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# Bridgewater Review



BRIDGEWATER STATE COLLEGE



*August 2004 Warsaw, 60 Year Anniversary of the Uprising*

**I photographed Warsaw during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary week of the Warsaw Uprising. Warsaw's Old Town (Stary Miasto) was faithfully restored after the entire city was destroyed by the Nazis during the first weeks of August 1944. The areas of Warsaw beyond the Stary Miasto reflect the heavy and angular structures of Communist architecture.**

*—Donna Stanton*



# Bridgewater Review

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## ON THE COVER

*My First School, 1975*, acrylic on canvas, 54" x 66" by Stephen Smalley, Professor of Art. Thirty years ago Professor Smalley depicted the Minot Elementary School in Boston where he began his formal education. Its relationship to his forthcoming BSC exhibition is noted on page 18.

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# Editor's Notebook

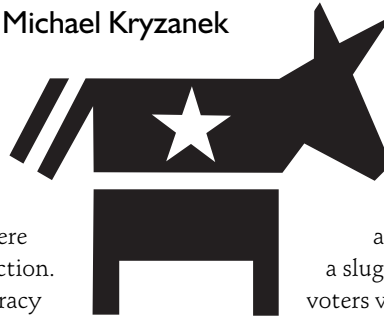
## An Election Post-Mortem

by Michael KryzaneK

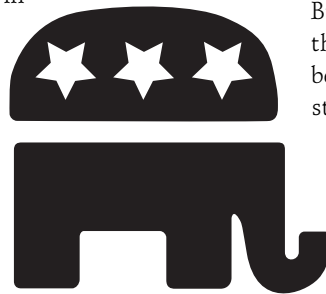
The presidential election year is finally over and this country can finally get back to doing what it does best, ignore politics and matters of public life. Yes, more people cast their ballot than in most past elections and yes, there did seem to be more interest in this election. But this quadrennial exercise in democracy left most Americans numb from the constant onslaught of a campaign that was excruciatingly long, filled with negativity and truth-bending, and unbelievably costly (somewhere in the neighborhood of \$ 3 billion). This was an ugly election that did little to bring a divided America back together.

Nevertheless, as it is often said, the American people have spoken and given George W. Bush a second term. Now that they have spoken and some time has passed since the votes were tallied, the question becomes, what did the majority of American people say or mean when they decided to give our President another four years in the White House? Here are a few of my thoughts on the presidential election of 2004.

- Americans are no different than any other human beings—they are motivated by fear of the unknown and long for normalcy in their lives. George Bush simply trumped John Kerry by playing to these simple human forces and convincing Americans that he was the one to make them secure.
- Voters like candidates who know how to connect with them. For all his malapropisms and syntactical maladies, George Bush was viewed by many Americans as just a regular guy. Of course Bush is just as much of a patrician as John Kerry, but the second JFK just wasn't able to shed the image of a blueblood Brahmin.
- For good or bad, religion and politics have become fused in the body politic. Separation of church and state is now an out of date standard as this president effectively made religion, religious values and religious institutions a key part of his campaign. It worked.



• The 2004 election proved for the first time in awhile that it wasn't as James Carville said "the economy, stupid." No matter how many times John Kerry hit the Bush administration for job losses and a sluggish economy, many American voters were not moved or impressed. This was an election about terror and values.



• Being a decisive leader has always been a key personal characteristic of leadership, and George Bush exuded decisiveness in his decisions regarding the war in Iraq. The fact that he may very likely be viewed over time as just plain wrong or too stubborn to change his mind didn't matter with the voters. No one likes a flip-flopper, especially one who wants to become President of the United States.

• Being a Massachusetts liberal is like the 2004 equivalent of Hester Prynne wearing the scarlet letter. We may think we have a pretty good life here in the Bay State, but most of America, except for all those Californians, thinks that we are a bit odd and clearly out of step with the mainstream, whatever that means.

• America is always about second chances. The fact that polls showed that George Bush was not a terribly popular chief executive was not enough to overcome the fact that the voters were willing to give him another opportunity to get it right. The old adage about going with the known rather than the unknown seemed to be work here.

For those of you who were crying in your beer over the results of this election, remember that this country will survive. There are House of Representative and Senate elections just two years away. If George Bush and the Republicans don't get it right in Iraq or on taxes or with Social Security, the American people can speak again and give the Democrats a boost. That's probably the best part of our flawed democracy, the people have regular chances to speak their mind.

—Michael KryzaneK is  
Editor of the *Bridgewater Review*

# Can China Import Western Ideas?

by Fang Deng



I was in China last summer for six weeks. Most people there seemed impressed by the Bush administration's enthusiasm for the mission to "bring world peace, spread democracy, and redirect history." At the same time, in Chinese academia, there has been a debate over the idea of a "universal civilization." Is Western civilization this "universal civilization?" Do Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, human rights, equality, liberty and democracy fit China? The debate has been hot and has attracted a great deal of attention. There is a practical reason for people in China to be interested in the debate, since there are significant differences between Western culture and Chinese culture. The values that are most important in the West are least important in China. How do Western ideas fit China?

In 1990, just three months after I came to the United States from China, I woke up at 7:00 AM one snowy December morning. Four or five inches of snow had already fallen. I lived in a house owned by the University of Chicago, sharing it with seven American students. It was more than fifty yards from our house to the parking lot. I got up immediately, didn't take a shower or brush my teeth, but took a shovel and went out to clean snow. In China, whenever it is snowing, every family sends one person out early in the morning, and all the neighbors shovel a path through the snow together. I had brought that norm with me from China and believed that all my roommates in Chicago would do the same thing. While I was shoveling alone I told myself: "Don't worry. They'll come out soon." Five minutes passed, then ten, but no one came out. Finally, the front door opened and a student came out. But she didn't have a

shovel. Instead, she walked to her car through the path that I had just cleaned. "Good morning, Fang," she said, and drove away. I was confused. Why didn't she join me? Why didn't she even pay attention to what I was doing? I spent forty-five minutes shoveling by myself that morning, watching as each of the other residents of the building walked the cleared path to their cars. Not one offered to help clear the snow.



There were three assumptions in my mind when I went out to shovel. The first one was that everyone would go out to shovel snow because that is our obligation to the group. The second assumption was that my roommates would judge me based on my fulfillment of this obligation. So, I didn't shower or brush my teeth because I wanted to show my roommates that I took this obligation very seriously. The third assumption was that my relationship with my roommates would depend on performing my obligation. In other words, in the future, my roommates would do everything to serve my interests as long as I did my duty. There was no room in my mind for individual rights and personal preference. In the Chinese culture, social obligation is the most important value and individual rights are the least important value. In Western culture, especially in American cul-

ture, people are born with rights. In Chinese culture, people are given rights by society. Shuming Liang, one of the greatest Chinese philosophers, explains the Chinese idea of rights in this way: "I bear an obligation to take care of others, who have a relationship with me, while the others bear the obligations of taking care of me; I enjoy my rights when the others perform the obligations. ... The individual performs obligations first, and then they are endowed with rights by the others, but they never ask for rights." In large degree, while Western culture is based on individual rights, the Chinese culture is based on social obligations.

One of my friends, an American who truly believes that Western culture is the "universal civilization," challenges me as follows: "What you are talking about here is the traditional Chinese culture. China is moving towards the free market and capitalism. The Chinese culture is changing and people in China have committed themselves to the Western values." It is true that people's economic interests in China have never been bound up with those in American and other Western societies. Recently, of every one hundred GM cars sold, twenty of them would be sold in China. Every year McDonald's opens one hundred branches in China. When people in China drive a GM car, work for Motorola, eat at McDonald's and watch Hollywood movies, they become familiar with Western culture. Does this mean that they have committed themselves to the Western values? History shows us that there has been a reverse trend in China. In 1920, Baihua Zong, a famous Chinese scholar, studied at Frankfurt University in Germany. He wrote his friend in China that "Many Chinese scholars have committed themselves more to the traditional Chinese culture after they were educated at European and American Universities. I am afraid that I have become one of them." Recently, this trend exists among the populace in China. After being attracted by Western values, most people in China have committed themselves again to the traditional Chinese culture. While China is moving towards the free market, indigenous, historically-rooted values, beliefs, and institutions reassert themselves. Why? Let us look at some examples.



One of the best examples is the amendment of China's Marriage Law. China's Marriage Law, initially enacted in 1950, has been amended twice since 1980. The first alteration was in 1980 and moved towards Westernization, while the second

time in 2001, it moved back towards indigenous values. Both times, the statutory conditions for divorce were a main focus. In its original 1950 form, the Marriage Law was based on the Chinese idea of social obligation. Divorce couldn't be granted without proper causes. Law officers, government agents, family members, and friends would be expected to work to convince individuals who wanted a divorce to accept that divorce was wrong, and that the individual was obliged to take care of his or her family.

In 1980, there was a divorce case in Beijing that sparked a nationwide debate that brought Chinese and Western values into sharp relief. A woman asked for a divorce due to "lack of spiritual life" in her marriage. The woman told the court that one day when she and her husband were sitting at the top of a mountain enjoying a fine view, her husband suddenly began talking about croakers that were on sale (croakers are a type of fish eaten in China) and how he wanted to be sure to buy some. "I cannot stand him anymore," the woman said, "He is a nice guy but I cannot discuss music and literature with him." The court granted the divorce, and the husband appealed to a higher court. What was wrong with talking about croakers on sale? Did the court do the right thing? Could lack of common interest in music and literature be a proper cause for divorce? A spontaneous public debate started in Beijing in the mass media. People were divided on the case. Since 1978, the Chinese Communist Party has protected political institutions from change but has loosened control on people's social lives. The debate became national in scope. While some people criticized the court and the woman based on Chinese values, a new perspective on marriage and divorce based on individual rights was spread for the first time since the Communist Party took power in

China in 1949. One supporter of the divorce complained that an important reason that China lags behind the Western countries is "...because we don't value the individual who is always sacrificed to serve others. There is no economic development without individual development. There is no individual development without individual freedom." In 1980, China, a poor country where, on average, one person could only purchase fifteen pounds of meat, three pounds of eggs, and five pounds of cooking oil for an entire year, had just opened its door to the world. People in China envied the economic prosperity and political freedom of Western societies. They couldn't wait to commit themselves to Western values because they believed that the success of Western societies is based on individualism, liberalism, human rights and democracy. Finally, more and more people accepted the new perspective and supported the divorce. At the same time China's legislature amended the Marriage Law. One of the important changes was that "No-Fault Divorce" was imported from the United States. The only statutory condition for divorce was the absence of mutual affection. In some degree, the Marriage Law in 1980 reflected and legitimated Western values by giving individuals rights to pursue their happiness.

What was the impact of the Marriage Law of 1980 on Chinese society, and why did China's legislature amend the law again in 2001? In the twenty years following the 1980 amend-

ment, while people started to enjoy economic prosperity in China, they were stunned by the changes in their marriage and family life. The divorce rate tripled. Many forms of infidelity emerged, including bigamy, taking a concubine and keeping a mistress. At the same time, social norms regarding adultery also changed. Chinese

citizens had never heard of ideas like the ones that soon followed. "Choose a husband or a wife who loves you, and find a paramour whom you love." "It is moral to have sex with a person you love." "The red flag (a husband or a wife) stands inside, and the color flags (your

paramours) flutter outside." For some people the involvement of a third party in marriage became fashionable, and they couldn't wait to keep up with the fashion. In a small town in Guang Dong province, for example, more than one hundred businessmen publicly kept their mistresses. Monogamy as a foundation of China's marriage institution was challenged.

How should we interpret these changes in marriage and family life? Were the changes a sign of social progress or moral degeneration? Was it the Marriage Law of 1980 that brought the changes? Another spontaneous national debate started in the 1990s, and it quickly became a focus of the mass media. While some people thought that the changes were normal, many others believed that the changes were, in their words, "a social disaster," "unacceptable," and that "the Marriage Law of 1980 gave individuals too much freedom." Why had marriage and family as institutions started to fall apart in only twenty years in China? Many participants in the discussion argued that the individual freedom represented by No-Fault Divorce is incompatible with Chinese culture. When Confucianism claims that the right thing to do is to put other's interests first, but individualism opposes this claim, how should people make moral judgments? Other people believed that after people lost the moral ground in their marriage and family life, it would be too easy for them to run wild in

China, where more than ninety percent of the population doesn't have religious beliefs and doesn't join any religious organizations. The latter opinion has focused on the difference in social organizations between China and Western societies which certainly explained why in only twenty years China ran so far from Confucianism

even without restrictions in marriage and family life. In April, 2001, a national survey showed that ninety-two percent of Chinese citizens insisted that the Marriage



Law of 1980 must be amended. One of the most important changes in the amendment was to take back individual rights from the parties who didn't fulfill their obligations to take care of their families. Divorce is granted after the victimized partner receives damage compensation. The parties in the wrong are those guilty of transgressions such as cohabitation with a third party, domestic violence, and maltreatment of family members. This alteration shows the trend to commit to indigenous values: people should perform their social obligations and they must pay the price for not doing so.

What can we learn here? First, it's not easy for China to import Western ideas for at least two reasons: cultural incompatibility and a significant difference in social organizations between China and Western societies. Second, China rushed into social disaster in marriage and family life by importing Western ideas without paying any attention to the cultural incompatibility, and the difference in social organizations. Third, people living in non-Western cultures have to work hard to deal with their problems instead of simply importing Western ideas.

—Fang Deng is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice



*Dr. Fang Deng's article illustrates some of the ways that cultural differences can make it difficult to adopt practices across national borders. Often, these cultural differences crop up in small, unexpected ways. One of these occurred in the preparation of this article. The editors of Bridgewater Review commonly ask authors to provide us with information about the length of the article they are submitting. It helps us plan for the space that each article can fill in the magazine. Such information has never been easier to supply, since all word processing programs come with a utility that measures the length of a document.*

*In Microsoft Word the utility is located under "Tools" and is labeled "Word count." We had asked Dr. Deng to write an article of about 1,800 words, or about 6 double-spaced typed pages, which is typical for an article that we plan to illustrate with several photographs.*

*During her preparation of the article Dr. Deng seemed frustrated by what she obviously thought was an extremely tight requirement for space. She asked how she was supposed to write about a complicated issue in such a short format. We, in turn, were confused, since this amount of space had served for a large number of faculty articles in the past. The problem was made clear only after Dr. Deng submitted her first draft, explaining that she had not been able to keep the*

*article under 5,000 words, but that she was willing to work with us to shorten it severely if we could only show her how this would work. She had done the word count we expected, and the information revealed that the article was really only 4 pages long, and was a bit short at some 1,100 words. So what was the confusion? It turned out that Dr. Deng was counting the characters in the article rather than the words, because that was what she was used to in her Chinese language articles. You see, in Chinese, each character is the equivalent in meaning to a word in English. For example, the character below left means "fire," and the one below right means "rain."*



*So Dr. Deng, quite reasonably, gave us a character count of her article, and was relieved to hear that she had a good deal more space (two pages more) to explain the issues in her article.*

# V. S. Naipaul and a Journey to Trinidad

by Arnold Girdharry



Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001, V. S. Naipaul is among the most distinguished contemporary writers as well as being one of the most controversial. Naipaul's grandparents were Hindu immigrants who left one British colony—India—to settle in another—Trinidad—during the 1800s. Along with thousands of other Indians, they arrived in the Caribbean as indentured laborers, whose travel costs were paid by their employers in return for a set number of years of work, usually on the island's sugar-cane plantations. Born and brought up in Trinidad, Naipaul revealed his intellectual gifts early on; he won a scholarship to Trinidad's best high school and, after graduation, a government scholarship to study abroad. After having earned a degree in English literature at Oxford, he remained in England to pursue a writing career. *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), his fourth published work, brought him international recognition for storytelling and stylistic virtuosity. Other major novels, including *A Bend in the River* (1979) and *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), followed.



Naipaul also writes journalistic non-fiction based on his travels in the post-colonial world. His books and essays about the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and the Indian subcontinent have won praise for the author's astuteness of observation and his eye for local color and human interest. However, Naipaul's journalism has also proved highly controversial. The harshness and cynicism of some of his writings, his often-bitter criticism of what he considers incompetent, misguided or wicked on the part of the governments and the peoples of developing countries, has offended many readers. *The*

*Middle Passage* (1963) angered a number of Trinidadians because it criticized conditions in the newly-independent colony. Many African-Trinidadians see Naipaul as the product of a Johnny-come-lately ethnicity compared to their own; Trinidadians of African origin had planted Caribbean roots long before the arrival of Indian immigrants like Naipaul's ancestors. As a result, Naipaul is still regarded by many as a displaced Indian, an inheritor of indentureship and the diasporic transformations. His bleak but insightful observations of India, including *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), *Among the Believers* (1981) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), also aroused hostility. Many Indians see Naipaul as a product of an Indian diaspora who has failed to keep up with, or has mismanaged and misinterpreted, the social and religious customs and traditions, as well as the language, of a country that remains proud of its heritage.

Naipaul has interested me for many years, not only because of his gifts as a writer, but also because of the similarity in our backgrounds. I, like Naipaul, am an Indo-Caribbean whose maternal and paternal grandmothers migrated from India to the West Indies during the 1880s. Thus, we are both part of the Indo-Caribbean diaspora, with both of us developing new lives in developed countries. Both of us lost our fathers

**Naipaul autographing his latest novel, *Half a Life*, at the Boston Public Library.**

at crucial times in our lives; Naipaul at twenty-one when he was alone at Oxford, and I at fifteen when I was a senior in a Guyanese high school. Naipaul's mother, the former Droapatie Capildeo, raised seven children by herself when Naipaul's father, Seepersad, died in 1953. My mother, Ivy, after my father, Bolton, died in 1961, rolled up her sleeves to become father and mother wrapped up in one, to care for and to oversee the proper raising of her four children.

Because of this similarity in backgrounds, and because both of us were raised by widows, Naipaul's portrayal of women is of particular interest to me. Growing up in the Republic of Guyana, formerly British Guiana, the only English-speaking country on the South American continent, and also the only continental country, because of its British colonization, grouped with the Caribbean islands, I learned through mimicking about how women should be treated, and how I should react to them in my enclosed world. My education on the way women, especially Indian women, should be regarded, came through the actions of the men I looked up to and imitated. My system of values emerged from a combination of British oppression, Indian cultural subjugation brought by immigrants from the old country, and influences from western-made movies from the 1940s through the 1960s. After reading Naipaul's Caribbean writings, visiting Trinidad, and reliving some of the experiences of most of his characters, I discovered that Indo-Trinidadian women fared no better than Indo-Guyanese women in the way they were treated by Indian males.

The British ruled the two colonies, Guyana and Trinidad, for well over a hundred and fifty years. During this time, non-whites were made to feel inferior in a variety of ways: where they could live, which schools they could attend, what jobs they could hold. Non-whites simply knew their places. As a result of this oppression by the British, non-whites (mostly Africans and Indians) began to imitate their "white masters." And how did they practice their imitation? On their supposedly weaker counterparts, of course: their women. The mistreatment of these women can be described as psychological copycatting—we tend to imitate the actions of those around us, whether it be our elders, our superiors, or our peers. Most often, parents who are guilty of child abuse have been abused as children themselves. It's all a part of the vicious cyclical ride from which some abusers fear getting off.

The typical Indian family is based on a traditional patriarchal hierarchy. The Indian migrants who came to British Guiana and Trinidad brought with them their customs, culture and religion. Most of them worked and lived on the sugar-cane plantations. Some of the men, receiving their paychecks on a Friday afternoon, would visit the nearest company "rumshop," get blinding drunk, and stay that way for most of the weekend. Hard-earned money was wasted. Family members, including wives, would be verbally and physically abused by the men in their lives. These women, caught in a lifelong trap, would stay with their marriages and their families from abusive weekend to abusive weekend. In both Guyana and Trinidad, the entertainment market was flooded with movies made in England and America. These movies, produced between the 1940s and the early 1960s, years before the women's movement had made any significant impact on western society, fed the West Indian audiences a steady diet of male dominance. There were also weekly Indian imports, with the plots of the Indian movies appearing as if they were being dispensed from the same mold, cut from the same ideological pattern: men were almost always dominant; women were almost always subservient. These stereotypical patterns in the movies continued to have great influence on a generation of men who were born into a patriarchal system, and who would find little need to change the status quo. Women in the Caribbean were kept in their submissive roles partially because of the strong influences of movie plots based on male domination.

Surfing the internet in the fall of 2000, I learned that Sir Vidia Naipaul (he had been knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1990) would be in Trinidad to advise an Indian movie company on the filming of his first book-turned-movie, *The Mystic Masseur*. Bollywood was coming to Chaguaramas, an area that was once used as a service base by the U. S. government. I thought that this might be an ideal situation to meet and possibly to interview the author himself. I would also be able to interview others who had studied Naipaul and his works, as well as to do research at the University of the West Indies' St. Augustine campus. With the aid of a grant from the BSC Foundation, I flew to Port of Spain, Trinidad, during winter break in January 2001.

Trinidad's population is a mixture of East Indians, Africans, Europeans, Chinese, native Indians and the "doughlah" (who can be compared to the American mulatto), and its culture blends customs and traditions from the island's different ethnic groups. The style of life is pretty much the same as when Naipaul left the island in the 1950s, with one major difference: econom-

The house that Naipaul grew up in, in Chaguaramas, Trinidad, nicknamed the “Lion House.”

ic growth. Trinidad is booming, thanks to the island’s oil refineries and pitch lakes, which have led to one of the strongest dollars in the Caribbean.

I was eager to find out what changes, if any, had occurred in the position of Caribbean women during the past half-century. Had the feminist movement affected their lives? During the journey, I was pleasantly surprised to see that one of the airport officials I encountered in Grenada was a woman of Indian descent. In the past, I had seen only men in such positions; the few women who worked at airports were relegated to inferior jobs. Another woman whom I spoke with was the proprietor of one of the Indian roti shops which line one of the busiest streets of Port of Spain, in the suburb of St. James. The fact that the line in front of her shop was the longest testified to the fact that she served the best roti and curry on the island. She told me that after her husband had died, she had rolled up her sleeves and gone to work. She currently employed three efficient young Indian girls to help her serve the many eager customers waiting in line. She was proud to say that her roti business was financing university educations for her children.

Another Indian woman whom I met in Trinidad had moved up the economic ladder from housemaid to business tycoon. She had married her employer, one of the largest furniture merchants on the island, and, upon his death, inherited the company. At first, Mrs. Hoosein had put the business up for sale, but two months later, she announced that the sale was off and that she had decided to run the business herself. During my first meeting with her, Mrs. Hoosein had seemed unsure of herself, and I still remember the weak handshake with which she greeted me. But within months, the former Indo-Guyanese young lady had grown into a mature and confident businesswoman.

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Ten days of traveling, researching and interviewing went by very quickly. Unfortunately, I did not get a chance to meet Sir Vidia during my visit to Trinidad. However, interviews with several people who know Naipaul, research at the University of the West Indies and, most importantly, meeting and mixing with Caribbean women, especially Indian women, increased my curiosity and understanding of Naipaul and of the women he describes, both in his novels set in Trinidad and in his three non-fictional books about India.

I discovered that the women in the Caribbean, like the women in India, have gone through a negative and wounded progression. Even though women have risen to levels of responsibility in the home and workplace that were once reserved for men only, there is an uneasy feeling in the background that the strides women have made are largely dependent on the whims of a male-dominated society and that rights that have taken Caribbean women years to fight for could evaporate quickly.

—Arnold Girdharry is Professor of English

# Climate, Research and Agriculture

James W. McKinsey, Jr.



*In the space of 176 years the Lower Mississippi has shortened itself 242 miles.*

*Therefore, any calm person who is not blind can see...that 742 years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three-quarters long, and Cairo (Illinois) and New Orleans will have joined their streets together, and be plodding along comfortably under a single mayor and a mutual board of aldermen.*

—Mark Twain  
*Life on the Mississippi, 1874*

*Prediction is very difficult, especially if it is about the future.*

—Niels Bohr

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a number of groups popularized the notion of the “Limits to Growth.” Prominent among those groups were academics associated with Washington University in St. Louis and with MIT, and a broad collection of people who called themselves the “Club of Rome.” They based their arguments primarily on three factors: rapid population growth experienced in many countries during the 1950s and 1960s; stagnant food output, and consequent near-famine, in many areas of the world in the mid-60s; and an appeal to the finite, seemingly-fixed physical quantity of petroleum and other resources [and consequently diminishing returns to labor] with which to meet the looming Malthusian challenge. They often punctuated their arguments with expressions of dismay or outrage at the unsustainable global maldistribution of economic activity and reward: that one nation, home to three percent of the world’s population, consumed one-third of the world’s energy and disproportionately depleted various other resources. Their dire prediction was imminent economic collapse, to be followed by apocalyptic ecological, social and political disaster.

Some of their advocacy became more shrill with the OPEC oil embargo of the early 1970s, held up as both proof and foretaste of the disruption to come. Yet thirty years later these dire predictions have failed to materialize and it may be that the only clubs of Rome known to

this journal’s readership are AS Roma and SS Lazio of the Premier League. Niels Bohr was right: prediction is indeed very difficult.

Most economists were skeptical of the “Limits to Growth” hysteria, because it seemed to spring from an understanding of human behavior which was mechanistic, rigidly determined: if individuals or groups have been doing something, they will continue to do the same. The analysis seemed not to rise above simple extrapolation.

In contrast, the economic approach focuses on three things: the *environment* [both opportunities and constraints, some of which are made known through prices] in which people find themselves, their *goals*, and their *choices* and behavior in pursuit of those goals. A hallmark of that approach is the idea that when the environment changes, people adjust, make different choices, change their behavior in response. Although Mark Twain was not a trained economist, he understood the adjustment process well enough to parody those who would assert that trends go on indefinitely, that behavior continues unchanged.

Each of the three factors which underlay the “Limits to Growth” arguments turned out not to have continued as the Cassandras had expected. Population growth rates moderated: the demographic transition continued its course, and birth rates declined a few decades after death rates had fallen. Quantities of resources alleged to have been fixed, limited, turned out to be responsive to scarcity-induced higher prices, as economists expect [but the impetus towards moderation and conservation, suppressed perhaps in our age of SUVs, did receive reinforcement in those times—another effect of higher prices]. And perhaps most dramatic of all, food output was far from stagnant: increases in rice and wheat productivity and output were so great in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the phenomenon was perhaps infelicitously termed the “Green Revolution.”

The story of the “Green Revolution” is instructive to us on several levels: biological, organizational and economic. Biologically, the varieties (“landraces”) of food crops selected over many generations by farmers in South and Southeast Asia and large areas of Latin America, well-adapted to highly-specific local soil, climate, pest and disease, husbandry and other conditions, had mostly reached their maximum yield. Over the previous half

century or so farmer's adaptations, primarily in higher-income, usually temperate areas, had been greatly assisted by formal research programs at agricultural universities and state experiment stations. An early success was the development of hybrid corn; other early success came in sugar cane, bananas, and various food grains. Often the breeding goal was explicitly to increase yields. But just as frequently it was to confer host plant resistance to insects, diseases, or to various abiotic stresses including drought and heat.

Significantly less progress had occurred for food crop varieties grown in Asia; with little idle land available to bring under cultivation, it appeared that food output in those areas had neared its limits. What might seem an obvious solution was to add more inputs—especially fertilizer—to each hectare of land. However, few Asian landraces were very responsive to increased nutrient input, and those that were, especially in rice, tended to become top-heavy with the extra grain, and “lodge”: fall over and rot on the ground or in the flooded paddy. But agronomists had begun to assemble and catalog collections of germplasm, samples of as many varieties of each crop as they could find worldwide, with as many different traits and characteristics as nature provided. And advances in basic biology improved the ability of crop breeders to cross varieties in many ways, attempting to combine desirable traits.

Organizationally, much of the most important early work was focused in international centers supported by major foundations and the World Bank; the two most successful early locations were CYMMYT in Mexico, dealing with wheat and maize, and IRRI in the Philippines, dealing with rice. But the work required cooperation among scientists from several disciplines, and in many locations, from international centers to national and local agricultural experiment stations, in distinct agroclimatic regions within nations. Scientists at IRRI discovered that a gene from the Taiwanese rice variety *Dee-Geo-Woo-Gen* was both easy to transfer to the popular *indica* and *japonica* rice varieties, and would convey to those varieties a much shorter, stiffer stalk and a remarkable ability to grow satisfactorily in many low-input regimes while responding very well to fertilizer applications. Some called the new variety “miracle rice”; hyperbole, to be sure, but understandable, as IRRI's first released variety [IR-8] and its descendants spread throughout South and Southeast Asia, further adapted by crosses with indige-



nous varieties performed at local experiment stations, often increasing yields by more than one third over the traditional landrace varieties, averting the specter of famine.

Economically, this is a classic tale of adaptation in response to scarcity, scarcity made known partly through an increase in food prices, scarcity which was manifested partly in a humanitarian resolve by officers of foundations and international institutions. As often happens, because of this adaptation rice and wheat output increased substantially enough that they ultimately became relatively less expensive in many places, enabling both private and public expenditures later to be redirected elsewhere, thereby accelerating more general economic development. This story is also a classic tale of a mix between public and private activity, a strong example of public programs which benefit both producers and consumers. Importantly, the private activity consisted of individual farmers independently deciding to plant the new varieties on their land; nearly all of the research and breeding and varietal development was performed by public institutions, both national and international, with almost no private firms involved in the research, breeding or seed dissemination. There were no plant patents at the time, and that absence of protection for the intellectual property represented by new plant varieties removed any incentives for private firms to engage in any related activity apart from hybrid crops [which did not produce germinable—growable—seed, thus requiring that farmers buy seeds from the inventing company every season].

The “Green Revolution” offered economists a major opportunity to participate and to study, as literally hundreds of economists played varied roles during and after the major crop breeding activities. One notable example is Robert Evenson, an economist now at Yale, who had worked at IRRI and the neighboring University of Los Baños in the early '70s. He has since informally led a loose confederation of agricultural economists around the world who have studied the economic impact of agronomic research in general, new crop varieties in particular. I have collaborated with him since the early 1980s in studying the varied but substantial impact of new crop varieties in India.

Three and four decades later, all echoes of the “Limits to Growth” seem to have faded to silence. But taking its place is widespread if diffuse concern with climate

change, fostering the fear that once again global natural forces may disrupt the planet's economies in general, and food supplies in particular.

Although most U.S. energy companies deny that anything is happening, and the rest of the Executive branch tries to squelch EPA findings, there is very strong consensus within the serious scientific community that human activity has increased the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and other so-called greenhouse gases over the past century or so to the point where the earth's climate is being affected. The impact is seen in very slowly rising mean temperatures, more volatile temperature and rainfall patterns including an evident increase in the frequency and severity of storms, and apparently some change in weather patterns such as the jet stream. Just as was true before, this increased concern sometimes spawns hysteria, as perhaps reflected in the recent movie *The Day After Tomorrow*; it sometimes also tempts people again into prediction by mere extrapolation, counting the years until coastal cities are inundated by rising sea levels as the polar ice caps melt, or counting the years until the Sahara desert, continuing to expand at recent rates, grows like Twain's Mississippi to extend from the headwaters of the Nile to the Mediterranean.

But beyond the hysteria is more restrained, more nuanced, more plausible concern. Because climate—temperature, rainfall amounts and patterns, sunlight—is fundamental to crop growth, and because therefore crops which are suited, successfully adapted, to one prevailing agroclimatic regime often perform very poorly in even slightly different regimes, it is reasonable to wonder whether global climate change would reduce food output. Numerous laboratory and greenhouse studies, supported by some mathematical models, suggest that it would, although for many reasons these studies cannot be conclusive.

Recent field evidence of the effect of climate change on agriculture comes in intriguing forms. In August botanists revealed that magnolia and dogwood trees in Boston's Arnold Arboretum were blooming five to eight days earlier than a century ago; they attributed the change to warmer spring temperatures. Ironically, at the birthplace of the "Green Revolution," botanists at IRRRI recently announced a slight decrease in the yields of specific rice varieties continually grown in their experimental plots over the past decade or two. While admitting that they were not sure of the precise biological mechanism responsible for the decreased yield, they attributed it to a small observed increase in minimum *night-time* temperatures during the early growth phases in the spring.

Economists who study climate change and its implications understand adjustment just as well as did Twain, and understand the role of agricultural research and the development of new crop varieties in that adjustment

just as well as did the economists who studied the "Green Revolution." Of course, many of the economists are the same: Evenson and I have continued to study the economic impact of research, and new crop varieties, in India in the context of climate change. We have found what we believe is compelling statistical evidence that well-organized, locally-adapted breeding programs can, and probably have begun to, mitigate harmful effects of higher temperatures and other manifestations of anthropogenic climate change.

Logic and history reinforce our evidence. The fact that varieties of rice which were selected for their optimal performance in one climate regime suffer a lower yield in another regime does not mean that average cultivated rice yields must decline as climate changes. It simply means that there is scope for continued breeding activity, continuing and more closely focusing on the decades-old experiences accumulated crossing strains of the crop which are tolerant of higher temperature with varieties exhibiting other desirable characteristics, selecting the best and releasing them for further local adaptation.

Scientists have had dramatic success with similar efforts, adapting soy beans, a very high-value crop previously suited only for warm regions such as the lower Midwest in the United States or portions of northern Brazil, making it tolerant of cooler weather and thus enabling its profuse and highly profitable growth in northern Iowa, Minnesota, and southern Brazil. The scientific challenge to breed heat tolerance into a plant is biologically no different from, nor more difficult than, the successfully-mastered challenge to breed cold tolerance into soy beans. The international collections of germplasm contain strains of rice grown in such a variety of agroclimatic regimes that many possible crosses exist. And the appearance in the 1990s in nearly every nation of plant patents has created an incentive for private seed-producing firms to devote their considerable scientific and financial resources to the task alongside the now-mature international and national research centers.

Climate is changing; farmers will adapt. National and international research systems, in some cases working alongside or competing with private seed companies, will facilitate that adaptation. With deference to Bohr, we cannot predict the exact outcome of the research and the adaptation which it fosters, but we can be confident that mere extrapolations of harm will prove incorrect.

—James W. McKinsey, Jr. is Assistant Professor of Economics

# The Socialist Roots of American Education

by John Michael Bodi



In 1889, President Benjamin Harrison appointed William Torrey Harris as U.S. Commissioner of Education, a position he held until 1906. Today, Harris is virtually unknown outside the profession of education administration, and few teachers have heard of



**William Torrey Harris.**

him. Yet Harris' educational philosophy exerted a powerful influence over the American public school system, one that is still very much in evidence today.

Harris was a follower of the German Socialist philosopher George W.F. Hegel and one of the founders of the Hegelian movement in the United States, known as the St. Louis

Movement. Along with Henry C. Brokmeyer, he established the St. Louis Philosophical Society in the early 1860s, and Harris began publishing and editing the first philosophical journal in America, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, in 1867. Many of his philosophical and pedagogical ideas were explained and elaborated in the pages of this journal.

The aim of the St. Louis Movement was to rationalize every field of activity using Hegelian philosophy as a principle of interpretation. Its founders sought to discover how Hegel's ideas applied and what form they might signify when translated into their own experience. These American Hegelians were effective in using the school as a means for molding the young to their ideas.

Through the work of William Torrey Harris, Hegelian ideas influenced the American educational system. Inherent in Hegelianism is the ideal, the idea that the perfect is knowable if not attainable. Socialism is a natural offshoot of Hegelianism because it gives hope for such an ideal to be realized. An educational system predicated on these principles strives to provide equal chances for all students.

As Commissioner of Education, Harris increased the importance of the position and advocated uniformity among all the nation's schools. In 1891, he lobbied for a bill that would provide federal monies for an "educational fund to aid in the support of public schools in the several states and territories;" in 1900 he proposed the idea of giving Civil Service Examinations to teachers; and in 1905 he suggested Presidential action regarding the issuing of bogus credentials to teachers. Harris thus laid the groundwork for the credentialing process, which is in place today.

Harris supported the kindergarten movement, which had been inaugurated in Germany by Friedrich Froebel. In 1873, with Susan Blow, another American Hegelian, he established the first permanent kindergarten in the U.S. He advocated free universities (so that many more students might have access to higher education) and communal schools, created the graded school, and broadened the curriculum to include the arts and modern history. He was instrumental in shortening the school day and year while at the same time providing more time per subject to be taught. His biggest pedagogical battle, one that he lost, was the movement to teach the "manual arts" (vocational education) in the schools.

In addition to funding the Philosophical Society, Harris became President and eventually Life Director of the National Educational Association (the most influential teachers' union then and now) from 1875 until his death in 1909, and also became President of the National Association of School Superintendents. As President of the NEA, Harris was a permanent member and chairman of what was called "The Committee of Ten." This group, later expanded to fifteen, provided educational leadership for the country at the turn of the century.

As Harris stated, "Ninety-nine out of a hundred people in every civilized nation are automata, careful to walk in the prescribed paths, careful to follow prescribed custom. This is the result of substantial education, which, scientifically defined, is the subsumption of the individual under his species. The other educational principle is the emancipation from this subsumption."

The emancipated individual is the person set free, through education, to solve the problems he/she confronts in his/her lifetime. The student, writes Harris, “must first avail himself of the wisdom of the race, and [then] learn how not to be limited by it.”

A “substantial education” is attained through the use of memory and gives the individual the methods and habits necessary to acquire the fundamentals of knowledge. The student is to “accept the authority of the teacher for the truth of what he is told, and does not question it or seek to obtain insight into the reason for its being so.”

Once an “individual or scientific education” has been acquired, however, the individual may go beyond the authority-based “substantial education.” In Harris’ view the critical problem with individual education is that the student may become “self-conceited” due to the notion that he/she has learned on his/her own without the assistance of a teacher. This causes the student to “drift toward empty agnosticism;” therefore this method of education must be built “on the safe foundations of what has been described as the education of authority.”

According to Harris, “silence, punctuality, regularity and industry are fundamental components of a ‘substantial education,’ as much as the critical study of mathematics, literature, science, and history is a part of the “education of insight.”

Today school systems are regimented and tightly organized, taxpayers and parents want accountability, and teachers and students want to teach and learn. William Torrey Harris believed that we should produce citizens who know how to follow directions, who have been exposed to a certain body of knowledge, and who have begun to understand how to fit into the society. But he also believed that American schools should “level the playing field” and allow children to realize their full potential.

Schooling in America should not just be about Harris’ views on, “silence, punctuality, and regularity” or for that matter the size of school budgets, the power of teacher unions and state-mandated tests. It is far more important, in my view, to revisit and question long-held views about public schooling. Some essential questions to be considered include:

- What should be the purposes for educating our youth today?
- How should we educate children to live in a republic with a capitalist economy?
- What do we want for our children and our society in the future?
- How does (and will) the globalization of trade and technology affect our next generations?

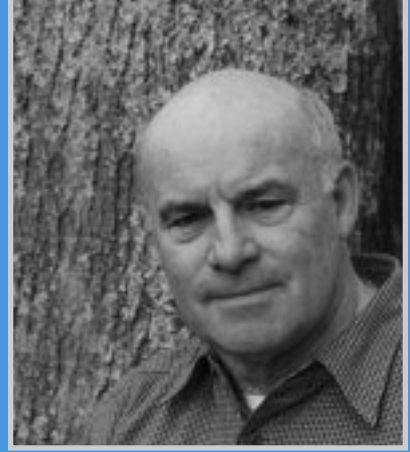
Public education today faces many serious problems that may never be solved without taking drastic action. That is why it is time to radically alter “the system.” Students should be given more autonomy to learn and to experience democracy in action. Real competition where individuals compete interactively (via technology perhaps) across schools, districts, and states could drive the curriculum. The arts should be the underlying basis of all we do. Art should be integrated into all subjects so that each of our citizens would become literate beyond reading, writing and computation. Children and teenagers should problem solve, and compete, and measure themselves (against themselves and others) in positive and productive ways.

Is the purpose of education to learn how to follow the rules? Is it to learn a specific body of knowledge? Is it to understand one’s place in society? If you agree, then Harris’ world view is alive and well, and our schools will never evolve into a learning experience that will prepare our children to: think for themselves, learn how to learn and more importantly be enthusiastic about learning.

—John Michael Bodi is Assistant Professor of Secondary Education

# Paintings

by Stephen Smalley



## *Buoys Will Be Boys*

2004, gouache and pencil on board 36" x 42"

*"As a devotee of the playing fields and popular culture, particularly baseball and rock music luminaries, I continue to develop imagery which evokes associations with "jock" or "rock" subcultures. My interest in art might be traced to the long-ago when as a young boy I would copy images found on baseball cards. Rainy days encouraged me to render in pencil the likenesses of Ted Kluszewski and Bill Bruton, seasoned performers on the diamonds around the National League.*

*I still remain most enthusiastic about the '53 Topps series—  
painted images, not high tech photos, somehow nicer, somehow richer.  
Baseball cards, as do Persian and Indian miniatures, ignite the creative spark;  
I look for such joys to continue."*



Clockwise from Left:

*Rock Hair Salon*

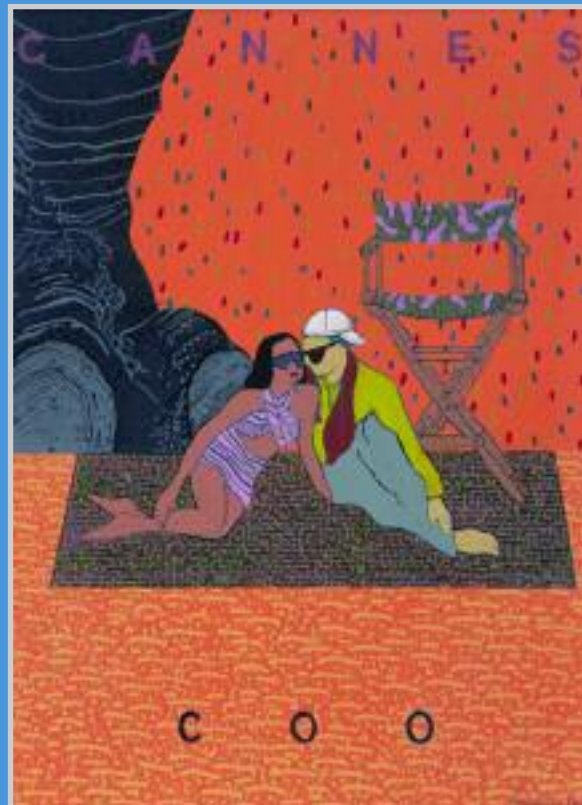
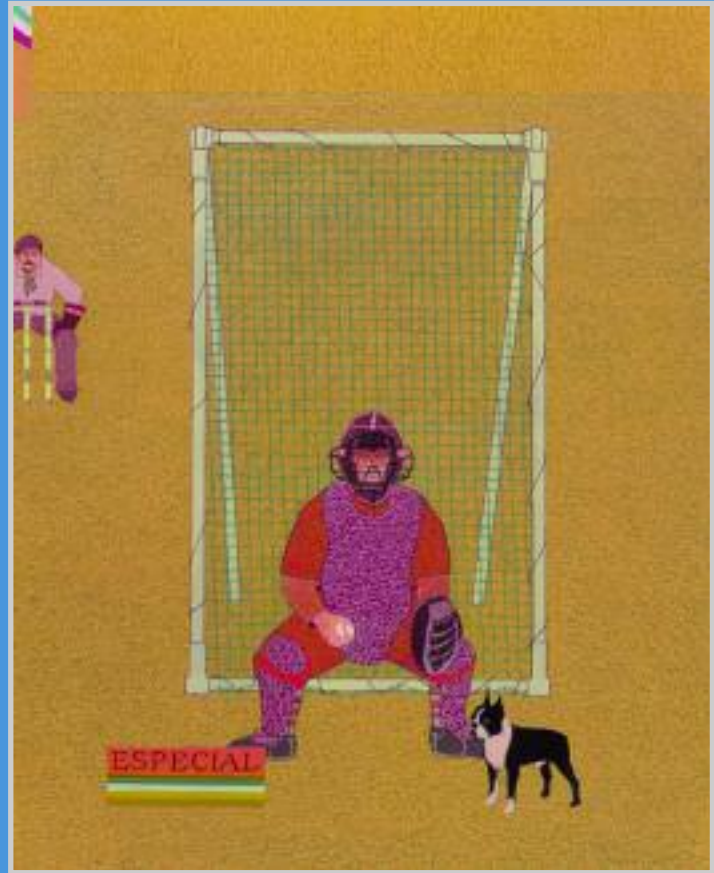
1997, acrylic on canvas 68" x 78"

*For Thine Especial Safety*

1991, acrylic on canvas 50" x 56" (detail)

*Cannes Coo*

1999, gouache on board 5 1/2" x 4"



# When I'm Sixty-Four

A Farewell Exhibition by Stephen Smalley

21 March–15 April 2005

(Reception date will be announced)

Wallace L. Anderson Gallery, BSC



After 33 years at BSC, Professor Smalley is retiring from full-time teaching at the close of the Spring '05 semester. His newest work focuses on favorite themes of baseball, rock stars, boyhood nostalgia, the cinema and a spirit of place.

The size of the painting, *My First School*, depicted on the *Bridgewater Review* cover—his first major work after he began at BSC in 1972—matches precisely the dimensions (54" x 66") of his last major painting at the College, his last school.



PAINTINGS STEPHEN SMALLEY

## *Pollyannie*

2005, acrylic on canvas 11" x 13" (in progress)

# A Postmodern Landscape

by Thomas J. Mickey



Homeowners often want a landscape to conform to what the media says an outdoor space should look like. The space is then designed according to a view which is manufactured in media representations. Images of reality are therefore blurred in modern life, which is a view some would call postmodernist. Postmodernism places importance on the constructed image or symbol as the reality.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century picturesque landscape view was the first early design theory in American landscape. Both Frederick Law Olmsted and before him horticulturalist Andrew Jackson Downing proselytized this view. The extensive lawn with a tree here and there offered an escape from daily life. The landscape was something to admire. The lines were straight. The outdoor scene was something that the actor does not participate in, but enjoys just contemplating. Thus the 19<sup>th</sup> century produced the public park with its walkways and park benches.

In the 1930s James C. Rose, Daniel Kiley, and Garrett Eckbo were important American modernists in landscape design. Their new view of landscape is one in which the actor becomes involved. It is not a landscape to admire from afar, but one in which the viewer participates. Plants, structures, and water features all serve the need of the actor. The garden becomes a room and part of the house. There are no longer straight lines leading to a central axis, but rather an asymmetry that encourages more involvement.

Eckbo said, "Our theory of landscape design for the balance of the twentieth century must be concerned with the realities of the now engrossing problems of the overall outdoor environment of the American people, rather than with abstractions about systems of axes, or poetic subjectivities about nature."

Just as the modernist view resulted in a rejection of the picturesque, a new view now called the postmodern has been applied to landscape, thus replacing the modernist approach. For the postmodernist there is no such thing as "the" way to do anything. Individuals and communities construct their own truth in ways that are significant to them. The viewer makes sense of the landscape in the context of earlier cultural experiences in which signs and symbols of power, wealth, status, and beauty, derived primarily from media images, are all important.

Today what people want in the landscape of a home, a mall, a restaurant or even an outside bar is the image of what the media present to them as important. In the capitalist world, built artifacts, whether houses or malls, are business products meant to bolster the fortunes of their builders. So the icons in constructing a space become ones familiar from the media.



The trees arrive on site in May.

**At the bar the palm trees become part of the landscape.**

Three strategies of post-modern design are: simulation, staged authenticity, and pastiche. Simulation refers to a fake world that references an exotic locale like Disneyland's Main Street. Legend, stereotype, and previous simulations are the source.

Staged authenticity claims to reconstitute something truly authentic. Boston's Faneuil Hall is staged authenticity. Though completely manufactured, it sits on historic land.

Pastiche means the use of cultural artifacts or figures to stimulate greater buying by the consumer. It is meant to divert and entertain. The boats in the water at the Venetian casino in Las Vegas are an example. They are real boats but in a completely artificial environment, constructed to give pleasure to gambling.

One might call a postmodernist landscape an absurd landscape. The absurd landscape is a humorless, intensely serious commodity that can be processed, treated, decorated like any other commodity, and often completely disposable.

Marina Bay, an oceanside community in the northeast section of Quincy, boasts the largest marina in the northeast. It enjoys a view of the Boston skyline. Known for its spectacular sunsets, Marina Bay has a boardwalk with several restaurants and shops. The outside bar called *Waterworks* is open from Memorial Day until Labor Day.

*Waterworks'* website describes itself in these words: "The northeast's largest and most exciting outdoor entertainment complex provides the ideal location for your corporate, school or social event. With a volleyball court, state of the art stage, lighting & sound, authentic Barbecue and the only palm tree grove in New England, we'll create an ideal afternoon or evening of recreation and dining!"

The palm trees in the landscape are the important feature for this essay. *Waterworks'* use of these plants will provide the material evidence for coding the landscape postmodernist.

In May the bar trucks in three dozen palm trees from Florida. They are then anchored in the soil on the grounds of the bar. They are used around the 60,000 square foot *Waterworks* property. The trees may need to be tied to stakes if they are very large trees. At the end of the season the trees are cut down and disposed of in a large dumpster brought to the property.

The photograph on page 19 shows two trees resting on a wooden rail in the back parking area next to *Waterworks*. The trees are 25 feet high. The roots are covered with a tarp.

The photograph above presents a view of the outdoor bar with some of the palm trees in place with the ocean in the distance. This is the typical scene all summer when the bar attracts hundreds of customers, especially on the weekend. The local community refers to the bar as a "twenty something hangout" and has often been critical of the loud music coming from the bar.

After the summer is over, the palm trees are cut down and taken away. The photograph at the top of page 21 shows the bar, its name *Waterworks* prominent in the front, but with no palm trees. They have all been removed to ready the property for winter. The only remaining trees are the evergreens, which, of course, can withstand the winter freeze and will still be on the site for next spring's reopening.

The final photograph shows the disposal of the trees. The palm branches from the cut-down trees rest on the sides of a large trash bin, which has been placed directly next to the bar's delivery area. The trees are entangled in trash like discarded pieces of wood, cardboard, and plastic. Within a day or so the dumpster is removed with no sign of the palm trees in the landscape other than the stumps.

The patron knows the bar is a business and the trees may be real, but this place with its exotic trees gives the sense of both simulation and authenticity. A patron might say, "It's not real but it's what I expect a tropical bar to look like."

The elements in the landscape include the large bar at the back of the property, the stage which features live music, a large dance area, a barbecue spot, and outside tables. Also on the side of the bar is a sandy area for volleyball. Several pathways connect one space to another.



**Left,**  
In the fall  
the palm trees  
are cut down.  
All that remains  
are the winter  
hardy trees  
and shrubs.

**Below,**  
Later the  
discarded palm  
trees wait in the  
dumpster for  
removal from  
the site.

The plants include yucca, evergreen, grasses, annuals, and the palm trees.

A northern climate like New England cannot winter over a tropical plant like a palm tree. The choice of this tree variety violates environmental concerns about the use of ornamentals in the landscape because they are not native plants. A central issue here, however, is that the plant is a tree, and not an annual like a 12-inch marigold.

The patron who encounters the trees in the landscape may sense the absurdity of it all. How could he/she be in the Boston area outdoors and in the midst of palm trees? In that sense one might refer to the landscape as postmodern: constructed to give the experience of another climate. The tree is a symbol, derived from the media, of what tropical means (e.g. ads for rum often have a tropical island as an image). It's a representation of a representation.

The choice of palm trees plays into the media image of what 'tropical' means. Though tropical can be expressed in many ways, the landscape designer wants to use the expectations of the actor in the scene. In a postmodern approach to landscape design the media dictate the choice of plant material.

Finally, the patron has no idea of what happens to the palm trees at the end of the season. The plants become disposable.

Technology of course has made the delivery of these trees from a warm climate to a cold climate possible. A postmodern view of landscape proposes an increased control over nature symbolized in these palm trees.

If one accepts the argument that a landscape design incorporates the cultural values of a period, the choice of palm trees in a bar located in a northern climate is not far fetched. Modern capitalism presents the iconography today, especially through the media. *Waterworks* is simply responding to what the media represents as tropical.



In the choice to use palm trees on the site, the three iconographic strategies proposed by Sternberg were incorporated: simulation, staged authenticity, and pastiche. Simulation refers to the palm trees as an artificial environment that was created by the landscape designer to look real. Staged authenticity means the trees were planted as a tree should be, but they were put in a commercial area whose use for them would be only three months. Pastiche refers to the choices in the landscape to encourage greater buying on the part of the consumer. In this case the feeling that one would get in this setting of being in the tropics would hopefully increase sales, because it is "the only bar like it on the East coast."

Before the onslaught of media icons came from a culture's tradition and history. Today icons of landscape may come from liquor and travel advertising. Thus in postmodernism media icons can become the motivation for landscape design.

—Thomas J. Mickey is Professor of Communication Studies

# News from CART

(Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching)

## CART TEACHING AND RESEARCH FELLOWS

*Two new fellowship positions have been established to assist faculty members in their research and teaching. Professor Henry Vandenburg of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice has been named as CART Research Fellow, and Professor John Marvelle of the Department of Elementary Childhood Education has been appointed CART Teaching Fellow, both for the 2004-2005 academic year.*



HENRY VANDENBURGH

As CART Research Fellow, Professor Vandenburg is responsible for encouraging and supporting faculty research. Hank, as he likes to be known, has already arranged several Brown Bag lunchtime sessions, informal meetings designed to provide a forum for participants who wish to share experiences related to their research. Topics discussed so far include techniques for getting the writing process under way, coping with the rejection of a manuscript, and composing an effective cover letter. In addition to the Brown Bag sessions, Professor Vandenburg is holding a series of research seminars, each one with a panel consisting of faculty members possessing particular kinds of expertise. For example, one seminar focuses on writing and publishing textbooks, another on scholarly monographs and a third on writing for refereed journals. In addition, Professor Vandenburg is available to consult with faculty members individually.

Professor Vandenburg's own research background is wide and varied. He is the author of a sociology textbook, *Deviance*, as well as of many book chapters and articles. He has presented papers at numerous conferences, and has served as a reviewer and referee for sever-

al journals. Having joined the BSC faculty in the fall of 2003, Professor Vandenburg was soon impressed with the high quality of Bridgewater's "world-class" faculty. He approves of the fact that the College encourages its faculty to pursue all kinds of research and to seek a wide variety of outlets, in contrast to the one-pointed research prevalent in some other institutions.

Professor Vandenburg did not begin his professional life in the academic world. He worked for several years as a psychiatric technician, then as a health care manager, before enrolling in the Ph.D. program in Sociology at the University of Texas. Drawing on his knowledge of the health care industry, he focused his research on medical sociology and wrote his dissertation on "Organizational Deviance in For-Profit Psychiatric Hospital Business Practices." "Organizational deviance," Professor Vandenburg explains, refers to fraud practiced by organizations; his thesis analyzed unethical referral practices and kickbacks to doctors. For example, adolescent psychiatrists in Texas were often furnished stipends of as much as \$20,000 per month to provide 20 or so teenagers for admission to a psychiatric hospital. Medical sociology continues to be one of his main interests, and he has been asked to write a textbook in that field.

Having helped guide several students through the writing of M.A. theses, Professor Vandenburg is aware of the kinds of problems that typically occur in scholarly writing. Writer's block, he says, is very common, stemming from the fear of failure. He recalls one student in a master's degree program research course who wrote and re-wrote the first page of his thesis, trying to make it perfect. I told him to "make it horrible," Professor Vandenburg says, "I insisted that he just keep writing." The student was finally able to produce a successful thesis. Another common problem is coping with revision. When a paper submitted to a journal is rejected or sent back for revision, the author's first reaction is often anger at the referees. "The writer has to overcome the initial reaction of 'I hate them,'" Professor Vandenburg counsels. He advises putting the manuscript away in a desk drawer for a week before looking at it again. Having calmed down, the author can then decide whether to send his paper to another journal or to attempt the required revisions. If the author chooses to revise, Professor Vandenburg suggests, it's a good idea to compose a cover letter to send with the resubmitted manuscript, explaining in detail exactly what has been done to satisfy the referees' criticisms.



JOHN MARVELLE

Professor Marvelle comes to the position of Teaching Fellow with many years of classroom experience and a longstanding interest in enhancing student learning. At BSC, he has worked with teachers-in-training and has co-taught with members of several academic departments, including Biology, Mathematics and Computer Science and Special Education. During his eight years as department chair, Professor Marvelle worked with his colleagues to design syllabi, to develop new teaching strategies and incorporate new technologies, and to identify “outcomes.”

In his role as CART Teaching Fellow, Professor Marvelle has conducted two workshops with a very practical focus: the first, “Difficult Students,” addressed the challenges posed by such students and suggested strategies for handling them; the second, “Revising Your Syllabus,” analyzed syllabus construction, including the most effective ways of explaining requirements and grading schemes, as well as identifying outcomes. Professor Marvelle has also worked with individual BSC faculty members to help shape and improve methods of classroom teaching and assessment.

Another key project for Professor Marvelle is a peer coaching program. Participants in the program partner with colleagues to explore and improve teaching skills by observing and coaching one another, using a non-evaluative strategy. Observing one another’s classes and sharing ideas, faculty members seek ways to become more effective teachers. One key aspect of peer coaching is that participants generate their own questions. For example, an instructor might ask her peer “coach” to

observe which students she is actually addressing in the classroom: Is she speaking to everyone in the class? Or is she focusing on those students who raise their hands? How many students are taking notes? When teachers formulate the questions, Professor Marvelle has learned, they are especially interested in the answers. He hopes to establish a community of faculty members who meet on a regular basis to discuss learning and teaching.

Professor Marvelle emphasizes the fact that his work is completely independent of the teaching evaluations that are part of the tenure and promotion process. Nonetheless, he is aware that his new position has pitfalls. Being overly aggressive, appearing to lecture colleagues on how they ought to teach, he could easily arouse resentment rather than winning co-operation. “My real goal,” he says, “is not to be the last Teaching Fellow.”

The challenge of engaging students in their own learning has absorbed Professor Marvelle’s attention for many years. He rejects the notion that teaching is a collection of gimmicks. Students will be more engaged, he argues, if they have a reason for learning and, in his own teaching, Professor Marvelle always tries to provide this kind of motivation. For one recent project, students in an education class were assigned to interview teachers who are working to include children with special needs in their classrooms. Their mission was to gather responses to a single, basic question: “What does someone need to know to do your job?” Having completed their interviews, the students understood what they needed to know to be successful teachers far better than if they had read about the subject in a textbook.

*Bringing enthusiasm and expertise to their new positions, Professors Vandenburg and Marvelle provide a valuable resource for BSC faculty. They invite their colleagues to contact them, either for supportive research advice and pre-reading (Professor Vandenburg) or to talk about learning and teaching in the college classroom and to suggest ways to build our community of learners (Professor Marvelle).*

# Cultural Commentary

## “If You Liked the Book, You’ll Love the Tour”: Seeing Italy with Dante

by Barbara Apstein

Fans of Jane Austen journey to Derbyshire to inhabit, for a few days, the landscapes and villages where Mr. Darcy met Elizabeth Bennet. Admirers of Dan Brown’s *Angels and Demons* explore St. Peter’s Basilica and search Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland for secret signs that might direct them to the Holy Grail. Visiting the places described in favorite books is a way of extending the pleasure of reading, of delving more deeply into an author’s world.

A literary tour focusing on Dante involves some problems. Because the *Divine Comedy* was completed almost 700 years ago, very little remains of the Italy Dante knew. In addition, Dante’s account of his journey through the three realms of the Christian afterlife—hell, purgatory and paradise—can be dauntingly difficult to read. In order to understand what is going on, readers must continually interrupt the narrative flow to consult the footnotes. We must acquaint ourselves with details of 14<sup>th</sup> century Tuscan political intrigue and learn the identities of the participants, look up biblical and mythological allusions, understand the rudiments of medieval astronomy and philosophy, and note the verbal echoes of Virgil, Lucan and Statius—all of which Dante’s early readers would no doubt have grasped on their own. Virginia Woolf, who was willing to make the necessary investment of time, noted in her diary on September 24, 1930: “I am reading Dante...I take a week over one canto. No hurry.” Since the *Comedy* consists of 100 cantos, reading it at the rate Woolf suggests would take almost two years!

A trip to Italy provides a good opportunity for the beginning reader of Dante to bring some of the footnotes to life and gain a deeper understanding of the artistry of his unique poem. Dante’s remarkable visual memory and his intimate knowledge of Italian geography emerge in many parts of the *Comedy* in precise and occasionally stunning ways.

For the tourist who wants to learn about Dante, Florence, the poet’s hometown, is a logical starting point. During the Middle Ages, as we learn from the *Comedy*, the city was divided into warring factions, somewhat like contemporary Iraq, and Dante, ultimately finding himself on the losing side, was banished for

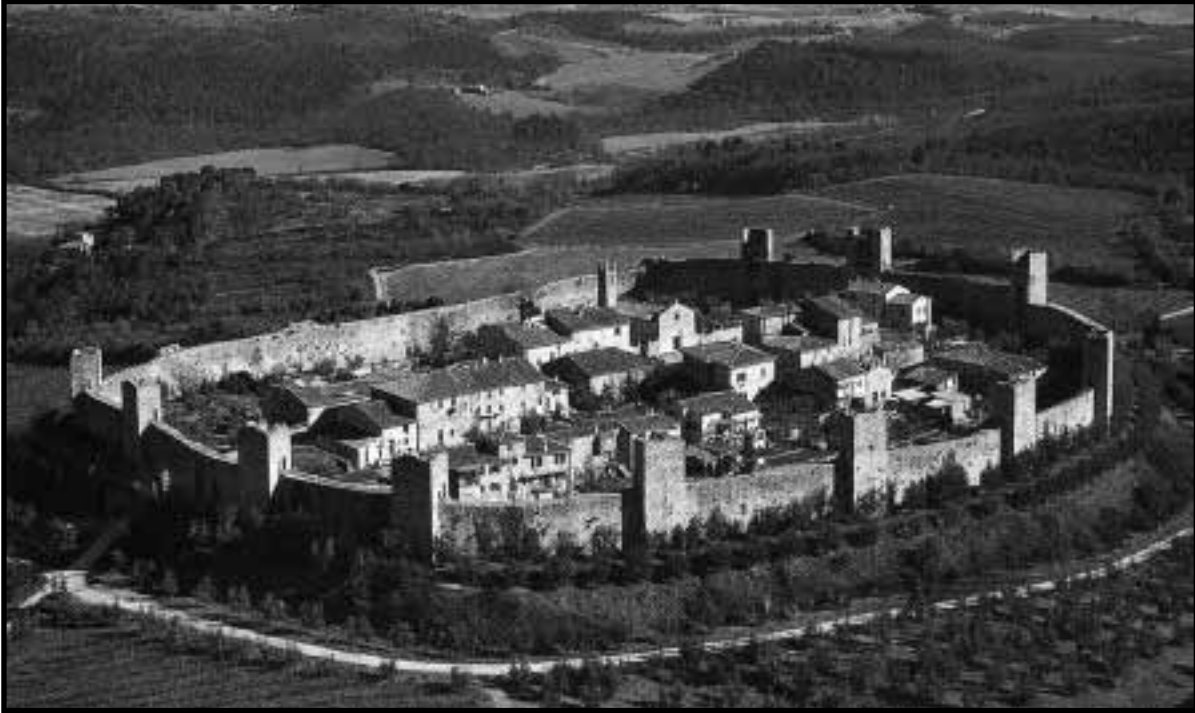
life. His love for his native city and the anguish of his 20-year exile are central to the autobiographical narrative that runs through the *Comedy*.

The tourist’s challenge is to locate what remains of the Florence Dante knew in a city where almost all the famous buildings—the Uffizi Gallery, the Pitti and the other Renaissance palaces, the Duomo (cathedral), even Giotto’s campanile (bell tower)—were constructed after the poet’s death. The Medici, Michelangelo—they all came later.

The Dante-oriented visitor can get some sense of medieval Florence in the district around Via Dante Alighieri, a neighborhood of winding streets and narrow alleys. The Casa di Dante, which houses documents relating to the poet’s life and that of his family, who were members of the ancient Florentine aristocracy, was closed during my visit—tourists in Italy get used to finding the sites they’d planned to see closed for cleaning, renovations, or unspecified reasons. Just down the street, however, the tiny parish church of St. Margherita was open; it contains the tombs of members of the Portinari family including that of Beatrice, the young woman whose divine intervention, as recounted in the *Divine Comedy*, initiated Dante’s journey. The Castagna Tower, where the priors who governed the city once met (Dante, who was politically active in Florence, had served a term as a prior), also survives. The medieval town was small—just a few blocks from Via Dante Alighieri to the center, the Ponte Vecchio, Duomo, and Baptistery. The San Giovanni Baptistery, with its white and green marble facade and the stunning mosaics within, is one of the few tourist attractions remaining that Dante mentions in his poem (he calls it “my beautiful Saint John”) and that appears today much as it would have in 1300. Ghiberti’s famous bronze doors had not yet been created. The Baptistery faced the relatively modest Romanesque church of St. Reparata, which was torn down and replaced by the black and white striped Duomo familiar to contemporary visitors.

Although it is hard to imagine the world Dante inhabited amid the congested, tourist-saturated streets of today’s Florence, the text of the *Comedy* is full of vivid and precise descriptions of many places in Italy that have changed very little. To make the unknown—the

## Monteriggioni.



physical realities of hell, purgatory and heaven as he imagined them—fully available to his readers, and to convey the hardship of the journey itself, Dante frequently draws on familiar landscapes. His descriptions of these places characteristically take the form of extended (sometimes called epic) similes: they begin with “Like” (in Italian, “Come” or “Qual è”) and conclude with “so” or “such was” (“così” or “cotal”). Thus, the desolate, rock-strewn slope down which Dante and Virgil, his guide, must climb to enter the seventh circle, where the Violent against their Neighbors are punished (Inferno XII) is like Li Slavini di Marco (the Slides of Mark), a landslide of fallen rocks on the bank of the river Adige, near the town of Rovereto. The rough and tangled thickets of the wood of the suicides (Inferno XIII) remind Dante of the area between the river Cecina in the Maremma and the town of Corneto, a district of marsh and forest in southern Tuscany. As Dante and Virgil complete their tour of the Violent, they hear the deafening roar of a waterfall, which is like the cataract that “thunders [the Italian verb, “rimbomba,” sounds thunderous] from the mountain in a single leap” above the monastery at San Benedetto delle Alpi about 25 miles from Florence (Inferno XVI). “You may think I’m making all this up” Dante seems to be telling his reader, “but it really happened.”

Some of the places Dante describes in these extended similes are tourist attractions, which helps explain why they have been preserved. One such site is the walled

town of Montereiggione (or Monteriggione), situated on a hill eight miles north of Siena. Its surrounding wall and eleven of its original fourteen square towers are intact and look much as they did in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A steep path leads up to the town’s main gate. What Dante, even with his vivid imagination, could not have foreseen, is the large parking lot and the cafes and gift shops that surround the main square.

After he has descended to the ninth and last circle, the central pit of hell, Dante discerns, through the dark air, what appear to be the high towers of a city. Virgil informs him that they are not towers, but giants, encased in the pit from the navel downward, and Dante, drawing nearer, writes, “my error fled from me, my terror grew”

*For as, on its round wall, Montereiggione  
is crowned with towers, so there towered here,  
above the bank that runs around the pit,  
with half their bulk, the terrifying giants,  
whom Jove still menaces from Heaven when  
he sends his bolts of thunder down upon them.*

—(Inferno XXXI, lines 40-45;  
Mandelbaum translation)



Dante's giants originate in the Bible and in Greek mythology; they include Nimrod, King of Babylon, who was believed in the Middle Ages to have ordered the construction of the Tower of Babel, and the Greek Ephialtes and Briareus, two giants who attacked Mount Olympus. Driving or bicycling toward Monteregegione today, with this passage in mind, it is easy to imagine the terror one might feel if these towers suddenly began to move and were revealed to be gigantic living creatures.

Another Dante simile refers to an even more popular tourist attraction, the Ponte degli Angeli (Bridge of Angels) in Rome. In the 8<sup>th</sup> circle, among the Fraudulent, Dante sees two lines of sinners, the seducers and panderers, lashed by horned demons with enormous whips, moving in opposite directions. He helps us visualize this traffic pattern by comparing it to a scene he may well have witnessed:

*...in the year of Jubilee, the Romans,  
confronted by great crowds, contrived a plan  
that let the people pass across the bridge,  
for to one side went all who had their eyes  
upon the Castle, heading toward St. Peter's,  
and to the other, those who faced the Mount.*

—(Inferno XVIII, lines 28-33)

The Ponte degli Angeli dates back to the era of the Emperor Hadrian (136 A.D.); it crosses the Tiber in front of "the Castle"—the Castel Sant' Angelo—which Hadrian originally had built as a mausoleum and which became a fortress in the Middle Ages. The bridge is now adorned with statues of twelve baroque angels, the work of Bernini added three centuries later (1667), but basically both bridge and castle are much as they would have appeared around 1300.

The event Dante refers to, the papal Jubilee, was instituted by Pope Boniface VIII to celebrate the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christ's birth. Boniface offered to pardon the sins of all who had confessed and were truly penitent, and who would, during the course of the year, visit continuously for 30 days the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul. (For non-Romans, only 15 days of continuous visits were required). This was an offer that few could refuse, and hundreds of thousands of people from all over Europe converged on Rome and trekked back and forth between the two churches. To go from St. Peter's Basilica (then a much smaller and less impressive building than the present one, which was not constructed until the Renaissance) to St. Paul's, 3 miles away, requires crossing the Tiber, and the volume of traffic was so great, according to contemporary accounts, that the bridge was divided by a barrier, with those going toward the Vatican on one side and those returning on the other. The idea of a divided highway was clearly novel enough in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century for Dante to comment on it. Standing on the bridge today, engulfed by tourists, it is easy to imagine even greater numbers crossing back and forth, confident that their sins would be forgiven.

While Dante's comparison shows how the two files of sinners looked, his simile also raises questions in the reader's mind. What did Dante think of Boniface's Jubilee? Did he believe that traveling back and forth between two churches every day for two weeks could guarantee salvation? The ironically paralleled traffic patterns of the living salvation-seekers on the bridge

with those of the damned sinners below is too obvious to miss. Pope Boniface VIII is one of the *Comedy's* villains; in fact, in the circle of hell where the Simoniacs (sellers of church offices) are punished, Dante the pilgrim is mistaken for Boniface himself by one of his papal predecessors, Pope Nicholas III.

Another suggestive simile evokes the Church of San Miniato al Monte in Florence. To convey the steepness and narrowness of the stairs leading from the first terrace of the mountain of Purgatory, the level of the Proud, to the second, that of the Envious, he explains:

*As on the right, when one ascends the hill  
where—over Rubaconte's bridge—there stands  
the church that dominates the well-ruled city,  
the daring slope of the ascent is broken  
by steps that were constructed in an age  
when record books and measures could be trusted,  
so was the slope that plummets there so steeply  
down from the other ring made easier;  
but on this side and that, high rock encroaches.*

—(Purgatory XII, lines 100-108)

The Romanesque church of San Miniato al Monte, situated on a hill across the Arno from Florence's historic center, provides a picture-postcard view of the city. The bridge leading most directly to the church, the Rubaconte in Dante's time, is now called Ponte alle Grazie. The narrow staircase he refers to does not exist today; instead, there is a wide flight of steps constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But the church's facade—its 12<sup>th</sup> century west front, with geometric motifs in green and white marble—is the same one Dante would have seen. He would also recognize the inlaid floor and most of the frescoes and mosaics inside, although modern tourists have the advantage in viewing them: as in the chapels of other dimly lit churches, visitors can turn on an electric light for a few minutes by inserting a euro. [Dante wouldn't, however, have seen a Volvo filled with white-robed Cistercian monks pull up in front of the church, as it did during my visit.] This passage is heavily ironic: Florence was, in Dante's view, anything but "well ruled." The words "record books and measures" allude to two famous scandals involving graft and corruption. In one of these, the Commissioner of Salt, a member of the noble Chiaramonte family in charge of the salt monopoly, greatly profited from selling with a dishonest measure. It is one of Dante's many bitter denunciations of contemporary Florence, mingled with longing for an earlier, purer, time. This recurring motif is finally given full expression when Dante meets his ancestor, Cacciaguida, in paradise and is told of the decline of Florence and its noble families—the Chiaramonte included—who had once been respected.

**Left, Ponte degli Angeli in Rome.**

**Below, San Miniato in Florence.**



Visiting just a few of the places described in the *Divine Comedy* provides the reader with new points of entry into this endlessly fascinating poem. Drawn back to Dante's text, we re-read the footnotes, this time more slowly. We begin to see how artfully the many threads of this poem are woven into a single pattern, and we move toward a firmer grasp of the essential unity of Dante's world, what the scholar Erich Auerbach called his "figural point of view," through which all earthly phenomena are revealed as part of the divine plan. Nothing is haphazard or accidental. Every soul Dante encounters has a specified place in God's order, and the city of Florence, like all earthly creations, is ever-changing, subject to the ups and downs of Fortune. The visible foreshadows the invisible; the landscapes of earth prefigure the geography of the afterlife. The towers of a walled town, crowds of people walking across a bridge, the steep, narrow path leading to a church—Dante's world is a forest of symbols waiting to be entered by the reader-tourist.

—Barbara Apstein is Professor of English  
and Associate Editor of the Bridgewater Review

# Computers in the Classroom

by William C. Levin

Whatever your age, at some time during your education a new technology changed the way you were taught and the way you learned. Some of these innovations, like the ball point pen and loose-leaf binder, have only made things slightly more convenient. Others have had much greater impact. The first electric typewriter was built by Thomas Alva Edison in the United States in 1872, and its widespread use became common starting in the 1950s. By the late 1960s, the photocopier was becoming an affordable and efficient replacement for the slow (and messy) mimeograph machine. At least at the college level, photocopying is indispensable to teaching.

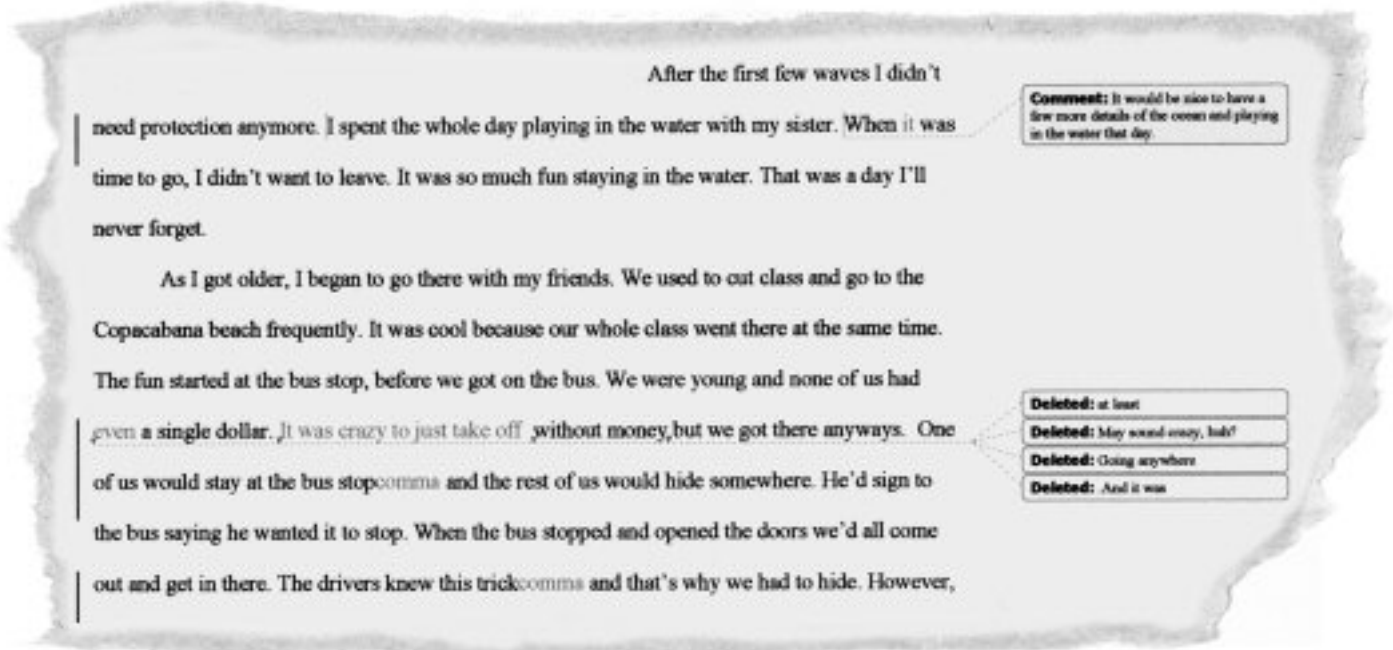
More recently, computer technology promises to dwarf all innovations, save the printing press, in its influence on American education. From word processing to data analysis, from e-mail to the publication and retrieval of information on the internet, the potential of computers to revolutionize education is apparent. But what is not at all apparent is how this technology will be integrated into our schools. The history of the adoption of innovation demonstrates that the process is far from predictable. For example, from its beginning in the 1950s, television was predicted to be a revolutionizing force in American education. It certainly revolutionized the way we get news and entertainment, but it has never gained a serious foothold in our schools except as a way of showing films. If computers are to have the impact on education that seems inevitable, educators at all levels of schooling will have to discover the ways in which they can be used.

At Bridgewater State the process of the integration of computers has been under way for many years. In the 1960s, Bridgewater faculty and administrators conducted data analysis and managed information using an IBM 360 that was housed in Boston, connecting to it via remote card readers located on campus. Perhaps there were some visionaries who imagined using computers in teaching at Bridgewater, but at first computers were limited to use for research and administration. It was not until the last decade that computers were brought to the campus in really large numbers. Now there is a computer on the desk of every faculty member, and essentially every classroom has computer capability, either with a permanent installation or a rolling cart

with computer and projection equipment. The entire campus has been equipped for wireless internet connection with very few blank spots in the coverage. The equipment is here in full measure, but what about the use of this technology in our teaching and learning?

In his studies of the ways in which innovations become adopted in societies, Everett M. Rogers recognized that the first to use innovations are their inventors, a very small proportion of the population, which he estimated at 2.5%. These inventors, while often independent and adventurous, typically are not well integrated into the social structures in which their innovations may have wide application. According to Rogers, for innovations to be tested in practical social settings requires the participation of people he called "early adopters." At Bridgewater, one such early adopter of computer technology in the classroom is Dr. Lee Torda of the Department of English.

In the spring of 2001, BSC received a Board of Higher Education grant to wire the campus for computers. One part of the grant called for integration of computers into teaching here, and Bill Davis, head of information technology on the campus, began looking for professors who would be interested in teaching courses using computer technology. Professors Anne Doyle and Garland Kimmer of the English Department were among the first who volunteered; they proposed a pilot project integrating laptop computers into freshman writing classrooms. Shortly thereafter, Professor Lee Torda, Coordinator of the Writing Program at Bridgewater, joined the laptop initiative. Though you might imagine that early adopters would be likely to love new technologies and to have special talent with them, this was not the case with Dr. Torda. A self-professed "non-techy," she had concluded early on that teaching with computers was the inevitable wave of the future, and that she might as well be involved at the beginning. In addition, she felt strongly that our students deserve to have the same technological training and experiences that students at elite colleges and universities would have.



**Comment:** It would be nice to have a few more details of the ocean and playing in the water that day

**Deleted:** at least  
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It has now been three years since Dr. Torda began to use computers in her beginning level composition courses. At first students were nervous about this new way of learning. They were often savvy about computer operation for e-mail, internet browsing and entertainment, but they were now being asked to learn how to use software such as sophisticated word processing utilities to submit and work on their writing. As a transitional device, Dr. Torda had students write in class by hand, mainly because they were used to it. But after a few classes they had begun to learn not only how to write on the computers, but how to edit and submit rewritten work. Their typing skills also improved.

One of the clearest examples of the advantage of computers in teaching writing is how they help students and teachers edit class writing assignments. It quickly became apparent in Dr. Torda's class that an electronic draft of a writing assignment could be rewritten with much less effort than with a paper copy. Just copy the file to be worked on with a new name, make your changes and resubmit. There is no need to rewrite or retype the parts of the original that were fine, and the original version is still available for comparison with the new essay. In fact, over a series of drafts, the evolution of an essay can be traced. Any decent word processor has as one of its utilities the ability to compare drafts and highlight the differences between them.

From Dr. Torda's point of view, correcting writing on computer was, after some practice, also much easier. Using an editing routine contained within the word

processing software (in this case, Microsoft Word) she found that she could make her corrections and suggestions to student essays faster and more clearly than she had been able to do by hand. Printed with this article is a sample of the way Dr. Torda has used this program in one of her composition classes. The sample reproduces part of an essay submitted by one of her students that has been edited by Dr. Torda. Notice that the editing and accompanying comments are much easier to follow than is usually the case when teachers have to find space between lines or in the margins of paper to fit their editing work.

Of course, this is just one of the many uses for computers in teaching writing that Dr. Torda has employed. She has encouraged her students to use the computer as a tool to improve as readers. For example, students have experimented with the analysis of "fan fiction" like that posted by fans of J. K. Rowling's novels on Harry Potter web sites. The boundary between author and reader appears to be changing. In addition, access to information that can be used in one's writing has been revolutionized by the internet.

As of the academic year 2004/5, all first year students are required to have laptop computers. They are configured to have access to the internet by wireless connection all across campus. It is now possible for Dr. Torda to have students writing in class and, while in the middle of an essay, interrupt the writing to look for a specific

*The following is a sample of "fan writing" taken from a Harry Potter web site on the internet. The site is called MuggleNet. This sample was written by a fan whose pen name is Goddess, and begins chapter one of eighteen chapters. As of late November, 2004, the site posted the work of over 1,000 fan authors, and had already published a conventional (non-electronic) book of selected fan writing entitled The Plot Thickens: Harry Potter Investigated by Fans for Fans. It is available for purchase on Amazon.com among other places. So much for the line between author and reader.*

Harry Potter and the Vision of Light, By Goddess

*Chapter One—The Unexpected Visitors*

*Evening had begun to fall on Privet Drive when large raindrops began dropping from the sky to signify the first rainfall in weeks. The trees seemed to sigh in relief and the thick smell of wet ground rose into the air. A teenage boy sat quietly in a tree that overlooked the neighbourhood of Privet Drive. He brushed his dark, untameable hair out of his green eyes and smiled, for he knew that the rain would anger his least favourite people in the world—the Dursleys. Just as he thought this, he swore he could hear a roar of anger coming from the window below him. Harry Potter was far from being like any normal boy his age. For one thing, he had been home for summer holidays for only two short weeks, and already he was wishing he were back at school. This was because he lived with the Dursleys of number four Privet Drive—his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon and their son Dudley. Whenever they looked at him, they would utter sounds of disgust under their breath and pretend as though he was not there. This was because Harry was something that they could not stand in the least bit—a wizard.*

ic bit of information on the internet. That information, with proper attribution, can then be incorporated into the essay either in the form of a direct quotation or the student's paraphrase. Of course, part of the teaching here involves the ability to evaluate the authority of the internet source. Dr. Torda has spent a good deal of time distinguishing for students between internet sites that are worth using and those that are not, just as traditionally published (paper) sources need to be evaluated.

As readers of the *Review* have already discovered, computers are being used in teaching across the campus. Chemistry displays complex molecules in three dimensional form. Earth Science maps population densities, traffic flow and land uses for regional cities and communities. Biology tracks the health of river and marsh sys-

tems in Southeastern Massachusetts. Sociology and Criminal Justice conduct statistical analysis of national surveys and of crime data obtained from university and government sources online. Art students create electronic "canvasses" impossible to produce with traditional materials. There seems to be no limit to the potential for the use of computers in the classroom, and the learning of writing is just one fundamental area of education that is certain to benefit.

—William C. Levin is Professor of Sociology and Associate Editor of the *Bridgewater Review*

# Cultural Commentary

## Won for All and All for Won

by William C. Levin

I was on my way to work at 8:30 AM on Thursday, the 28th of October, 2004 with my passenger side window opened and the radio spilling happy Red Sox news all over the place. The night before the Sox had won the World Series and “Red Sox Nation” had 86 years of frustrated ambition to wash away in a flood of self-congratulations. I was smiling.

A pickup truck pulled up to the light next to me, and the driver looked over. He must have heard my radio, because he raised his Dunkin’ mug in celebration, grinned and nodded to me. We had done it! I had never seen that guy before, and would likely never see him again, but it did not matter. For the moment we belonged to the same club, and we were WINNERS! (Insert Howard Dean maniac scream here. “EEEEEEEEHAH!”)

The memory of this little scene stayed with me for a few days as fans of the Red Sox pounded each other on their backs, traded stories of where they were when the deal was sealed, and wore Red Sox gear no matter what the requirements of the setting. In the financial district there were serious looking briefcase-toters wearing Sox jackets with their ties. Women in their eighties wore Sox caps and became popular interview subjects for the local news. Even lawns sprouted signs of congratulations for the Red Sox (and curses for the Yankees) that overwhelmed the political signs of the season.

After a week my wife had had enough. I had called an old friend from Manhattan, using the Red Sox win as an excuse to catch up with him, and do just a little gloating. (“Yeah, we won, but you guys did have us down three games to none in the ALCS. Shame about Rivera, though.”) After I hung up Jeanne quoted that great sage,

Jerry Seinfeld. “Remember that Seinfeld when he makes fun of George?” she asked. “George is watching a game on TV and suddenly jumps up screaming, WE WON! WE WON! Jerry looks up and him and says ‘No. They won. You watched.’ ”

She was right. They won. We watched.

And this is a fact that a sociologist like me should have kept in mind. The problem was that I was a fan first, and a sociologist a long way second. But now I’ve got my wits, such as they are, about me again, and I’m beginning to understand how extremely interesting this whole Red Sox Nation stuff really is, especially from the point of view of a sociologist. It turns out that the sense of belonging that we are still enjoying in the wake of the World Series win fits the two main definitions of community that sociology generally uses. This means that the euphoria may last a very long time. Sorry, Jeanne.

Sociologists have been fascinated by the idea of community, which we most often define as a social grouping that gives people a feeling of belonging. Originally, a community was understood in only geographic terms. That is, the social grouping forming a community had to be people who lived in the same place. For example, the suburban town where I was raised on New York’s Long Island, would be seen as a “place community.” Our sense of belonging was rooted in a number of factors. There was a way of life that defined us. For example, it was very much a suburb from which most folks com-



muted to Manhattan for work each morning. We had lots of shared norms and values such as our strong commitment to the importance of education and to the “neat lawns and weekend-barbeques” sort of life. We even had recognized boundaries, though they had nothing to do with the more traditional markers such as rivers or changes in terrain. Instead, there were white signs on our borders that said “Entering Hewlett” on one side and, “Entering Lawrence” (for example) on the other.

Clearly, the Red Sox have been a community of place, and are even more so now. Though you can get into a lively argument in any sports bar by asking where the geographic boundaries of Red Sox Nation lie, it is beyond question that Boston is at its core, and Fenway Park is dead center. They are emphatically the Boston Red Sox, though fans regularly travel from across New England to get to games, including regular season games. (I never was crazy about the name New England Patriots. It seemed to dilute the community feeling.) During the World Series, fans were interviewed who had flown across the country, and from around the globe to see the Sox win it all. They were from here, and they were returning to reclaim their membership in the community. Given the wide area claimed for the community of Red Sox fans, it became something of a defining issue to distinguish Boston from New York. Everything from the Canadian border to central Connecticut would be Boston, and below that boundary would be New York or Philadelphia. Big area, but the bigger the title, the greater the area of citizenship it can encompass. I understand that after the Sox won the World Series, fans were seen in Sox gear in Tokyo, Madrid and (of course) throughout Central and South America. Such a widely spread community stretches the idea of community of place beyond its original capacity. So we need another idea of community that can move beyond traditional ideas of place. No problem.

Sociologists have long recognized that people can be bound together by a common set of beliefs or practices, even if they may not live near one another. Examples of such “communities of interest” include civil libertarians, model helicopter makers and fliers, Mothers against Drunk Driving (MADD), veterans of WWII, conservatives against gay marriage and liberals for it, fans of the Grateful Dead and bird watchers. For many years these communities of interest were limited in their abilities to form or persist, mainly by the difficulties of staying in touch by mail and telephone. Recently, the ability of like-minded individuals to communicate has been revolutionized by the internet. Now it takes just a few people with minimal internet expertise to express an interest in an issue and—*BAM*—a community of interest is formed. Such communities can be amazingly nar-

row since they draw for their membership on essentially the entire population of the world that has internet access. To test this assertion, I just did an internet search for [bottlecaps.org](http://bottlecaps.org), assuming there must be such a site. Was.

As for the Red Sox community, it is clearly a community of interest. Baseball fans have for more than a century shared a love of the game, speaking a language of statistics that is the true sign of a fan-atic. The literature of baseball is monstrous, ranging from fiction to history and the endless publication of performance statistics. And the number of baseball sites on the internet seems infinite, even when you try to limit it to Red Sox sites. Some, such as the one called Sons of Sam Horn, even tries to limit its “memberships” to fans who are serious enough in their baseball chat. Here’s a taste of the site, quoted from their opening page. “Welcome to the Sons of Sam Horn discussion community, where the web’s brightest and most passionate Red Sox fans gather to thread messages from the security of their parents’ basements. Sure... we’re stingy with memberships and have been branded “elitists” by many but our commitment to quality and signal/noise ratio is second to none. SoSH has maintained a reputation as one of the most well-informed and introspective Red Sox discussion communities on the ‘net and our daily goal is to maintain that reputation. We’re proud that the site has become more than just a posting board for its members, but also an alternative source of information for Red Sox fans all over the world.” Anyone can hook onto the official web site of the Boston Red Sox, but you need to be serious to be an SoSH type.

It is clear to me now that what happened after the Red Sox won the 2004 World Series was an unusual combination of these two, powerful, sources of community. It seemed to amplify the sense of community surrounding the team, resulting in what I now think of as a sort of “flash community.” People who never felt any sort of membership in the world of Red Sox baseball were temporarily swept up in a feeling of belonging. It was infectious and fun. The boundaries of the community flew beyond its normal geographic and interest limits to encompass millions. It is certain that the community will recede to its pre-series numbers eventually, and certainly by the end of next year’s first losing streak. However, for the time being we should enjoy the good feeling that goes with the knowledge that “we won,” even if we don’t all wear spikes or spit in public.

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—Donna Stanton