

Hillary Rodham Clinton "Smith." *Daytime Dialogism: Erica's Eroica in the Pine Valley Village* (Washington, D.C.: Presidential Partner Press, 1996) \$29.95

D. Raymond Gardner. *Acronym for Alterity: AMC and the Subaltern* (Carolina: Berngerger Press Ltd., 1996). \$20.01

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Perhaps the most formative work legitimating the multi-textuality of popular culture literatures has come from Martha Stewart Radway in her *Reading the Roll, Man* (1988). Radway's now-canonical text on the counter-cultural(1) activity of forming discourse communities about and responding to the "from a mix" intellectual cooking industry has spawned the devotion of scores of former "from scratch" devotees. Part of the appeal is Radway's underscoring of a tri-partite matrice in which "reader's pleasure/choice/taste, the publishing industry, and the baker/writer each play a part in determining textual production" (Simon and Schyster 438). Radway in a rad(ical)way redefined for many what serious scholarship and spectatorship can mean, but applications of her groundbreaking theories into other areas of the popular culture milieu have been sparse(2) until the recent publication of two long overdue monographs on the crucial television text: *All My Children*. After years of exacting scholarship and meticulous notetaking, Hillary Rodham Clinton "Smith" (3) has produced *Daytime Dialogism: Erica's Eroica in the Pine Valley Village* (Washington, D.C.: Presidential Partner Press, 1996) and with similar passion, though not similar thoroughness, D. Raymond Gardner has recently written *Acronym for Alterity: AMC and the Subaltern* (Carolina: Berngerger Press Ltd., 1996). Though neither "Smith" nor Gardner evaluate *All My Children* on the basis of Radway's tripartite matrice, nor do either particularly notice the strong Marxist element of Radway's text, nor do they discuss the ideological ramifications of cultural production, nor do they attend to cyber-technic polymorphism or third world domination, these texts open a seam for discussion and serve as the seeds for what will assuredly become a robust and healthy canon of the finest soap opera produced in the late twentieth century. "Smith" and Gardner do, however, provide striking evidence to further build on Radway's central tenet that "all foundational principles should be served with crescent rolls" (a clever euphemism, part of an extended metaphor, in which Radway draws a connection between bread and the Transcendent). "Smith" does this by relating the Pine Valley heroine extraordinaire to one of literature's most enduring heroines, Catherine Earnshaw from *Wuthering Heights*. Gardner makes his connection to Radway's notion of the staff of life by arguing that the absent voice of fathers equals a void functioning as the very vortex of the cosmos. Though I argue that "Smith's" contention is more credible than Gardner's, both deserve the highest commendation for recognizing and contributing to this emerging field of scholarship. Others have made similar attempts to establish the AMC body of scholarship (4) but their ideas were too progressive to hold cultural sway. Now, that we've undergone a paradigm shift and can perceive the meritocritous value of network programming (well, some of it anyway), the ground has been prepared, the farmer is at the ready, the fertilizer is available in abundant heaps, the plow has done its work, the land lies awaiting those very seeds mentioned earlier, and we can only hope the mighty oak will grow.

Let us look first at Hillary Rodham Clinton "Smith" and *Daytime Dialogism*. "Smith" is a relatively new writer in academic circles, although she has done some mainstream press publications in the past. In her last book, intended for an extra-academic audience, she used as a central theme "it takes a village." In *Daytime Dialogism*, Smith's central thesis is "it's only a village, goddammit!" as such emphasizing the seeming remoteness, even positionless-ness of Pine Valley.^ The writerly voice "Smith" employs is clear and compelling, although some might argue a bit too strident, even shrill. And this is, indeed, a shame, for it relegates "Smith's" own feminist consciousness to a desolate Pine Valley of its own. Perhaps in some effort to keep her voice as a part of the mainstream dialogism, "Smith" offers the reader a series of recipes to go along with the different chapters (6), combining domestication and dialogism in a way which is

sure to open intellectual doors while it simultaneously polishes the brass of the door knob. "Smith" makes her points clearly and decisively. Her commitment to narrative breadth is impressive. Few scholars would be able to devote the sheer number of hours in scholarship or concentrate throughout the demanding schedule which Jones has clearly applied to her viewership of AMC. It is no wonder that "Smith" dropped out of the public eye as she prepared to write this exhaustive tome.

"Smith" draws heavily on the work of Dale Bauer, a feminist rhetorician who argues in *Feminist Dialogics* that female characters often "misinterpret their social texts and therefore fail to understand their own social power." As such, women in textual spaces often "represent the struggle for women's construction of self within a dialogic structure of many competing voices" (Emerson, notes on the back cover). Both "Smith" and Bauer lean heavily on Bakhtin's (7) notion of heteroglossia and indeed, the conversations of Pine Valley are heteroglossia at its Heideggerian ownmost. What "Smith" makes clear in the central character of Erica, however, is the lack, quite frankly the absolute dearth, of appropriate dialogic partners (I mean, would Erica ever talk to Brooke? Yeh, right)(8). Erica, like Lily Barth in Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, struggles to develop a female consciousness which can give rise to her distinctive feminist subjectivity and like Catherine Earnshaw in Emily Bronte's classic *Wuthering Heights*, Erica Kane is a passionate free spirit, in love with a dark and exotic man, yet confined by the stifling smallness of her remote provincial town. Both Catherine and Erica follow similar cyclical journeys, paths which could also be likened to the heroic descent and return of Odysseus and Gingrich. In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine begins as Catherine Earnshaw, she wants to be Catherine Heathcliff, and she eventually becomes Catherine Linton. Her daughter, the younger Cathy begins as Catherine Linton, is for a brief time Catherine Heathcliff, and will become at novel's end Catherine Earnshaw, thus enacting a classic circle of wholeness. "Smith" points out that part of Erica's great passion (her eroica) is a similar sort of journey, though Erica's route is far more arduous. She begins as Erica Kane and starts the slow progression alphabetically through the men in her village, both eligible and not, becoming Erica Chandler in her marriage(s) to Adam, Erica Cuddahy in her marriage to Tom, Erica Merrick in her (three) marriages to Dimitri, Erica Montgomery in her marriage to Travis and entertaining a host of alphabetic possibilities in her love affairs with Jeremy Hunter, Nick Martin, Mike Ross, Jackson Montgomery, Charlie Martin, etc. "Smith" points out clearly: this eight-times wed Erica is a far stronger and more potent vessel of passion than ever a Catherine Earnshaw could have represented, and as "Smith" argues most persuasively, this suggests that Pine Valley must be more desolate, more remote, more eerily haunting than the moors of Haworth could ever be, either in the fictive imaginary cooked up by three coughing sisters or on a very real and very rainy day in November when you're trying to get across the country for a Thanksgiving dinner in Sheffield. In one nice move, then, "Smith" undoes a cultural hierarchy of high art, placing Erica in a much-earned (even if she can't get an Emmy) position of cultural dominance.

For the most part, the book is an excellent example of the good work which will finally highlight the integrity of this daytime drama, though there are some small problems. For instance, "Smith" uses as a central premise the notion that Pine Valley is remote, yet this reviewer has to ask how it is that Erica can move from Seattle to Pine Valley to New York City to Paris within twenty minute intervals? How can she be seen at Linden House and Wildwind and out and about in Pine Valley all in the span of 44 minutes and fourteen outfits? Clearly, Erica Kane is a possessor of talents which extend far beyond the ordinary, and this seems a point which "Smith" is woefully remiss in addressing. Further, I have to question the application of Bakhtin to the Pine Valley text. Yes, indeed, hetero-glossia, hetero-geneity, and hetero-sexuality are central issues in Pine Valley. But frankly, the peg-leg-walking-Russian-army-running-dissident-encouraging,-manuscript-chain-smoking Bakhtin would make a woeful member to the Pine Valley community. OK, he might be interesting for an episode or two due to his salty ways, his method of hiding from Soviet dictatorship, his clever devices for surviving work camps in Siberia, but the novelty of him would soon wear off, staining the show like so much nicotine rubbed into so many fingers, a nasty smoker's cough remaining where he had once been, black tar on a pink lung. In the words of Erica Kane, "Oh, that is just too disgusting to think about."

D. Raymond Gardner's work is slightly less disgusting imagistically, though his piece is not as comprehensively researched as Ms. "Smith's" and his writing lacks the zest and punch of

her prose. But perhaps the reviewer can forgive him of this cumbersome and sometimes sporadic piece of writing given the fact that until recently Gardner was considered to be, quite frankly, no longer with us, gone, passed over, on the other side, way dead. Really, really dead. Seriously obliterated. The last anyone knew of this renowned scholar, he had been blown up in a freak accident (while his teen model daughter Jenny and her good looking though insufferably preppy boyfriend Greg Nelson looked on. Many thought the bomb might really be intended for Jenny, as planted by the vile Liza Colby who had the hots for Greg, though she later shifted her attention to Tad, Jenny's brother, though Tad couldn't decide between Liza and her mother Marian and so dated them both, but Liza got her revenge twelve years later by sleeping with Tad and ruining his marriage with Dixie and is now getting further revenge in pretending she and Adam are engaged as a ruse to incite Tad and Brooke's jealousy. Tad on the other hand, is more interested in Gloria than the nefarious Liza. Tsk, tsk, ladies. When will you ever learn? Tad the Cad never changes his spots.) At any rate, Ray Gardner has indeed returned from the dead, and I owe apologies to Dr. Chauncy Bortman who has maintained in several first-rate articles(9) that Ray Gardner would breathe the air of scented pines in the valley yet again.(10) He appears to be finally vindicated in his long-held opinion.

Gardner's central premise is an intriguing one and is the best evidence yet that there must be an extraordinary lending library in purgatory, or wherever Gardner has been convalescing these many years. Gardner's awareness is really up to speed on subaltern theory and third world dialectics, and he shows that knowledge in a good light, arguing that it is not women, or people of color (my euphemism, Gardner's terms would insult even Bakhtin's fellow work-camp mates), or the poor, or native groups who speak from the unprivileged privilege of the margin, but that white fathers are the absent and therefore the insistent voiceless minority in our culture. This certainly plays out in the zone of Pine Valley, where nary a child has been raised by his biological father since the show began in 1960. Using the textual evidence of his own son Tad (who is now undergoing his own erasure as a father since Jamie is living with Brooke and Junior, who isn't even his biological son anyway, has moved to Pigeon Hollow with Dixie), Gardner argues that absent fathers create absent spaces, a kind of black hole which draws attention to it. That magnetic pull, Gardner contends, is undeniable, inalterable. As such missing/ mis-named/ignorant/once, twice, and thrice dead fathers constitute the fulcrum of the universe. In making such an assertion, Gardner lays out the conceptual territory in which he can tease out meaning, thus revealing a teeming sub-altern zone. Gardner contends that characters in *All My Children* possess a capacity to remember (and in his case to re-member, how did he get his hand back, anyway?). Citizens of Pine Valley can recognize the ideal form upon which all else is based, and through this process of recognition and rememory, they are lead through the vortex of the black hole into a ideal space of bliss.

As a reviewer and long-term scholar of *All My Children*, I find Gardner's ideas extraordinarily appealing, but patently absurd. To his credit, his notions are more persuasive than the other black hole conspiracy recently put forth by J. Grauchuss who argues that Husserl, Heidegger, Hitler and Heime the Clown (soon to be revealed as Langley's illegitimate circus son) form a cadre called the 4-H club, also unbeatable, also intensely magnetic, also like a metaphoric black hole in the universe of culture (except they can milk cows) . . .yadda, yadda, yadda. It's all tripe. What these notions do is lift the text out of itself, extrapolating into a zone which is more appropriate for star trekers than television watchers. Certainly, television can give us momentary transference into the "other," but we know where that transportation stops. Soap operas are the substance of the real; they do not strive for the metaphysical except in their stunning, and occasionally self-parodying, analysis of the physical. Admittedly, *All My Children* represents the peak of the soap market, but it is a peak firmly grounded, a Mt. McKanely if you will. Certainly, there are elements of the ideal in cultural texts, but I am much more inclined to side with "Smith" who, when it comes to ideas of the Transcendent, leaves the concept in the physical and rightly gives the last word on the sublime to Erica: "You're forgetting, we have a secret weapon, moi. I'm Erica Kane, silly."

Dedication

Gretchen had Faust, Dora had Freud, Clarise Starling had Hannibal Lecter and I had B(ryn) F(iona) D(arlington). Great scholarship is always informed by great mentorship, and I could have

requested no better than BFD whose unflagging discipline toward the field of AMC knew no equal. No scholar has ever shown a more dedicated attention, a more prescient awareness of emergence trends, or a more sensitive responsiveness to finely shaded nuance. BFD's level of rigor has always stood as the intellectual apogee for my own work, and I dedicate this article to BFD who scrupulously, and with fine exaction to detail, built my own scholarship.

Notes

(1) I use the word "counter-cultural" here which may be confusing to many. Martha Stewart Radway once represented the epitome of scholarly cooking refinement. Her exacting attention to detail set the standard for responsible scholarship. However, Radway underwent a truly transformative conversion of the mind while stranded in her Connecticut hideaway one cold winter weekend. Surrounded there with only tubes of Pillsbury roll-ups and powdered cake mix, Radway made the astounding discovery that the Transcendental lay not in the "from scratch" of the bourgeoisie but in the "from a mix" production systems of the proletariat. Radway daringly shifted her position and set out a far more complicated system of analysis which voiced the mainstream view, or so the academic community expected. However, the modest Radway had underestimated her former influence, which had weighted the scales of cooking on the sides of "from scratch." In taking the "from a mix" side, then, Radway adopted the voice of the subaltern, thus opening up a new niche for intellectual work, a brilliant move on the part of Radway which has provided inestimably valuable information about margarine-alized cultures and their caloric intake.

(2) A reliable source reports that Drs. Lucius Beljang and Wyblad Glisnic will reunite as collaborate partners and are now working on what they hope will be the definitive text employing Radway's radical ways and the psych-thermo dynamics of the kitchen, particularly in relation to adolescent females. Their working title is *The Nexus of Mash(ed) Potatoes and Turkey Hash: Comfort Food for the Over-Stimulated Television Generation*. This will be a follow up, of sorts, to their *Mush Brains! Unite* text which served as a rallying cry in the sixties for a generation of despondent television addicts.

(3) It seems obvious to the reviewer that "Smith" is endeavoring to hide her true identity amidst a not so clever subterfuge of pseudonymic adoption. This reviewer is very fond of the first day, but she would, perhaps, have been more successful had she followed her own recent advice while speaking with the Australians and put a bag over her head. "Smith" takes a page from Rodney King in trying to "just get along." Consequently, as a nice gesture of flexibility and use value, the book comes in a Madonna-esque mylar wrapper which can be used either to cover the face or for food storage and hair cellophane treatments (see footnote 6).

(3.1) (footnote to footnote 3) Ms "Smith" follows in a long line of other first ladies who have grown dismayed at the level of efficacy allowed to them as presidential partners. Almost all of these eminent women write in the field of pop culture and have been contributing anonymously to the growing field of cultural studies. See *Political Pumps: There's More to Sensible Shoes than a Two-Inch Heel* which argues that all of the following texts are products of stifled and stultified first ladies: *Millie, Me and Modernity: Marginalization at the Edges of Kennebunkport* by Babs Bush "Smith;" *Genderbubbles: Lawrence Welk's Penchant for Cross Dressing* by Lady Bird Johnson "Smith;" *Discipline and Punish: Adultery in America* by Jackie Kennedy "Smith;" and *What's War Got to Do with It: Ike and Tina in the Vietnam Years* by Mamie Eisenhower "Smith."

(3.1.1) (footnote to footnote to footnote 3) *Hints from the Highest Office* argues that other first ladies have chosen to write self-help books under assumed names. Many scholars agree that Nancy Davis Reagan "Smith's" *The Rules: Listen to Me!* is one such text. There is heated debate, however, about the authorship of *If You Were Married to Him, You'd Take Them Too*, a gripping tell-all account of one woman's addiction to alcohol and drugs, attributed to over thirty-seven first ladies and several runner-ups including Kitty Dukakis "Smith," Pat Nixon "Smith," and Betty Ford "Smith."

(3.1.1.1) (footnote to the footnote to the footnote of footnote 3). Betty Ford, whether smith-ful or

smith-less, has a story of great importance to tell, considering that the protagonist of *All My Children* and of Hillary Rodham Clinton "Smith's" *Daytime Dialogism* itself, Erica Kane, recently spent time recovering from an addiction to prescription pain killers at the Betty Ford Center. This reviewer, for one, hopes Betty will realize her civic duty and educate the public of Erica's eroica in de-tox.

(4) The reader here is reminded of a mid-1970's to early 1980's attempt on the part of Carol Burnett to bring national attention to this cultural treasure. In a move both daring and intellectually on the cutting edge, Burnett invited "Phillip" up from the audience on her variety show so that he might feel her hip displace and see tonsular spectacle up close as she whortled out her Tarzan impersonation. Burnett did some masterful inter-textual boundary crossing, playing the part of Langley's long-lost and illegitimate circus daughter, a role which was crushingly cut short when Burnett's character ran off with a buff motorcycle hunk. For more recent efforts see Rosie O'Donnell's "I love de two of yas" in *Women, Television and Society* 14(1995): 14-37. Unlike Burnett, O'Donnell has made nice efforts to strengthen the Marxist ideological bent as depicted in and domesticated by the AMC venue, Pine Valley. Her forthcoming book *Marx, K-Mart and Mark (ya know, Erica's long-lost brother, de one who had AIDS or something): When Consumer Culture and Pine Valley Collide* elucidates even more clearly her commitment to commercial objectives as enhanced by passionate viewership.

(5) Although observant viewers will have noted in the recent Jonathan-Kinder-pushed-down-the-stairs,-wrapped-in-an-oriental-rug,-stuffed-in-Erica's-car-and-then-buried?-in- her-flower-garden sub-plot that Erica drove a car with Pennsylvania plates. The reliability of this as a spatial marker, however, is dubious given that Erica was driving a silver Honda. Why would a woman who has a million dollars in rare jewels in her bedroom safe drive a Honda? Obviously, the creators of this show are skillfully deploying postmodern tropes to seemingly orient but to actually fragment the already collapsing rationality of the story landscape.

(6) Reader's tip: do try the accompanying recipe with Chapter 4 "Erica in the Age of Enlightenment." In this pithy chapter detailing moments when Erica is de-duped, "Smith" provides a piquant and delightful equivalent with her "Surprise Sugar Cookies." You'll love serving these butter cookie cakes to your guests, and they'll love the fantastic fodder you cleverly conceal inside. Note: this recipe not good for children, though it is an excellent way to dispose of old staples, nails, tacks, and incriminating documents (on this note, see also Pat Nixon "Smith's" recipe for Erlichman Eclairs in Chapter 3 "Clever Ways of Getting Rid of Old Problems" in her *Helpful Hints for Around the (White)House*.) Also a nice recipe in Hillary's book is the hair tonic in Chapter 9 "Which Way to the Wigs? Erica Gets Creative With Hair." Apparently the author took a page from Erica Kane's book, as the dust jacket features Jones in fifteen different head shots. This reviewer's preference was the combination Barbra Streisand/girl from Friends "do" though "Smith" doesn't quite have the profile or the inanity to pull off either in the original form.

(7) Note the common error at play in Bakhtin studies. Bakhtin does not make the hurt stop hurting. However, first aid cream does a fairly nice job.

(8) Though note the text's attempt to right the female imbalance by introducing new characters for Erica to bond with. Her new homegirl is Janet (from another planet), a schizophrenic ex-jailbird now trying to walk on the right side of the law. Janet's past is more than checkered, it's check marked, checkmated, and check bounced, and her new face (courtesy of the corrections department and a plastic surgeon) is only mild reassurance that she has given up impersonating those she has unceremoniously dumped down a well.

(9) Chauncy Bortman, "He'll be Back, Mark My Words." *Trends for Television's Future*. Special 1980's edition 14(1986): 135-170. Bortman, *I'm Still Predictin', He's Still A Comin': Ray Gardner and the Trumpet's Call*. 1988. Chauncy Bortman with Robert Dylan. "The Times May Be A Changin' but Ray's Pieces Aren't Blowin' in the Wind." in *Conspiracy Theories and the Insane*, ed. O. Stone, 1991.

(10) Although it should be noted that this reviewer has seen no visual evidence of Gardner's return, and she suspects that this book may well indeed be the work of that ever sly S. Pynchon, brother to Thomas, and the model for the new series *Pearl*. Let us not forget the immortal words of S, Thomas's brother, Pine Valley is "life, love, heaven, hell—like a lover you can hold in your arms"—which clearly marks him as a believer in the centrality of the AMC influence. Ah, those nutty Pynchons. Always coming up with a new way of cleverly folding themselves into the postmod mainstream while remaining conspicuously absent.