

TANGENTS

THE JOURNAL OF THE
MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM
AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY



IN THIS ISSUE...

Essays by Mollie J. Henrikson, Jean Collier Hurley,

India by Naomi Hunter, Laura Moorhead, Blake L. White

Fiction by Andy Grose

Poems by Jennifer Swanton Brown, Robert Brown

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VOLUME 7

IN THIS ISSUE...

- 4 Keeping the Eggs Warm
Andy Grose
- 8 Tall and Green (*poem*)
Jennifer Swanton Brown
- 10 A Love Letter from Ben Franklin
Laura Moorhead
- 14 Eleanor Roosevelt, Defender of Human Rights
Molly J. Henrikson
- 20 The Requirements of Justice Rising from the
'Digital Divide'
Blake L. White
- 26 Sonnets (*poem*)
Robert Brown
- 28 Athena in the Twenty-first Century
Jean Collier Hurley
- 31 Parallel Currents: A Journey of Reconciliation for
Elizabeth Gaskell ... and Me
Naomi Hunter
- 36 Contributors

PUBLISHING NOTES

This is a publication featuring the work of students and alumni of the Master of Liberal Arts Program at Stanford University.

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Cover inset photo: Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt of the United States holding a Declaration of Human Rights poster in English, November 1949, Lake Success, New York.

Cover photos: Courtesy of the United Nations

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

We are proud to present this issue of *Tangents*, the journal of the Stanford Master of Liberal Arts Program. For the seventh volume we have chosen a diverse group of works by students and alumni, including:

✦ A story about childhood

✦ A discussion of a Ben Franklin love letter

✦ Eleanor Roosevelt as the caretaker of FDR's human rights agenda

✦ An analysis of the 'digital divide' and how it affects disadvantaged students

✦ How the goddess Athena can serve as a model for the modern woman

✦ A personal essay by an MLA student describing her struggles in pursuing the 'life of the mind'

✦ Three poems

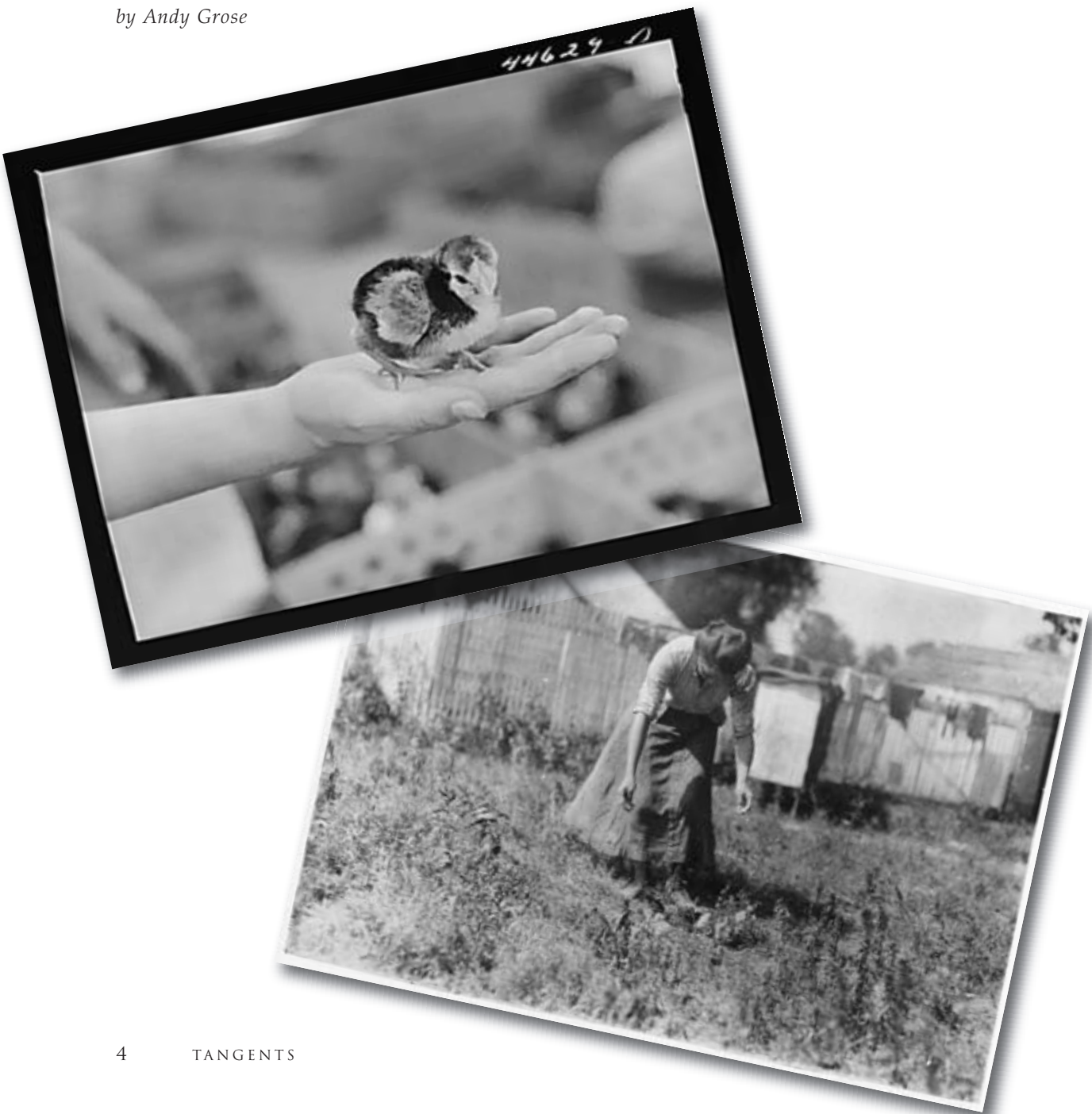
We are indebted to Theda Firschein for her contributions as a reviewer and proofreader.

Be sure to read about this issue's contributors on the last page.

We hope that our choices will give you hours of enjoyable reading—and that they will inspire future contributions.

KEEPING THE EGGS WARM

by Andy Grose



“Your eggs are getting cold,” her grandmother called from the kitchen.

But Helen hurried out the back door, slamming it loudly behind her. She was not eating, and not talking. Not after what happened yesterday.

For three summers now, Helen had spent a month with her grandparents in the country. So did her cousins, Pete and Toad. Toad and Helen were the same age, almost eight, but she was a year ahead of him in school. She and Pete, who was already nine, would be in fourth grade in a few short weeks.

This summer, for the first time, she was the one who got to let the chickens out each morning. Not the boys. Right after breakfast each day for the past three weeks she had proudly walked across the orchard to unhook the strand of rusty barbed wire from the latch and swing the door aside to supervise the wobbly parade of red, and white, and speckled hens as they started off for another long day of pecking about after insects and seeds. The big rooster, Rhode Island Red, her Grandpa called it, strutting after them.

Her grandfather was showing Helen how to tell all the chickens apart. How to notice little clues that made each one of the two dozen in the flock special in its own way. And teaching her important things, like how chickens gathered rocks to grind the wild seeds inside their gizzards. How one cackled when it laid an egg.

She often followed them as they scattered, scratching, pecking everything in sight. One of the young hens, the one with missing tail feathers, was good at catching grasshoppers with sudden flashing stabs of its arched neck. And good at eating them before the bigger hens took them away. She named that one Princess Lightning, but her cousins called it Bugbreath.

Sometimes the hens laid their eggs out in the yard, not in their nests. Their grandma paid the three cousins a dime for every egg they found outside. For school money. Sometimes one would be tucked underneath a patch of grass along the ditch bank. Or maybe in a hollow, hidden up against the fence. Once one was even in grandma’s old laundry basket. Helen loved egg-hunting. She had earned more dimes than both the boys combined.

But not today. Today was different. She couldn’t eat breakfast. And there was no way she would ever let the chickens out again. Because only yesterday her favorite, the gentle-clucking setting hen, the one they all called Nellie, was hit by a car. And killed.

* * * * *

“Dead as a doornail!” Pete kept repeating, when he brought the mangled chicken into the front yard all twisted and bloody, one wing swinging loose over the side of his rusty wagon.

Helen had cried looking at the poor old hen’s broken wing, and the golden-pink eyelids, still warm when she tried to open them. When she went with her grandfather to lock the coop for the night, just before going to bed, she could still see blood spots on the lawn, where she had tried so hard to make Nellie wake up.

While she cried over the dead bird, her cousins had only laughed at her.

Worse, her grandmother cooked it for dinner that very night.

And, most outrageous to Helen, Pete and Toad just ate like it was some ordinary chicken, and not Nellie. Nellie who was going to have chicks. Grandpa at least said he wasn’t hungry.

So, Helen was not eating. Not ever again. She was feeling too full of other things she could not understand. How could grandma do that? Did she mean it when she said she loved Nellie too? Every day the two of them had slipped their hands under the warm, grumbling hen, checking on the eggs. Making sure that they were safe. Carefully counting the seven of them. Nellie was part of the family. Wasn’t that what Grandma said? What kind of family ate each other? What about the chicks?

Now all Grandma said was, “Good grief.” If she answered at all.

* * * * *

Grandpa said the eggs would hatch in three weeks. “Yep, twenty-one days for chicks,” he told her, “if, that is, Nellie keeps them warm.” Then he added as he often did, even when he was sure of himself, “More or less.”

It had already been eighteen days when Nellie was killed. Helen had marked off each day on the calendar in her room, eighteen nice warm days for all seven eggs.

Why did Nellie run away? What scared her? Nothing seemed right to Helen anymore.

The rusty metal rooster on the barn, the one that always turned to face the afternoon rain storms, seemed angry now. Squawking at her as it turned. All the hens seemed to be staring at her. Afraid of her. They ran to hide whenever she tried to get close to them.

But, in spite of everything, the very next morning her grandfather took her with him when he unhooked the wire from the door to let them out again.

As Helen looked in through the open door of the empty coop, the eggs Nellie had been sitting on so faithfully for almost three weeks sat abandoned,

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THAT NIGHT SHE
DREAMED ABOUT
FOOD. CHOCOLATE
CAKE, AND ICE
CREAM. A WHOLE
BATHTUB FULL OF
ICE CREAM.

white lumps scattered on the dirty yellow straw. She could see five of them from the door, but she didn't feel like going in. The brood hen her Grandma had borrowed yesterday, hoping it would set on Nellie's nest, was over in one corner sleeping. All alone.

Even without touching them, Helen knew the eggs were cold, the little chicks almost ready to hatch, trapped inside. Maybe even dead.

* * * * *

"Grandpa," Helen said, when she found him in the front room that afternoon, napping in his favorite chair. "You're not listening, Grandpa."

"Humph," he answered from behind his newspaper. "Nellie's eggs are getting cold. Those little chicks are never going to hatch," Then she added, "It's all my fault. I let her out."

"Accidents happen, Helen," he said, folding the paper onto the table, and drawing her up into his lap.

"Oh, Grandpa, they were almost out," she said. "I know they were."

He just held her as she kept on talking. About how it was all her fault. How she should have watched Nellie. How things never happened right for her. He was the only one who really took the time to let her finish talking. Not like Pete and Toad. Even her mother cut her off, finishing her sentences before she could. Or saying stupid things like, "Yes, I know." But Grandpa always waited for her to find the right words.

"Those chicks were mine. You said so." "Ummm," was his only reply.

"That I could name them," she muttered. "Like Pete and Toad got to last year." She was getting too sad to go on, but he still sat holding her, rocking gently as she mumbled mostly to herself, and finished crying. Then one very sad "you promised," and she drifted off to sleep.

"I did promise," he said to himself, "more or less," as he slipped back into his nap, still holding her curled in his arms.

* * * * *

Her cousins were less tender. They had great fun teasing her, holding one arm tight alongside their chests, flapping wildly with the other. Mocking her, she thought, playing they were wounded hens too, run over by cars. Or clucking and crowing. If she tried to hit one of them, he would quickly turn his back, and run away, staying just beyond her reach.

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch," Pete had taunted, as she came outside that first evening, to avoid the cooking smells in the house.

"Hey, Pete," Toad asked, "why did Nellie cross the street?"

"Gosh. Why?" Pete said, with a mock curiosity.

"For dinner!" Toad yelled, laughing and trying to dance away from her.

This time she caught him, digging her blond head hard into his side, and falling with him onto the grass. But her anger was no match for his giggles, as he wrapped his arms across his chest to protect himself.

"Be careful," Pete said, as he quickly, and almost kindly, untangled them.

Pete and Toad began to skip their baths, which grandma would never allow before the accident. And she let them all sleep in their clothes.

They had started whispering behind Helen's back, as if they had a secret they chose not to share.

Then the brothers began to stay away from her, which at first was just fine. She tried to ignore them

too, and played alone. But watching Toad riding his bike one-handed, she had to look away, choking on tears of something she could not put into words even to herself.

In new thoughts that she knew were wrong, she wanted to hurt them back. That night she dreamed Toad was hit by a big truck that smashed him flat. But he had somehow turned into a giant chicken, and his bloody feathers went flying everywhere.

She woke in total darkness, her heart thumping far too fast to count.

* * * * *

The third morning after the accident, her grandfather was able to coax her to unlatch the coop for him all by herself, while he stood back, waiting. The parade of chickens went out like nothing was wrong. But Nellie's nest was now empty, even the cold eggs were gone.

Helen and her grandfather wandered around the yard for quite a little while. Just walking side by side.

"I will never eat again, Grandpa," she said. "Ever." But he just walked and listened.

When they finally got back to the kitchen, Helen saw her plate waiting for her, underneath a chipped, hand-painted cover, in the shape of a chicken. The head and comb looked like a rooster, but it was shaped like a setting hen, all round and flat bottomed. The head was missing half its comb. And she could see a square hole where it had lost the tip of one wing.

"An egg warmer," her Grandma proudly said, "It was your mother's favorite. When she was a little girl. I've been saving it for you."

Silently, she studied the chips and scratches on the egg warmer. Grandma told some tall tales. But this one might be true, Helen thought. The cover was red. Her mother still loved red. And sometimes she called men hot roosters. Maybe this was why. When she put her face down to study the gleaming black eye, it looked almost alive, but without eyelids.

She could smell the hot bacon and buttered toast. At her grandmother's urging, she took one forkful of egg, and one corner of the toast. But she just kept them in her cheeks, and as soon as she was outside, she spit them out. The taste of egg tied her stomach in knots.

In spite of her promises to herself, Helen was painfully hungry. She had weakened once already and eaten the three candy bars she kept hidden from the boys, wrapped inside her spare underwear. Yesterday, she took two green apples from the tree in the front

yard. That night she dreamed about food. Chocolate cake, and ice cream. A whole bathtub full of ice cream.

* * * * *

When her grandma called her to breakfast the fourth morning, they were all waiting for her. Her place was set, and her plate was once again covered by the old egg warmer.

"About time," Pete said. "I thought you wanted us all to starve, too."

She gave him a dirty look, because she still was not talking to him.

"Please, Helen, at least try," her grandmother said, adding softly, "it's something special."

Helen studied them in silence. They weren't even a little bit sad, not one of them, and inside she still wanted to cry, or scream, or something. But she was too hungry to fight anymore. So, with a frown, she removed the egg warmer.

There were no scrambled eggs. No bacon. No toast.

Instead, two new-hatched chicks teetered together on the warm plate, peering up at her, blinking their eyes, two tiny balls of golden living fuzz, each cocking its head to take in the strange sight.

The total silence ended when one chick peeped.

"We hatched them for you," Pete and Toad both said at once, beaming broadly.

"In our armpits," Toad said, "just like Grandpa showed us." Toad held up one arm, pointing proudly.

"We kept them warm at night, too," Pete said.

"Down in our shorts," Toad grinned, pointing.

Helen, still voiceless, sat gaping first at the chicks, then at Pete and Toad.

"Pock, pock, paaagawk," Pete crowed, leaping from his chair to run about the kitchen, flapping both arms.

"Well," her Grandpa asked, "aren't you going to name them?"

"Oh, yes," she said, after a long minute. "In honor of the boys!"

Her cousins were squabbling about which chick was which even before Helen took the butter knife to touch each chick gently on the wing, announcing with dignified innocence the two names that would live for many years. For the chicks. And for the boys.

"Peep, and... Poop."

TALL

and

GREEN

by Jennifer Swanton Brown

Girl in the green sweater
with your hood up over your hair,
over your ears,
you are like a nun in your sea-foam
hoodie wimple,
you glare, you gleam.

What is that green?
Sage, smudged hills behind
school, the end of spring
heat coming on.
Radio green, screechy,
soft green, gum under your seat
when you first put it there,
green moony cheese, no
more my nursery rhymes,
bold bile-sick and bad-liver green,
green still of fair leaves.

Your glare, your gleam, your
sneer, pierced and pouty, you
catch me in both eyes, I am
stuck on your self-
absorbed self
like a burr, like a weed.

Tall green weed,
you don't belong in my poem
but your roots are deep.
You root, your funny pale
root tapers to a place
I'll find for you
one day, I'll

trip over you,
take a shovel to you, sell your
celery stalk, teenager, silly-
celery snarl.

Child, your seeds are still
ovary-deep, in those rude grinning
hips, but in my
poem they are already
scattered.

In one of the many almanacs Benjamin Franklin published in Philadelphia, he wrote, "Let all men know thee, but no man know thee thoroughly" (Morgan 1). Even well into his seventies (Schiff 161), Franklin appears to have adhered to this chestnut, and to this day—despite the dedicated efforts of historians privy to much of his public and private writing, from printed essays to playful love letters and to-do lists—we are still left wondering about the man behind the pen and, in many cases, the printing press (Isaacson 369).

Of all his personal writing, the witty essay, "The Elysian Fields" (1780), is among the most intriguing. With his satirical style, Franklin obscures his ultimate intentions, teasing the reader with innuendos and not-so-subtle allusions. Certainly, much has been made of this brief essay directed to a freewheeling aristocratic French widow, who had previously spurned Franklin's apparent offer of marriage. But many scholars have been overly extreme in discerning Franklin's true ambitions in "The Elysian Fields." For the most part, they interpret his objective as either marriage or utter farce (Brands 559). Modern interpretations, in particular,

base literary judgment on textual rather than on biographical evidence, and most typically suggest Franklin was merely playing a game or, according to historian Alfred Owen Aldridge, simply after sex (Aldridge, *Early American Literature* 121).

Such interpretations both under- and overestimate the seriousness of Franklin's intent. Yet, when one considers the biographical and textual evidence holistically, it becomes clear that Franklin was both adamant *and* flexible in his approach. As a randy rebel turned elder statesman (Aldridge, *Ben Franklin* 290), he was surely realistic, if not hopeful, in his entreaty. Sex (or marriage, for that matter) was almost certainly not the true directive, but his proposal was not in complete jest. Rather, "The Elysian Fields" looks to be the start of a genuine campaign by a notorious

flirt to convince his subject that he indeed had favorites among his harem and that his attraction to her was far from passing.

According to historian Bernard Bailyn, the woman-dominated salons of Paris were "entranced" by Franklin (Bailyn 65). "The most sophisticated women literally hung on his neck, wrote poems to him, and received back from him bantering love letters" (65). Yet, there was one woman in Franklin's life who seems to have stood out from the crowd: Madame Anne Catherine Helvétius. In fact, she was the only woman who replied

less to Franklin than he wrote (Schiff 233), and as dowager-queen wife to the well-known philosopher Claude-Adrien Helvétius (Lopez 265), she graciously held court among Europe's top thinkers of the time, including French Enlightenment writer Voltaire and Scottish philosopher and economist David Hume (247).

According to Denis Diderot, another prominent French Enlightenment thinker, Madame Helvétius—unlike most women of the 1700s—"was not a slave" (251). Rather, she was a valued, independent woman who knew how to entertain, charm, and hold her own

among the intellectual titans of her time. Franklin seems to have recognized this instantly, and like many other men, was drawn to her:

I see that statesmen, philosophers, historians, poets, and men of learning attach themselves to you as straws to a fine piece of amber. It is not that you make pretension to any of their sciences, and if you did, similarity of studies does not always make people love one another. It is not that you take pains to engage them: Artless simplicity is a striking part of your character.... [I]n your company we are not only pleased with you, but better pleased with one another and with ourselves. (Lopez 251)

As Madame Helvétius's Parisian neighbor, Franklin regularly visited her home, filled with nearly twenty

cats (Silverman 211) and "thousands of couches" (Schiff 231). Through his correspondence, we can see that the founding father was clearly smitten: "Of course, I shall not fail to come next Wednesday," he wrote to Madame Helvétius, who had been known to stand him up on occasion, "I get too much pleasure from seeing you, hearing you, too much happiness from holding you in my arms, to forget such a precious invitation" (Lopez 259). He also wrote of joining in late-night rounds of drinking songs and enjoyable breakfasts at her compound (252), which, rather scandalously, housed three of her late husband's friends (Isaacson 363).

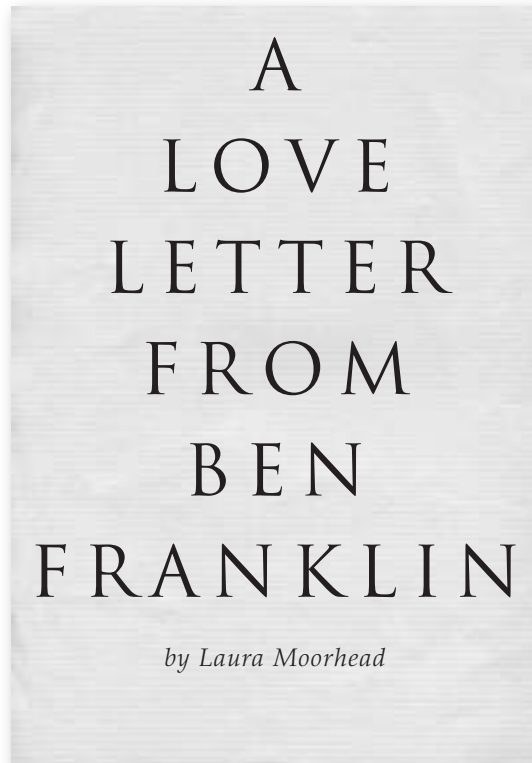
Franklin penned "The Elysian Fields," originally titled "Lettre de M. Franklin à Madame Helvétius" (Aldridge 121), in response to the 64-year-old coquette's (Schiff 230) "barbarous resolution, stated so positively ... to remain single the rest of [her] life, in honor of [her] dear husband" (Silverman 211). Distraught and believing himself dead over this news, Franklin dreams that he is in the Elysian Fields, the abode of the blessed after-life in Greek mythology. When asked if he wished to see some important persons, Franklin requests

the philosophers, and he is offered Socrates and Master Helvétius. Knowing not a word of Greek, he opts to meet the Frenchman Helvétius, who greets him warmly, asking questions about war, religion, and politics. Franklin writes that he is surprised that Helvétius has no interest in his still earth-bound wife and is even more shocked to learn that Helvétius has taken another spouse in eternity, allowing himself to forget the cause of his previous "felicity" (211-212). "[Y]our former friend is more faithful than you," says Franklin, "for several matches have been offered her, and she has turned them all down. I, for one, loved her madly...." (212). Master Helvétius, nonplused at this news, kindly offers Franklin some courting advice: lobby the madame's friends. But the more intriguing part of the essay is the introduction of Franklin's late

wife, Deborah, as Helvétius's new wife. Rather than embrace her one-time husband of almost half a century, she greets him coldly: "I have been a good wife to you... be content with that; I have formed a new connection here, and that will last for eternity" (Silverman 212). Displeased by this rebuke, Franklin calls her his Eurydice, demotes her to Hades, and suggests to Madame Helvétius that they join together in revenge toward their ungrateful spouses.

With this textual background, one can now consider biographical evidence from Franklin's life. As many historians have suggested, the founding father long employed the habit of using satirical writing to convince his opponents of the ridiculousness of their arguments. In "The Elysian Fields," Franklin reminds Madame Helvétius that death is an unfaithful mate and her marriage in eternity is far from sacred (and, in fact, it appears to have evolved into a wife-swapping arrangement of sorts) (Aldridge 124). Clearly, she has vested more in the relationship than her husband. And in typical Franklin fashion, there's wisdom to extrapolate from this tale: The dead forget the living, so move on—find your next

felicity. In fact, in the essay, Master Helvétius tells us that "one must forget, in order to be happy...." (212). Surely, such common-sense commentary would ring true to Franklin's friend, and if not, he goes on to employ yet another tried-and-true tactic of his in hopes of winning her lasting affection: peer pressure. Franklin, as he did with organizing a library (Brands 112) and establishing a fire department (Morgan 141), typically recruited others in his lobbying efforts. In the case of courting Madame Helvétius, he focused most on Abbés Morellet and de la Roche, the widow's subsidized renters (Lopez 250). Franklin went so far as to mention how he might sway their opinions in the essay (gifts of coffee and cream and fine editions of old classics) (Silverman 212). But Franklin did not stop there; as historical documents show, he petitioned



both men and Madame Helvétius's adopted waif Pierre-Georges Cabanis (Lopez 250), with subsequent letters, in hope that they would work in winning over their benefactor for Franklin (254-256). Surely, if Franklin's essay was merely a farce, there would have been no need for the founding father to work in enlisting these men for help.

Both Abbés were part of the "Académie d'Auteuil"—as Madame Helvétius's retinue became known (249)—and this leads us to another important biographical element when gauging Franklin's genuine designs on the widow. For our club-joining American, this tightly knit group was surely akin to the Junto in Philadelphia and the Hellfire Club in London (Wood 28-30). The Académie d'Auteuil would also have been one of the initial public audiences for "The Elysian Fields." As with many of his *bagatelles*, Franklin printed the essay on his personal press that he had in France, and distributed the work to his close friends and acquaintances (Isaacson 369), many of whom, incidentally, were a part of this social group and could have worked to influence Madame Helvétius on his behalf.

Most notable among Franklin's satirical essays that help us understand his interest in Madame Helvétius, his flexibility in courting approaches, and his seeming indifference toward formal marriage are the "Old Mistress Apologue" (Silverman 184-186), explaining the virtues of intimate relations with older women, and "Polly Baker" (186-189), setting out a case for the unwed mother. But it is the miscellaneous correspondence between Franklin and Madame Helvétius, along with letters by locals and visitors, that is most telling. John Adams and his wife Abigail certainly appear to have generated the most amusing notes about the relationship between Franklin and Madame Helvétius. For his part, Adams often expressed general indignation and disgust toward the almost certainly chaste couple and the happenings at Académie

d'Auteuil (Lopez 256-257); meanwhile, Mrs. Adams pointed to specifics:

[Madame Helvétius] entered the Room with a careless jaunty air. Upon seeing Ladies who were strangers to her, she bawled out *ah Mon dieu! Where is Frankling* [sic]....Dr. [Franklin] entered at one door...she ran forward to him, caught him by the hand, *helas Frankling*, then gave him double kiss one upon each cheek and another upon his forehead....[At dinner, seated between Franklin and John Adams,] she carried on the chief of the conversation, frequently locking her hand into Drs. ... then throwing her Arm carelessly upon the Drs. neck....After dinner she threw herself upon a settee where she shew more than her feet. She had a little Lap Dog who was next to the Dr. her favorite. This is one of the Drs. most intimate Friends.... (Morgan 43)

Jacques Turgot, a French philosopher and scientist who regularly joined the gatherings of the Académie d'Auteuil (Schiff 230), had also asked Madame Helvétius to marry him twice. He was reportedly quite displeased with Franklin's campaign, which he took, among others,

to be serious (Lopez 265). According to Claude-Anne Lopez, Turgot had been irritated enough "to tell Madame Helvétius rather bluntly that both she and Franklin had passed the age for romance" (264). The one-time friend, then rival of Franklin, wrote the following in a letter to a mutual acquaintance of his and Madame Helvétius:

It was all too much, both the seriousness and the public playfulness, for Madame H. She fled in June 1780 to spend the summer in Tours with the hope that she may forget, if possible, all the turmoil that has tormented her. [He added that the time away from Paris was best] not only for her own tranquility, but also to reestablish it in the other head [i.e., Franklin's] that he has agitated so ill-advisedly. (Isaacson 367)

... WE ARE
STILL LEFT
WONDERING
ABOUT THE
MAN BEHIND
THE PEN.

Walter Isaacson assures us that Madame Helvétius led Franklin on lightly, citing her note in reference to "The Elysian Fields." "I hope," she wrote, "that after putting such pretty things on paper you would come and tell me some" (Isaacson 366). Although there seems to be no direct response from Franklin in regards to the essay and its reception, his loving banter and correspondence with Madame Helvétius continued until his death (Brands 648). For her part, she assured him that he has "been a rascal and will find more than one wife [in heaven]!" (Lopez 268).

And it is now worth considering Franklin as the man of many masks once again. As Claude-Anne Lopez notes, the founding father was a difficult man to decipher. "Franklin somehow never committed himself wholly in love," explains Lopez (Isaacson 367). "A part of him was always holding back and watching the proceedings with irony." Clearly, Franklin was a complex man, having played multiple roles throughout life, from printer, politico, and scientist to father, husband, and lover. So, we should not take this lack of commitment as a poor reflection on the fair Madame Helvétius, who appears to be the only sweetheart to which *cher papa Franklin* dedicated and published such a touching essay. Rather, it is something that we can again link to the biographical evidence that we have from Franklin's life. He had been injured by those closest to him—the brother/master, who beat him in Boston (Silverman 3-41); the "pretty Talker" James Ralph, who duped him into paying his London bills (Lopez and Herbert 18); and the turncoat son, who betrayed him over America's independence (Wood 160-161). Surely, a love that brings to mind the Elysian Fields would make even a man like Franklin feel vulnerable and in need of the shields of satire and feigned detachment, particularly when considering these experiences from his past.

We can never know Franklin's true intentions in "The Elysian Fields"—if, say, he genuinely hoped to spend eternity with Madame Helvétius or merely wanted to show Europeans that a buttoned-down pragmatist with Puritan roots could hold his own in the fancy-free atmosphere of aristocratic France. Yet, even the most unromantic reader can sense the genuine regard he has for Madame Helvétius through his essay and letters. The fact that others of his time took his entreaty seriously suggests that we should, too. The object of his affection was, after all, the woman he dreamt about for years after leaving France (Schiff 402). Even Madame Brillion, Madame Helvétius's main rival, noted Franklin's special feelings

toward the enchanting widow and blamed her for his leaving France (Baker 245-259). Clearly, Franklin's "Elysian Fields" was a trial balloon—and one with a large safety net—for a 74-year-old with little to lose and much to gain (Schiff 233) in his search for a soul mate. Our elder statesman was after far more than marriage, sex, or passing dalliances with the *femmes fatales* of France. He desired something that could continue on into eternity or, at least, until truly old age. As Franklin once bemoaned to his French lady friend Madame Brillion, "the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimates they have made of the value of things" (Matthes). But with Madame Helvétius, Franklin's calculations were correct: "Usually when we share a thing, each person gets only one part; but when I share my *pleasure* with you, my part is doubled. *The part is more than the whole*" (Lopez 271). Now, he simply had to lure Madame Helvétius to the Elysian Fields.

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ELEANOR ROOSEVELT,

CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

by Molly J. Henrikson

In the wake of World War II, President Harry Truman was committed to realizing the dream of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) of establishing the United Nations. In December of 1945, in anticipation of the first meeting of the UN in London, Truman called upon his predecessor's widow, Eleanor Roosevelt, to be a member of the U.S. delegation. Truman wrote to Eleanor: "You, as a representative of the United States will bear the grave responsibility of demonstrating the wholehearted support which this government is pledged to give to the United Nations Organization.... I am confident that you will do your best..." (Neal 51). Truman made a prescient choice. As eventual chair of the Human Rights Commission, Eleanor would help draft and secure the UN's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which today is considered to be the singularly most important document in giving rise and legitimacy to the twentieth century's international human rights movement. Eleanor Roosevelt's unique political leadership—a mixture of visionary ideals, tempered by political pragmatism, yet strengthened by a fierce determination to achieve results—helped her sustain FDR's global vision of a world in which "freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere" (Commager 449).

On December 31, 1945, just nine months after FDR's death, Eleanor Roosevelt set sail aboard the Queen Elizabeth to attend the first meeting of the United Nations in London. Eleanor later recalled that she had "no experience or background in international meetings," but she was buoyed by the confident hope that her participation would help secure FDR's vision of the UN: "I believed the United Nations to be the one hope for a peaceful world. I knew that my husband had placed great importance on the establishment of this world organization" (Roosevelt 299). FDR's commitment to the creation of an international institution to ensure world peace had been rooted in the realities of World War II. Speaking to Congress in January of 1945, FDR passionately articulated the importance of the UN: "1945 can and must see the substantial beginning of the organization of world peace. This organization must be the fulfillment of the promise for which men have fought and died in war" (Woolley). The expansionist policies of the Axis powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—had been predicated on a trampling of civil liberties, especially in Nazi Germany where a complete obliteration of human rights had taken place. According to FDR, "The rights of every nation, larger or small, must be respected and guarded as jealously as are the rights of every individual... the doctrine that the strong shall dominate the weak is the doctrine of our enemies —



and we reject it" (*Fireside Chats*). FDR hoped that the United Nations would not only ensure a lasting peace, but that it would also serve as an international protectorate of human rights. Eleanor Roosevelt emerged as the caretaker of his altruistic agenda.

When Eleanor arrived in London in January of 1946 for the first UN meeting, she understood her role as FDR's surrogate. She wrote to President Truman: "I do feel that you were very wise in thinking that anyone connected with my husband could perhaps, by their presence here keep the level of his ideals. Just being here, perhaps, is a good reminder, which I think is what you had in mind" (Neal 55). Truman recognized the powerful symbolic nature of having FDR's widow as a member of the first U.S. delegation to the UN, but his selection of Eleanor was not without political consideration. Eleanor was popular among the liberal wing of the Democratic Party because of her previous work on the forefront of civil rights. As an accidental president, Truman needed to engender the liberal's goodwill. In asking Eleanor to join his administration, Truman hoped to allay their doubts about him. While many liberals admired Eleanor, there were many Republicans who did not embrace her progressive stance on social issues. Her appointment was met with Republican opposition. Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan and John Foster Dulles (foreign policy advisor to Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey) vigorously voiced their concern to Truman, arguing that Eleanor's support of African American leaders made her too divisive. Despite their protests, the Senate approved Eleanor's nomination with only one dissenting vote cast by Senator Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi, who claimed that she was too liberal on issues of race.

Once the UN meetings convened, Eleanor quickly immersed herself in the work of the UN's Third Committee on Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Affairs. Eleanor regarded her assignment to this Committee as a political calculation on the part of Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, leader of the U.S. delegation. She believed Vandenberg wanted "a safe spot for her" in which he felt "she could do no harm" (Neal 302). However, the Third Committee unexpectedly ended up tackling a volatile political issue—deciding the future of nearly one million displaced war refugees that were scattered throughout Germany and Eastern Europe. The fate of the war refugees quickly became a point of controversy between the U.S. and their western allies and the Soviet Union, giving rise to acrimonious debate.

"It was ironical," Eleanor later commented, "that one of the subjects that created the greatest political heat of the London sessions came up in this 'unimportant' committee to which I had been assigned (Neal 307). The Soviets argued that the war refugees should be forced to return to their country of origin, and if they refused, then they were either "quislings" or "traitors" (Neal 307). In contrast, the United States believed that the refugees should have the right to choose whether or not they wanted to return home. As tensions mounted, Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated her aplomb in dealing with Soviets. She was able to forestall the committee's vote until she had persuaded other countries to join the U.S. in their opposition to the Soviets (Neal 308). Her colleagues began to see that she was not to be underestimated. Even her initial detractors, Vandenberg and Dulles, were impressed by her diplomatic victory. They both confessed to Eleanor: "We must tell you that we did all we could to keep you off the United Nations delegation. We begged the President not to nominate you. But now we feel we must acknowledge that we have worked with you gladly and found you good to work with" (Neal 308). Eleanor had successfully established her credibility as both an advocate of the dispossessed and a skilled diplomat.

Following the meetings in London, Eleanor was chosen to be a member of the UN's Human Rights Commission, which was charged with the task of drafting a declaration of individual rights. The original members of the Commission were chosen, not as official representatives for their respective countries, but rather as individuals. Eleanor's selection reflected the genuine and serious respect she had garnered in London for her dealings with the Soviets. She was unanimously elected to chair the Commission, which held its first meeting in late January 1947 at the UN's temporary headquarters at Lake Success, New York. To accomplish the drafting and eventual adoption of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor needed to exercise strong leadership and an unyielding determination to overcome conflicting opinions to reach compromise. She also needed to balance her own progressive impulses with the more limited aims of the United States government. To her credit, Eleanor achieved this Herculean task.

Her first challenge was to reconcile the different points of view of the Commission's members and to develop consensus. Among the participants were vice-chair Dr. Peng-Chun Chang of China, secretary Dr. Charles H. Malik of Lebanon, Hernan Santa Cruz

of Chile, Hansa Mehta of India (the only other woman on the Commission), and Dr. Alexei Pavlov of the Soviet Union. In her efforts to bridge cultural gaps and points of difference, Eleanor would frequently host different members for lunch or dinner in hopes of building collegiality. As she explained, "I found that often a few people of different nationalities, meeting on a semi-social basis, could talk together about a common problem with better results than when they were meeting officially as a committee" (Roosevelt E. 305). Her interpersonal skills were an enormous asset, especially when much of the Commission's initial debate centered on philosophical viewpoints.

Yugoslavia's Vladislav Ribnikar, the Communist delegate, raised the most contentious point of intellectual dispute, maintaining that the concept of human liberty, as derived from individual rights, reflected the bias of the West's bourgeoisie. He argued that the Declaration should instead promote the idea that

Eleanor had not resolved the fundamental differences between the Commission members, but she was able to convince them that the drafting of the Declaration must proceed—its importance trumped their respective ideologies.

The Human Rights Commission met again in Geneva in November 1947, and Eleanor Roosevelt laid out a demanding schedule. She instructed the Commission that they were to complete a draft declaration within two weeks. She wanted to avoid the superfluous debate that had taken place at the earlier January meeting. Her determination and focused nature may have truncated discussion at times, yet it yielded results. As she recalled in her autobiography, her single-mindedness may not have always been appreciated, but people could not argue with the results: "Within a few days I was being denounced—mostly in fun, I hope—as a merciless slave driver. But I must say we got through a great deal of work and kept to our

The Republic of Honduras
By Vladislav Ribnikar
Jan. 1947

**"WITHIN A FEW DAYS I WAS BEING
DENOUNCED—MOSTLY IN FUN, I HOPE—
AS A MERCILESS SLAVE DRIVER."**

Jan. 1947

human liberty stems from "perfect harmony between the individual and the community." Dr. Alexei Pavlov of the Soviet Union entered the debate, explaining that "community and society" provide the "materials of existence" rather than individual rights. Dr. Malik of Lebanon vigorously countered the collective thesis put forward by the communists. He argued, "The deepest danger of the age is the extinction of the human person as such in his own individuality and ultimate inviolability" (Lash 60-62). This philosophical debate frustrated more pragmatic members of the Commission. Hansa Mehta of India complained, "Whether the human person comes first or society, I do not think we should discuss that problem now... [we] should not enter into a maze of ideology." Eleanor Roosevelt was careful not to further polarize the debate, and told the Commission: "It seems to me that in much that is before us, the rights of the individual are extremely important. It is not exactly that you set the individual apart from his society, but you recognize that within any society the individual must have rights that are guarded" (Glendon 40).

schedule..." (Roosevelt, E. 319). The fact that the Commission kept to the timetable, considering the international situation that had accompanied their deliberations, was no small feat.

The politics of the cold war pervaded the Geneva meeting. The Truman administration had begun its policy of containing the spread of communism by sending aid to Greece and Turkey, and the Soviets were openly supporting Mao Tse Tung's communist insurgents in China. These were hardly ideal circumstances for hashing out an international document. Meanwhile, the Soviets were developing a reputation for sabotaging committee work throughout the UN, so it was not surprising when Dr. Alexei Pavlov of the Soviet Union proved to be an impediment to the Commission's work. Whenever a Russian proposal for the Declaration was voted down by the Commission, Pavlov would filibuster. Eleanor quickly lost patience with Pavlov: "He delivers many long propaganda harangues that appeared to be more for the purpose of publicizing the Communist point of view than in the hope of making changes in the Declaration"

(Roosevelt, E. 320). Eleanor did not take fools lightly, and she was determined that Pavlov would not undermine the Commission's goals. She did not shy away from reprimanding the Soviet delegate when he went on a tirade: "I banged the gavel and said, 'we are here to devise ways of safeguarding human rights. We are not here to attack each other's governments'... and I banged the gavel again. 'Meeting adjourned!'" (Roosevelt, E. 320). Despite her firmness with Pavlov, Eleanor was the consummate diplomat, using great care not to exacerbate U.S. and Soviet tensions. Following the Geneva meeting, she publicly insisted that Pavlov was not an "obstructionist." She acknowledged that his enthusiasm for discussion "reflected a genuine interest" (Mower 71).

The Human Rights Commission reconvened for its third and final meeting in late May of 1948 at Lake Success, New York, for one last fine-tuning of the Declaration before it went before the UN General

Assembly for adoption. This time debate surrounded Articles 23 and 25 of the Declaration, which addressed "the right to work, to free choice of employment" and "the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being" (Glendon 313). Dispute arose over the implementation of the articles. Underdeveloped countries were concerned about their ability to meet the financial requirements of such standards. The Soviets and their communist allies objected to the right of "free choice of employment," which they felt undermined the power of the state, and the U.S. feared that the Declaration would expose its domestic affairs to UN oversight. Eleanor assured the U.S. State Department throughout the negotiations that the Declaration was "a statement of goals" and covenants of implementation would be addressed separately (Roosevelt, E 318). Eleanor's position might seem a bit surprising in light of the vision she and FDR shared of wanting to secure freedom from want in the world, yet like FDR, her political instincts were attuned to the need at times to temper one's idealism to reach compromise. Eleanor was able to quell the doubts of

all countries, underscoring the idea that "the Declaration does not imply an obligation on governmental action... It is not a treaty" (Roosevelt, *Universal Declaration*). By the conclusion of final session of the Human Rights Commission, Eleanor's objective had been achieved—a draft of the Declaration was now ready to be submitted to the UN's General Assembly for its next meeting to be held in Paris in the fall of 1948.

In anticipation of the UN's meeting in Paris, Eleanor Roosevelt used the summer to vigorously promote the adoption of the Declaration. Her years as First Lady had made her keenly aware of how to use her public stature to successfully lobby for causes she cared deeply about. She went on lecture tours, gave radio and television interviews, and used her daily column, *My Day*, as a bully pulpit to advance the Declaration. She appeared on the weekly broadcast, "The Security Workshop," to familiarize the public with the United Nations (Hareven 243). She also spoke to audiences

UPON EISENHOWER'S ELECTION, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S RESIGNATION WAS ONE OF THE FIRST REQUESTED.

in Europe, passionately arguing that international reconciliation begins with a shared idea of "human freedom" (Roosevelt, *Struggle for Human Rights*). Eleanor's campaign was successful, making it incumbent upon the UN delegates to vote for its adoption.

The United Nations General Assembly met during the fall and early winter of 1948 in Paris. Once again, the politics of the cold war threatened to overshadow the meetings. The Soviet blockade of Berlin and a potential war in Korea led to mounting tensions. With Eleanor's prodding, the delegates were able to put aside international circumstances, if only momentarily, and pass the Declaration on December 10, 1948. Eleanor spoke to the General Assembly before the vote was taken, imploring the delegates to pass it "with an overwhelming majority." She unabashedly appealed to their sense of idealism: "This declaration may well become the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere... comparable to the proclamation of the Declaration of Rights of Man by the French people in 1789 [and] the adoption of the Bill of Rights by people of the United States..." (Roosevelt, *Adoption of*

the Declaration of Human Rights). There were no votes cast against the Declaration. However, the Soviet Union and their satellite countries abstained, as did the delegate from Saudi Arabia, because he was not sure if the Koran was duly protected, and the delegate from South Africa abstained, stating that the declaration "went too far extending basic human rights" (Roosevelt, E 322). Eleanor had accomplished what she later considered her "most important task"—the drafting and ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Roosevelt, E 305).

Eleanor felt triumphant after the vote was taken, but she also recognized the hard work of drafting the implementation covenants lay ahead. She remained on the Human Rights Commission, although she relinquished her role as chair, believing that it was important that the chairmanship not be perceived as an exclusive right of the United States. As negotiations followed in subsequent years over a Human Rights Covenant, American domestic politics increasingly questioned the rationale for signing a binding agreement. With Eisenhower's election in 1952, it became the official U.S. policy not to actively participate in the drafting or ratification of human rights covenants—acquiescing to the objections of isolationists, state's rights activists, and McCarthy sympathizers (Johnson 46-47). In fact, upon Eisenhower's election, Eleanor Roosevelt's resignation was one of the first requested. Eleanor gracefully submitted her resignation even before the inauguration took place, but later offered harsh criticism of Eisenhower's position on human rights. She wrote in her *My Day* column in April of 1953, "We have sold out to McCarthys" (Johnson 46-47). She went on to claim that Eisenhower had not acted in "good faith" by not championing "the human rights and freedoms of people throughout the world" (Johnson 46-47). Much to Eleanor Roosevelt's chagrin, the United States would never again demonstrate a strong desire to create an international framework to protect human rights. Nonetheless, the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights served and continues to serve as the cornerstone of international human rights struggles, and since its inception, the written constitution of over one hundred new states bear the mark of the Declaration—establishing human dignity as an inherent right (Henkin 512).

Eleanor Roosevelt possessed a set of unique skills. She was a charismatic and disciplined manager, a diplomatic negotiator, and a persuasive spokesperson. The UN needed her visionary leadership from 1946 to 1948 to secure its pledge to human rights. When

Eleanor died on November 1962, the United Nations honored her memory by observing a moment of silence and, on the floor of the General Assembly, Adlai Stevenson eulogized her "as the First Lady of the World," extolling her great virtue, "She would rather light candles than curse the darkness, and her glow has warmed the world" (E. Roosevelt Eulogized). FDR may have molded the candle, but Eleanor Roosevelt provided the fortitude and inspiration to keeping it burning brightly.

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The 'Digital Divide' is a political euphemism used to describe the technology gap that falls along the lines of race and class. For example, the Commerce Department reported that, while high-speed Internet access had reached about 40 percent of urban households and 25 percent of rural households by 2003, minority residents had lower adoption rates, with 14 percent of black and 13 percent of Latino households having broadband. Examining the Digital Divide provokes us into reexamining our assumptions regarding the concept of moral rights and obligations in the provision of public infrastructure in a technological society. This analysis will show that distributive compensatory justice in the digital era entails, not just meaningful access to the new digital infrastructure, but 'human capital development' that would allow for an equal opportunity for all to fully participate in economic, educational, and political life. These inequities will continue to be exacerbated by new generations of technology.

Specifically, I contend that the discussion of computers and the Internet is a smokescreen for the real systemic underlying structural issues of class, race, advantage, and disadvantage. Furthermore, since the actual divide is structural, computer-based solutions do not solve the problem. In fact, technology thrown at social problems tends to exacerbate the inherent social and economic inequities.

The analysis in this paper is based on the late twentieth century principles of John Rawls (1921–2002), which are based in part on the nineteenth century utilitarian works of the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Specifically, John Rawls's Difference Principle would allow social and economic inequalities to exist only if they satisfied two conditions pertinent to our discussion of the Digital Divide: (1) there must be fair equality of opportunity (i.e., it is irrelevant to give one a right that they are unable to take advantage of); and (2) the greatest benefit should go to the least advantaged members of society (Rawls, *Political Liberalism* 5–6).

While the Digital Divide issue is global in scale, this paper focuses on the Digital Divide in the United States, which, in 2004, had 37 million people in poverty.² The U.S. government's official poverty line is set at \$19,300 per year for a family of four, or \$9,800 per year for an individual under 65. The overall rate of poverty in 2004 was 12.7 percent.³ The poorest 10

THE REQUIREMENTS OF JUSTICE



W.E.B. DuBois



Booker T. Washington

ARISING FROM THE 'DIGITAL DIVIDE'¹

by Blake L. White

percent of people in the U.S. receive only 1.9 percent of the country's income, just ahead of China's 1.8 percent, and straggling behind the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany, and Japan, whose poorest 10 percent receive 2.1 percent to 4.8 percent of the country's income.

The U.S. has not progressed that far from the state espoused by the 1968 Kerner Commission Report. We continue to move toward two societies, one rich and the other poor — separate and unequal. When looking closely at the systemic poor in the U.S., the underclass of poor people encompasses all races and ethnicities. However, the case of African-Americans is both easily identifiable and of historical significance.

A valid question might be asked — Why focus on African-Americans? African-Americans comprise about 12 percent of the U.S. population, but 25 percent of America's poor.⁴ In addition, the individual successes of specific African-Americans can allow us to forget that a large underclass exists in twenty-first century America; and that caste has historically been and continues to be stratified by race. Skeptics and detractors need only be reminded of the 'invisible' masses of blacks that suddenly flashed across television screens during the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster. Of the 67 percent black population of New Orleans, 35 percent lived in poverty while 11.5 percent of the city's white population also lived in poverty. As the Brookings Institution notes, the concentrations of black poverty seen in New Orleans can be found in 46 of the 50 largest American cities. For example, the concentrated poverty rate among blacks in Miami was 68 percent, Louisville 53 percent, Fresno 45 percent, and Atlanta 41 percent (Berube 3–4).

These extremely poor, racially segregated neighborhoods did not appear by accident — governmental policies contributed to these imbalances. The federal Interstate Highway Act, for instance, literally paved the way for the 60 percent suburban growth and central city decline between 1970 and 2000 (Berube 5). This left only 17 percent of metropolitan populations working within three miles of downtown, job decentralizations that exacerbated the concentration of poor in the inner cities. The Federal Housing Administration "red-lined" inner city minority neighborhoods and private lenders followed suit, denying these areas access to private-sector capital needed to fuel housing markets.

As Harvard's Glenn Loury observes, when it comes to African-Americans, whether the inequality in economic opportunity results from the historical actions of a hostile or indifferent American society, or whether

it is due to the pathological actions of those within the group, the resulting inequities have occurred within the confines of the U.S. social system and under the influence of the peculiar relationship of social behavior, customs, expectations, laws, and self-fulfilling prophecies that have a particular American character.

By rationally examining the structural impediments of blacks, it may be easier to understand the less obvious structures that impede the poor in general. In this case, color-blindness, though admirable in some respects, ignores the reality and allows the culpable to escape responsibility for being part of the solution.

The “Digital Divide” is not Digital

In the U.S., the Digital Divide debate is a surrogate for the degree of fairness, or the lack thereof, associated with the infrastructure for the systemic distribution of goods, services, and wealth in a rapidly transforming information economy that requires a certain level of technical sophistication for one to be an active and successful participant. As Stanford’s Robert McGinn explains, since social change is a joint product of the technical change in question and the “initial social conditions” under which the technical change is introduced, the relative starting position of a group is a key indicator of its likely success in leveraging a new technology (McGinn 96-97). Following McGinn’s framework, when one looks at the starting positions of African-Americans over time, one finds them lagging behind the state of technology when they were captured and enslaved.

During this period of enslavement, the forced and unpaid population of blacks were prohibited from learning how to read and write (Wright 38) and were prohibited from tasks requiring wide dispersion, extensive travel, firearms, or control of large sums of money (Sowell 84-85).

In later generations, mechanized agribusiness eliminated the need for sharecropping and large-scale manual labor in agriculture and therefore displaced 6.5 million blacks into the “foreign” industrial system of northern and western cities; 5 million of them moved after 1940 (Lemann 6).

Globalization of manufacturing negatively impacted 310 million people between 1993 and 2002, including the 44 percent of black men and 11.5 percent of black women who held jobs in industrial operations, fabrication, precision crafts, repair, or as laborers at a time when they had just begun to attain unionized industrial positions. The current globalization of service sector jobs and intellectual expertise will likely further

exacerbate the competitive situation for those just starting to make progress in the corporate structure.

Unintended Consequences – “Race-Neutrality” in Public Infrastructure

Race-neutral attempts to address the Digital Divide are contrary to Rawls’s Difference Principle and risk violating certain long-cherished civil rights, notably the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 dealing with anti-discrimination in public programs, and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1955) that stated: “separate is inherently unequal.”

The Digital Divide moral argument should not be restricted only to the distribution of computers, but must be expanded to address the distribution of relevant benefits. In fact, computer technology may indeed be irrelevant in the lives of many of the poor. A case in point is LaGrange, Georgia (27,000 residents 60 miles southwest of Atlanta), the first city in the world to offer free and fast Internet access to its citizens back in 2000 (McFarlan 4-7). In spite of the broad availability, the city’s subsidization, use of a television instead of a personal computer, local content, and training material, almost one year from its launch only 4,137 of the 9,100 eligible households had ordered the system. Sadly, the goal of encouraging workforce education for those in the lowest socio-economic status was not met. Mayor Tom Hall explained, “We went door to door with our installers on Saturday at a public housing project and nobody was interested” (McFarlan 10). Harvard and Georgia State University researchers concluded that, “Based on our analysis, we believe that providing access to information technology (IT)—even access that is delivered for free to the home—is insufficient to adequately address the Digital Divide” (Keil 8-9).

LaGrange may also teach another lesson—the power of self-reinforcing stereotypes. Paraphrasing Stanford’s Thomas Sowell and Harvard’s Glenn Loury, if poor blacks in the housing projects thought that there was no expectation and no benefit to learning how to master the Internet, either for economic, educational, political, or social gain, then it is not surprising that they failed to see the relevance of investing their meager resources in such mastery.

Consider the example of how the Arizona Democratic Party hosted the first binding online vote on March 2000. Registered Democrats were given four days to vote in the election by computer, but only one day at polling places. This may have had the unintended consequence of increasing the representation of white voters, since Latinos, Native Americans, and African-

... THE DISCUSSION OF COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET IS A SMOKESCREEN FOR THE REAL SYSTEMIC UNDERLYING ISSUES OF CLASS, RACE, ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE.

Americans who were underrepresented in the online population were given less opportunity to vote than their white counterparts (Wilhelm 67-71).

Well-intentioned government programs that utilize computers to provide services can miss their target audience. For example, an Alabama program offered by the state employment agency encouraged jobless citizens to use a regional “one-stop” center that offered training, job listings, and other employment assistance. However, billboards erected in the poorest part of the state only listed the website address as contact information (Wilhelm 73). This is tantamount to replacing “White Only” signs from the 1950s and 60s with “Digital Only” signs today. It may also be a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964’s prohibition of discrimination in public programs.

Consider as well how the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, launched a program in 2003 to fight hunger, but used an online prescreening tool to determine Food Stamp eligibility (Wilhelm 73). It is ironic, insensitive, and arrogant for the government to be unaware that most Food Stamp recipients are not online.

Though the U.S. public school system was legally desegregated over the past 50 years, de-facto segregation persists along economic lines, which are

determined by historical racial inequities. Jonathan Kozol, who worked in inner-city school systems for over 40 years, notes that, “A segregated inner-city school is almost six times as likely to be a school of concentrated poverty as is a school that has an overwhelmingly white population” (Kozol 20)⁵ Although standardized tests do not provide an accurate prediction of a particular student’s likely academic progress, it is instructive to note that from 1976 through 1996 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that mean SAT scores ranged from 110–250 points more for white students than black students. We might conclude that separate educational facilities are still inherently unequal, as determined by *Brown v. Board* in 1955 (Loury 202).

Echoes of Washington and DuBois

This Digital Divide debate is not new. It harkens back to the debate between the Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois schools of thought regarding the best way to “train and uplift the race” over 100 years ago.

Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), former President of Tuskegee Institute, faced the dilemma while aiding ex-slaves in making the transition to a producer-consumer society, one in which blacks had to pay their own way in a “foreign” economic system. He urged strong vocational education in agriculture and the skilled trades at the expense, if necessary, of a broad-based education (Washington 131-58). Largely seen by today’s blacks as conciliatory to whites, Washington’s arguments deserve further examination and updating as we make the transition to a new global economy in which India is experiencing rapid growth in the IT services sector and Asia has experienced two decades of growth as an assembler and manufacturer of high-technology products.

It was Washington’s 1895 speech before the Cotton States and International Exposition, called the “Atlanta Compromise,” that caused the most furor among blacks. He asked white Southerners to abide by the law and to aid in the education of blacks. He advised blacks to postpone their fight for political power and social justice until they gained more prosperity (Washington 131-58).

Others did not share his hopeful view of whites. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963), the Harvard-educated black sociologist and professor who later served as an editorial voice for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), wrote that Washington had given up three things essential to black improvement: the vote, social equality, and liberal

... WE
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UNPRODUCTIVITY.

education. DuBois believed that success meant more than monetary gains. He accused Washington of preaching the “Gospel of Work and Money” to the extent of overshadowing the higher aims of life.

He also blasted Washington for accepting the alleged inferiority of blacks. DuBois eloquently stated in *Souls of Black Folk* that “manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing.” DuBois set the stage for a great disagreement over methods of reaching the same goal—compromise vs. confrontation—by asking,

Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men [blacks] can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meager chance for developing their exceptional men? (DuBois 42-88)

Washington’s other philosophical flaw is actually a strategic economic mistake. Washington, from the Benjamin Franklin school of hard work, Puritan ethics and craftsmanship, advocated skilled training in the crafts and agriculture. This may have made sense during Franklin’s day, but Washington’s America was industrializing at a fierce pace. He was unwittingly training black youth for obsolescence. The skilled trades were being replaced by the technology of mass production, and the manual labor of the farm was being mechanized with tractors, reducing the need for farmers and craftsmen. He failed to change with technological progress and, unfortunately, many of his graduates had to struggle blindly through yet another foreign economic system.

What is an Appropriate Education Today?

As far back as 1933, Carter G. Woodson (1875–1950) criticized the misaligned goals of educated blacks in

his treatise, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. Woodson considered the educational system as it developed in both Europe and America as an “...antiquated process which does not hit the mark even in the case of the needs of the white man himself.” Our educational process is designed to accommodate the needs of an industrial society, and it is becoming increasingly obsolete as the industrial society becomes more obsolete.

Today, the economic system that a large segment of the African-American poor needs to master is one based on the value of ideas and the ability to exploit a global marketplace. While computers can be tools for economic advantage, merely acquiring a computer is as useless as gaining union membership in an industry that has moved offshore. Access to the tool is useful only to those prepared to use it. Washington could prepare ex-slaves for skilled trades, but those specific skills are of no value when relevant goals cannot be accomplished. In today’s information economy, computers and Internet access are required, but are only steps toward socio-economic advancement.

Just as DuBois believed in, first, a rigorous training of the mind in various academic disciplines and, then, training in a specific trade for breadwinning, today many educators and scholars are advocating “back-to-basics” plus a strong sprinkling of the classics. On the other hand, business leaders today, echoing Washington’s belief in training for survival first, then training in the arts and letters “as intelligence and wealth demand,” argue that schools are not preparing students for the job market.

Who is right? The answer lies not in decisions requiring either academics or trades, but one that values both scholars and inventors, global vision and local action, entrepreneurs and skilled workers. The greatest need today is for creative, technically literate people who can think through problems, communicate them succinctly, and get results with minimal non-renewable resources. We need people who are generalists in many things and specialists in a few.

The ability to use computers comfortably is the key to being functional in an information society. However, if one looks at those professions that regularly use computers to do their work, but that do not consider computer science as part of their specialty, two things become apparent, according to Vico Henriques. First, people working with computers have the confidence that it is just another tool to help them perform their jobs. They use computers as a secondary tool, just as they used telephones, calculators, or typewriters. The second is that people who work with computers are

articulate and literate. Such diverse professionals as lawyers, engineers, librarians, medical professionals, and Indian call center operators all use the computer with equal facility, not because their academic training is similar, but because their basic communications skills are well developed (Henriques).

Given the structural changes going on in the global economy, changes which benefit highly-educated, flexible, politically astute, visionary entrepreneurs, the superficial argument of equitable distribution of computers, communications lines, databases, and software programming mask the complexity of this social problem. We must get serious about a wholesale W.E.B. DuBois-style upgrading of literacy, logical thinking, mathematical skills, research, and entrepreneurship demanded by a twenty-first century educational system for both children and adults, rather than a rehashing of a Booker T. Washington-style basic or vocational education model designed for the Industrial Revolution. Only then will computer-based tools be relevant to the day-to-day needs of the poor.

From a utilitarian perspective, we cannot afford the social costs of ignorance and unproductivity. For those prepared to take advantage of the opportunities enhanced by technology, our society may be ready to turn the corner on win-lose industrial-era thinking. Columbia University economist Jeffrey Sachs suggests that “Economic development is not a zero-sum game in which the winnings of some are inevitably mirrored by the losses of others.” In the information-intensive global service economy, the ability to bring capacities to the table that have value in the marketplace of ideas is what Sachs describes as “a game that everybody can win” (Sachs 31).

For the systemic poor, abstention is not a viable option.

NOTES

The full text of this thesis, edited for public consumption, plus some additional editorial material can be found at: http://www.strategic-tech.org/images/Requirements_of_Justice_Arising_from_the_Digital_Divide.pdf

A version dealing with the international implications of the Digital Divide can be found at: http://www.strategic-tech.org/images/Ethics_of_the_Global_Digital_Divide.pdf

¹ A version of this paper was presented at Stanford and Dominican University’s Joint Student and Alumni Symposium, June 23, 2007.

² U.S. Census Bureau: *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States*, 2004.

³ WashingtonPost.com, and *Newsweek* interactive chart on September 21, 2005.

⁴ The Urban Institute using 2000 U.S. Census data.

⁵ In the academic year 2000–2001, black or Hispanic were 95 percent of the public school enrollment in Detroit, 94 percent in Washington, DC, 88 percent in Baltimore, 87 percent in Chicago, 84 percent in Los Angeles, 82 percent in St. Louis, and 78 percent in Cleveland and Philadelphia (Kozol 8).

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SONNETS

by Robert Brown

Le Deviation

We name the No Thing that we might address,
Appeal to, No Thing with our final breath:
“O, save us from the Other Thing called Death—
O—faceless No Thing in the Nothingness.”

Above the hollow House of Illusion,
The sun stops and refuses to create
The definition of the horizon
Where Angels light the way to No Thing’s gate.

We join our brothers on the path to Hell,
Seeing quite clearly where each one went wrong.
We cannot see ourselves and cannot tell
That we are merely one of the doomed throng.

Our tears form River Ambiguity
And flow unnoticed to Indifferent Sea.

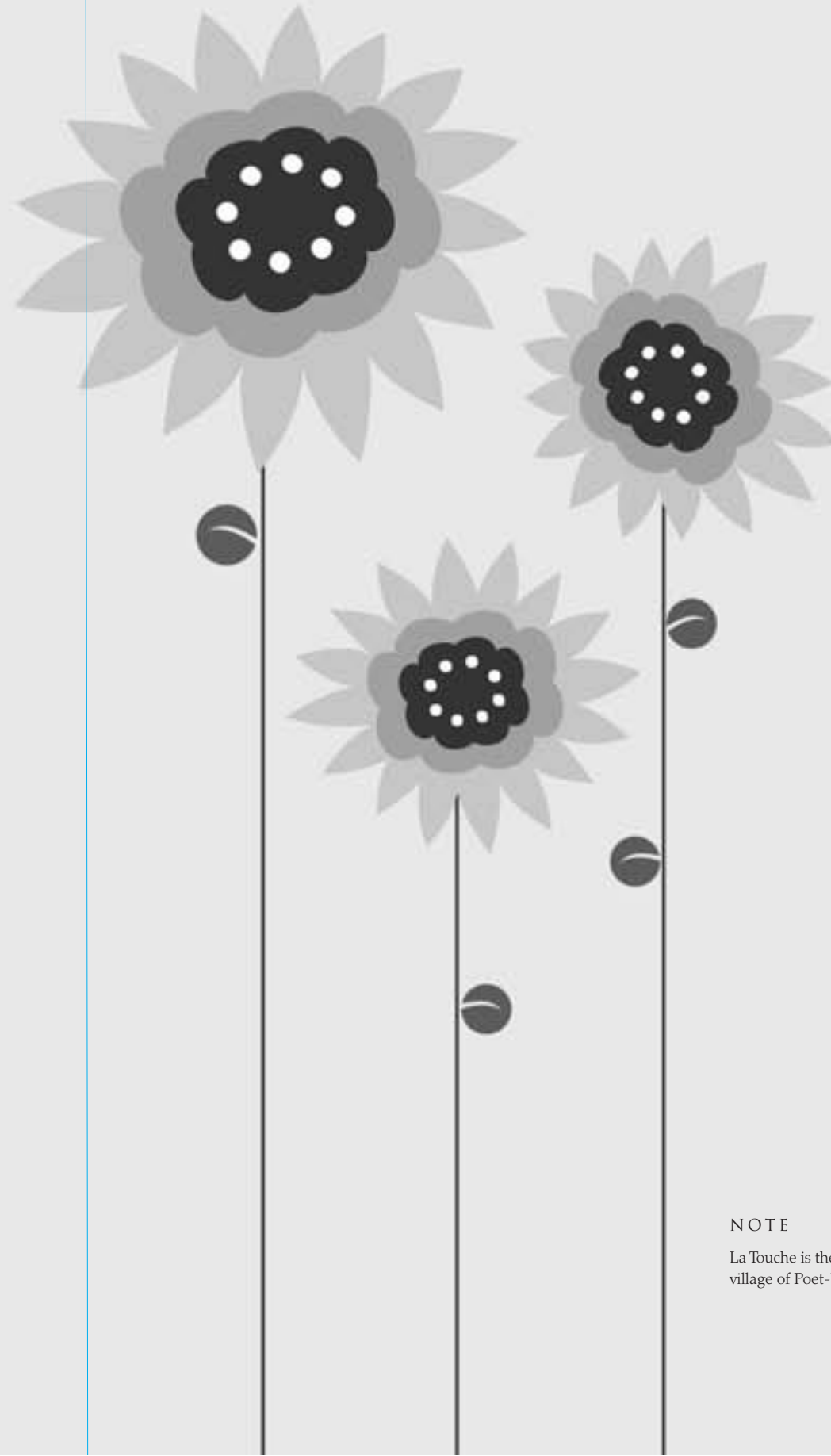
La Touche

A narrow road leads to a narrow gate,
Blue-shuttered memories of bees on lace.
Over the pebbled courtyard, lovers wake
In Paradise, a simple, sacred place.

Mute supervisors of the setting sun:
A solitary grey mare shakes her mane,
A magpie struts, wings folded like a nun.
A gentle mistral moves the weather vane.

Nearby *le village du Poet-Laval*,
The scent of lavender imbues the air.
An ancient mantra echoes from the walls,
Caressing, tempting us to linger there:

La Touche—sunflowers in a neighbor’s field.
La Touche—the sweet face of the baker’s child.



NOTE

La Touche is the name of a village in Provence near the medieval village of Poet-Laval.

HOMER BRINGS TO LIFE THE CHARACTERISTICS
OF A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PROFESSIONAL
WOMAN IN THE FORM OF THE GODDESS ATHENA.



ATHENA IN THE

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by Jean Collier Hurley

In writing *The Odyssey*, Homer brings to life the characteristics of a twenty-first century professional woman in the form of the goddess Athena. Like many contemporary women, Athena moves in what is primarily a man's world, striking a balance between male roughness and female tenderness. She attends meetings, collaborates with colleagues, mentors subordinates, plans strategic offensives, and resolves conflict. Her success demands mastery of delegation, persuasion, and motivation. Competence and assertiveness are givens. Athena skillfully integrates these qualities with her extraordinary insight into interpersonal dynamics. In doing so, she advances an agenda tied to home, family, and ultimately peace; objectives as relevant today as they were at the time of Odysseus.

Athena's persuasive skill is introduced in Book One of *The Odyssey* during a meeting of the gods when she presents the case for rescuing Odysseus. Her objective is to return him to his home and family. The gods have convened in full assembly at their home on Olympus, like a group of senior executives meeting at corporate headquarters. Zeus, the all powerful creator and the father of Athena, presides over the meeting in the manner of a CEO. Athena masterfully begins her presentation by first showing deference to Zeus and his position, referring to him as "...our high and mighty king..." (1.54) She follows by supporting

his argument that Aegisthus deserved to die, agreeing that he paid the price with "...a death he earned in full!" (1.55) Her calculated display of loyalty to Zeus sets the stage for his support of her proposal.

As she lays out her argument on behalf of Odysseus, Athena draws on her talent for persuasion and motivation. First, addressing Zeus's compassion for her as her father, she pleads that her heart breaks for Odysseus who is "...far from his loved ones..." (1.59) Appealing to his sense of justice as the CEO, she declares that leaving Odysseus to wander far from home for so long is a great inequity; that he suffers miserably from being trapped by Calypso, who is after all the daughter of a wicked father, and that Odysseus even longs to die.

Athena appeals again to Zeus's sense of justice with a bold challenge that sets up a guilt scenario. Reminding him that Odysseus has made sacrifices to win his favor, she questions whether Zeus is simply too lofty to care and asks, "Why, Zeus, why so dead set against Odysseus?" (1.76) Her strategy works and Zeus replies, "How on earth could I forget Odysseus?" (1.78) Using his godly executive power, Zeus addresses the assembled gods to "...come, all of us here put heads together now, work out his journey home so Odysseus can return." (1.91-92)

With remarkable insight, Athena can see that Hermes should be delegated to deliver the order to

Calypso to release Odysseus. She begins by again stroking Zeus's ego, referring to him as "...our high and mighty king!" (1.97) Next she seeks reaffirmation of support from the group with a statement of confirmation, "If it now really pleases the blissful gods that wise Odysseus shall return..." (1.98-99) Only then does she suggest sending Hermes to deliver the message to Calypso, whom she calls the "...nymph with lovely braids..." (1.102) Probably not intended as a compliment; her description hints at the tension between Calypso, who seeks to achieve her goals through seduction, and Athena, who relies on her intellect. Athena may perceive that ordering Calypso to release Odysseus will bruise the nymph's ego, implying a rejection of her seductive appeal, and if Athena delivers the message it could generate animosity. In today's parlance she does not want to get into a 'cat fight' over a man, as it would be counterproductive to achieving her objective. Hermes, however, is neither a threat nor a rival and can therefore deliver the message with all the power of Zeus and the gods behind him.

Athena's friendship with Odysseus embodies characteristics common in today's business world; an intense professional relationship with the potential for something more intimate. Although Athena and Odysseus are intellectual soul mates, she has the wisdom to handle the relationship with deftness. In Book 13 Homer provides insight into the dynamics

of their connectedness. Athena moves between being a pal or "one of the boys" and expressing herself as a woman. When she sheds her appearance as a boy, she breaks into a smile, strokes Odysseus with her hand, and appears as a lovely woman, "...beautiful, tall and skilled at weaving lovely things." (13.327-28) Like a wife scolding an errant husband, she chides Odysseus, "Any man—any god who met you—would have to be some champion lying cheat to get past you for all-round craft and guile! You terrible man..." (13.329-31) She acknowledges, however, that they are both crafty, "We're both old hands at the arts of intrigue. Here among mortal men you're far the best at tactics, spinning yarns, and I am famous among the gods for wisdom, cunning wiles, too" (13.335-39). But she warmly reassures him that she will stand beside him, "...her glances flashing warmly. That's why I can't forsake you in your troubles—you are so winning, so worldly-wise, so self-possessed!" (13.375-77). Odysseus acknowledges admiration and gratitude for Athena and the power and confidence he receives from her, exclaiming "Athena, fire me with daring... Stand by me—furious now as then, my bright-eyed one—and I would fight three hundred men, great goddess, with you to brace me, comrade-in-arms in battle" (13.443, 445-47).

Like a highly competitive twenty-first century professional woman, Athena is a strong and savvy competitor. She understands how to mentor her

LIKE A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, ATHENA IS A STRONG AND SAVVY COMPETITOR.



associates, building on their strengths and overcoming their weaknesses. When Odysseus is preparing to battle Penelope's suitors, Athena makes him taller, stronger, and younger. During the battle, when Odysseus seems to lose his courage, Athena fires him up again. First she issues a blazing accusation, "Where's it gone, Odysseus—your power, your fighting heart?" (22.235). Then she inspires him to continue with renewed vigor, saying "Come, old friend, stand by me!" (22.243).

Taking the form of Mentor in the final battle scene with Eupithes, Athena gives strength and courage not only to Odysseus, but also to his son and his father, inspiring them all to do their best. Odysseus recognizes her influence as he tells Telemachus, "...you'll learn soon enough—as you move up to fight where champions strive to prove themselves the best... In battle prowess we've excelled for ages all across the world" (24.558-59, 561-62). Telemachus responds that "...now I'm fired up" (24.565). Finally, Athena breathes enormous strength into Odysseus's father, Laertes, addressing him as "...dearest of all my comrades" (24.570). This is Athena as a competitor in battle, but also as a woman of tender compassion.

Athena, like twenty-first-century women, learns to synchronize toughness and tenderness. She is competitive, competent, and willing to fight when the cause is just; and she has the strength of character to

remove individuals who are a threat to the organization. Balancing between fighter and peacemaker, she delivers Odysseus back to his home and family and establishes lasting peace in Ithaca. With the male persona of Mentor, but with feminine grace, she recoils at the futility of endless war. When she cries out in a piercing voice, "Hold back...from brutal war! Break off—shed no more blood—make peace at once!" the men listen, blanch, and go limp with fear (24.584-86). With support from her father Zeus hurling a bolt of lightning, she cries, "Call a halt to the great leveler, War—" and even Odysseus is relieved to stop fighting (24.596). A woman has done what perhaps no man could do without losing face. Like a woman of the twenty-first century, Athena is a warrior when required, a compassionate peacemaker, and the subject of admiration by her male associates, qualities of increasing importance as twenty-first century Americans consider the possibility of electing a woman to be United States President.

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PARALLEL CURRENTS:

A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION FOR ELIZABETH GASKELL... AND ME¹

by Naomi Hunter



"Henceforward Charlotte Brontë's existence becomes divided into two parallel currents – her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman."

Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*

When Elizabeth Gaskell wrote these words about her friend and literary colleague Charlotte Brontë, she was also writing about herself, I argue in my Master of Liberal Arts thesis. Gaskell felt torn between her art and her duties as a wife and mother, a conflict she expressed unambiguously in her personal correspondence, and communicated subtly in her novels and short stories. Three and a half years later, I recognize that I was, in turn, writing about *myself* as I wrote about Gaskell writing about Brontë! The challenges of a writing life for a woman and a mother are not so different today as we like to imagine.

I knew all along that I was writing about the theme of women's divided lives, but it was only well after my thesis had been proofread, printed on fine paper and bound in a sturdy red cover, my name and title proudly embossed in gold on the spine, that I began to think about the themes of my thesis in a context beyond sex roles. Now in a new phase of my own life, I see that some of the questions Gaskell asked are the very questions I hear from fellow MLA graduates—*How do I integrate personal and intellectual pursuits? Do our lives run in parallel but separate currents, or do the currents flow together at times? Today I think about Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë and ask how they help me answer the frequently-asked, post-MLA question: How do I continue to pursue a "life of the mind?"*

Reflecting on my journey with Gaskell and Brontë, and my earlier journey through MLA classes and seminars, I hear the whisper of an emerging answer to the last question. Looking back even further, I see that even as I worked on my application to the MLA program, I was already beginning to search for an answer to that question, and that there were clues along the way. I offer the story of my thesis journey in the hope that it might resonate with your own story, and move us toward understanding what it means to pursue a life of the mind even as most of us experience a life of the ordinary.

December 1999. I am working on my application to the MLA program at Stanford, and I am perplexed. I must write an essay describing an intellectual interest I have developed over the years. I am asked to explain where this interest began and where I anticipate it leading me. I am in trouble, I think. I yearn to be accepted in this program because I hope to develop some intellectual interests. As of now, I do not believe I have any, at least not anything specific.

My reading for the past few years has mainly consisted of child-rearing books, and articles about whether women should work or stay home with their children—a question that is deeply personal and highly practical for me. It is a question I have wrestled with for 10 years, but clearly NOT an intellectual question, and I decide not to write about it. I do the best I can. I write a truthful but, in my mind, off-the-mark essay about the joy of rediscovering literature, and cross my fingers.

March 2000. To my delight, I am accepted into the program.

August 2000–August 2003. I am much too busy working on papers about all kinds of interesting topics to think about whether I should be working or staying home with my kids. I have made an unconscious decision—I am definitely working. And my mind is now occupied with presumably more important questions than the “mommy wars”—a term I have come to hate and am tired of thinking about. I write about a modern-day outbreak of the plague in India, C.S. Lewis as a literary critic, and Stephen Pinker's failure to consider sociolinguistics in his popular book, *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language*.

Then, one fateful day, in a class on Victorian women writers, I am introduced to a novelist I have never heard of—Elizabeth Gaskell, a contemporary of the Brontë sisters and George Eliot. I am fascinated by Gaskell, a writer who to this day is frequently referred to as “Mrs.” Gaskell. She was married to a prominent Unitarian minister, and wrote seven novels while running a household, raising four daughters and working as a social activist. I am struck and disturbed by the fact that the first generation of feminist literary critics did not pay much attention to Gaskell, and when they did they wrote about her in disparaging terms, as a quintessential Victorian lady who acquiesced to a nineteenth-century patriarchal social structure. Such a pat dismissal confuses and annoys me. I see something different—a woman who represented a modern ideal. Gaskell had figured out a way to have it all, and in mid-nineteenth-century Victorian England, no less. She juggled a successful career while raising a family and engaging in the most important social issues of her day.

I don't realize it yet, but a thesis topic has begun to emerge. I want to write about Gaskell and I want to defend her. I think I am going to write about the unfair criticism of Gaskell. I do not yet realize I am going to write about myself, about women and writing, even about the MLA experience.

September–December 2003. I go through the painful process of narrowing the scope of my thesis, and I settle on writing about Gaskell's one work of non-fiction, the biography she wrote about Charlotte Brontë, who was a friend, but who was also a literary competitor. I focus on the conflict Gaskell felt between her own writing and her identity as a woman, and how her depiction of Brontë expressed some of her own deepest questions and most subversive ideas. My theme becomes clear: *divided lives*.

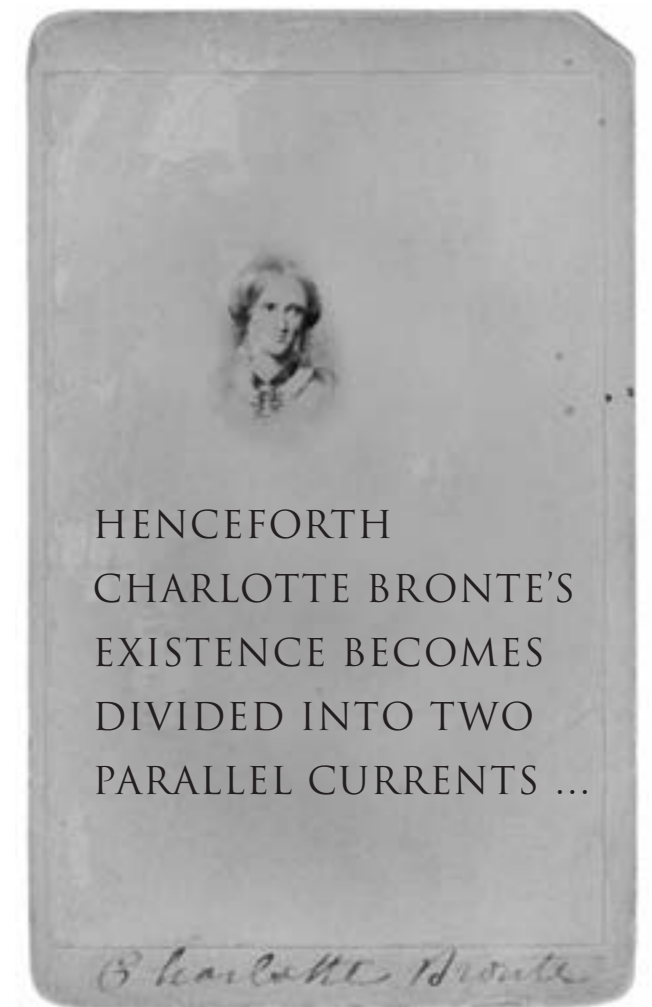
January 2004. I present my preliminary argument to the works-in-progress group. I suggest that the Brontë biography is not only an account of Charlotte Brontë's life—the first prominent biography of a woman by a woman—but also a conversation about writing, and about the constraints of living as a woman in Victorian England. As I form my ideas about Gaskell and Brontë, I cannot help but see the connections to my own life. It is easy for me to see that I also face constraints while trying to write and live as a woman and a mother in the San Francisco Bay area in 2004. I do not yet generalize about the challenge of an intellectual life for *anyone* who is pursuing it on the sidelines of a life filled with other responsibilities and pressures.

February 2004. My work intensifies and I begin to understand that the very act of writing is at odds with the Victorian social code for women. The ideal woman perfectly fulfilled her duties when she was self-sacrificial and sexually innocent, when she graciously met the demands of husband, children, her parents and sometimes siblings, and existed primarily within the private sphere of the home rather than the public sphere.

I discover that even if a Victorian woman wrote, her life was still expected to center around the family. At the same time, I am struggling myself with keeping my thesis in motion while shuttling my three sons to school, baseball practice and piano lessons, buying groceries and occasionally volunteering at their public school. Several of Elizabeth Gaskell's letters to her friends about the constant interruptions to her work are uncomfortably familiar.

The pressures for a Victorian woman writer, however, were even more complicated than they are for a modern writer. Besides keeping up with domestic responsibilities, she had to be careful that the themes of her literature did not cross the boundaries of what was proper for a woman to know. The problem was that both Gaskell and Brontë knew more than the stringent social code allowed—Gaskell because of her social activism, and Brontë because of her brother's indiscretions and her own obsession with her professor, Monsieur Heger.

Gaskell and Brontë then were both constrained by the Victorian boundaries—Gaskell for tackling indelicate subjects like unwed motherhood, and Brontë for writing with too much familiarity about passionate romantic attraction and sexual feeling. Brontë had been severely criticized during her lifetime by literary reviewers for her “coarseness”—a euphemism for being too sexually knowledgeable. Gaskell



agreed to write the Brontë biography, in fact, partly to defend the honor of her friend. But Gaskell wasn't just defending Brontë. She recognized the hypocrisy forced on women who were forced to choose between writing honestly about their lives or the lives they witnessed and getting accused of being unfeminine, or worse of representing life as the culture expected and telling a story that was not true.

March 2004. My colloquium approaches and I begin to draw conclusions. I have come to believe that modern literary critics missed Gaskell's anger in the Brontë biography. Gaskell saw that women's writing was judged unfairly and, as a result, women were forced to live divided lives. Gaskell herself faces this problem in writing about Brontë. She could not tell the truth and yet preserve the image of Brontë as a sheltered Victorian unmarried lady. So, she attempted to reconcile the conflict between the life of the writer and the life of the woman by suggesting a division,

saying that Brontë's life ran in parallel currents—her life as Currer Bell, the author, and as Charlotte Brontë, the woman. "There were separate duties belonging to each character," Gaskell said, "not opposing each other; not impossible, but difficult to be reconciled." This becomes the pivotal passage of the book for my thesis, and the point at which my own work intersects with my personal life. I now see that it is a passage that also speaks to the dilemma faced by many MLA students and graduates who have chosen to pursue a life of the mind in the midst of an ordinary life. But while Gaskell seems to suggest this separation of roles, she also sees the possibility of reconciliation between them.

I think of my own life—how my family experience enhances my understanding of Gaskell at the same time that it creates enormous challenges for recording my observations and ideas—and I begin to wonder if these separate currents flow in parallel streams, as Gaskell suggests, or turbulently against each other like rapids in a fast-moving river. Each of us brings

our personal life experiences to our intellectual work, whether we are reading a book, viewing a work of art, or conducting scholarly research. And yet, at the same time that our jobs, our families, our responsibilities inform our questions and our insights, they also compete with them.

April 2004. The day of the colloquium arrives, and it is time to present the core of my argument and my conclusions. I began my research with the idea of defending Gaskell, and I do, but in the end I also have to admit that she contradicted her own argument. As much as Gaskell wanted to separate the woman from the writer, she couldn't. In fact she repeatedly used difficult events from Brontë's life to justify her friend's "coarseness" as a writer, negating her own claim of a neat separation between the personal and the intellectual. Despite her attempts to argue that Brontë's writing is cleanly divided from her feminine identity, she made a perfect, and surely unconscious, argument that one's personal life and one's intellectual life are inseparable.

May 2004. I polish and correct my thesis and draw my final conclusions. I suggest that the most lasting legacy of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* may be its frank acknowledgement that women, especially women who write, frequently feel divided, and that the culture in which they live reinforces the sense of division. Gaskell's powerful, but conflicted depiction of Brontë's life reminds us that the division of a woman's self into a public and a private persona was impossible in nineteenth-century England because her life was inextricably tied to home and family.

I believe that Gaskell revealed an important truth—the truth that no writer should be subject to such a forced division of the personal and the private. Later, I hope, it may be recognized that Gaskell's inability to separate her world into neat categories actually empowered her to write about deeply personal subjects—subjects that have to do with how people live in relation to their culture.

January 2008. From this vantage point, I can see that as I analyzed Gaskell's treatment of the conflict between the life of the writer and the life of the woman, I was working out the conflict I felt between my role as a mother, and my interest in things outside my own family. As I wrote, it slowly began to dawn on me that this practical, politically-charged 1990s question—should I work or should I stay home—was rooted in

several deeper questions. Back in 1999 when I wrote my MLA application, I thought of an intellectual question as something lofty and outside of myself. Part of what I gained through the entire MLA experience was a deeper understanding of what constitutes an intellectual interest, and I see now that questions about how ordinary people live and relate to their world are profoundly intellectual in nature.

My thesis addressed the problem of sex roles and gender expectations in Victorian culture, and our own, and how they affect the process of thinking, the imagination and writing. But beyond that, today I ask an even larger question: how much do our everyday experiences, our job responsibilities, our personal obligations inform our intellectual lives? This is a question deeply relevant to how I take my MLA experience forward into the rest of my life.

All the MLA students I know feel a tension between our intellectual pursuits and interests, and our other roles—employee, spouse, partner, parent. Since most of us don't do academic work professionally, we may be tempted to separate our everyday lives from this passion for the life of the mind. Do our lives run in parallel currents? Or, are our work and our lives intertwined with the questions we ask, and the answers we find?

After graduation, I asked: where do I go from here? Unlike undergraduates, most of us will not go on to pursue careers related to the work we did in the program. When I get together with fellow alums, we often talk about how to continue to pursue a life of the mind. Does that mean taking a class now and then, joining a book club, getting together with MLA friends, or does it mean something more?

What I learned from my own journey with Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë is that our everyday experiences inform our questions, and our intellectual lives inform our answers. I have come to believe that the way to extend the MLA experience into the rest of our lives is to live, to observe, to ask questions and to seek answers with intellectual rigor.

I am driven by different questions today than I was in 2000: as communications director for a school district that is bifurcated between affluent white, highly educated parents, and non-English speaking immigrants, the questions of race, equity and cultural integration weigh heavily on me. I could meet the requirements of my job without my MLA degree, but I think I have a better chance of making a difference on an important level because I have learned how to think deeply, ask tough questions and look for unexpected answers.

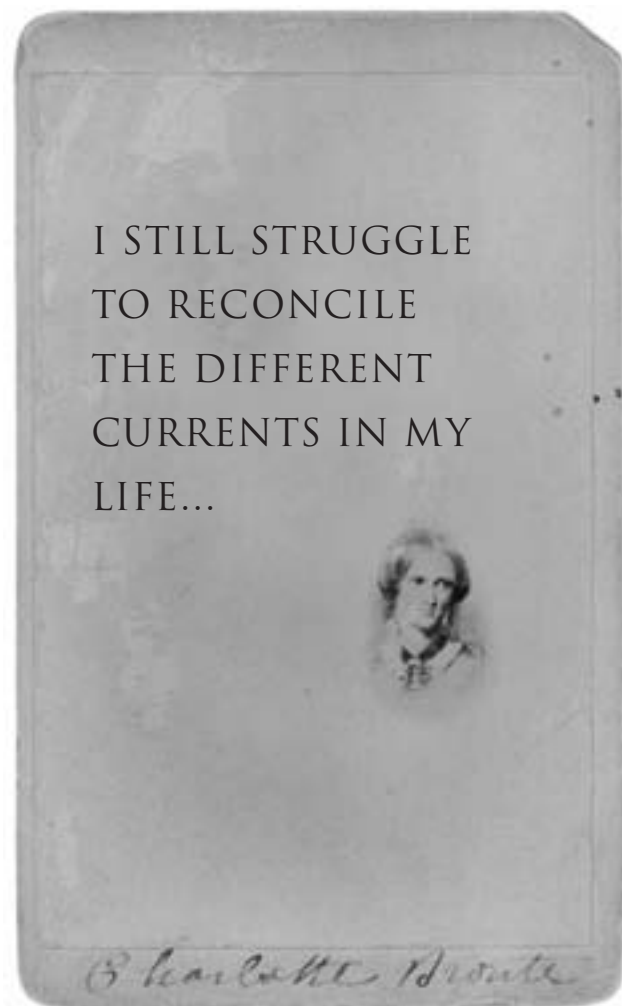
I still struggle with reconciling the various currents in my life, but I move forward with the strong conviction that my rather ordinary life, with all its mundane challenges and accomplishments, is fertile ground for asking the biggest questions of life, and pursuing answers with all the intellectual rigor of an MLA thesis.

NOTE

¹ A version of this paper was presented at Stanford and Dominican University's Joint Student and Alumni Symposium, June 23, 2007.

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Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 1857. Ed. Elizabeth Jay. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.



CONTRIBUTORS

JENNIFER SWANTON BROWN (*Tall and Green*) published her first poem in the Palo Alto Times when she was in the fifth grade. She has studied Linguistics, German Literature, and Nursing, and works as a research educator at Stanford University. Jennifer has been a poet/teacher with California Poets in the Schools since 2001. She has been active with Waverley Writers in Palo Alto since 1986, and first joined the Squaw Valley Community of Writers in 1989. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in multiple local journals. Jennifer is currently finishing her fourth year in the Masters of Liberal Arts program at Stanford University. She is a two-time recipient of a Fine Arts Commission grant from the City of Cupertino, where she lives with her husband and two children.

ROBERT BROWN (*Le Deviation* and *Le Touche*) is a third-year MLA student. He is the broker/owner of a mortgage brokerage and has over thirty years in the local real estate and real estate finance industry. He has published a number of poems including *The Binary Star*, *The Stowaway*, and *As He Bombed the Village*, *He Thought He Saw a Man Who Resembled His Father*. Bob has a BA in English Literature from San Francisco State University.

ANDY GROSE (*Keeping the Eggs Warm*) is a 2001 graduate of the MLA program who hopes you enjoy his story, and that you will read it to the children in your life. Youth, our common heritage, continues to fuel his fiction. His other writing includes medical papers, poetry and further development of his thesis topic, the Deseret Alphabet.

MOLLIE J. HENRIKSON (*Eleanor Roosevelt, Defender of Human Rights*) is a fourth year MLA student working on her thesis, "Representations of Women's Wartime Contributions in Film, 1942-1946: Perpetuating the Cult of Domesticity." She is a social studies teacher and the Model United Nations coach at Campolindo High School in Moraga. In 2007, she was recognized as Teacher of the Year for the Acalanes Union High School District. Molly lives in Oakland, where she enjoys swimming with the Manatee Masters swim team. She also enjoys traveling, going to baseball games, and reading historical biographies.

JEAN COLLIER HURLEY (*Athena in the Twenty-first Century*) is a first year MLA student. She holds an MBA in finance from UC Berkeley but has seen the light and is fully committed to her studies at Stanford. She is also an art photographer, a business-woman with an interest in philanthropy, and a runner. She enjoys visiting the world's great art centers, most recently Berlin. Her home is in San Francisco where she takes advantage of the City's rich cultural activities and hangs out with friends at the local coffee houses.

NAOMI HUNTER (*Parallel Currents: A Journey of Reconciliation for Elizabeth Gaskell ... and Me*) graduated from Stanford's Master of Liberal Arts program in 2004. Her thesis, "Finishing a Conversation Between Friends: Elizabeth Gaskell and *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*" examined the complex friendship between these two Victorian novelists, and how their long-running dialogue about women and writing is connected to our contemporary conversation. After two post-graduate years of asking, "Now what?" she resumed her previous profession of public relations. Her new position, Director of Communications for the Redwood City School District, has raised a whole new set of questions to explore, and also provides a terrific opportunity to put the power of analyzing and writing learned in the MLA program to good practice. Naomi also has a BA in English from Northwestern University.

LAURA MOORHEAD (*A Love Letter from Benjamin Franklin*) is a second-year MLA student and a freelance editor with several San Francisco Bay Area organizations, including PBS FRONTLINE/World and the Art Institute. She also co-authored *Cocktail: The Drinks Bible for the 21st Century*, a somewhat historical look at mixed drinks from the dusty corner of the bar.

BLAKE L. WHITE (*The Requirements of Justice Rising from the Digital Divide*) is a 2006 graduate of Stanford's MLA program. He has thirty years of technology industry leadership in Silicon Valley and Hollywood and is the author of several articles and two books: *The Technology Assessment Process* and *A New Era for Content: Protection, Potential, and Profit in the Digital World*. Blake also holds a BS in engineering from North Carolina State and an MBA from Xavier University.

DECLARATION BY

MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM
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Stanford, CA 94305-6079

DECLARATION BY UNITED NATIONS:

A JOINT DECLARATION BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN
IRELAND, THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS,
CHINA, AUSTRALIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, COSTA RICA, CUBA,
CZECHOSLOVAKIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, EL SALVADOR,
GREECE, GUATEMALA, HAITI, HONDURAS, INDIA, LUXEMBOURG,
NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, NICARAGUA, NORWAY, PANAMA,
POLAND, SOUTH AFRICA, YUGOSLAVIA.

The Governments signatory hereto,

Having subscribed to a common program of purposes and principles embodied in the Joint Declaration of the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland dated August 14, 1941, known as the Atlantic Charter.

Being convinced that complete victory over their enemies is essential to defend life, liberty, independence and religious freedom, and to preserve human rights and justice in their own lands as well as in other lands, and that they are now engaged in a common struggle against savage and brutal forces seeking to subjugate the world, DECLARE:

(1) Each Government pledges itself to employ its full resources, military or economic, against those members of the Tripartite Pact and its adherents with which such government is at war.

(2) Each Government pledges itself to cooperate with the Governments signatory hereto to bring about a separate armistice or peace with

The foregoing declaration may be extended to other nations which are, or which may become, material assistance and contribution to the common cause for victory over Hitlerism.

*Done at Washington
January First 1942*

*The United States of America
by [Signature]
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
by [Signature]*

*on behalf of the Soviet Socialist Republics
[Signature]*

*National Government of China
[Signature]*

*The Commonwealth of the British Isles
by [Signature]*

*The Kingdom of the Netherlands
by [Signature]
Canada
by [Signature]*