven years ago"). The place of (first) reading was recalled in about 90% of cases as one of the categories presented in Table 9, where "N/A" refers to 31 instance in which subjects could not remember the location, as well as to some transient locations ("walking the dog"). The relation between the physical reading environment and the effect it might have on literary reading has not been researched in detail, but this study's results indicate that the grounds for such exploration are very solid because such memories are often intertwined (encoded) with the memory of the text itself. Interview analysis indicates that the reading environment tends to be a "locus of pleasure," most often as one's own room or a vacation, such as R15 (M, 58) recalling reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in a hammock. The place of reading is less often remembered as an "imagery prop," like in the case of R26 (M, 59) reading Tolstoy *War and Peace* while stationed in barracks in Germany, and almost never as a "distractor," which makes sense because remembering such distracted reading is unlikely to occur (see Kuzmičová 2016 for an overview of the topic and the terms used to describe reading environments).

The readers were thus adept at remembering not just a coherent sense of the text, but also at least some of the context in which they encountered it. Again, Elfenbein offers a useful summary: "While all readers construct a mental representation, not all readers comprehend because some mental representations are more successful than others. Psychologists use the concepts of 'coherence' and 'usability' to define this success. 'Coherence' means that the different elements of a mental representation fit together meaningfully. (…) [On 'usability':] Reading is a moment in a chain of purposive action that begins before the moment of reading and ends after it is finished. The self-sufficient bubble of reading often assumed by literary scholars is a useful scholarly fantasy, but not one that describes everyday reading practices." (Elfenbein 2020: 250-251) Another pinprick of personal resonance bursting the metaphorical bubble was detectable in the answers concerning the source(s) of the books. As it turned out, two-thirds of the sample (or 66 respondents during 108 recollections) could remember the relevant place and/or person where or from whom they obtained their copy of the book. They remembered the person more often than the location, and it was usually one close to the interviewee, such as a family member, romantic partner, or a teacher. This finding was reinforced by the conversations

they remembered with the person recommending the book, and also sometimes about discussing it before or after reading. Here is an example from R22 (F, 53): "It was a recommendation by my, my mom. (...) I got it at a used book sale. I happened to find it. But yeah, my mom had, had read it and said, 'If you're going to read any of my [V. S.] Naipaul books, you should read that one first. That's the best one.'"

Such responses show that vivid memories of books were reinforced by meaningful relations with the person who mediated the reading, and possibly *vice versa*. To elaborate on this connection, we can invoke some recent theoretical interventions made by Rita Felski and see how they fit in with the pertinent findings in this study. It should be noted that the whole study was designed with a motivation similar to the one Felski mentions as crucial to her work, to "slice[s] across this dichotomy of skeptical detachment versus naive attachment" (Felski 2020a: 135), and in order to do that it was important to avoid pigeonholing professional reading into Felski's first category, and non-professional reading into Felski's second category, as literary criticism is wont to do. For her part, Felski advocates a "postcritical reading," which would focus "on what carries weight. Its key concept – attachment – invites us to re-evaluate the significance and salience of ties. (...) Literary critics are starting to register the limits of purely cognitive approaches to art and to chafe at an exclusive focus on language and interpretation" (2020a: 138-9).

In her monograph discussion of the term "attachment," Felski shows how it "doesn't get much respect in academia," where the default mode of viewing readers "pits detachment against attachment," or professional readers against non-professional ones (2020b: 2). She goes on to show that such attachment – to a method, rather than an object – also fuels literary criticism (2020b: 133), and it may be utilized productively in teaching (2020b: 156). Most importantly, by utilizing actor-network theory (ANT) she goes on to show that "nothing can be automatically excluded: fictional characters, figures of speech, physical objects, supernatural beings, philosophical ideas, generic conventions, physical landscapes, or patterns of metaphors. These are very different kinds of phenomena, to be sure – and their differences are to be respected – but they are connected and coexistent rather than parceled out into opposed realms" (2020b: 138).

The results of this study would suggest that this kind of diversified and dispersed attachment may be identified and theorized by locating it in individual memories. Put differently, a reader's specific memory of a text provides the basis of her or his attachment to it. This is corroborated by the fact that each and every phenomenon mentioned in Felski's quote was present in the one hundred interviews, most often "fictional characters" and "supernatural beings." In addition to that, they were already very much "connected and coexistent" as part of their mental representations of the text, not just as a potential "ANT-ish close reading" (2020b: 138) of literary texts:

close reading of the interview transcripts yields such information readily. By identifying such memories as tokens of readers' attachments to texts and their authors, this study confirms that readers routinely mix attachment with detachment. The evidence for this is the objective textual and paratextual data which they routinely recalled, also confirming that non-professional and professional reading overlap in important ways.

As mentioned previously, readers were indeed capable of attaching themselves to a certain writer's way of writing as their memorable trait. Felski herself offers such a professional, but also quite personal (re) mark of attachment: "[the] defining mood of Bernhard's work, we might say, is irritation" (2020b: 139). Similar qualifying remarks were interspersed throughout the interviews, especially when readers were asked to define the genre of the texts they were remembering. This also goes to show how important it is to "explore a fuller range of emotions about reading experiences," which are not disqualifying when it comes to attachment and memorability, even though – or in some cases because – the texts in question have been described as irritating, "boring, frustrating, impossible" (see Fuller and Rehberg Sedo 2019). Such qualifications in fact enable a particular kind of relatability which Felski, following Brian Glavey, identifies in regards to the "aesthetic experiences [which are] transitive or intransitive, a relation to others or to the self" (2020b: 160). This means that such reading experiences were sometimes conveyed to close persons not just to spread the joy of reading, but to share the frustration left by a difficult or unpalatable book, which made it that much more memorable.

Discussion (readers' age and paracanon)
Of course, the most obvious and direct kind of attachment to a book recorded in the study was the utilization of a pre-existing personal connection. About a fifth of the subjects reported how such connections played a role in determining both positive and negative views of books. If it is true that "one can feel as closely connected to a film, a painting, or a song as to another person" (Felski 2020b: ix), when it comes to books this seems to be so because they are often remembered as part and parcel of an attachment to another person, who is not necessarily the fictional character or author. In fact, the subjects were far less knowledgeable about the person who wrote the book and their circumstances than the person who recommended the book to them and the circumstances in which that occurred. However, another less direct kind of attachment may be identified when we look into the age at which all of the remembered books were most often read, which was 17, while the total average age of the first reading was 23.

This age span conforms with the notion of a "reminiscence bump", a period of young adulthood identified by research in psychology as the time from which most vivid memories are retained later in life (see Williams and Conway 2009: 47, and Copeland et al. 2009 as an excellent example of another way in which

it is relevant to remembering literature). The duration and frame of this period varies according to different research studies, but it usually includes adolescence, which is also the time when American readers – and any other readers from a society which features a compulsory school system that extends into late teenage years – are introduced to books deemed culturally memorable. These books are the stuff of literary canons by virtue of American education, but also the stuff of private, intimate memories, and the majority of the books remembered in the study were *not* classics, but rather contemporary novels. Marianne Hirsch's distinction neatly captures this cultural and private divide when she notes that "[Jan] Assmann uses the term 'kulturelles Gedächtnis' ('cultural memory') to refer to 'Kultur' – an institutionalized hegemonic archival memory. In contrast, the Anglo-American meaning of 'cultural memory' refers to the social memory of a specific group or subculture." (Hirsch 2012: 255) So, the books which the subjects remembered well from their teenage years are culturally memorable in the first, hegemonic sense, as the product of the American educational system which, as Steven Roger Fischer detects, "still tr[ies] to uphold civilization's literary pillars and do[es] awaken, in some, a permanent hunger for more." (2005: 309) But, at the same time, the titles themselves and the way in which they were discussed indicate that these books are memorable within "the social memory of a specific group," that group most often being family, close friends, or school teachers and peers.

As the top title from the list of remembered texts would indicate (Table 6), the reminiscence bump might also overlap with another phenomenon identified by Fischer on the same page: "globalization has progressively meant fewer titles from fewer countries: most recently, English-language 'supersellers'." But while there are some titles which fall under that category, they were far from dominant in the whole sample, which one might expect if globalization was as omnipresent as Fischer implies. A more useful framing of the convergence of age, memory and literature in the American public might then not be the canonical, but the paracanonical one. Alison Waller does a great job of introducing the concept in her own study of remembering childhood books: "The paracanon has been defined by Catharine R. Stimpson as a set of texts 'beloved' by individuals and communities of reading (...). This approach encourages a more complex consideration of the affective influence of literary encounters over time. The paracanonical books that feature in this study are not only 'love object[s]', (...) but also texts that have been and remain meaningful in all kinds of ways, not all of them positive." (Waller 2019: 4) This ties in well with Felski's notion of attachment, as the 'reminiscence bump' period within the wider American society is also one when strong (sub)cultural attachments, including romantic relationships, are made – or unmade – autonomously for the first time. Although the present study offers few clues about the communities in which these American readers were situated, it is beyond doubt that the kind of books they got attached to form a certain paracanonical

Non-professional readers tend to establish links to texts through their physical forms (books) and the people they have received them from

selection in their recollections. Therefore, the period in which readers are systematically introduced to the canon of literary works also seems to be the one in which foundations are laid for their long-lasting paracanonical attachments.

Lastly, a curious sort of discrepancy in the recollections may be remarked upon here as it may imply a feature of paracanonical selection. Even though the memories in general did not seem to vary noticeably according to the respondents' age or sex, there was a notable difference in correlation with sexes of both the readers and the authors. The 47 women in the study recalled works written by 81 male and 56 female writers (59% and 41% out of their share of the total author count, respectively), while the 53 men recalled works by 136 male and only 16 female writers (89% and 11%). When men did remember female writers, about a third (6 out of 16 books and writers) of their writing was aimed at children and young adults, consisting of science/speculative/fantastic fiction. The rest was focused on experiences of women, but their male readers had virtually no memories about that. Therefore, it would seem that the differences between male and female readers have at least something to do with

content preferences, whether it is for specific (female) characters or (fantastic) plot. Faced with uneven odds of finding proper representation of their lived experience in books (for example, see Underwood 2019: 127), it might be that American female readers strive for more (ideal) self-representation in the books they read. This effort then makes such books more memorable for them, while the male readers simply default to what is for them already culturally and textually dominant, allowing the female aspects of writing to evaporate from memory.

Discussion (titles and classics)

Another sort of dominance – that of American and British authors – is by no means surprising as American readers have a well-documented preference for literature written in English (Allen 2007 asserts that translations amount to about 3% of the annual book production in the US, and works of literature are only a fraction of that percentage). The sample is also unsurprisingly novel-centric (around 4 in 5 books discussed), mirroring the general American interest in the genre. This has been elaborated on by C. K. Farr in her book, which shares some similarities with this study. Farr quotes R. B. Kershner who notes how the "'fundamental characteristic that distinguishes the novel from most Western literature that preceded it [is] its appeal to the reader's daily experience (...)'" (Farr 2016: 26) This connection to everyday life is buttressed by the fact that the study's text sample is dominantly modern, corresponding well with the daily experience of the subjects' realities,

with around 60% of texts written after 1950 onward, or more than 80% after 1901. Combined with the tendency of the readers to focus on content and simple retelling (rather than the more complex summarizing by topic), the results indicate that American readers seemed comfortable with their experience of books. To put it differently, they did not seem to feel themselves pressured by any sort of a cultural literacy imperative, like the one implicit in Edward Hirsch's influential and popular *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1988).

However, this does not mean that the influence of a literary canon disseminated through formal education was not felt by the readers, and that they remembered only their own paracanons. The expanded lists of the most commonly remembered titles and authors provides evidence of a sizable minority (around a third, depending on the definition) of works deemed important by a culture, and therefore worth memorizing. This phenomenon was confirmed recently in another comparable study, which focused on online readers of the *Goodreads* platform and offered some plausible reasons about why the classics (still) seem to be so prominent (readers from the US made up about 40% of the sample; Walsh and Antoniak 2021: 254). After showing why the term itself is still prominent in general use, as opposed to the more academically flavored "canon," and noting how readers can create their own classics by categorizing books as such (243-244), the authors offer their own take on the definition: "A classic, Van Doren said, is simply

'a book that remains in print.' For the twenty-first century, we might update Van Doren's definition and say that a classic is simply a book that continues to make money in whatever form it takes." (245) This definition might then be updated yet again by noting that a classic is also a book which is well remembered by some sizable portion (about a third) of a random reader sample.

In the present study, out of the dozen most commonly remembered titles, seven regularly appear on lists of American and British (or Irish) classics of literature, while the rest may be considered classics in their own (sub-) genres of young adult literature, science fiction, fantasy, and dystopian literature. Also, with the exception of *Harry Potter*, all of the novels were written about half a century ago (*Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1969) or earlier. The fact that two American authors are at the top of the most-remembered list with their (mostly long-form) fiction deserves further scrutiny. The wide scope of this study's discussion, however, can afford it just a cursory comment, which should open with the fact that these two authors were represented in the study with the largest number of texts. Whereas both Rowling and Tolkien were represented by, effectively, a single book series each, and Orwell with only one title besides *1984* (*Animal Farm*), both Vonnegut and Steinbeck were represented by four titles each, more than any other author in the study except for another prodigious American writer, Stephen King (four titles, five discussions). This may mean that the saturation of the publishing market with their works, and consequently their strong dissemination, had a lot to do with their popularity and memorability. But it does not preclude another potential conclusion: It is not the specific texts that make these authors memorable, but it is their specific way of writing.

This does not refer only to the more narrow category of the writer's style, which non-professional readers seem readily able to identify on their own terms, as the *Goodreads* study also shows ("e.g., conversational and slangy language"; Walsh and Antoniak 2021: 243 [Abstract]). The way in which the present study's subjects represented literary writing seems to be equally a creation of their own memory and the writer's input, as the mental representations (kernels, gists) of the texts consisted only of elements (specific quotes, episodes, elaborations of a topic) that were always semantically coherent in their recollections. This conversely means that there were very few instances of readers recalling some random detail or quote that seemed to have no relation to their representation of the text. When readers were able to identify such a mechanism or pattern for representing and conveniently memorizing a text in one or more works by the same author, they would usually ascribe it to the author's specific way of writing. This is of course a form of interpretation, but one that seems quite distinct from more general remarks (concerning, for instance, impressions about the writer's value or importance) by virtue of its always being rooted in specific, episodic instances of memory.

In summary, it may be stated that the results are in general agreement with the earlier Croatian study (Škopljanac 2014), which indicated that what readers usually remember the most after reading fictional narratives are larger-than-life characters, as well as scenes and plot lines incongruous to the readers' everyday life experience. This would explain the memorability of writers such as Steinbeck, who seems to be quite intent on introducing characters that are "no longer conventional", as noted by R83 (M, 67). Vonnegut as the other most remembered American author keeps inserting one "*non sequitur*" after the other into his narration to the point of it becoming regular practice, as noted by R95 (M, 35). Of course, the latter's novels also feature a wide array of unconventional and bizarre characters, but to readers these seem to get subsumed by the unconventional, literary use of language, as well as the literally otherworldly occurrences, such as the ironically incongruous harmoniums.

Conclusion

Based on the data presented and discussed so far, what may we expect American readers to remember? The most comprehensive answer would be that memories of even a hundred readers vary tremendously, as do the texts and the reasons why certain textual elements were remembered and certain personal attachments formed. This should be borne in mind by anyone trying to discuss everyday, non-professional readers and reading, especially if they try to create a model of reading based on such lived experiences. Which brings us to the first conclusion of the study: any one (American) reader may be reasonably expected to have rich and diverse memories of literary texts. Although they are not extensive, detailed, nor factual in the sense of professional literary criticism, these memories are nonetheless irreducible to a model or scheme without the potential loss of an important aspect of what makes a particular text memorable *to them*. This immediately brings up the second conclusion: readers' memories usually contain not just coherent mental representations of a text, but also some sort of episodic memory which attaches that particular text to their own lived experience. Whether the attachment is professional, personal, positive, negative, or of any other kind, the text is usually remembered within a rather detailed real world context which has to do with at least the reading circumstances, but often also with how readers made sense of it in the first place.

In a recent study similar to this one, conducted in London with 25 readers, Shelley Trower noted how her subjects "intended to speak about reading, and spoke much less of books than they had expected." She took that point further to conclude that "[r]eaders tend more readily to remember experiences of reading novels (...) than the content of the novels themselves." (Trower 2020: 284, 271) The results of this study would not support this particular conclusion to such an extent, as there was a clear majority of answers (62%) involving content as one of the most salient textual elements. However, an even higher

percentage of answers suggested extratextual content was indeed remembered, and in ways that were sometimes crucial to what made readers "hooked" to the text, as Felski's book bearing that name would have it. It could have been a recommendation, a discussion, a review, a reading ritual, an enjoyable time it provided to the reader while they were on a tiresome trip, or any other of the dozens of reasons put forward by the subjects during the interviews.

That being said, while the context of the memories was certainly varied, it was of course possible to provide typical instances of reading, as shown by the discussion. And this brings us to the third and last major conclusion of the study, which may be framed as an updated version of the remark which ended the discussion: unusual and incongruous characters and plot occurrences are central to the literary memories of (American) non-professional readers. While this certainly seems to hold true, it must be qualified by another remark, which is that readers are keen to establish and memorize their lived experience of the (reading of the) literary text as a sort of a background against which they define what was unusual and incongruous to them. We can apply here one of the basic distinctions of cognitive linguistics, which contrasts the figure and the ground (see Stockwell 2002: 13-18): the subjects' memories acted as familiar ground. This ground was typically based on elements highlighted in the discussion: the readers' reading circumstances and attachments, their sex, the "classics," and their own paracanon. In contrast to that

(back)ground, the varied memories of mostly unexpected characters, their developments, and episodes in which both of these were shown and played out seemed to hold the readers' attention the most, which in turn made them the most memorable figure(s) of the text(s), especially when they were able to land into a "sweet spot" between the known and unknown.

Taken together, these three conclusions outline the following main implication of the study: as much as the texts were reduced and distorted in the subjects' memories, the textual kernel which remained was expanded and amplified by the lived experience of the text, which proved to be quite unpredictable on the individual level. This would also imply that during their reading the subjects were simulating other kinds of experience based on their own life experiences, as they tended to remember the outlines of the selected texts either as departures from (or ruptures of) their everyday life. In other words, although there was a myriad of memories that the subjects recalled, a coherent thread could usually be drawn (during the final set of questions) from the text back to their own lives in the form of a slightly modified experience (departure) or completely different experience (rupture), which memorably modified or changed their perspective of the text. Therefore, these memories give evidence of literature being used as a sort of a simulation, in the sense of reading in order to imagine and partially live out one's own existence in different circumstances (see Pettersson 2012: 105-124 and Boyd 2009: 155-158; also Hogan

2016, Djikic et al. 2013, Koopman 2015). It would be interesting to see if this effect could be found in other empirical studies, and also to investigate if it was culturally based, with American readers tending to simulate more or less than readers from some other cultures, but that is clearly beyond the scope of the work presented here.

One final remark: A study such as this one – based on qualitative data which points to individual readers, but also enables the extraction of quantitative data that subsumes readers into distinct groups – is faced with a conundrum when it comes to proceeding with meaningful generalizations. It also faces the difficult task of aiming the readers' voices back at the texts which they speak of, and showing how one interacts with the other. A potential way forward is to reverse the usual operation, in which one or several literary texts are taken as individual phenomena to be analyzed in great detail, while the readership is taken to be more or less monolithic and not in need of differentiation, at least when taken synchronically. Reversing this would make it possible to try and explain the literary, but also the cultural implications entailed by the findings, such as the appeal of a writer's way of writing over that of a specific text in an individual's memory, or the skewed sex ratios of authors and readers when it comes to what the latter remember, or the general memorability of unusual characters and their circumstances. This also goes hand in hand with the warning Felski put forward in the opening of her *Uses of literature*: "Any attempt to clarify the value of literature must surely

engage the diverse motives of readers and ponder the mysterious event of reading, yet contemporary theories give us poor guidance on such questions. We are sorely in need of richer and deeper accounts of how selves interact with texts" (2011: 11). The interviews in this study present about three hundred such accounts – each of the hundred readers recollecting such engagements with at least three texts – as well as corroboration of Felski's four "modes of textual engagement," especially the "logic of recognition," which may be also understood as a more specific case of simulation (2011: 14). In this way, it also becomes possible to show some of "the specific ways in which [literary] works infiltrate and inform our lives" (2011: 5), which makes this paper a sort of a feasibility study about looking into individual memories to gain more insights about what literature is, and how it is mentally represented by a large majority of its users. The paper is finally also a sort of a stepping stone, leading up to the larger goal of researching readership on a more individual basis that can be carefully analyzed and then generalized based on the readers' own thoughts and voices, leaving the analysis of the texts to be processed in the background. In the third and – as always – most productive synthetic step, the two analytic foci may be superimposed on one another for potential new insights into literary texts, as well as their readers, whose memories make up literature itself.

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IN THE WOMB OF UTOPIA:

Feminist Science Fiction, Reproductive Technology, and the Future

Key words: feminist futurity, reproductive technology, feminist science fiction, utopia

Abstract: This article explores the ways in which reproductive technology is used as a literary trope to enable or embody a desired social order in a utopian setting. It discusses Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and "Coming of Age in Karhide" (1995), Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976). In these American classics of feminist science fiction, reproduction is a key element, and they are rooted in a feminist understanding of power that sees the organization of both reproductive and child-care labor as central to analyses of patriarchy, as well as to any attempts to re-imagine patriarchal structures. The analysis draws on critical kinship studies that see the forming of kinship and families as a form of "cultural technology" and which thus open these relationships to critical examination. It explores how the kind of change reproductive technologies can effect is not a property simply inherent in the technologies themselves. Rather, these medical technologies intersect with and become part of pre-existing cultural technologies of family and gender. Finally, the article addresses the question of how feminist futurities or feminist conceptions of time can be mobilized to enable resistance and change.

Introduction: Reproductive Technologies and Feminist Futures

Assisted reproductive technologies and the practices they make possible such as sperm donation, in vitro fertilization, and surrogacy have become so common in our 21ˢᵗ century lives that they are increasingly seen as "normal." However, as ongoing debates about these practices testify, feminists are still grappling with how these technologies and practices should be understood. How can the relation between technologies, reproductive practices, and social change be conceptualized and, importantly, how can literary texts become resources in such conceptualizations, allowing us to employ their world-making capacities? This article will explore some ways in which representations of reproductive technologies function in literary texts to promote, enable, or embody a desired social order in a utopian setting. It will engage with four utopian texts that have become classics in the feminist science fiction tradition: Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and the short story set in the same world "Coming of Age in Karhide" (1995), Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1975), and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976).

For the purpose of this article, I use a short-hand definition of a feminist utopia as a text that portrays a society different from the world as we know it and that has in some way resolved or moved beyond central problems of inequality that feminists have identified in our current construction and organization of gender and society. None of the texts discussed here fit the traditional mold of what Erin McKenna calls "the end-state model of utopia" (3); they are not claiming to offer blueprints of perfect societies where change could only mean deterioration. While one could argue that some earlier feminist utopias such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) do just this, feminist utopian fiction and feminist science fiction (SF) more broadly are generally oriented towards the possibilities of the future as a site of imaginative resistance, and thus typically value process, continuous change, and critical interrogation of the present over attempts at social perfection.[1] They are thus eminently rewarding as texts to think with and through when conceptualizing and exploring possibilities of social change. Furthermore, insisting on the importance of the future as something different than our present constitutes an important gesture of resistance. As science fiction scholar Sheryl Vint notes, our current dominant perception is that "the future is only more of the present" (12); in Zoe Sofia's words the future is "the

[1] Feminist utopian narratives are central to reconceptualizations of utopian thinking that we find in works such as Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions;* Moylan, *Demand the Imposisble: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* and *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia.* Feminist theorists, philosophers and literary scholars have also engaged specifically in reconceptualizing utopia. Notable examples are Burwell, *Notes on Nowhere: Feminism, Utopian Logic and Social Transformation;* McKenna, *The Task of Utopia: A Pragmatist and Feminist Perspective;* Wagner-Lawlor, *Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions.* I see my own work, here and elsewhere, as sharing much of the foundational claims of these works, varying as they are, as to the importance of imagining and exploring futures as sites of resistance and change.

bound to be of the ideology of progress" (57) that brings about a sense of "the collapse of the future onto the present" (48). To insist on the future as something which is not already here means constructing a space where something radically different can be thought. Given the pervasive presence of reproductive technologies in our lives today — indeed, this is one way in which popular commentary would have us already inhabiting the future — many feminists' evaluation of these technologies' potential for promoting desirable social change is understandably informed by a sense of a "bound to be," connecting assisted reproductive technologies with exploitation and global inequities. This, then, is an important reason for what might seem a counter-intuitive move: to turn to texts written more than forty years ago when engaging with new reproductive technologies. Written just before these technologies became part of our reproductive repertoire, at a time when their possibilities where not yet inscribed in the language of capitalist logics of consumption and commodification, these utopias, I argue, can help feminists frame their responses to assisted reproductive technologies. Engaging with the role that Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New* World has played in debates on reproductive technologies, Shannon N. Conley shows how SF supports "creative and imaginative capacities for envisioning possible futures" and "serves as a mechanism for engagement with both desirable and undesirable scientific and technological futures" (245). While important, this approach to the roles that SF can play in our understanding of reproductive technologies

can become unnecessarily limited. In an article published in 1997, bioethicist Kathy Rudy makes a related argument, turning to two of the texts discussed here: *The Left Hand of Darkness and Woman on the Edge of Time.* She recognizes the importance of feminism's struggle with reproductive technologies and, in line with Conley's position, claims that "[b]y envisioning what tomorrow might be, these novels help us reset the terms of the debate for today" (24). Rudy focuses on how these novels can help move us into a better tomorrow, exploring ideas such as male pregnancy or ectogenesis and what changes the novels suggest we need to make to society for these options to be viable. In contrast, then, I hold that their usefulness does not lie in providing blueprints for feminist uses of reproductive technologies. Rather, as will be explored in what follows, it lies in the specific connections these texts make between utopianism, reproduction, and feminist social change. Thus, my primary interest is not their respective attractiveness or feasibility as feminist worlds, but rather how forms of reproduction help constitute these worlds, how they are, indeed, central to what is utopian about each of these worlds.

The ethical and political implications of reproductive technologies are contested, both in American society at large and among feminists. This can in part be explained by the variety of methods and procedures — such as sperm or egg donation, in-vitro fertilization, or surrogacy — that the term encompasses. However, they primarily elicit such diverse and frequently fraught responses because of

the multiple and contradictory ways in which they intersect with current practices and discourses that help constitute both family and gender. For conservative defenders of family values, technologies such as IVF and insemination can be seen as weapons in the hands of liberals and homosexuals aimed at the nuclear family, but they can also be understood as tools to help women become mothers, and thus as enabling that same nuclear family. Equally conflicting positions can be inhabited by progressive groups, including feminists who tend to be wary of the way in which women's bodies become objects for medical and corporate interests in these reproductive processes. In *Pandora's Box: Feminism Confronts Reproductive Technology (*1988), Nancy Lublin attempts to summarize and categorize feminist responses to reproductive technology, identifying both what she calls "technophilic" and "technophobic" responses, as well as a response based on liberal individualism, which does not engage with the technologies as such. Feminists fundamentally critical of reproductive technologies are so either based on a celebration of the natural and a rejection of technology generally, or because these technologies are seen as inextricably bound in patterns of patriarchal control over women's bodies and inequitable national and global gender, race, and class relations. Since the publication of *Pandora's Box,* there has been a wealth of feminist research on reproductive technologies, particularly in the emerging field of critical kinship studies. Many studies focus specifically on aspects such as consumption and commodification of reproduction in a globally

inequitable world, examining for instance infertility tourism, surrogacy factories, and emerging bio-economies.[2] As this research shows, there is good reason to be critical of many of the practices that have been made possible by new reproductive technologies. Even feminists who primarily see the use of these technologies in the context of a desired move away from the hegemony of the nuclear heteronormative family recognize the risks and challenges involved in employing them.[3]

Many commentators in the media seem to assume that the new technologies in and of themselves will change the way reproduction and family are not only understood, but also lived, whether that change is welcome or not. This assumption is often accompanied by a juxtaposition of reproductive technologies with what is posited as natural conception and natural familial practices; we are seen as leaving the natural order behind and moving into technological and futuristic terrain. This understanding is fundamentally flawed in that while the creation of a child is a biological

2   See for instance Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant, eds., *Commodifying Bodies;* Krolokke et al., *Critical Kinship Studies; Pande,* "Commercial Surrogacy in India: Manufacturing a Perfect Mother-Worker." As Rosi Braidotti points out, the feminist position that is most unqualifiedly positive toward reproductive technologies in their current use in the US and Western Europe are neoliberal feminists that do not sufficiently recognize the local and global power imbalances at play (53-4) that the scholarship referred to here illustrates.

3   See for instance Cutas and Chan, eds., *Families Beyond the Nuclear Ideal.* For a good overview of the state of what is often called new kinship studies, which includes an engagement with reproductive technologies, see Bamford, ed., *The Cambridge Handbook of Kinship.*

process, the creation of family is not. Family comes into being through forms of cultural technology that use different social, political, and cultural tools and practices to construct this reality of relatedness. As Carol Singley aptly summarizes feminist anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's argument: "kinship is a hybrid formed of nature and culture, a cultural technology that naturalizes relationships as well as turns natural relations into cultural forms" (6). Cultural technologies can be understood here as the ways in which a society uses discursive and material tools to shape our relations to and understanding of crucial identity categories and processes, making us conceive them, and the roles we play in them, as natural.

As I will explore further in the analysis below, the kind of change reproductive technologies bring with them is thus not a property simply inherent in the technologies themselves. Rather, these medical technologies intersect with and become part of pre-existing cultural technologies of family and gender. These cultural technologies include discursive practices as well as material ones, and the ways in which reproductive technologies enter dominant discourses on family affect the kind of transformative potential they might have, not least because our very understanding of their potential is shaped by these discourses. What Helena Ragoné calls "American kinship ideology" (343) which privileges biological relatedness and emphasizes the naturalness of heterosexual desire for biological offspring has been shown to have enduring power, even among participants in surrogacy procedures,

structuring how these participants understand their own actions.[4] As Sarah Franklin observes, "IVF technology is embedded in a naturalized and normalized logic of kinship, parenthood, and reproduction: it is pursued in the hope of alleviating childlessness. It has come to be viewed as normal and natural..." (4). However, as these technologies and practices enter dominant discourses, a process of unsettling takes place. As Franklin argues concerning IVF, its "ambivalence" lies "in its promise of delivering children who are 'just like' other offspring, but through a process of mimicry that is not quite the same as the original process on which it is based. This ambivalence of mimicry lies at the heart of the paradox IVF presents ... as both a confirmation of the norms it relies upon and a disruption to their authority and authenticity" (34).

Written during the decade prior to the birth of the first "test-tube baby" in 1978, the novels discussed here imagine the future rather differently from how things have unfolded until the current moment in history. Importantly, their shared engagement with utopian reconceptualization of reproduction insists on a future not already colonized by the present. They all make reproductive technologies strands in the warp of their utopian tapestries and thus provide a rich material

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4   See also, for instance, Thompson, "Strategic Naturalizing: Kinship in an Infertility Clinic;" Graham "Choosing Single Motherhood? Single Women Negotiating the Nuclear Family Ideal."

for critical exploration at this point in time. Furthermore, against the backdrop of the discussion above, these novels bring to the fore important ways in which reproductive technologies are by necessity dependent on and become meaningful through the cultural technologies of kinship or family and gender.

The Left Hand of Darkness and "Coming of Age in Karhide:" Heterosexual Reproduction Contained

The Left Hand of Darkness is set on the planet Gethen, in a future or alternate universe where the Ekumen, an egalitarian interstellar organization promoting cooperation and exchange between planets, has just contacted the planet to invite them to join. The population of Gethen are hermaphroditic in the precise meaning of biological reproduction, that is, they each have the reproductive organs and gametes of both male and female and can take on either of these roles in the reproductive process. In the text, they are referred to by the representatives of the Ekumen as ambisexual androgynes, a term used to encompass both reproductive properties and personality. They are also sexually inactive, in a phase known as somer, for most of the month, with a cyclically recurring sexually active male or female phase called kemmer. The same individual can enter kemmer as a man one time and as a woman the next time. Consequently, the same person can be the father of one child and the mother or "parent in the flesh" (83) of another. The first representative of the Ekumen to visit the planet believes that Gethenian physiology is the result of genetic engineering performed by the people that once colonized large parts of space and "seeded" many planets with human life: "It seems likely they were an experiment. The thought is unpleasant. ... will anything else explain Gethenian physiology? Accident, possibly: natural selection, hardly." (81). Thus, what is natural to Gethenians could be the result of genetic engineering performed in a long-forgotten past, putting into question the idea of "natural" itself, a recurring theme in all three novels discussed here.

Be it because of evolution or genetic engineering, on Gethen people are sexed – and sexual– only a few days a month. Even if the reproductive system of the people of the planet Gethen is the core novum[5] of The Left Hand of Darkness, the focus is not on biological reproduction or even the cultural technologies of family, but on the impact that this mainly asexual life has on identity, psyche, or spirituality. The Ekumen representative speculates on the possibility of the Gethenians being the result of an experiment, wondering if "the experimenters" wanted "to see whether human beings lacking continuous sexual potentiality would remain intelligent and capable of culture," or, if perhaps their aim could have been ending war, based on the hypothesis that "continuous sexual capacity and organized social aggression, neither

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5   "Novum" is a term coined by Darko Suvin in his seminal 1979 Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre as a distinguishing characteristic of a science fiction text. It signifies an important way in which the world of the narrative is different from what we recognize as reality.

of which are attributes of any mammal but man, are cause and effect?" (86). Central to the story is the evolving friendship between the second Ekumen representative, Genly Ai, a man, and Gethenian former politician, Estraven. Through their relationship, the novel explores these kinds of questions on a personal level; Genly Ai struggles to understand the spiritual and moral life of the Gethenians, and to accept Estraven as fully human and, thereby, trustworthy. Only when the two of them are isolated in extremely cold weather and dependent upon each other for survival, does he manage to accept "what [he] had always been afraid to see … that [Estraven] was a woman as well as a man" (210). However, it is not only Genly Ai who struggles to recognize the female aspect of the Gethenians in the novel. Since activities typically coded as female or domestic in the social context in which the book was written are left out of the story, it becomes somewhat too easy to read everyday life on Gethen as exclusively male rather than genderless. The use of the male pronoun to refer to Gethenians and the dominating voice of the surprisingly misogynist Genly Ai combine to further emphasize this effect. Consequently, and despite its iconic status in the feminist SF canon, *The Left Hand of Darkness* has received criticism for not challenging existing gender norms enough. Joanna Russ phrases this critique in a straightforward manner, claiming that the novel "has no women in it at all"

(*Feminist Utopias* 80).[6] Rudy understands this critique to be based on a "logic" in which "the principles of feminism are dependent on a firm, stable sense of what it means to be a woman; to destabilize that essence by collapsing both genders into one being essentially harms women" (32). However, Rudy crucially misses the point of the feminist criticism that Russ and many others level. It would be more accurate to say that the text is critiqued for not destabilizing gender identity enough. When characters continuously come across as male and little disruption of the reading habits that support this sense occurs, the psychological and spiritual explorations of the characters as well as the readers occur in a world curiously disembodied, evocative of the philosophical traditions that rely on the ideal of the man of reason.[7]

Most central to the way in which reproduction figures in the novel is the construction of heterosexuality as primary and of

6   See also, for instance, Lefanu, *Feminism and Science Fiction;* C Barrow and D Barrow, *"The Left Hand of Darkness:* Feminism for Men"; Parker Rhodes, "Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness:* Androgyny and the Feminist Utopia." In "Is Gender Necessary? Redux," 1979, Le Guin discusses feminist criticism of the novel and agrees that it might – and perhaps should – have been more radical. Karolin has engaged with the critique against the novel's portrayal of androgyny more recently, finding that the novel is "simultaneously androcentric and feminist," placing the responsibility on the reader "to resist a gendered reading" (24). My argument here has a different focus, centering on how technologies of reproduction and gender function in the text, rather than on narrative perspective or voice.

7   See for instance Lloyd, *The Man of Reason,* for a feminist exploration and critique of this ideal.

heterosexual reproductive sex as the sine qua non of sexuality. While Rudy somewhat surprisingly wants to read Gethenian androgyny as a precursor to Butler's concept of performativity, the nature of kemmer clearly establishes the body as the foundation of heterosexual identity and that identity as complementary. In the early stages of kemmer, the sex a person assumes is decided by the person who brings him or her into kemmer, often someone further along in the process. The body appears to respond instinctively and inevitably assumes the opposite sex, creating a heterosexual dyad, ready for conception. Sexuality becomes synonymous with heterosexuality and primarily understood as designed for reproductive purposes. While contraceptives are used, the outsider's perspective on Gethenian sexuality emphasizes that this more typically mammalian pattern of only having intercourse during the fertile period means that "the chance of conception is high" which "might have adaptive value" (84). No scenes of sexual intimacy are described, and any kind of sexual expression appears to be contained within a reproductive heterosexual matrix.

When Le Guin returns to Gethen in the short story "Coming of Age in Karhide" (1995), she is, in her own words, now freed from "a damned plot" and able to "see how sex works;" to "finally get into a kemmerhouse" and "really have fun" (*Birthday* ix). *In the story,* she thus somewhat addresses the issues caused by the reproductive heterosexual matrix by delving into the private and intimate sphere which went mostly overlooked in the novel. The story

is set in a hearth, a private home where children grow up, and centers on the Gethenian narrator Sov's first visit to a kemmerhouse, the place where people in kemmer go to have sex. The story is told in the first person and in retrospect and thus escapes having to assign Sov a gender through the use of a third person pronoun. As Sov's first kemmer approaches, his/her body becomes strange to him/her: "It did not feel like my body, like me. … My clitopenis was swollen hugely and stuck out from between my labia, and then shrank to nearly nothing, so that it hurt to piss. … Deep in my belly something moved, some monstrous growth. I was utterly ashamed" (8). The first appearance of an emergent sexual body in adolescence is experienced as monstrous, as non-human. The echoes here are interesting in that they simultaneously chart misogynous conceptions of the female body with its uterus as a "monstrous growth" and evoke possible reactions to the hermaphroditic body as monstrous in what could be described as an act of unstable mimicry, as the body briefly inhabits one sex and then the other. However, once Sov enters the kemmerhouse, he/she is brought into kemmer as a woman, temporarily stabilizing the gender identity as intercourse becomes central. Despite the mention of threesomes and lesbian sexual encounters, there is a lingering primacy awarded to heterosexual intercourse. The first lesbian sexual encounter comes across mainly as foreplay and when a man reaches out to Sov, saying "I'd like – Your first – Will you –" (20), their encounter is framed as a fairly traditional loss of virginity. The lesbian encounter at the end of Sov's stay

in the kemmerhouse, thus neatly framing the heterosexual intercourse as the main act, is "drowsy, peaceful, blissful lovemaking" (21). While complemented by other sexual activities, heterosexuality remains central and, importantly, fundamentally connected to reproduction. Furthermore, outside of the confines of the kemmerhouse, the sexual body appears threatening and disruptive.

Just as sexuality is based on heterosexual reproduction, parenting is intimately connected to gestation, for childbearing is central to the role of parent. The importance of a child being "of his flesh born" (68) is highly stressed, and, while the expression is challenging in its use of the male pronoun, it simultaneously reinforces the idea of parenthood as biologically based in the process of gestation. The short story gives a more sustained description of life in the hearth, and thus of the cultural technologies of family, than the novel does. Nevertheless, just as with the portrayal of sexuality in the two texts, there is a form of narrative rupture. *The Left Hand of Darkness* assumes the couple as the fundamental unit of both sex and family, emphasizing the prevalence of the custom of vowing kemmering as corresponding to marriage — although without the legal implications. The few scenes set in hearths, the place where an extended family live together, typically focus on the head of the hearth as a person of power, related to the political concerns of the plot. "Coming of Age in Karhide," on the other hand, portrays the communal life of an extended family, including family and work life in the crèche or a furniture shop, respectively, but neither

politics, public life, nor couples who have vowed kemmering. In the short story, the hearth comes across as a world of mothers and grandmothers where "getters" (4), as fathers are called, are mainly absent. The absence of getters or long-term partners is explained as a trait of Sov's family, the Thades, who "never keep kemmer" (4). These narrative choices in combination with the continuous use of both mother and grandmother to describe the parent or grandparent "in the flesh" support a reading of parenthood as motherhood and motherhood as predicated on gestation. As if to further underline these connections and separate the getter from maternal roles, Sov only learns who his/her father is when Sov is brought into kemmer as a woman by the "head cook of [Sov's] Hearth, Karrid Arrange" who s/he remembers as "singling [him/her] out in a joking, challenging way, tossing me some delicacy" (18). Karrid presses his naked body against Sov, gives a "hard laugh" when others around them seem concerned and says, "I won't hurt my own get, will I?" (19). Disconnecting Karrid from any parenting role, even though he has been present in the hearth, and then casting him as the male who makes Sov a woman, introduce disruptive notes if this is read as a mimicry of what we conceive of as natural fatherhood. Nonetheless, it simultaneously leaves motherhood un-mimicked, so to speak, true to (its) supposed nature.

Together, the two texts underscore that if the connections between biological sex, heterosexual intercourse, and reproduction are left discursively intact, the biological novum

of an ambisexual people does not in itself cancel out or seriously challenge dominant understandings of reproduction and family. Rather, sexuality and reproduction are put in a narrative parenthesis, separated from the public world, and contained in terms of time and space. The potential of radical changes to the cultural technologies of gender and family in a world where anybody can be a mother and the same person can be both a mother and a father remains largely unexplored. Whereas in the novel, where family is not at the heart of the narrative, mothers and children are virtually non-existent, in the short story, where childhood and adolescence are central, fathers suffer the same fate.

The Female Man: Motherhood Demystified

If the *Left Hand of Darkness* constructs a world where sex, sexuality and reproduction are put in narrative parenthesis, Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* employs the idea of parallel universes to create a utopia where both sexuality and reproduction are demystified but also narratively decentered. This utopia, the all-female Whileaway of the protagonist Janet, is one of four alternative worlds explored in the novel. In each of these worlds, we follow the story of a female protagonist, which, put together, play out four different versions of the same woman. In Whileaway, the men were all killed by a plague several thousand years ago, a fact we are presented with, but later asked to question: did the women perhaps exterminate them? The usefulness and desirability — theoretical or practical — of feminist separatist utopias

have been much discussed, primarily as part of debates surrounding radical feminism.[8] While such a vast debate is out of the scope of my analysis, Rudy's critical remarks on separatist utopias and their limitations for reconceptualizing reproductive technologies must be noted. As she has pointed out, unlike *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Woman on the Edge of Time,* separatist utopias do not offer solutions that include men and thus do not "show us alternative methods of reproduction wherein women's bodies are not the only places babies can grow" (25). While babies in Russ' Whileaway do grow in women's bodies, I read her novel as contributing to feminist understandings of reproductive technologies as well as cultural technologies of gender and family in important ways.

In Whileaway, the all-female population necessitates a reproductive novum. However, this novum is not a narrative focus of *The Female Man* and to the extent that reproduction is discussed at all it is the cultural technologies of gender and family that are primarily engaged. Marriage remains but "[n]o Whileawayan marries monogamously ... there is no legal arrangement" (53) and families are larger units created by choice: "By twenty-five [the typical Whileawayan] has entered a family...

8   Some examples are: Fitting, "Reconsiderations of the Separatist Paradigm in Recent Feminist Science Fiction;" Crowder, "Separatism and Feminist Utopian Fiction;" Relf, "Women in Retreat: The Politics of Separatism in Women's Literary Utopias;" Jones and Webster Goodwin, eds. *Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative;* Rhodes, "Becoming Utopias: Toward a Queer Rhetoric of Instantiation;" Cortiel, *Demand My Writing;* Russ, "Recent Feminist Utopias."
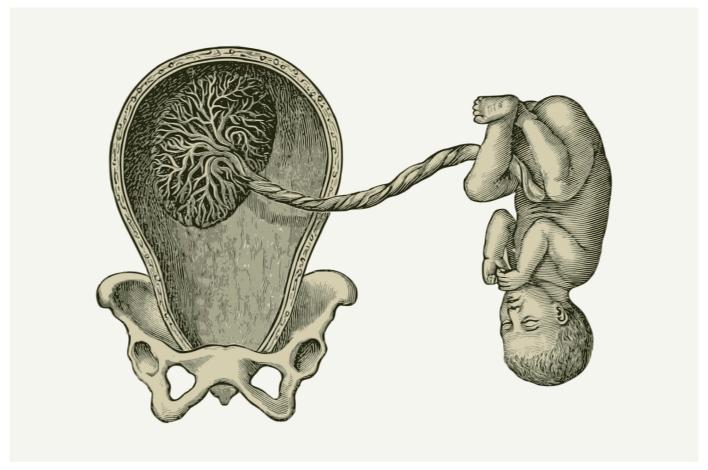
Her family probably consists of twenty to thirty persons, ranging in age from her own to the early fifties" (52). They also re-form: "Families tend to age the way people do; thus new groupings are formed again in old age" (52). The family primarily functions as a system for emotional and practical support; it is not a legal entity.

In contrast to Le Guin's Gethen, Whileawayan sexuality is described as part of everyday life and surrounded by few taboos, except for too great an age difference, and sexual relations "be[gin] at puberty" and "continue both inside the family and outside it, but mostly outside it" (52). Rather than equating sexuality with the act of sex for reproductive purposes, Whileawayan reproduction is disconnected from intercourse and involves the merging of two ova followed by gestation in the uterus of one of the women who provided the ova. Even though this process does not receive much narrative attention, I would argue that the shape this reproductive novum takes embodies, or gives physical reality to, the utopian qualities of Whileaway. The most common form of reproduction in all-female utopias is parthenogenesis. As in Gilman's early and influential *Herland,* this form of reproduction that only involves genetic material from one individual often signals asexuality and carries a potential symbolic value of uniformity and stasis.[9] In *The Female Man,* the reproductive duality of egg and sperm, symbolically as

9   As I argue elsewhere, there are other ways of conceptualizing parthenogenesis, as Nicola Griffith does in *Ammonite* (1992).

well as factually underpinning heterosexual technologies of reproduction and gender, is replaced by a process that still involves the genetic material from two people but which does not place duality at its center. Instead, the merging of ova takes the difference of individuals as its starting point, thus emphasizing individuality, a trait which is also one of the most striking aspects of Whileawayans.

In both Le Guin's Gethen and Russ' Whileaway, the process of gestation is left mainly unaltered and narratively unexplored. Moreover, both texts emphasize the importance of the parent carrying the child. While each child in Whileaway has two mothers instead of a mother and a getter as in "Coming of Age in Karhide," the mothers are differentiated as "biological mother (the 'body-mother')" and "the non-bearing parent … ('other mother')" (49). Descriptions of motherhood mainly focus on the body-mother: "A family of thirty persons may have as many as four mother-and-child pairs in the common nursery at one time" (50). Motherhood, no matter how differently conceived, seems to rest primarily with the person carrying the child. However, while I see Gethenian motherhood as mainly in line with heterosexual cultural technologies of gender and family, Whileawayan motherhood is fundamentally rescripted. Moreover, Whileawayan cultural technologies of gender and family are central to Russ' feminist project and brought into focus mainly through the dystopian reality of motherhood in the other alternative worlds.

Medical illustration of a fetus, umbilical cord , womb, and placenta. Illustrations of this kind suggest a simultaneous separation and connection of fetus and womb.

The novel juxtaposes Whileawayan family life with family life in the world of the character Joanna, who inhabits the alternative reality that is closest to the real US of the late 1960s and early 1970s when the novel was written. In doing so, Russ emphasizes the dystopian nature of her contemporary American ideologies of motherhood. In a hilarious TV interview with world-travelling Janet, a male interviewer attempts to make her admit that the absence of men on Whileaway is a problem, a deficiency that needs to be rectified. In the process, he highlights his inability to recognize the reality of these radically different cultural technologies. While the medical technology of merging ova is dismissed as unimportant with a passing admission of Whileaway's superiority in that area, the interviewer struggles to accept, or even recognize, the disconnection of elements that in his understanding are necessarily fused. He refuses to apply the term family to Whileawayan kinship constellations: "we know you form what you call marriages … that you even have 'tribes' – I'm calling them what Sir --------- calls them; I know the translation isn't perfect" (11). What makes them disqualify as families is the absence of men, or more specifically, the

absence of heterosexual romantic love as the basis of the unit. Without this basis, family cannot exist. As the interviewer's struggle to recognize the relationships of Whileaway as real suggests, while technologies of reproduction might challenge ideas about gender, it is the removal of certain cultural technologies of gender and family, including practices of childrearing, from the heterosexual economy that poses the most far-reaching challenge. As much of the rest of the novel demonstrates, a central aspect of these heterosexual gender technologies is an ideal of motherhood that makes it incompatible with personhood.

As Russ herself has stated, and as critics such as Jeanne Cortiel and Kathleen Spencer have explored, a central trope in her writing is "the rescue of the female child" (Russ, *Feminist Utopias* 79) by an older woman. Cortiel's reading highlights the ways in which these "rescue operations" are never "unequivocally successful" and that to the extent that they lead to a "utopian space" this space should be understood in terms of "a process rather than a stable state of being" (139). As I have suggested elsewhere, the relationship between girl and woman itself can usefully be seen as constituting the utopian space (2005, 130). Furthermore, the girl is typically rescued not just from patriarchy in general, but from the crippling life that the construction of motherhood as the primary or even sole meaning of a woman's life entails. In *The Female Man,* the girl rescued by Janet is Laura, a teenager in Joanna's reality. Laura is furiously attempting to carve out a sense of self in a world that refuses to recognize her as anything else

than a potential wife and mother. "Whenever I act like a human being, they say, "What are you getting upset about?' … of course you're brilliant. They say: of course you'll get a Ph.D. and then sacrifice it to have babies" (66). While Laura resists the discourse of pregnancy and motherhood as "that mystically-wonderful-experience-which-no-man-can-know crap" (67), she struggles to find an alternative through which she can formulate another future for herself. The technologies of family on Whileaway function to make it precisely such an alternative, a space in which motherhood is not only compatible with personhood, but where it has ceased to be a defining feature of female identity. Most importantly, motherhood is stripped of its mystical aura of fulfillment and completeness. Indeed, the absence of any rhetoric of sacrifice or selfless maternal love underlines the discursive strangeness of Whileawayan motherhood. In Russ' characteristically tongue-in-cheek style, motherhood on Whileaway is described as "both… fun and profit, pleasure and contemplation… a slowing down of life, an opportunity to pursue whatever interests the women have been forced to neglect previously…" (49), and the common nursery means that "[f]ood, cleanliness, and shelter are not the mother's business" (50). The narrator then evokes this discourse of a self-less, almost holy motherhood: "Whileawayans say with a straight face that she must be free to attend to the child's 'finer spiritual needs'" only to immediately refute it: "Then they go off by themselves and roar. The truth is they don't want to give up the leisure" (50).

Not only do the cultural technologies of motherhood make possible other ways of being a mother while the child is young. Motherhood is also limited in time and in terms of responsibility for raising a child, seems to end at around the age of five when the children are sent to school and then from there out into the world, first to move around in groups of exploring adolescents, then going through several stages of apprenticeships. These children, we are made to understand, are highly intelligent (genetically engineered to be so) and fully capable from a very young age. While they may choose to return to their childhood home, "neither Mother may be there; people are busy; people are travelling; there's always work," but children in this stage "have the right of food and lodging wherever they go" (50). The communal responsibility for all children is a central characteristic of these cultural technologies of family and while the re-inscription of not only motherhood but also childhood can read as negligence or abandonment to us, I would argue that for Russ the freedom this entails is as much freedom for the child as it is for the mother. The sacrifice of selfless motherhood is also a sacrifice of the independence of daughters, and the disconnection of biologically based, permanent familial ties is crucial for the rescue of the female child to potentially succeed.

In the dystopian world of Jael, there is a war between gender-segregated Womanland and Manland. Here, childbearing is a woman's business, even though conception is not through intercourse, and babies have become a business, for males are sold to Manland.

There is little information on how the girls of Womanland are raised, but the brief descriptions of Manland practices delineate a twisted version of a Whileawayan model: they "keep them in city nurseries until they're five, then out into the country training ground, with the gasping little misfits buried in baby cemeteries along the way" (167). The training grounds are then intended to make them "real-men" (167), with those who fail to live up to these standards of masculinity undergoing sex-change surgery to function as women in the heterosexual logic Manland insists on maintaining. Thus, even in Manland, "child care is woman's business" (170). If Jael's violent reality is in some ways a twisted mirror image of utopian Whileaway, it thus also draws on current dominant discourses of heterosexually framed cultural, but also medical, technologies of gender and family. It is thus noteworthy that neither Janet nor Jeannine, the women from worlds closer to the present of the author, have children or seem to desire them. Motherhood in *The Female Man,* then, appears to be an option for only one of the four women protagonists, one of the four possible versions of the same woman: Janet in utopian Whileaway where it is possible to be both fully human, and a mother too, not simply because reproduction is no longer a heterosexual process, but more importantly, because the cultural technologies of gender and family of the US of the 1960s and 1970s—cultural technologies that still resonate in Western discourses on family—have been rendered obsolete and meaningless.

Woman on the Edge of Time: Reproductive Technologies as Means of Liberation

Thoroughly changing both reproductive and cultural technologies of family and gender is explicitly presented as the direct means to creating an equal society in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time.* To achieve such a shift, the novel employs ectogenesis as its central novum. As scholars such as Joan Haran and Lucy Sargisson have noted, Piercy's novel enters into close dialogue with Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), in which Firestone posits the sexual division of reproductive labor as the basis for all sexual (and other) oppression. The "seizure of control of *reproduction* ... as well as all the social institutions of child-bearing and child-rearing [italics in original]" is necessary for a future in which "the sex distinction *itself* [italics in original]" is eliminated (11). In the village Mattapoisett in the year 2137, babies are gestated in artificial wombs, in an environment that is "more like a big aquarium than a lab," and that includes music, the sound of voices and heartbeats, and tanks "painted over with eels and water lilies" (94). Importantly, the environment in which ectogenesis takes place is framed to come across as both reflecting an emotional investment, a sense of care, and as evoking nature rather than science or technology. The reference to a laboratory evokes as its other Huxley's well-known descriptions of ectogenesis in *Brave New World,* where the "Fertilizing Room" is lit by "harsh thin light ... finding only the ... bleakly shining porcelain of the laboratory" and the workers are dressed in white, "their hands gloved with a pale corpse-coloured rubber" (1). Other critics have noted the parallels between the two texts. Rudy even claims that "Piercy's novel is in many ways a feminist rewriting of ... *Brave New World"* (26). Bioethicist Evie Kendal comments that Huxley's linking of ectogenesis with eugenics in the service of a totalitarian state has been much more widely used in ethical discussions of ectogenesis than Piercy's Firestone-inspired vision of ectogenesis as a means of eliminating the basis for sex-based oppression (67). Both Rudy and Kendal recognize the largely negative response to ectogenesis among feminists, citing amongst others Andrea Dworkin, Robyn Rowland and Gena Corea, who see this technology primarily as an expression of a misogynistic agenda seeking to control reproduction and perhaps even replace women (Kendal 65; Rudy 27). In contrast, both Rudy and Kendal appear to view Piercy's Mattapoisett as a viable possibility, embracing the potential of the technology. I suggest that rather than taking sides for or against the technology itself, the juxtaposition of *Brave New World* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* should serve to highlight the inextricability of reproductive technologies from the cultural technologies of gender and family and from the dominant discourses through which we make sense of these technologies. *Woman on the Edge of Time* thus underlines the importance of the power relations of the context in which reproductive technology is used.

The primary narrative device to explore the impact of gendered power relations on our understanding of reproductive technologies is the narrator Connie, a poor Chicana

woman of the 1970s, who spends most of her time committed against her will to a psychiatric ward and visits the future of Mattapoisett in dreamlike episodes. She finds it hard to accept their version of motherhood and her resistance to it is rooted in her own experiences. Rudy sees Connie as mediating Mattapoisett to the reader, helping us appreciate its utopian futurity in stark contrast with the abusive present which confines Connie, claiming that although the babies in the tanks of the brooder are "frightening to Connie, when compared to her experience in the real world, they begin to seem like a more attractive and viable option" (26). However, Connie's reaction of feeling physically sick at the sight of the brooder and her flashback to seeing an aborted fetus rather bring to the fore the ambivalent role that motherhood plays in feminist thought. Sam McBean notes that there has been a "critical blindness to Connie's resistance" (17) and points out that having been forced to go through both a non-consensual hysterectomy and forced adoption, "Connie sees control over mothering as a desirable future for women" (18), thus joining feminist critics of ectogenesis. Connie finds the idea of disembodied motherhood both untenable and an expression of privilege: "How could anyone know what being a mother means who has never carried a child nine months heavy under her heart, who has never born a baby in blood and pain, who has never suckled a child. Who got that child out of a machine the way that couple, white and rich, got my flesh and blood. All made up already, a canned child, just add money. What do they know of motherhood?" (98). Connie

thus expresses not only the value she puts on the physical experience of motherhood and the importance of biological and genetic connection, but also how that value is formed by a society where economic and social/political inequality shape our reproductive and familial practices. The people of Mattapoisett see Connie's skepticism as an expression of her being "less evolved" (55), thus adopting the privileged perspective of a future judging its own past, echoing Firestone: "*Pregnancy is barbaric* [italics in original]" *(*180). However, Connie refuses Mattapoisett's claim to superiority, seeing the rural lifestyle as past rather than future; "we're back to the dark ages to start it all over again" (65). McBean argues that Connie's "resistance to the discourses of motherhood" in Mattapoisett should be read as a "challenge to Mattapoisett's narrative of progress" (19). While this reading is worthwhile in highlighting the importance of troubling straightforward narratives of progress or reading strategies that posit Piercy's novel as a utopian blueprint, it also downplays the importance of Connie's development over the course of the story. The text charts her acceptance of the possibility that there is a future where the inequality of her present is not a natural fact and where rescripting motherhood might be a sacrifice worth making.

If giving up biological motherhood is a high price from Connie's perspective, the narrative as a whole is more ambivalent. As we have seen, reproductive technology is represented as breaking the connection not only between the act of sex and reproduction, but between reproduction and biological sex. While in both

The Left Hand of Darkness and *The Female Man* the gestational parent – however differently conceived – is seen as having a special role or relationship with the child, in line with Firestone's analysis of sexual oppression, the people of Piercy's future insist that human gestation and "live birth" is something that must be given up. "It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth" (97). However, the passage continues in a way that emphasizes the ambivalence of the text to biological motherhood: "Cause as long as we were biologically enchained we would never be equal." (97). That which gives women power is also what subjugates them, a paradoxical bind that runs through the novel's construction of Connie's present as well. The ambivalence towards the role reproductive technologies play in *Woman on the Edge of Time* is rooted, I believe, in the warning that Firestone, too, conveys: "the new technology … may be used against [women] to reinforce the entrenched system of exploitation" (11). Reproductive technologies, then, are not in themselves carriers of social change. Instead, just as in the other narratives discussed here, cultural technologies of gender and family are thoroughly restructured to embody social change.

An important aspect of these changed cultural technologies has to do with the positioning of males in relation to motherhood. The passage cited above continues: "And males would never be humanized to be loving and tender" (97). What males need to be humanized, however, is not the experience of gestation. Rather, they need the experience of mothering, an experience that appears to be necessarily connected to gestational motherhood as long as it exists. Moving gestation out of the body thus makes motherhood available to everyone, which includes another biological component. While gestation is moved out of the female body, the biological process of lactation is hormonally induced in all parents who wish to breastfeed. This physical closeness is seen as something all parents should share and as important for the development of the infant. Neither Russ nor Le Guin discuss breastfeeding, and Piercy's emphasis on the biological changes needed—both in terms of removal and in terms of addition—to achieve equality is worth noting. However, all three novels in their different ways emphasize a biological equalization as a necessity for the termination of gender-based oppression. Just as in the other utopian narratives, reproductive technology is not enough, a cultural technology is also needed—a re-formation of the basic structure of the family. The passage cited above ends: "So we all became mothers. Every child has three. To break the nuclear bonding" (97). This radical break with the nuclear family also entails a rejection of heterosexuality as well as of romantic love as the basis for parenthood. Additionally, there is no genetic connection between the child and its three mothers. Motherhood is in all ways a matter of choice, thus taking the concept of families by choice that contemporary kinship theory uses to a length rare in contemporary

family constellations. Just as in Whileaway, Mattapoisett has a common nursery, and children are encouraged to be independent at an early age. Motherhood thus becomes an activity that is limited in time, as Connie's contact in Mattapoisett explains: "I'm mother to Dawn. I was also mother to Neruda … I no longer mother Neruda, not since naming. No youth wants mothering" (66). While emotional attachment can remain, the relationship is seen as going through distinct stages. Importantly, motherhood is also seen as communal. When Connie asks why people would want to see the artwork of children who are not their own, she is met by "puzzlement:" "But they are all ours" (70). Again, this communal responsibility for children is similar to Whileawayan practices. In Karhide, this communal responsibility is limited to the extended family of the hearth, but here too, the nuclear family is rejected as the primary context for childrearing.

Motherhood, then, is central to *Woman on the Edge of Time,* both in terms of Connie's obsession with her own failed motherhood and in terms of biological motherhood as what needs to change to enable equality. However, the narrative also asks us to perceive this future as one in which motherhood no longer is the most vital part of women's existence. "Birth! Birth! Birth! Luciente seemed to sing in her ear. That's all you can dream about! Our dignity comes from work! Everyone raises the kids, haven't you noticed? Romance, sex, birth, children—that's what you fasten on. Yet that isn't women's business anymore. It's everybody's" (245). Interestingly, this is an apt description of life on Russ' Whileaway, underlining that both texts belong to the same feminist tradition and both, to different extents and in varying ways, draw on Firestone's vision of a future without "the sex distinction."

Coda: Conceiving Feminist Futures

These three novels weave reproductive technologies into their utopian tapestries in different ways yet have many concerns in common. Undoubtedly formed by the feminist projects of their time, their attempts to re-conceptualize not only reproductive technology, but also cultural technologies of gender and family through the construction and organization of family life, childcare, and sexuality nevertheless remain highly relevant. They all illustrate that while reproductive technologies have the potential to change understandings as well as realities of reproduction and of family and gender constructions, this potential is not inherent in the reproductive procedures themselves. It can only be developed, supported, and continually renegotiated through reconceptualizations of cultural technologies of family and gender that work to challenge both material realities and discursive practices of dominance to allow for new realities of relatedness.

Let us conclude by returning to the idea of the future as a space of feminist resistance. As McBean notes, the first decade of the 21st century saw many feminists engaging the narrative of timelines of feminism, its past, present, and future. Citing Sarah Ahmed and

Clare Hemmings among others, McBean identifies "models that resist narrating feminism's time as cohesive, linear, and singular" (1). The texts I have discussed here all resist such linear or cohesive narratives. The universe in which Le Guin's Gethen exists is not placed in a temporal relationship with the present in which it was written, and consequently not with the current time either. This complete temporal and causal disconnect means that while it certainly works as a space in which we can imagine differently, in which current dominant discourses of gender, family, and reproduction can be examined and moved out of the interpretative binary framework of natural – unnatural, the question of feminist time itself, of how moves between present, past, and future can be used to mobilize resistance and effect change is foreclosed. In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, reciprocity in temporal movement between future and present is established, as Connie uses her experiences in the future to gain a sense of self and agency in her presence, while Mattapoisett is dependent on revolutionary action in the presence for its future existence, emphasizing the future as something created in the present. Even though an alternative dystopian future is briefly introduced as a possibility, the direct causal relationship between present and future remains dominant. This serves to emphasize agency and revolutionary potential, while simultaneously framing feminism as something which must leave both past and present practices behind

to avoid foreclosing its future.[10] None of the four alternative worlds of *The Female Man* is identical to ours, nor can they be placed in a straightforward temporal or causal relationship with each other. Since, as Cortiel notes, Russ "shares the radical materialist feminist premise" of Firestone, discussed above as inspiring Piercy's work (76), Cortiel chooses to read the relationship between the four worlds as potentially staging a "disrupted and disruptive chronology" of a historical dialectic process that moves from alienation via "the feminist revolution" (Jael's world) to a "woman conscious of herself and able to act" (Janet) (77). While this reading does well in placing *The Female Man* in its contemporary feminist context, to resist linear narratives that place the novel itself in feminism's past and Whileaway as its imagined, desirable endpoint, we would do better to note how the two protagonists in the fictional worlds closest to the present in which the novel was written draw on both Janet's and Jael's realities to reinterpret their own presents and mobilize resistance. In a time when both our present and our future appear increasingly precarious, I would suggest that a feminist understanding of time needs to allow the present to proliferate, enabling realities of relatedness across time and space that are built on multiple and shifting intimate connections. Feminist utopias, and feminist

10   At the same time, as Bussière argues in "Feminist Future: Time Travel in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time,"* by placing a woman minority character as the time traveler, the novel disrupts the notion of the future as inevitable progress, witnessed (and furthered) by white males.

SF more broadly can help feminists do such conceptual work, allowing us to read reproduction outside heteronormative matrices of futurity as descent.

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Book Review:

The Cold War of the Twenty-First Century is widely used to describe the rising conflict between the United States and China. At the global level, China obviously represents the only viable challenge to US domination, and US President Joseph Biden is describing the war in terms of a clash between democracy and authoritarianism. Apart from the problematic and oxymoronic images that such language conjures up, the truth is frequently the first casualty in such fights. For David Engerman the Cold War was a "battle of ideas" between American liberal capitalism and Soviet socialism. Both countries associated their ideologies with universality and modernity and ascribed a special mission to themselves; a mission that remained incomplete as long as the other state existed. All aspects of life, including the press were mobilized in the struggle. Dina Fainberg's *Cold War Correspondents: Soviet and American Reporters on the Ideological Frontlines* explores the communications and mass media aspects of the Cold War. The book is based on material gathered from Soviet correspondents in the United States and from American correspondents in Moscow.

The book is divided into four sections. Each one delves into a distinct era of the Cold War. The first section focuses on the earliest stages of the worldwide ideological clash between 1945 and 1953, as well as how journalists in both nations viewed the conflict. Fainberg adds that the phrase "Cold War" was first used by journalists in neither the United States nor the Soviet Union. The active weapons race, Moscow's accomplishment in launching a satellite, and the ambition of the economically and socially trailing USSR to surpass America are all discussed in the second section. The memoirs and work of American and Soviet journalists during the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars are the subject of the third section. The fourth section discusses the perestroika strategy of Mikhail Gorbachev, which prompted a profound paradigm shift in journalistic work in both the United States and the Soviet Union.

The first part of the book focuses on the early stages of the Cold War, from 1945 to 1953, and the perspectives of journalists on both sides. The armaments competition and Soviet aspirations to economically surpass

the United States are discussed in the second half. The third part is dedicated to journalists' memoirs during the Vietnamese and Afghan wars. Perestroika's impact on journalism is discussed in the last section. The book demonstrates that the disparity between American and Soviet reporting stemmed from how people from all areas of life saw the other country. The reporting shaped the image of the other in popular perception (2). Fainberg argues that "foreign correspondents were keen analysts who aspired to understand their host country, at the same time; they were fundamentally shaped by their cultural and institutional backgrounds" (3-4). She points out that both sides claimed to be keeper of the truth and criticized the opposing viewpoint as "lies, disinformation, and propaganda." Governments on both sides acquired an interest in the power of mass media in discrediting their rivals and bringing their perspective "to the masses at home and abroad" (11). The author argues that the reporting on both sides increased tensions, and that "[I]nternational reporting quickly reacted to the rising tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States and the two countries' growing sense of disadvantage vis-à-vis the rival's propaganda" (11).

The author describes the first visit of Soviet journalists to America in April 1946, when Konstantin Simonov, Ilya Ehrenburg, and Mikhail Galaktionov were among the Soviet delegation. Simonov was under the impression that their "instructions came directly from Stalin" (18), thereby confirming the argument that the political leadership paid close watch

over journalism. Another interview described the October 31st, 1985 visit to the White House's Oval Office by Gennadii Shishkin (TASS), Stanislav Kondrashov (Izvestiia), Genrikh Borovik (Novosti), and Vsevolod Ovchinnikov (Pravda), to interview President Reagan. The author notes that Kondrashov reflected on the highly charged atmosphere of the Oval Office in his diary. He also noted that Reagan acted "like a Superman-Buddha, handling even the most difficult questions in a clear and relaxed fashion" (227). The propaganda machine of the Soviet Union is thoroughly explained in this book. The function of reporters was enlarged under Perestroika and Glasnost, and this tendency continued between 1985 and 1991. The journalists concocted a story that depicted the conclusion of the Cold War (229). Anyone interested in the Cold War and its journalism, particularly US academics interested in dissecting current conflict narratives including the People's Republic of China, should read this book to gain a better understanding of the processes of "truth making" in the pre-internet media.

Correspondents attended all periods of the Cold War, according to the author, and they were a mirror of bilateral ties. It is worth noting that journalists' importance grew after 1985, when perestroika began and, in reality, the Cold War ended. Cold War correspondents—journalists who covered the other side before 1985—played an active role in this process. Between 1985 and 1991, these journalists were more crucial in shaping the story of a dissolving superpower rivalry and the end of the Cold War (229).

Dina Fainberg's book deserves special attention from all those who research and are interested in the history of the Cold War, propaganda, and world journalism. Despite minor flaws and the boldness of individual hypotheses, the monograph is a qualitative scientific, historical study.

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Book Review:

Lawrence, Mark Atwood. The End of Ambition: The United States and the Third World in the Vietnam Era. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021. 408 pages. ISNB: 978-0-6911-2604-01.

The impact of few American foreign wars has been studied as intensively as the Vietnam War. Scholars of political history, international relations, military history, presidential studies, film and cultural studies, and memory studies (just to mention a few) have focused on the impact of Vietnam for decades, trying to understand the invasive influence of the America's first lost war on not just politics, but on the national psyche. According to Mark Atwood Lawrence's newest contribution to his already impressive scholarship on the US foreign relations and the Third World, the significant shift in US politics happened not after the war, but in the transition from the Kennedy to Johnson Administrations.

Lawrence's book is a welcome addition to foreign policy history, focusing specifically on the US' use of democracy and economic progress as tools of foreign policy in the Third World. The author has chosen case studies to represent different regions - Brazil (Latin America), India and Indonesia (Asia), Iran (the Middle East), and Southern Rhodesia (Africa). While internal developments in Third World countries are touched upon as causes of change, the main focus remains with the US, with leaders and their policy-making frameworks. A framework that rewarded loyalty to the US and stability, frequently at the expense of genuine democratic development. This book tells the story of the foreign policies of Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon, and how Vietnam changed the policies towards the Third World.

At the time of this book's chronological beginning (1960), the post-colonial Third World was increasingly in focus as the battleground for US-Soviet power struggles. President Kennedy considered self-determination, democracy, and economic progress to be America's gift to the Third World, and they became its weapons of choice in convincing former colonies of particularly Africa and Asia to choose America's side in the Cold War. The author's introduction quotes Democratic Senator Frank Church as saying, in 1971, that the decade started on an optimistic note, but ended in abject failure. While the Presidents

themselves provide ideological frameworks for the approaches of their administrations, much of the analysis focuses on various levels of policy making, the personal experiences of policy makers and their competing goals.

Lawrence's contribution to an already busy field of scholarship on US foreign relations in the 1960s is the analysis of the why's and how's of American policy making towards the Third World. America's strategy towards post-colonial countries changed, reflecting not just foreign policy choices, but also domestic developments. Thus America's perception of its own global role was a reaction to events both abroad and at home. The three Presidents studied here follow the narrative established by a host of scholars: Kennedy as the most ambitious on foreign policy, genuinely interested in supporting self-determination in the Third World; Johnson as preoccupied with the Great Society on the home front and with little personal interest in foreign policy, and finally Nixon as the pragmatist, more interested in power balance than idealist causes. Lawrence argues here that Kennedy is the odd one out, as there was little fundamental change in outlook or policy in the transition from the Democratic Johnson to the Republican Nixon.

Structured around the five case studies and based on extensive primary source research in presidential and State Department archives, Lawrence's book is convincing and well-balanced in its writing. While the main argument of US emphasizing regional stability over democratic development is hardly a new

one in foreign policy scholarship, Lawrence brings light to the high level of ambition of Kennedy's doctrine. However, the trials of Vietnam led to other Presidents choosing a more cautious approach, abandoning the confident optimism of the early 1960s, and this book offers welcome details of the policy interests and negotiations behind it.

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Jenny Bonnevier is a senior lecturer in English at Örebro University, Sweden. Her most recent publications are the anthology Kinship in the Fiction of N.K. Jemisin: Relations of Power and Resistance, co-edited with Berit Åström, and "Making Babies and Making Home in an All-Female World: Reproduction, Sexuality and Belonging in Nicola Griffith's Ammonite" in Populating the Future: Families and Reproduction in Speculative Fiction, edited by Britt Johanne Farstad. She is currently engaged in two projects that examine the potential and limits of kin-making in our more-than-human presents: "Circuits of Care: AI and Kinship in Speculative Fiction" and "Transspecies Kinship and Hominid Ecologies: Imagining Livable Worlds in a (Post)Apocalyptic Present."

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For Contributors
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