
Babacar Mbaye
The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association
Fall 2007 Volume 40, Number 2

Special Convention Issue
High & Low / Culture

1 Editor's Introduction
Kevin J. H. Dettmar

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Sylvia Plath as such does not exist: it is through invention and fabrications that she comes alive; she is perpetually mourning a self that she no longer resembles and the (per)versions of her own image. But how do we prey on images of the poet and how do they prey on us?

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Throughout their investigations, false signs, conflicting testimonies, red herrings, as well as contending antagonists, abound and momentarily complicate, and even foil, their efforts. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exemplify the corrupt state's police spies (another formulaic staple) and show the antagonists' impulse toward extracting, though ineptly, Hamlet's own "mystery" in order to incriminate him. Similarly, Marlowe must confront with, and outsmart, the equally corrupt desire of the police to know.
The Lost Work of Longfellow's Hiawatha

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Longfellow's authorship (taking his texts and their reception together) focuses a number of high and low culture polarities. Here is a Harvard professor, a scholar of modern languages, translator of Dante, Michelangelo, and Goethe—certainly one moving in and conceiving of himself as creating "high" culture. Yet, as the subject of so much popular media, Longfellow's work has come to appear in many ways "kids' stuff"—most familiar (speaking for myself) from reruns of Warner Bros. cartoons in which a pudgy Hiawatha floats serenely downriver or Paul Revere rides madly through a black night.

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Taken together, health practitioners' powers of observation and narration make them ideal characters to serve as moral arbiters in ficive narratives about human rights violations; rarely is their professional integrity as witnesses of disease, abuse, or torture called into question by their employers. In these narratives, health professional protagonists serve as interpreters of the human body, mediating between the uninformed viewing audience and the knowledgeable, but guilty, perpetrators of abuse, pollution, or poisoning.

Fair-y Tale: The Wizard's Souvenir

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The pages of Oz provide a dense visual embroidery utterly untypical of that era's fiction for children or of fair volumes. Not only are there many, many more illustrations than was customary in either genre; not only is there an unprecedented profusion of color; not only do the illustrations look larger than life, like poster art; but the preference of author and illustrator was to break the rectilinear borders, and the conventions of symmetry, that usually governed most children's writing, circa 1900, and most Columbian Exposition souvenir albums as well.

Book Reviews

Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age.

By Harold K. Bush Jr. (Charles D. Martin)
The centerpiece of Bush's argument, and its finest achievement, is an extensive consideration of Twain's relationship with Joseph Twichell, his de facto pastor at the Asylum Hill Church (he never officially joined) and possibly his dearest and closest friend outside of his wife. Too little has been made of this relationship, perhaps, Bush contends, because the spiritual fellowship between the men contradicts the popular view of Twain as a hard-bitten cynic.

Dialect and Dichotomy: Literary Representations of African American Speech.

By Lisa Cohen Minnick. (Babacar M'Baye)
Bringing together literary and linguistic studies, Lisa Cohen Minnick reviews pivotal American writings that reflect the various usage of dialect as satire and as a means of resisting oppression and stereotypes.

American Theorists of the Novel: Henry James, Lionel Trilling, Wayne C. Booth. By Peter Rawlings. (Colin Irvine)
The focus on moral themes, combined as it is with Rawlings's ability to contextualize the critics, to illuminate the dynamic relationships among them, and to reclaim and recuperate their ideas from subsequent critics, underscores the complexity of these thinkers and their impressive and persistent relevance.
embrace one of the egregious logical fallacies of our own day: that any theory or idea outside of Christian theology is necessarily hostile to the religion. In a regrettable moment late in his book, he dismisses Sigmund Freud’s theories of mourning and melancholia as “anti-Christian in spirit” (236). Why the concepts of a Jewish psychologist should be Christian, I do not know, but Bush’s choice of adjective here is at best unfortunate and at worst potentially derogatory. These problems aside, Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age is a necessary addition to Twain studies. Other scholars have acknowledged Twain’s debt to Christianity, in particular the scholarship of Dixon Wecter, Phillip Foner, and, most recently, William Phipps. This fact belies the straw man Bush sets up of an atheistic academy antagonistic to discussions of religious influence in Twain’s works. Even so, Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age is by far the most extensive and authoritative study to date of Twain’s religious values. Bush’s religious sensibility aids him in establishing a new image of Mark Twain, a man profoundly influenced by his abiding Christian faith and deeply affected by the spiritual crisis of the late nineteenth century. Without an honest assessment of Twain’s religious values, Bush reminds us, we can have only an incomplete understanding of the man and his works.

Charles D. Martin
University of Central Missouri


Dialect and Dichotomy: Literary Representations of African American Speech is a comprehensive and analytical study of the artistic and linguistic significance of written language in African American literature. Bringing together literary and linguistic studies, Lisa Cohen Minnick reviews pivotal American writings that reflect the various uses of dialect as satire and as a means of resisting oppression and stereotypes.

Minnick’s major thesis is that a qualitative study of an author’s representation of African American English (AAE) with a method that applies computational linguistics to literature can reveal the artistic and ideological elements that traditional linguistic analyses of this literature have overlooked. This oversight partly arose from the convictions of many traditional linguists that “written representation of orality cannot be worth studying” (xvi). Cynthia Goldin Bernstein has shown that this theory, which privileges written language over spoken language, stemmed from the limited Saussurean emphasis on the sound of language rather than on its replication (xvi). The Saussurean focus creates an illusive dichotomy between literature and linguistics and fails to suggest the connections between the two fields and among the written and oral forms of dialect. As Minnick unequivocally states, “There is no question that everything that is known today of older forms of English and of other languages and varieties no longer extant comes from written sources” (28).

The strength of Dialect and Dichotomy also lies in its emphasis on the importance of race in the representation of African American dialect. Minnick views this representation of Black speech as a depiction that is “inextricably intertwined with racial attitudes and issues that help to define the American experience and, by extension, the national literature” (xvii). One excellent example that Minnick provides, among many, is Mark Twain’s representation of Jim in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884). Discussing Jim’s reaction when he believes Huck has returned from the world of the dead, Minnick cites the following passage from Twain’s book:

He bounced up and started at me wild. Then he drops down on his knees, and puts his hands together and says: “Doan’ hurt me—doan’! I ain’t never done no harm to a ghos’. I awluz liked dead people, en done all I could for ‘em. You go en git in de river agin, whab you b’longs, an’ doan’ do nuffin to Ole Jim, ’at ‘uz awluz yo’ fren’.” (53)

According to Minnick, a number of writers have interpreted this dialogue as part of an unfortunate scene, one that shows in Minnick’s words “the influence upon Twain of nineteenth-century minstrel shows, which contributed greatly to popular stereotypes of Africans and which Twain is known to have regularly attended and enjoyed” (73). Analyzing this assessment, Minnick suggests that although Twain might have intended for his representation of Jim “to be a comic scene based on the minstrel genre” (74), he might also have used it to show his “parchment for making merciless fun of anyone, regardless of race, whenever he could” (74).

In a similar vein, Minnick calls attention to the contrast between the lack of respelled /n/ variants in Huck’s speech and the prevalent respelling of “nearly all Jim’s articulations of ing words as –ing” (71). Attempting to understand the reasons why “Twain represented the variant with respelling for Jim and not for Huck” (71), Minnick points out that Twain might not have intended to characterize Jim “as inferior or deviant” (71-72). However, Minnick posits: “But it seems clear that to represent features that Jim and Huck unquestionably share with respellings for Jim and in standard orthography for Huck, is to mark Jim as other” (72).

Later, Minnick devotes a major part of her book to debunking some of the prejudices that twentieth-century African American intellectuals such as Richard Wright, Alain Locke, and Sterling Brown expressed about the representation of black dialect in African American literature.
Wright’s reactions to Zora Neale Hurston’s use of this speech in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Minnick notes that Wright accused Hurston of “selling a stereotypical image of African Americans and their speech to a white reading public” (25). Minnick represents Wright’s criticism as a disparagement that stemmed from a “party line” which, in the similar accusations from Locke and Brown, was motivated by a primary interest in social document fiction, class, and caste (26). These critics failed to understand that the thousands of blacks who migrated North during the 1920s and 30s were unfamiliar with the urban and educated life which shaped their critical worldview. Referring to Henry Louis Gates’s criticism against his predecessors, Minnick sees early commentators presupposing Hurston shared the naturalistic belief that blacks exist only in relation to whites and a hostile white world (26).

*Dialect and Dichotomy* does an excellent job of revealing the discrete and interrelated predicament that Charles Waddell Chesnutt faced for drawing on the richness of African American vernacular. These challenges evolved out of the tense racial, political, and cultural climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Black writers sought to affirm the humanity, dignity, and intelligence of African Americans without falling into the stereotypes that plantation slavery and its minstrel traditions had popularized. Chesnutt specifically refused to categorize himself as a writer who spoke solely about the elevation of blacks or whites, since he saw the compartmentalization of people into discrete racial groups as a process that reinforced the “unjust spirit of caste” that ailed the American nation (77). Yet Chesnutt made sure that his writings, particularly his stories in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* (1899) reflected his desire to improve the conditions of African Americans and his respect for the survival techniques and self-reliance of slaves (78-79).

Minnick, then, sees Chesnutt as a middle-class Black writer who did not forget his roots despite Amiri Baraka’s charge that he was an assimilationist and a purveyor of racial stereotypes and superstitions (79). Unlike Baraka, Minnick perceives Chesnutt as a writer who countered racial prejudices in *The Conjure Woman* by representing the impact of slavery on African Americans. As Minnick writes, “Chesnutt’s genius was in his ability to outline the cruelest realities of slavery—family torn apart and marriages ignored or forbidden, whippings, forced illiteracy—while framing them in the mysticism of conjure” (85). In this sense, Uncle Julius as the protagonist of *The Conjure Woman* uses dialect to fight for his dignity and freedom from white racist values (84) and subjugation (98).

Looking ahead to *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Minnick argues that William Faulkner’s novel incorporates documented grammatical features of African American English and linguistic elements that he added by way of overgeneralization. For example, Minnick writes, “Faulkner uses legiti-

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Additionally, Minnick notices in *The Sound and the Fury* the recurrence of “was-leveling,” a common AAE practice that she describes as “the use of was and wasn’t to mark past tense even in second-person forms and in first- and third-person plural constructions, in contrast to Standard American English (SAE) were and weren’t” (100). Crediting Faulkner with being able to detect the difference between the legitimate and the less common constructions of these words and with adding his own constructions to them, Minnick reveals how the writer used African American speech in a genuine attempt to realistically represent it.

*Dialect and Dichotomy* is an excellent work about the representation of race and language in American literature. The book suggests the importance of the depiction of African American speech in both American literature and literary criticism. In addition, Minnick shows the significance of countering previous linguistic scholarship that overlooked the value of written dialogue. *Dialect and Dichotomy* is a fascinating work that urges critics to study African American speech with greater care and less prejudice.

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138 Blue Studios: Poetry and Its Cultural Work.
By Rachel Blau DuPlessis. (Glenn J. Freeman)
As she has in much of her innovative critical work over the years, DuPlessis interrogates the idea of texts as multiple, polyvocal entities, examining both their production and their reception.

141 Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel.
By Lisa Zunshine. (Amy Watkin)
ToM is the mind's capacity for figuring other people out, based on their words and tone as well as their overall body language or non-verbal cues. ... Even while we are aware that characters are fictional, we use our "mind-reading" capabilities while reading literature in order to lend explanation to nuance of gesture, movement, and intonation.

143 A Reader's Guides to the Novels of Louise Erdrich.
By Peter G. Beidler and Gay Barton. (Lori Muntz)
Although the implications of Ojibwe words, phrases, and sentences are often available from their context, Beidler and Barton persuasively argue that meaning can be enriched by reviewing the glossary, while they invite readers to support the learning of indigenous languages.

146 Notes on Contributors
embrace one of the egregious logical fallacies of our own day: that any theory or idea outside of Christian theology is necessarily hostile to the religion. In a regrettable moment late in his book, he dismisses Sigmund Freud’s theories of mourning and melancholia as “anti-Christian in spirit” (236). Why the concepts of a Jewish psychologist should be Christian, I do not know, but Bush’s choice of adjective here is at best unfortunate and at worst potentially derogatory. These problems aside, *Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age* is a necessary addition to Twain studies. Other scholars have acknowledged Twain’s debt to Christianity, in particular the scholarship of Dixon Wecter, Phillip Foner, and, most recently, William Phipps. This fact belies the straw man Bush sets up of an atheist academy antagonistic to discussions of religious influence in Twain’s works. Even so, *Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age* is by far the most extensive and authoritative study to date of Twain’s religious values. Bush’s religious sensibility aids him in establishing a new image of Mark Twain, a man profoundly influenced by his abiding Christian faith and deeply affected by the spiritual crisis of the late nineteenth century. Without an honest assessment of Twain’s religious values, Bush reminds us, we can have only an incomplete understanding of the man and his works.

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