☐ Contemporary
Literary Criticism

CLC 396

Volume 396

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short-Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and
Other Creative Writers

Lawrence J. Trudeau
EDITOR

Contemporary Literary Criticism

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Preface

Named "one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years" by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (*CLC*) series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 3,000 authors from 91 countries now living or who died after December 31, 1999. Before the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC,* therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially necessary to today's reader.

Scope of the Series

CLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors of the twenty-first century. Volumes published from 1973 through 1999 covered authors who died after December 31, 1959. Since January 2000, the series has covered authors who are living or who died after December 31, 1999; those who died between 1959 and 2000 are now included in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism.* There is minimal duplication of content between series.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science-fiction writers, literary and social critics, world authors, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups.

Each *CLC* volume contains individual essays and reviews selected from hundreds of review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning an author's career from its inception to current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other works that offer insight into the author's works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the general critical and biographical material in *CLC* provides them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

CLC is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale's *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (*TCLC*), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (*NCLC*), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (*LC*), *Shakespearean Criticism* (*SC*), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (*CMLC*).

Organization of the Book

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- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author's name.

- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.

- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. As a further aid to the reader, a list of **Principal English Translations** is provided for authors who did not publish in English; the list selects those translations most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, plays are dated by first performance, not first publication, and the location of the first performance is given, if known. Lists of **Representative Works** discussed in the entry appear with topic entries.

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- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* 7th ed. (2009).

- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** describing each piece.

- Whenever possible, a recent **Author Interview** accompanies each entry.

- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *CLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of titles published in other languages and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, plays, nonfiction books, and poetry, short-story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks. All titles reviewed in *CLC* and in the other Literary Criticism Series can be found online in the *Gale Literary Index.*

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism

may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) style or University of Chicago Press style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

James, Harold. "Narrative Engagement with *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin*." *Philosophy and Literature* 29.1 (2005): 130-45. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism.* Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 246. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 188-95. Print.

Wesley, Marilyn C. "Anne Hébert: The Tragic Melodramas." *Canadian Women Writing Fiction.* Ed. Mickey Pearlman. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1993. 41-52. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism.* Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 246. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 276-82. Print.

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Wesley, Marilyn C. "Anne Hébert: The Tragic Melodramas." In *Canadian Women Writing Fiction,* edited by Mickey Pearlman, 41-52. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism.* Vol. 246, edited by Jeffrey W. Hunter, 276-82. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

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Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments, are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Product Manager:

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Acknowledgments

Contents

Charles Frazier
1950-

(Born Charles Robinson Frazier) American novelist and nonfiction writer.

The following entry provides criticism of Frazier's life and works. For additional information about Frazier, see *CLC*, Volume 109; for additional information about the novel *Cold Mountain*, see *CLC*, Volume 224.

INTRODUCTION

Charles Frazier is best known as the author of *Cold Mountain* (1997), his first novel, a depiction of life in the Appalachian Mountain region during the Civil War as experienced by a deserting Confederate soldier and the woman he loves. The book brings an unusual level of detail to its rendering of the landscape and language of the nineteenth-century American South. Born and raised in North Carolina, Frazier was a college teacher whose published work had primarily been nonfiction when he began writing *Cold Mountain*, which took seven years to complete, and the novel was an extraordinary critical and commercial success. It topped the *New York Times* best-seller list for nearly a year, selling more than three million copies, and received the 1997 National Book Award for Fiction. A Hollywood film adaptation, directed by Anthony Minghella and starring Jude Law, Nicole Kidman, and Renée Zellweger, was released in 2003. Frazier has also published another tale of antebellum Southern life, *Thirteen Moons* (2006), and the atmospheric thriller *Nightwoods* (2011).

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Frazier was born on 4 November 1950 in Asheville, North Carolina. He grew up in the small towns of Andrews and Franklin, some seventy miles west of Asheville near the Blue Ridge Mountains. His father, Charles O. Frazier, was the principal of Franklin High School, from which the younger Frazier graduated in 1969. His mother, Betty, was the school librarian. A good student, he developed a taste for literature in his youth, admiring works by American authors such as Ernest Hemingway and Edith Wharton. Frazier attended the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, completing his BA in 1973, then returned to the mountain region and earned an MA from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. There, he met Katherine Beal, an accounting student, and they were married in 1976.

Frazier made his first attempts at writing fiction while he was in his twenties, but he soon laid this work aside and entered the doctoral program in English at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, focusing on twentieth-century American literature. His first published work, a scholarly essay on a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, appeared in 1979 in an academic journal. The following year he co-wrote a trade book on communications skills for accountants. Before he completed his dissertation, Frazier and Katherine moved to Boulder, Colorado. He taught part-time at the University of Colorado and, over the next few years, traveled several times in South America. This interest led to his next writing project, the travel guide *Adventuring in the Andes* (1985), coauthored with Donald Secreast and published by the Sierra Club. In 1986 Frazier completed his PhD with a dissertation on the depiction of landscape in contemporary Western fiction. That year Katherine joined the faculty of North Carolina State University (NCSU) in Raleigh, and the family moved back to North Carolina.

Over the next few years, Frazier was the primary parent at home with their young daughter. In 1987 he published his first short story, "Licit Pursuits," in the *Kansas Quarterly*. The narrative concerns a lawman who tracks a killer across mountain country in the nineteenth century. Frazier taught English part-time at NCSU and researched the folklore, history, and natural history of the Appalachian region. He was especially interested in the work of the early American naturalist William Bartram, whose writings about the region he later used as a focal point in *Cold Mountain*. He also frequently explored the local terrain on foot.

Frazier learned about the life of W. P. Inman, his great-great-uncle, from his father. A Confederate soldier, Inman was wounded in battle then deserted the military and walked home, traveling hundreds of miles over the mountains. This odyssey, augmented by folklore Frazier had discovered in his research—such as the stories behind a pair of double graves found on the real Cold Mountain, south of Asheville—became the foundation of *Cold Mountain*. He left his teaching position in 1990 to concentrate on his writing, working deliberately and meticulously and rarely producing more than one page a day. By 1993 he had a one-hundred-page sample to show to prospective

publishers. With the help of the novelist Kaye Gibbons, a neighbor, Frazier found an agent and eventually sold the manuscript, still unfinished, to Atlantic Monthly Press. It was published in June 1997. When Frazier proposed another historical novel based on material from his *Cold Mountain* research, his one-page outline led to a bidding war among publishers. Random House paid him an $8 million advance for *Thirteen Moons.*

MAJOR WORKS

Cold Mountain focuses on the effects of the Civil War on the lives of men and women, soldiers and civilians, away from the battlefield. Inman, like many nonslaveholding Southerners, enlists to fight in the early days of the war but ultimately grows disillusioned and abandons his commitment to the Confederate cause. In the opening pages of the novel, he is recuperating from a wound sustained during the siege of Petersburg. Certain that once he recovers further he will be sent back to the front, Inman escapes through a hospital window and undertakes the long journey on foot to his home at the base of Cold Mountain. Still severely injured, he must survive by his wits and combat skills, hiding from Federals (Union soldiers) and pursued by the Confederate Home Guard, armed men tasked with capturing and often executing "outliers." At one point, after Inman accepts the hospitality of a man known as Junior, his host turns him in to the Home Guard. He is marched into the countryside with other prisoners, shot, and left for dead in a mass grave, only to be miraculously rescued by wild hogs. The narrative alternates between Inman's adventures and the story of his love interest, Ada Monroe. The daughter of a Charleston minister, Ada is genteel and has received a fine education, but her father's sudden death leaves her bereft and unfit to run the neglected family farm. She desperately scratches out a living, and eventually a young woman named Ruby enters her life and helps her learn the skills she needs to survive off the land.

Inman's journey home is an odyssey, and, among many other textual references, *Cold Mountain* makes explicit allusions to Homer's *Odyssey* (c. eighth century BC). Ada, like Homer's Penelope, stays on the home front, but her character grows dynamically over the course of the novel. War and deprivation burnish her lofty romanticism into hard-bitten realism. Ada and Inman are both survivors, and both are extremely sensitive to landscape and the potency of the natural world. With Ruby's assistance, Ada comes to understand her union with the land and learns to practice stewardship, not just farming. Inman also must rely on the mountain terrain for sustenance and shelter. His two prized possessions are his pistol and a copy of

Bartram's *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals, and Other Matters Worthy of Notice. Made by Mr. John Bartram, in His Travels from Pensilvania to Onondago, Oswego and the Lake Ontario, in Canada* (1751), commonly known as his *Travels.* Inman frequently turns to the book for comfort and absorbs its deep appreciation for the living earth. The mountains exert a spiritual influence on Inman as he struggles to reach home and the woman of his dreams. Their courtship, described in flashbacks, was brief but especially meaningful to Inman as a motivator for his journey. Their eventual reunion is also brief. After a passionate meeting in a Cherokee village, the two agree that Inman cannot safely return to her Black Cove farm. Only four days after the lovers reunite, Inman is ambushed by members of the Home Guard and killed. A brief epilog, set in 1874—almost a decade after the end of the war—does not mention Inman, but Ada and Ruby are shown living peacefully together at Black Cove along with Ada's daughter, presumably fathered by Inman.

Frazier has said his primary goal in writing *Cold Mountain* was to render a sense of the bygone culture of the Appalachians. The novel is filled with details and language that conjure the flavor of an alien time and place, and the regional idiom and forgotten names of antiquated objects make some passages difficult to decipher. Frazier also imbues his prose with a spiritual undertone that is especially effective in descriptions of nature and the archaic past. M. Thomas Inge (2010) noted that Cold Mountain is the English translation of the name of Han-shan, a Chinese poet associated with the Tang dynasty whose works have long been revered in the Buddhist and Taoist traditions for their depictions of nature.

Thirteen Moons is the first-person narrative of Will Cooper, a one-hundred-year-old white man who, at times, will speak only Cherokee. As the novel progresses, he recounts the sprawling story of his life across the turbulent nineteenth century. Cooper's character is loosely based on a historical figure, William Holland Thomas, the Cherokee "White Chief" and North Carolina state senator. Thomas lobbied against Indian removal during the administration of Andrew Jackson and secured lands for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, who had adopted to white ways of living. As a child, Frazier's character is an orphan and "bound boy" sold into indentured servitude. As a youth, he is left to manage a trading post in the wilderness at the edge of Indian Territory. In time he is adopted into the Cherokee band led by the fatherly Bear. Cooper prospers, becomes a frontier lawyer, and goes to Washington to fight for the Cherokee but fails to prevent passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the resulting Trail of Tears, the forced removal of Native Americans from their homelands.

Threaded through *Thirteen Moons* is Cooper's thwarted, lifelong love for a beautiful, enigmatic woman named Claire. Like its predecessor, the novel is abundant in nineteenth-century backwoods life and lore.

Frazier's third novel, *Nightwoods,* is his first set in the 1960s. Its central character, Luce, has chosen to live alone as caretaker of a remote, abandoned lodge. She is obliged to take in her niece and nephew after her sister, Lily, is murdered, apparently by her husband, Bud. The twin children, Dolores and Frank, witnessed the killing and are traumatized: they are almost completely silent and unpredictably violent. The handsome, predatory Bud, who comes to question the children about a hidden sum of money, drives the suspenseful plot toward its climax, but the introspective Luce remains the focus. All of the characters, it turns out, are carrying secrets.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Cold Mountain achieved a level of popular and critical acclaim that is rare in contemporary American fiction. The novel's unusual degree of exposure, amplified by the success of its big-budget Hollywood adaptation, led to particularly high expectations of its author's next works. The enormous advance Frazier received for the long-awaited *Thirteen Moons* contributed further to the anticipation. *Thirteen Moons* garnered a tepid critical reception upon its release, with some reviewers suggesting the novelist had tried too hard to repeat its predecessor's formula for success. However, some scholars consider the novel to be worthy of further attention. Reviews of *Nightwoods* were mixed, but some offered enthusiastic praise for Frazier's prose style.

Of Frazier's three novels published to date, only *Cold Mountain* has attracted substantial scholarly attention. Some of the elements noted in the critical discourse include the novel's careful construction of landscape and topography, strong regional sensibility, and richly symbolic evocation of the flora and fauna of the Southern Appalachians. Inge pointed out that Cold Mountain itself functions as a major character in the text, its secluded peak looming in Inman's mind as a potent symbol of healing and spiritual purity. Some critics have examined, either appreciatively or skeptically, the sense of historicity and the relative historical accuracy of Frazier's tale. Paul Ashdown (2007) reviewed the historical record that the author incorporated into his fiction, arguing that Frazier remains true to the perspective of the region's inhabitants.

A substantial proportion of the critical work on *Cold Mountain* concerns its literary antecedents and intertextual allusions. The most overt and structurally significant allusions

are to the *Odyssey.* Grounding his comparative analysis in the variety of livelihoods and socioeconomic models that Odysseus and Inman witness during their journeys, Jonathan Burgess (2014) argued that these experiences exacerbate the "ambiguity of home for the returning travelers." Emily A. McDermott (2011) examined other references within the text that introduce both Christian and pagan notions of rebirth, or resurrection. Inge discussed the relevance of Han-shan to Frazier's representation of nature and its role in spiritual life. Margaret Donovan Bauer (2014) positioned *Cold Mountain* alongside the most celebrated Southern novel of the Civil War, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), observing that the two novels concentrate on women's experiences in wartime. Bauer likened the relationship between Ada and Ruby to that between Mitchell's Scarlett O'Hara and Melanie.

Roger K. Smith

Academic Advisor: George Hovis,
State University of New York at Oneonta

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Developing Communications Skills for the Accounting Profession. With Robert W. Ingram. Sarasota: Amer. Accounting Assoc., 1980. Print. (Nonfiction)

Adventuring in the Andes: The Sierra Club Travel Guide to Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, the Amazon Basin, and the Galapagos Islands. With Donald Secreast. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1985. Print. (Nonfiction)

"Licit Pursuits." The Best of the West 2: New Short Stories from the Wide Side of the Missouri. Ed. James Thomas and Denise Thomas. Salt Lake City: Smith, 1989. 213-22. Print. (Short story)

Cold Mountain. New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1997. Print. (Novel)

Thirteen Moons. New York: Random House, 2006. Print. (Novel)

Nightwoods. New York: Random House, 2011. Print. (Novel)

*Originally published in the *Kansas Quarterly* in 1987.

CRITICISM

E. T. Arnold et al (essay date 2004)

SOURCE: Arnold, E. T., et al. *"Appalachian Journal* Roundtable Discussion: *Cold Mountain,* the Film." *Appalachian Journal* 31.3-4 (2004): 316-57. Print.

[In the following essay, in a wide-ranging discussion, nine scholars examine the novel and film of Cold Mountain. *Among discussion points are the making of the movie; the influences on the novel, particularly the work of Cormac McCarthy; and the movie's avoidance of the realism it pretends to have, for example the unlikelihood of a small landowner owning a slave.]*

EDWIN T. ARNOLD

GOING DOWN WITH THE SHIP

I was not a big fan of **Cold Mountain** when the novel appeared in 1997. I found it derivative, especially in its constant echoes of Cormac McCarthy, an author Charles Frazier has occasionally acknowledged as an influence. The author Madison Smartt Bell later confirmed my feelings in his essay "A Writer's View of Cormac McCarthy" [in *Myth, Legend, Dust: Critical Responses to Cormac McCarthy,* ed. Rick Wallach (2000)], observing that in parts of **Cold Mountain** Frazier "appears to be channeling Cormac McCarthy. In the story line involving the wanderings of the wounded soldier Inman, not only the language but the content of the episodes is derived from McCarthy's works" (6). Anyone who has read *Outer Dark* (1968) or *Child of God* (1973) or *All the Pretty Horses* (1992) would likely agree.

But what book doesn't borrow from others? (One might profitably compare McCarthy's *Outer Dark* with Madison Jones' *Forest of the Night* [1960], for example.) I was more disappointed by the soft, unconvincing romanticism of the book, especially since I had been led to believe that the novel was an authentic masterpiece of historical fiction. After reading it, I told the previous editor of this journal that I was inspired to write an essay entitled "Jack and Rose and Inman and Ada" in which I would compare the novel to James Cameron's film *Titanic,* released in the same year. My friend the editor did not encourage me—I believe his words were something like "Over my stiff dead body"— but I still think that **Cold Mountain** can be seen as another product of the end-of-the-century *Zeitgeist* that produced Cameron's dumb but entertaining movie. The novel **Cold Mountain** is a superior work, to be sure, but its heart is equally melodramatic and manipulative. Which, of course, made filmmakers sit up and take notice.

The book was quickly optioned, but the finished film was rather slow in coming, due in part to casting and production decisions. The initial lead Tom Cruise decided not to play Inman opposite his soon-to-be-ex-wife Nicole Kidman, and director-screenwriter Anthony Minghella conducted an exhaustive search for a locale *other* than North Carolina to approximate a 19th-century version of the

state. When the film did appear, just before Christmas 2003 as a prestigious holiday film, it got the expected publicity build-up and the inevitable award nominations, but it proved a disappointment at the American box office and was pretty much blitzed at the Oscars (along with *The Last Samurai,* the film Cruise did instead of *Cold Mountain*) by *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King.*

It's true that Civil War movies (with the notable exception of *Gone with the Wind,* of course) rarely do well, but the hopes for this film were high. So what happened? I've seen *Cold Mountain* twice now, liked it fine the first time and better the second, but it's not a great and sometimes not even a good film and, unlike *Titanic,* it seems not to have a clear sense of its intended audience. Cameron knew he was making a special-effects epic, and that's where he put his energies. The Jack-Rose love story provided a conventional Hollywood narrative framework and gave Celine Dion a reason to sing, but what people really wanted to see was the big ship go down, and that's what they got, in spades. "Collide with Destiny" was the film's tag line, and while it's not Thomas Hardy, it does sum up the brash intention of the movie.

Cold Mountain's tag line, on the other hand, is "Find Your Way Home," and here's the problem. Unlike *Titanic,* it can't admit that its romance is preposterous and secondary to Inman's journey, which is itself a glum and sober version of the escapades found in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Moreover, we never really know what "home" is in the film except in some misty Shangri-La sense, and when Inman finally gets there, he immediately gets killed. In *Titanic,* Irish Jack dies too, but he goes out laughing and shouting on the big boat waterslide in Cameron's amusement park of a movie. In *Cold Mountain* Inman's death is meant to be much more tragic since this is a "serious" work, but, as in the book, it's hard not to see it ultimately as a bad joke.

I am of the opinion that Frazier's book is far too self-important, but supporting the often ponderous rhetoric and borrowed style is the sense that the author had his details down and knew of what he wrote. In stark contrast, *Cold Mountain*'s Minghella has no feel for either the American South or Appalachia, so perhaps it's just as well that he went to Transylvania to make it. A friend noted that although the Romanian scenery may have substituted well enough for Appalachia, the Eastern European faces of the extras in the battle sequences did not look authentic in the least. I was concentrating too heavily on accents to notice. Bela Lugosi might have done as well as Donald Sutherland, Philip Seymour Hoffman, or Ray Winstone in approximating Appalachian speech.

Moreover, although *Cold Mountain* was publicized as an "event" film, a "serious" Hollywood adaptation of a

popular "literary" work, it is at heart still a "movie" in the same way that *Titanic* is a movie. It's largely surface and image. Inman and Ada are Hollywood beautiful, while bad guys look squirrelly like Giovanni Ribisi or thuggish like Ray Winstone or just freakish like Charlie Hunnan, the albino psychopath who dances, yes dances, on the split rail fence while crushing Sally Swanger's fingers and then does a flip in the air before nailing one of her sons with a well-aimed bullet. Believe me, I *like* movie moments like this (Steve McQueen jumping his motorcycle over the fence in *The Great Escape*), but I am always aware that they are, indeed, movie moments.

And there's no bigger cinematic cliché than the climactic scene where Inman and the psycho shoot at each other simultaneously. In the book, the boy—"white skin, white hair, and a killer ... a little wormy blond thing, his hair cropped close as if he had recently been battling headlice. Face blank"—shoots Inman "quicker than you can see" (351-52). In the film, Minghella employs one of the hoariest of gunfight conventions. The guns fire, and then we all wait breathlessly. The villain smiles—oh, no!—but then, slowly, topples—oh, yes!—while Inman silently ponders the situation. But then Inman coughs—oh, no!—and spits blood—oh, no again! And then the crows fly and that hackneyed vision in the well comes true, and Ada, dressed in black by Armani, screams Inman's name and runs through the snow (and through the birds, too—she could be Tippi Hedren at this point) and kisses Inman's bloody mouth, except that it's not bloody when she kisses it, and then he dies. Frazier says he debated whether or not to kill Inman in his novel but finally felt he had to go with it because that's the way it really happened. But, unfortunately, that's also the way it really happens in movies, and it's hard not to see the ending, in both book and film, as predetermined by cinematic expectations as well as by fate.

Thus, if *Cold Mountain* the novel is derived from other books, so *Cold Mountain* the film is conceived out of other movies. As in *Titanic*, the cultured lady and the decent commoner have one moment of bliss, and then it's a lifetime of sweet memory and what-ifs for the woman. Ada's voice-over at the end of the film, set some years afterwards, tells us that, despite everything, the journey was all worth it. Easy for her to say. But the movie also wants us to see Inman's death in larger terms. During his journey, Inman is treated by the goat lady. At one point she holds a kid between her legs, rubs its head lovingly, then gently pushes a blade into its throat and muses about how everything serves a purpose. Several years after Inman's death, we see Ada, in a parallel scene, ripping off the pelt of a dead ewe to dress its orphan lamb so that it won't be excluded from the rest of the flock. If I understand it correctly, Inman, serving his own purpose,

has walked steadfastly across the state of North Carolina not to live and love and grow old with Ada but to impregnate her, die, and leave his offspring so that she can finish becoming part of the community. Somehow this set of circumstances doesn't resonate and evoke the same emotions as Jack's going down with the ship.

Apart from Inman's, the other death most remembered from the book is when Ruby kills the rooster that has terrorized Ada during her early days of living alone. In the book, Ruby "in one swift motion snatched up the rooster, tucked his body under her left arm, and with her right hand pulled off his head. He struggled under her arm for a minute and then fell still" (52). In the movie, Renée Zellweger picks up the rooster, turns her back to the camera, and, hidden from view, yanks the head from the neck. This sleight of hand sums up the film in general. The movie pretends to convey a realism it actually takes great pains to avoid. The massacre at Petersburg is computer-generated fantasy combat more suited to *Lord of the Rings*. Ada's development from pampered belle to britches- and hat-wearing farmer woman takes place mostly off-camera. Veasey the rogue preacher, Ruby, and other secondary characters are portrayed broadly and too-often for cheap laughs at the yokels' expense: it's not for nothing that David Letterman employs Ruby/Renée's "If you need hep, here I am!" line as a running gag on his show.

In his critique of *Cold Mountain,* Madison Bell notes that Inman "drifts around through a dark, inimical world, full of incomprehensible, unreasoning violence" but concludes that these adventures "don't have any significance. These episodes constitute a series of ornamental layers draped over the sentimental love story at the heart of *Cold Mountain.* In this respect the novel resembles a marshmallow elaborately wrapped up in barbed wire" (6-7). The film, to my mind, dispenses with the barbed wire, and what is left is sweet, chewy, fun to eat, but not filling in the least and probably bad for your teeth.

Creadick's response to Arnold: I enjoyed Chip Arnold's discussion, first, because it was snarky like mine, and second, because it allowed me to rethink my ground. I was interested to see that the same problem I had with this film—its failures of authenticity—was what ticked him off about the novel. He "had been led to believe the novel was an authentic masterpiece of historical fiction," but found both the novel and the film to be "derivative." This is where his disappointment sets in. But this is also where I get all tangled up in the question of what it is we're all expecting from art.

"What book doesn't borrow from others?" Arnold asks. That goes double for movies, yet in our theater seats, we

seem to be more willing to accept the absence of all originals, to accept the simulation as the thing, as long as we can wash it down with a popcorn chaser. I pined for representation that gives me better access to the "real thing." Crutchfield suggests that what we're really wishing for is a "reality effect." McKinney convincingly argues that even bald-faced historical mistakes can have their uses, delivering to viewers (or readers) a "truth," if not *the* truth. (I'm reminded of Janice Radway's study of female romance readers, who insist that they really do learn some history in all those bodice-rippers.) And several others—Cortner, House—actually found at least some of the realism they were looking for in *Cold Mountain.* But the same threads run throughout these responses: reality, authenticity, originality. Why do we need these things from the movies?

Arnold notes that Frazier killed Inman off "because that's the way it really happened." This means the author's best efforts at verisimilitude became, for his critic, the film's worst cliché. What a hideous double-bind, though I'd argue that the death of the male lead is patently *not* "the way it really happens in the movies"—well, okay, except in *Titanic.* Jack has to go down with the ship. Hell, Jack's so wooden, he *is* the ship. But generally, offing a principal character just doesn't test well with American audiences: too bleak, too European. I suspect for many viewers of *Cold Mountain,* the death of Inman was moving and sad.

But like Arnold, I found the film's ending didn't "resonate," but rather left an emotional vacuum. I got the biggest heart-wrench out of the compressed emotional crisis we see Ruby face when Inman returns. In fact, that little white goat's death was tougher to take than Inman's. Why? Because the goat's death was a surprise: Inman's was predicted, and predictable. Ada saw him fall. It's a war story. He's half-dead already.

Perhaps we're seeing a difference of opinion over what resides at the "heart of *Cold Mountain.*" Some call it a "Civil War novel." Madison Bell claims it's a "sentimental love story." But if he means the one between Ada and Inman, then he's read a different book. No, I say the title gives the heart away. Cold Mountain is at the center of *Cold Mountain.* It's a sentimental love story about a *place,* and in the novel, Inman considers putting down stakes just as soon as he's within sight of it. He returns to Ada because he decides he's not hermit enough to enjoy it alone. As Cortner puts it, Minghella "took Frazier's mountain love story and transformed it into a love story set in the mountains." That's why the ending feels so empty. Without the sense of place, there's just no *there* there.

TYLER BLETHEN

APPALACHIA ACCORDING TO COLD MOUNTAIN

The sustained buzz leading up to the opening of the film adaptation of **Cold Mountain** was designed to encourage great expectations. The hugely popular novel's portrayal of western North Carolina's home front experience during the Civil War has received mixed reviews. Consequently, speculation swirled around what historical liberties director and screenwriter Anthony Minghella might take. The film certainly offers viewers a menu from which to select perceptions of Appalachia.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the film does not reflect a true feel for the region, its people, or its history. Small details grate. The decision to route Inman via the Carolina coast on his urgent journey home from his hospital bed in Raleigh reveals a laughable ignorance of Tar Heel geography. As for landscape, while Romania's mountainous terrain may squeak by as a stunt double for the Blue Ridge, its forests do not come close; even the bark on their trees looks different. (Yes, this is lingering sour grapes over the movie having been filmed in Romania because, reportedly, Romania looked more like western North Carolina than the original does.)

Of greater concern, one of the film's few portrayals of African Americans has Ada free her slaves from bondage. This is a significant transformation of the book's family of white laborers that abandons her in her time of need. While this change represents a greater effort than Frazier made to acknowledge western North Carolina's racial diversity, it does so by straining historical reality. According to the 1860 census records, 313 slaves and 14 free blacks lived in Haywood County (5% of the population). Small landowners like Ada, farming up in the coves, were unlikely to have owned any of them; those few who did would have been reluctant to divest themselves of valuable property. While this revision of the book may elevate Ada's moral character in the eyes of the audience, it does so by misrepresenting the nature of mountain slavery.

Another weakness of the film's presentation of Appalachia stems from its deficient portrayal of community. The [historically nonexistent] "town" of Cold Mountain has no life; it serves primarily as an emotional backdrop for Inman's farewell as he marches off to war. The thin depiction of rural mountain community life focuses on the imported lifestyle of upper class Charleston immigrants, for example the party scene. Aside from the chapel-raising for Monroe and the church service, there is little representation of the traditional ways in which mountain neighbors interacted. The breakdown of community caused by the Civil