

tant black organization that describes whites as “devils” created as a curse upon the world by an embittered black scientist.

That evening Hackney came out and met with the student militants, and the following day he refused to condemn the minority students for their theft of the paper. His statement reads like an apology. Hackney lamented that “two important university values, diversity and open expression, seem to be in conflict.” One wonders if Hackney regretted the conflict between the morals of normal Americans and the publicly-funded homosexual pornography in Mapplethorpe’s photographic exhibit in his past defense of free expression. Perhaps he would have been quick to come to my defense if I had been receiving federal subsidies for my work.

As of this writing, the theft of the paper has been deemed a violation of the open expression policy of the university. This cerebral realization represents something of a milestone in university life. Perhaps some backlash will crystallize against the previously unstoppable juggernaut of university thought control. However, the security officer who arrested the young Muhammad has been suspended for detaining two of the protesting thieves. Penn’s enforcers of the politically correct have apparently found another scapegoat on whom they can vent their bitter brand of sensitivity.

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## Letter From the Lower Right

*by John Shelton Reed*

### This and That From Here and There



It’s been a while since my last roundup of regional news, so some of these items have a little age on them, but you probably missed them anyway, so they’ll be news to you, right? An implicit theme (not implicit now that I’ve mentioned it, I guess) is that Southern culture is still

kicking, even if in some respects it’s on the skids.

Let’s start with the fact that here in Chapel Hill we have a local band called—Southern Culture on the Skids. (Their best song is “Eight-Piece Box.”) I ask you: Would anyone name a band, say, *New England Culture on the Skids*? I rest my case.

But not all of the musical news these days is, ah, upbeat. A recent marketing study, for instance, reveals that two-thirds of the country-music audience is now female. I have to say that we traditionalists suspected as much.

See, it used to be that country was a pretty masculine world. Most of the fans were male, and so were most of the singers, old boys who could tear your heart out with a sad song or make you grin with a lyric like “Her daddy calls her ‘angel,’ and her mama calls us three times a night.” That was the era of great country titles, like “Because of the Cathouse I’m in the Doghouse with You,” “Footprints on the Windshield Upside Down,” and, of course, “Take Your Tongue Out of My Mouth (I’m Kissing You Goodbye).” Women singers were a minority, but there were plenty of them. Many of them knew their place and sang songs like “I Want to be a Cowboy’s Sweetheart” or “Stand By Your Man,” but there was always room for a spunky, take-no-crap gal like Loretta (“Don’t Come Home A-Drinkin’ With Lovin’ on Your Mind”) Lynn.

But it seems that now women have quit telling their husbands and boyfriends to change the station, and I think the advent of the music video has something to do with that. It’s no accident that homely guys like George Jones, Johnny Paycheck, and Hank Williams Jr. are being replaced by studly hunks whose videos show their peccs. Ironically, this development hasn’t been good for female singers. New women singers are coming along, and they’ll have careers, but there are fewer Loretta’s and Dolly’s and Tammy’s these days—Reba McEntire is about the only female superstar—and the megahits are from guys with names like Vince and Garth and Clint. (A friend of a friend recently moved from Siler City, North Carolina, to Nashville and changed his name to “Brick”—watch for him.) It’s almost incidental that some of these boys can really sing: others can’t, and it hasn’t hurt them one bit. “Achy Breaky Heart” has a good beat and Lord knows you can

dance to it, but *I* could sing it as well as Billy Ray does.

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Speaking of music videos and Nashville, I find it almost touching that officials at David Lipscomb University in Music City banned MTV from television sets in dormitory lounges and the student center, objecting to both the noise level and the frequently suggestive content. Hard to believe, isn’t it, that these good souls live in the same world and century as the Netherlanders who (Reuters informs us) recently wrote a report recommending special fire-safety regulations for brothels catering to sado-masochists. (I hadn’t thought about it, but obviously it takes longer to escape from a burning building if you’re handcuffed to a bedpost.)

Yes, our world is made up of many diverse and mutually uncomprehending communities. It always has been, of course, but these days they can’t simply ignore each other. Forcing disparate cultures to *notice* one another is the great effect of the modern mass media. Communications gurus like to argue that the media are making us look more alike, too, but that’s less clearly so. As a recent article on “territorial television” in the broadcasting trade magazine *Channels* shows, different folks watch different programs—and region is one of the differences that makes a difference. *Designing Women*, for instance, used to be one of the best shows on television (even if it did get a little preachy sometimes) and it’s certainly one of the best ever set in the South (although that’s not saying much). Southerners seemed to appreciate that: at its peak the program had ratings in Atlanta and Little Rock nearly half again as high as the national average. That’s about the same regional bonus that *Newhart* and *Murder, She Wrote* enjoyed in Burlington, Vermont. Similarly, the relatively wholesome CBS miniseries *Lonesome Dove* was watched by 38 percent of all Houston households, but by only 19 percent of those in New York City (where it was outdrawn by *Full Exposure: The Sex Tapes Scandal*). *Miami Vice* got a bigger audience in, no surprise, Miami. And so forth.

This is nothing new. Twenty-odd years ago the Nielsen ratings showed only one program (the *Lucy Show*) in the top ten for both the South and the Northeast, and that was at a time when there were at most three channels for viewers to choose from. Now that cable

delivers dozens of stations and folks can watch televangelists or pro wrestlers or soft porn or Spanish-language game shows *24 hours a day*, it seems to me that the effect of television is likely to be to allow regional groups, or any others for that matter, to become even more what they already are. Whether that's good or bad, of course, depends on what that is.

By the way, researching this subject the other evening, I came across a cable offering called *Glamorous Ladies of Wrestling*, or GLOW. I lingered long enough to see the terrorist Palestina, in fatigues and combat boots, treacherously biting the thigh of the California Doll, who sported not one but two Happy Faces, one on the butt of her *Flashdance* sweats, the other tattooed on her arm. Hands across the sea . . .

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Anyway, the spirit of competition and free enterprise is alive and well down here. My buddy Hardy tells me there's a guy in Dothan, Alabama, who sells tires for 75 cents a pound, and if you can find them cheaper anywhere else he'll give you a goat. I heard a radio ad the other day for a Greensboro used-car dealer who bills himself as a "car-opractor." And my buddy Cliff has even come up with an entrepreneurial solution for the kudzu problem. He proposes to sell it as a pick-your-own crop to Yankee tourists, to put in their terrariums.

Southern women in business have sound values, too. A survey by a Chicago executive search firm found that more than 70 percent of female executives in the South oppose federally imposed parental-leave policies, roughly twice the level of opposition found in the East and West. Despite their manifest good sense, I'm sorry to say that Southern women executives seem to be playing catch-up. A Texas A&M study reported that only 48 percent of Southern male executives had "strongly favorable" attitudes toward women in business, compared to 57 percent in the East and 65 percent in the West. The Midwest trailed the South, though, with only 40 percent strongly favorable.

In other business news, the *Wall Street Journal* reports that Mexican marijuana growers have a "patron saint," Jesus Malverde, a philanthropic drug dealer hanged by the army in 1904. A prayer to him goes:

Malverde, increase their cravings.

If necessary, let the devils help me in this. Let not my healthy countrymen smoke it, at any rate, only the gringos who buy it. Malverde, you light up my path to make harvesting my destiny. You allow me to harvest the grass for the gringo and to make great bunches of silver coins.

(This translation sounds as if it is the work of the Standing Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church, but I am assured that it is not.)

According to North Carolina agriculture officials marijuana has long since surpassed tobacco as our state's number one cash crop, but my question is: How are our guys—good Protestant lads, for the most part—supposed to compete with this? President Clinton, are you listening?

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Here in the Tar Heel State we also grow some collards, and a story in the *Raleigh News and Observer* suggests that some of our folks can eat them, too. It seems that Mr. Mort Hurst from Robersonville consumed seven and a half pounds at one sitting to retain his title as Collard-Eating King. Ole Mort is an eating fool. Earlier he had traveled to Alabama and set a record by inhaling 16 and a half double-decker Moon Pies in ten minutes. He shared the secrets of his success: one, three weeks before entering an eating contest he stops smoking; two, three or four days before the event he calls his friends so they can "brag on him" to the extent that he feels backed into a corner and just has to win; three, he listens to a record about himself called "The Legend of Ole Eating Mort Hurst"; and four, for the last day he just concentrates on being a big SOB and doesn't speak to anyone, including his wife and children. Incidentally, he doesn't like collards.

Which reminds me, for some reason, of a great country joke I heard a while back:

Q: Why is my finger like a pie?

A: Because it's got meringue on it.

(This requires some familiarity with East Tennessee accents.)

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In political news, when the student newspaper at Lander College in Greenwood, South Carolina, asked a number

of its readers who the college's next president should be, sophomore Lauri Clements said, "Jefferson Davis—he may be dead, but at least he's Southern." Alas, Lauri, that's no guarantee these days.

In fact, lately I've been taking a lot of flak from Yankee friends about the all-Dixie ticket that now reposes in the White House. That's not fair, of course. I mean, look, we tried to tell you guys about these people. Seriously, they're trouble. Any fool can see some of the bad news coming, but there may be even more. In a few years, for instance, we may have Bill Clinton to blame for an increase in the activity of racist hate groups. Consider this theory about why such activity decreased in the 1980's:

By 1981 the tide had begun to turn [against racist groups]. For one thing, it had become perfectly clear that the KKK couldn't deliver on its promise to reverse the prevailing trend toward racial integration. For another, the new administration in Washington's stated aim of reviving America's pride and strength and restoring conservative social and cultural values tended to undermine whatever base of popular support the far right had begun to acquire.

Want to guess where that came from? How about from a report called *The Hate Movement Today*, by the Anti-Defamation League. I hope the ADL is wrong (honest)—but I wouldn't bet on it.

On the other hand, some unanticipated consequences of the Clinton presidency may not be all bad. For instance, a lit prof friend of mine thinks it means the end of postmodernism. I didn't follow her reasoning—something to do with words not meaning anything concrete during the Reagan-Bush nightmare—but if she's right, it might be worth it.

Come what may, though, you can't blame the South. Our states have 157 electoral votes and Bill and Al only got 47 of them, mostly from their friends and neighbors in Arkansas and Tennessee. So knock it off, OK? The next four years are *your* fault.

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

## Truth or Consequences

by Theodore Pappas

### Redefining Plagiarism

A Trojan horse has passed through the gates of the academy, virtually unnoticed. The Sinon is Keith Miller, an assistant professor of English at Arizona State University and author of *Voice of Deliverance: The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Its Sources* (1992), and the subversive offering is his essay in the January 20 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: "Redefining Plagiarism: Martin Luther King's Use of an Oral Tradition."

Considering the cowardliness and disingenuousness with which the scholarly community has greeted the revelations of King's literary thefts, this call for a kinder and gentler definition of plagiarism in light of King's chicanery is not surprising. Miller argues that King's plagiarisms should not be condemned but rather "understood" in context of the "black experience." Because King was black as well as a preacher, and because black preachers traditionally "voice merge" with one another by freely borrowing sermons without attribution,

Miller concludes that King's plagiarisms must have derived from his inability to separate himself from this homiletic tradition and to comprehend the standards of an alien "white" culture—this even after 11 years of higher education, three academic degrees, and a Boston University seminar on plagiarism and scholarly standards.

Since many minorities come from cultures rich in oral traditions, Miller urges the academy to redefine plagiarism to accommodate these "excluded" groups. To put this more bluntly, all legal claims to original thought and the interpretation of ideas must now be nullified in deference to multiculturalism, cultural relativism, and universal human rights. Like the long list of taboos to have fallen before it, plagiarism must now be updated and redefined in accordance with social progress. For "the process of securing fundamental human rights," argues Miller, "such as those King championed—outweighs the right to the exclusive use of intellectual and literary property."

To Miller's chagrin, what's good for the goose is apparently not also good for the gander. As copyright expert Robert Cassler points out in the February 24 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Dr. King vigorously defended his copyright in 'I Have a Dream' when others wanted to use it. (See *King v. Mister Maestro, Inc.* . . . 1963)." This is doubly interesting when one recalls that King plagiarized the famous climax to the "I Have a Dream" speech from a 1952 address to the Republican National Convention by a little-known black preacher named Archibald Carey.

Miller is proud of where this revolution in standards will lead. "A lawyer asked me for advice in defending a Native American student charged with plagiarizing papers in law school," he states. "The student came from an oral culture, and could not immediately understand or obey the rules of written English. . . . King's example thus is not an isolated case." Indeed, Miller's call for a new conception of plagiarism should have little trouble gaining the support of both the ABA and the U.S. Student Association, as "voice merging" is a godsend to lawyer and plagiarist alike.

Miller's defense of King and his novel approach to plagiarism are both predictable. Polygamy, female circumcision, animal sacrifices, and witchcraft have all become acceptable so long as they are practices of preferred minorities, and if Mr. King seduced underage girls, then statutory rape must be redefined as mere erotic exuberance or as an assault on children's rights. Miller's sophistry and skewed logic produce just such absurdities. "Simply put," he writes, "we face a contradiction: We wish to lionize a man for his powerful language while decrying a major strategy that made his words resonate and persuade." Then for the howling non sequitur: "How could such a compelling leader commit what most people define as a writer's worst sin? The contradiction should prompt us to rethink our definition of plagiarism." And we should rethink drunk driving in light of Chappaquiddick and redefine adultery to accommodate King's philandering.

In better days the follies of our heroes did not move us to subvert the moral underpinnings of our culture. Great falls were lamented but expected of Fallen Man; they were the unavoidable acts in the tragedy of life, and the lessons they taught formed the grist of our greatest literature. But a rhetoric of accountability has little appeal today and pales before the lure of "diseases," "addictions," and novel theories of human behavior that conveniently exonerate us from responsibility for our actions. Marion Barry, when caught cavorting with drug dealers and smoking crack cocaine while mayor of D.C., didn't let down his constituency, make a mockery of political office, shirk his responsibilities, break laws, to say nothing of trivializing the real problems plaguing the black community. No, he simply had an addiction and needed a couple of months of counseling to build his self-esteem. Baseball star Wade Boggs, who blubbered on national television that he was "addicted to sex," didn't lie to his wife, neglect his children, and cheat his teammates and his fans by playing ball only halfheartedly when his wife rather than his mistress was watching from the stands; his "disease" did. And similarly with King. He didn't take the words of others, claim