
FAUW FORUM

FACULTY ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO NEWSLETTER

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If you are interested in helping out, please contact Pat Moore in the FAUW Office at x3787 or by e-mail at facassoc@watserv1.

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INSIDE:

President's Message	1
<i>No Ivory Tower:</i>	
<i>The University Under Siege.</i>	4
A Word from the Editor	5
Interview	6

President's Message

by John Wilson

I want to begin by paying tribute to the work Fred McCourt has done on behalf of us all during his time as president of the Association. He accomplished an enormous amount of good during his three years at the helm and in my view – which goes back a long way – he has been one of the best presidents the Association has had. None of us can ever be perfect, but Fred is surely among the very best in a very excellent group of people who have served this University's faculty members over the years. Moreover, he has become a really good friend, for whose judgment I have enormous respect, and I am delighted that he will remain on the Board of Directors as past president during my term.

I should also express my gratitude to those members of the Association who were good enough to support my candidacy, and I want to thank them for their confidence and say that I will do the best I can to be deserving of it during the coming year.

As I start out I think it might be useful to have a shot at explaining where I come from by giving a kind of anecdotal account of an intellectual journey which is called to mind by the task of writing this first president's report. It started almost exactly 60 years ago, in the middle of May. I remember May 19, 1940 – I really do remember it, I was about eight years old at the time – and a radio broadcast I heard that night. A few days earlier, following a raucous debate in the British House of Commons, Winston Churchill had become prime minister, and now he was addressing the nation. "I speak to you for the first time as prime minister," he said, quietly and calmly, and I was hooked on the absolute confidence he showed that all would be well. I thought, "Wow, this guy sounds like he knows what he's doing – maybe we will win the war after all." In those far-off times we had come to understand that winning the war was all that mattered and that wise and authoritative leadership was the order of the day.

But as the years went by and I grew older and perhaps a little bit wiser – and started to learn something about politics – I began to think that anybody with authority was a very dangerous individual who had to be resisted at all costs. In short, I became a rebel, a real nuisance, and a troublemaker. Later still, I came to understand that with a little imagination you can deal very easily and effectively with people in authority. It's called opposition (elsewhere I have called it "nuisancehood") – and I became an unrepentant admirer of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the idea of a parliament built on the Westminster model.

It was then that I learned more of that famous debate in the British House in May of 1940, and of what could be done with a government which was making a mess of things but had a majority of over 200 seats. I learned for the first time about what is probably the most electric intervention which has ever occurred in a parliamentary debate, when Leo Amery rose from the Conservative backbenches to make a blistering attack on the government's conduct of the war and then, pointing his finger at the prime minister, repeated Cromwell's famous words to the Long Parliament:

"You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go."

His and other interventions on that occasion so terrorized Neville Chamberlain that he decided to step down even though the government won the debate. One needs to remember the dates to appreciate all of this. Dunkirk had not yet occurred. Pearl Harbour was more than 18 months away. Britain stood alone. To recognize those things is to recognize that Leo Amery and the members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition probably won the war.

So I think I am now irretrievably stuck in the groove that says that all authority must be resisted – but with imagination and good humour as well as tenacity – and that ought to make me absolutely the wrong person to be in charge. But there's another side to all of this. I know very well that the Association president is many light miles away from being anything like a prime minister in terms of the role and power of the office and that in fact the job can only be done properly if one is prepared to challenge the real authority in the University whenever that is necessary. One has to be, in short, a nice nuisance. In that way it may be possible to do some good for all of us.

I suspect that he would not want to admit it as bluntly as I will but in his three years as president Fred McCourt was one of the most effective nuisances I have ever seen. He made it as clear as it possibly could have been made that that is the only way in which the job can be done.

There are a number of things I can report on this first occasion. As many will know Vera Golini has been chosen as president of the St. Jerome's branch of the Association and on that account is a voting director (Vera was also elected last month to the Status of Women Committee of the CAUT). As a result of Vera's Board membership through St. Jerome's a vacancy occurred on the Board and this has been filled by Alicja Muszynski.

Cathy Schryer is now our Vice-President; Ian Macdonald is Secretary-Treasurer, Ray McLenaghan continues as Chair of our Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee; Anne Fullerton continues as OCUFA Director; Sandra Burt as Chair of our Pensions and Benefits Committee, Len Guelke as Chair of our Political Relations Committee, and Mohamed Elmasry as our Chief Salary Negotiator. Our five members on the Faculty Relations Committee are Fred McCourt, Cathy Schryer, Alicja Muszynski, Ray McLenaghan, and myself.

Fred McCourt will also be Chief Negotiator for the discussions with the Administration regarding articles to be added to the Memorandum of Agreement dealing with Program Redundancy, Financial Exigency, and Layoffs, with Metin Rensizbulut and Jim Brox as the rest of our team. The team for the Administration side will be led by John Thompson, Dean of Science, accompanied by Bob Kerton, Dean of Arts, and Mike Sharratt, Dean of Applied Health Sciences. The first meeting of the two negotiating teams is scheduled for June 8.

As most people will know the salary negotiations went to the end procedure provided by the Memorandum of Agreement – arbitration based on final offer selection. The Arbitrator selected our position of a 2 percent increase in scale for 2000-2001. The text of the Arbitrator's report will shortly be posted on the Association's Web page (<http://watserv1.uwaterloo.ca:80/~facassoc/>) and is very much worth reading.

The addition of new articles 13 and 14 to the Memorandum of Agreement – described by Fred in the last issue of the *Forum* – was approved by 94 percent of the faculty who voted, and will be before the June meeting of the Board of Governors for final ratification. New policies 76 and 77 – also described by Fred in the last *Forum* – were approved by the April meeting of Senate, and will also go to the June meeting of the Board of Governors. These changes have necessitated some small amendments in the existing provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement, and these have been approved in the Faculty Relations Committee and will also go to the June Board meeting.

Faculty members will want to know about the discussions now going on in the University Pensions and Benefits Committee which could have very serious consequences for us all. For the past several months the Committee has been reviewing the Extended Health and Dental programs. Premiums for these programs – which in the case of Extended Health are based simply on the actual cost of claims – have been increasing dramatically in recent years. In 1999/2000 Extended Health premiums increased 20 percent over the previous year and will increase another 32.8 percent (or \$1.23 million) in 2000/2001. Dental program premiums rose 10 percent in 1999/2000. We are very well served by our three members on the

University Committee – Sandra Burt, Ray McLenaghan, and Jock MacKay – and with their help we will keep members informed as discussions on these very important issues continue.

As an end to Fred's term and a beginning for mine the two of us attended the spring meeting of the CAUT Council in Ottawa at the end of April where we enjoyed meeting folks from all parts of Canada who are doing what we are doing. There were discussions with many of them about the way they approach their problems and, as always, we were able to learn more about our own situation through these exchanges. More of this another time.



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NO IVORY TOWER: THE UNIVERSITY UNDER SIEGE

H. T. Wilson

**(Richmond, Ontario: Voyageur
Publishing, 1999)**

This book is not to be confused with Ellen Schrecker's *No Ivory Tower*, an epic account of the devastating impact of the McCarthyist anticommunist witch hunts of the fifties on American higher education. H.T. Wilson's book of the same title is far more limited in scope. It reads like a rushed book. The prose lacks finesse. But his message is of the utmost importance, especially as Canadian universities enter the new millennium.

This book is a direct challenge to the prevalent gospel of "privatization," especially its already disastrous (and potentially even more ominous) impact on universities in Canada. Wilson, a professor of public administration and law at York University, also does a fine job in numerous parts of the book comparing recent trends on campuses in both Canada and the United States, even though his focus is decidedly on the former. He is at his strongest when he addresses the neoconservative assault on academia and when he assesses the negative impact of privatization on higher education. The book culminates with a much-needed plea to reverse privatization, increase public sector influence over higher education, and take steps to empower students and academics. In essence, Wilson offers a recipe for the democratization of Canadian universities, a process long overdue on both sides of the border.

Wilson ably demonstrates that neoconservatism—which he defines as "either the withdrawal of the public sector from established (and often even traditional) patterns of responsibility in favour of the public sector, or the gradual curtailment and/or termination of public services, benefits, and activities" (17)—has cut across political boundaries and is having a pernicious impact on policymaking at the highest levels of federal and provincial government. Politicians and university administrators, he fears, are too quick to want to emulate privatization trends occurring in the United States. Proponents of privatization, those who support such measures as "internal and external marketing, contracting, pricing and transactional approaches," particularly a growing number of private bureaucrats on campuses across the country, are "beginning to drive universities more and more in a direction which is

inimical to both the public interest and the national (and provincial) interest" (37-40). They have been aided in their efforts by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which, despite its indirect effect on higher education, has already led to an erosion of sovereignty that encourages market forces to intrude increasingly on Canadian campuses.

The long-term impact of such trends is perhaps less detrimental in the United States, which has a population ten times the size of Canada. But Canada, with its limited resources, can ill-afford privatization. The disastrous consequences are already being felt, from a steady increase in contract teaching (a trend running amok in the United States) to a dangerous imbalance in research, where basic/pure research is withering in the shadow of applied research.

Wilson's solution to reinforce public input into the shaping of higher education is complicated, but it essentially boils down to a plea to persuade the public that "higher education is an imperative key sector function requiring consistent support through the taxing and revenue collecting functions of governments" (99). Wilson does a fine job throughout the book of questioning the flawed assumption that the private sector handles matters of education more effectively than the public sector, and that the current trends on university campuses will continue to disempower faculty and students alike. In a lengthy, but vital, final chapter titled "The University that is Needed," Wilson outlines a multiple-point plan to revitalize and democratize universities. His plans are innovative, from empowering students and faculty in various ways, to carefully regulating the interference of the private sector in university affairs.

It is refreshing to read a book that is not simply criticism but that provides some tentative solutions to the crisis plaguing Canadian higher education. Most importantly, Wilson knows his subject well. The research is meticulous, the conclusions sound. Unfortunately, because of the nature of this book—it's short, it's thoughtful but not always well-written, and it's published by an obscure press—it will probably only reach the converted. Those who need to read it the most, namely Mike Harris, numerous MPs and MPPs, as well as countless deans and administrators, will likely miss it. Instead, it will probably end up on the bookshelves of discontented academics, who applaud Wilson's principled visions, but ultimately feel powerless to challenge the terrible trends he illuminates in the face of such overwhelming odds.

*Andrew Hunt
Department of History*

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The conclusion of my commitment to the *FAUW Forum* coincides with the publication of this 100th issue. As editor for these four years I have greatly appreciated the freedom that the editorial board enjoys in relation to material considered for publication. In fact, except for one instance where the members of the editorial board made a unanimous decision not to include a piece reviewing a court case in progress, the *Forum* has published everything that it has received under my editorship. We have been fortunate also to have received submissions that had been thought through and were well written, which minimized the work of the editor. It has been a genuine pleasure to work with Pat Moore of the FAUW office, and with FAUW presidents Ian Macdonald and Fred McCourt, who wrote regular messages and other features of importance to us all. Anu Banerji contributed a number of interviews and memorable sketches, while Pino Tenti shared with readers searching and questioning perspectives on the status of the Academy. In addition, while more of us have less time for research on education and pedagogical methods, book reviews have helped to keep us in touch with the latest research in these important fields.

This practice of conveying information is one goal of the *FAUW Forum*, but not its only one. The Faculty Association newsletter was intended from its inception in 1988, to be an open means for exchange and dialogue among the UW professoriate – a goal yet to be achieved. It is my hope that future editors will be able to inspire constructive dialogue across the Faculties. And this is the best wish that I can express to my successor, Professor Edward Vrscay (Applied Mathematics), who has agreed to serve as the next editor beginning this fall. In the coming months our attention will be increasingly drawn to some crucial issues: private universities, the double cohort, funding, matters of equity, quality of education, retaining and attracting high caliber faculty at UW. Change is the one perpetual constant, and we can not only hope that the changes ahead be for the good of all, but we can in some measure contribute positively to change by sharing our ideas, our experiences, and yes, why not our “dreams” about how we wish our University to be in the future. After all, although there are times when we believe that no one is listening, we know in fact that not only colleagues, staff, students, but also administrative officers are keenly interested in the voice of the professoriate who are the heartbeat, the conscience and consciousness of a “universitas”. Healthy debates and sharing of perspectives help to move us forward, and are the hallmark of a thriving university. The *FAUW Forum* can make this exchange possible.

Finally, I wish to thank you, the readers, the members of the editorial board, and the FAUW for affording me this experience as editor which, in truth, I have found time intensive but at the same time humanly rewarding and enriching.

Vera Golini
Italian & French Studies, St Jerome's University
Director, Women's Studies, University of Waterloo

"OF COWBOYS, COWGIRLS, AND THE CANON"

an interview with Victoria Lamont, conducted by Andrew Hunt

*Victoria Lamont joined the Faculty of Arts as an assistant professor of English in July 1999. She teaches American literature. Her research focuses on American women western novelists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an intrepid group of authors who found themselves treading on male-dominated terrain. She did her masters work at the University of Guelph and completed her Ph.D. at the University of Alberta. She has just recently finished an article on the Johnson County War, a Wyoming range war that pitted powerful cattle barons and their hired guns against bands of cattle rustlers (a popular western term for cattle thieves). The article will appear in the fall issue of *Western American Literature*. She graciously agreed to an interview for the FAUW Forum, which occurred on May 9. The interview was conducted by Andrew Hunt of the department of history. In his course, *The American West: Myth and Reality (History 216)*, Andrew Hunt focuses on many of the same themes found in Victoria Lamont's research.*

AH: You've just finished your first year of teaching here. How did it go?

VL: It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed it immensely. I've found that the students here are very strong, very hardworking; they're very engaged in their work. So overall, it was a very positive experience.

AH: Did you have a favourite course, a real labour of love kind of thing?

VL: A course that I had a lot of fun with was my survey course on nineteenth century American literature. It was my first opportunity to teach in my field of expertise, so it was something that I knew a lot about and that made the prep easier, but also a lot more enjoyable to do because there was just so much that I felt I could draw from. I felt really confident with the subject matter. I put a lot of experimental texts on the syllabus, texts that many students weren't familiar with, had never heard of, writers who have recently been recovered and discovered, and it went really well.

AH: Writers recently added to the canon, whose work is now recognized as having more merit than previously assumed?

VL: Yes, and writers who have, within the past ten years or so, garnered more attention from scholars, and that attention has been translated into making editions of their work available so they can be taught. For example, I taught a novel called *Hobomok* by Lydia Maria Child, who was a contemporary of James Fenimore Cooper, a far more familiar name. So one of the risks I took in this course was to teach authors

that these students had never heard of, alongside some familiar names, and I was a little bit worried about how the students would respond to that. It was very gratifying to see students pick up on my own interests, to see them open up to wider possibilities about what literature is or can be.

AH: So it sounds like you were able to mix some of the American renaissance types—Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne—with others whose texts may have had some influence at the time but have been perhaps unfairly marginalized for many years.

VL: Yes. I think when the whole canon revision, which has also been called "the New Americanism," got going, there were a lot of reservations about what that would do with established writers. Would that mean books like *Moby Dick* would no longer be taught? Would that mean American renaissance writers would be forgotten and replaced by a kind of counter-canon that represents African-American writers, women writers, and other marginalized traditions? What I've tried to do is teach a lot of the more well-known writers side by side with some of these newly discovered writers and to show how they're in conversation with each other. What I'm trying to do with that approach is not only expose students to some of these lesser-known literary traditions, but also broaden their understanding of the canonical writers like Hawthorne and Melville. You know, you can open up a lot of doors into understanding a novel like Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, which I taught, when you read it in the context of a novel like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, when you see how the sentimental

movement that Stowe is coming out of is also informing some of these American renaissance writers.

AH: You wrote your Ph.D. dissertation on a fascinating topic: women writers of the American West. Can you give me some of the details?

VL: Well, my dissertation focused on a particular period, 1880 to 1920, which American historians call the progressive era. This is an important period in the literary history of the western novel because it was when American culture was adjusting to the idea of frontier closure and what that meant for the future of the nation. It's a period also known as the "birth of the western," because, following James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels, westerns were taken up by dime novel publishers. And so the reputation of the genre was somewhat sullied, you might say, by this popularization, this ghettoization.

AH: It was thought of as 'low literature'. . . .

VL: Yes, it was coming to be thought of as low-brow, boy's literature. Owen Wister [author of the influential 1902 western *The Virginian*] was a little bit uncomfortable about writing westerns because he aspired to be another Henry James. So what Wister, I think, quite self-consciously did was try to recuperate the genre as a literary genre, and he was quite successful. His great achievement was the 1902 western, *The Virginian*, and that novel is considered the foundational text of the popular western that we're now familiar with, through the novels, through the movies, through figures like John Wayne, Clint Eastwood's *Man With No Name*, et cetera.

AH: Yes, Wister coined the line, "Smile when you call me that. . . ."

VL: Exactly, it was in *The Virginian* where we saw the first showdown between the hero and the bad guy, and that showdown was over the honour of a lady. So the popular formula so familiar to us is understood to have its origins in that moment. But what's interesting about that moment is that there were also, I was amazed to discover, quite a lot of women writers who were writing popular western novels at the time. Women were becoming active in rodeos. The first professional women athletes in the United States were rodeo cowgirls. And, of course, this is the period of suffrage, culminating in the passing of the woman suffrage amendment in 1920. The more I learned about this period, the

more I saw connections between all these things: the suffrage movement, westerns by women, rodeo cowgirls. I think the thing that drove my research in this area is just the act of discovering a really significant body of texts, and yet there is that pervasive assumption that the western is a man's genre and that women don't write them. To this day, when people ask me what I research and I say, "Westerns by women," they always say, "Did women write westerns?" Whereupon, I launch into my whole, "Well, yes. . . ."

AH: Were these female western novelists endeavouring to imitate Wister, were they writing low-brow dime novels, or were they fashioning a voice of their own? Or a little bit of all of the above?

VL: I would say it's a combination. This is where it becomes very difficult to describe because you don't want to draw these arbitrary distinctions, you don't want to stereotype these writers. You don't want to say, "Women writers did it this way," and you don't want to stereotype the male writers either. Be that as it may, there are some very interesting things happening in women's westerns. They might engage in a lot of the familiar ingredients of the genre: cowboy heroes, rustlers, cattle roundups, similar settings, a similar cast of characters in their novels.

AH: Are the main protagonists often men in their books?

VL: Just off the top of my head, I would say that in general they do tend to focus on female protagonists. But probably one of the most prolific women writers from this period of westerns was a woman who published under the name B. M. Bower. Her name was Bertha. Her first novel was called *Chip of the Flying U*. The protagonist was very much modeled after the *Virginian*. His name was Chip. But she does very interesting things with this character. She describes him physically in feminized terms, she talks about his long eyelashes that any woman would be glad to own. He has a sensitive side. He is an artist who likes to paint, but he's a little bit ashamed of his painting. It's kind of a secret that he doesn't like to draw a lot of attention to because it might compromise his masculinity. Bower wrote serial novels, so the same cast of characters come up in different novels, different stories. She was one of the early progenitors of the serial western tradition. She had another character who has a reputation for being the greatest bronc-buster in the area – there isn't

any horse he can't ride. He never gets thrown, and they always give him these terrifying wild horses to break. But he has a secret, and his secret is that he got his start as a circus rider and he used to have to wear tights and perform ballet maneuvers on the back of ponies in a circus ring. And so she's very playful with the tradition. . . .

AH: There's almost an androgynous element to it all.

VL: Very much so. In fact, Chip, the main character in *Chip of the Flying U*, is very much an androgynous figure. I sometimes see him as a model of Bower's own identity as an androgynous writer. She published by her initials, so she had an androgynous signature. I see a lot of parallels between the character Chip in the novel and Bower's persona as a novelist.

AH: The women in these novels, how are they in general portrayed? Is that, again, a mixed bag? Do we get gentle tamers, soiled doves, Belle Starr types?

VL: It is difficult to generalize. Certainly you do see a lot of the same kinds of stereotypes in these texts by women writers, and sometimes that's not what we want to see necessarily. We want to see women writers writing against those stereotypes more so than they actually do, or perhaps they write against them in a way that we don't recognize as subversive, but at the time might have been.

The main line of novels that Bower published and she was most of all known for were the Happy Family novels. The Happy Family was a bunkhouse of cowboys who worked on the ranch. These novels would focus on the exploits of the Happy Family, and the various adventures that they experienced. The women characters in these novels do tend to be fairly conventional female characters upon first glance. Chip's love interest—Chip's also a Happy Family cowboy—his love interest is Dale Whitmore, who is in many ways like *The Virginian's* Molly Stark Wood, the kind of genteel Eastern woman who arrives in the West. . . . These women tend to have attributes of the kind of American “new woman” of the period, who's more independent, more vocal, powerful, intimidating to men. Then the pattern is that they are, over the course of the novel, domesticated and they succumb to the appeal and even domination of the hero. In *The Virginian*, in the final pages of the novel, the independent heroine is melting into the arms of

the hero, and I think that's something we're still familiar with in westerns, that old chivalric tradition of the westerns. And that's there in a lot of these women writers.

But Bower wrote a novel called *Lonesome Land*. She had been writing novels since 1904, and *Lonesome Land* was published in 1914. Here the heroine—she's kind of a mail-order bride—arrives in the West expecting to be a “civilizer,” a gentle tamer who is going to transform the West into a garden. She finds that the man she's marrying and she's now going out West to join, is an alcoholic, a compulsive gambler, a cow rustler. The convention is that the single woman is in danger in the frontier, and marriage is, for them, about domesticity and safety. In this text, that is reversed, and marriage itself is very unsafe. So by the end of the novel, she ends up contemplating divorce. So that's kind of undoing the formula.

The typical western formula culminates in marriage, it ties everything together. That's the resolution. But in this particular novel, the resolution is divorce, or the thought of divorce, but it doesn't actually transpire. These novels tread on dangerous ground, but they don't go all the way. They try to contain these subversive ideas within the conventions of the formula. This is possibly something the writers had to do to get their stuff published. There is some debate among scholars about how you read women from this period. Are there subversive strategies that they're using, or are they just invoking controversies in order to undermine them?

AH: Our readers are very curious, and I've found too a great attraction among students when I taught my course on the American West. I know that when I proposed the idea of interviewing you, everyone on the *FAUW Forum* editorial board was very excited because they knew you and I would be talking about the American West. There seems to be this ongoing fascination with the West. There was the Ken Burns miniseries. Hollywood is not churning out quite as many westerns as it used to, but they're still making them. Can you account for the continuing fascination with the American West? Have you tried to figure that one out?

VL: That question confounds me and it always has. I don't know. And the fascination is international. I've heard that in Germany there's a lot of interest in western Americana, there's the great German western serial writer Karl May. . . . As much as my work involves debunking myths, the

whole story of transplanting—and I know that this whole story is bound up in colonization and the displacement of aboriginal cultures—was a very bad thing and I don't want to celebrate the project of western expansion. But having said that, the whole idea of a society transplanting itself into a space and just starting over . . . perhaps that's where the fascination comes from. We all have fantasies of going to a desert island where there's nobody around.

AH: Yes, exactly. And that's a lost moment in history. That possibility doesn't exist anymore. There aren't really any more frontiers, are there? Well, I guess if you believe *Star Trek*, space is the final frontier.

VL: Well, and the Internet. There are some fascinating parallels between the whole discourse that's used to describe the Internet and the same discourse used to describe the frontier of the nineteenth century. In my actual scholarship, I'm kind of debunking it, critiquing it. But on the other hand, the irony is, this scholarship is driven by this fascination with the very mythology. . . . One explanation that I've seen is that North American society—our desires, our expectations—is very much premised on this idea that resources are unlimited, that economic growth, expansion, creation of wealth, building your wealth, these are all things we believe we're all entitled to as a society. But we know that resources are not unlimited, that they're scarce, and if I have a big house in the suburbs that's on an acre of property, it means that someone else has to live in an apartment in an urban area. The idea of a frontier rationalizes that for us, it's where we deposit this sense that the kind of lifestyle that we've carved out, that we value, that our values are actually possible, that they can be practiced.

AH: And the Internet analogy is right on.

VL: The Internet to me seems to play a function that's similar to the function the frontier played in the nineteenth century, where a way out for somebody unemployed in New York, let's say, in poverty, was they could go west and homestead. A cultural critic of the time said that even if you are poor, the idea of a frontier, of a

place where you can go and claim your land, makes your poverty easier to live with. The Internet seems to have played a similar function when people were downsized. "Well, go off on your own, take your severance package, and start an Internet company." It's free land, right? Because it's imaginary, it's virtual.

AH: You just have to go out and squat on it. Get your own URL and you've got it made.

VL: Yes, right. Get your own Website, carve out your own space. And the same thing with Internet stocks. They've since been deflated. It's my understanding that a lot of these Internet companies, like amazon.com, their stock values are incredibly high but they're not making any money. It reminds me a lot of the kind of speculation that was going on in the nineteenth century. And the "I Love You" virus, which I understand often targeted files that have been illegally downloaded. So there's the whole vigilante thing going on.

AH: And all these viruses going around are the banditos, the Indians, the hired guns out to ruin the homesteaders. The analogy is a great one. Changing the subject slightly: Any plans for the future?

VL: The next project I'm just starting to work on is looking at, well, the formal name is an analysis of the woman's body on the frontier. The premise I'm working from is that the act of migration really disrupted the dominant ideas about femininity in the nineteenth century, which were based on domesticity, purity, piety, being in a closed place. And so I'm looking at how that whole ideology was disrupted by frontier migration and frontier living in general. But I also want to continue my work on women western writers, perhaps focusing on getting some of these writers published in new editions so they can be taught. But also there are writers that I know about and haven't had a chance to really research, who fall into the same genre.

AH: Thank you very much, Victoria.

VL: Thank you.



The FAUW Forum is a service for the UW faculty sponsored by the Association. It seeks to promote the exchange of ideas, foster open debate on issues, publish a wide and balanced spectrum of views, and inform members about current Association matters. Opinions expressed in the Forum are those of the authors, and ought not to be perceived as representing the views of the Association, its Board of Directors, or of the Editorial Board of the Forum, unless so specified. Members are invited to submit letters, news items and brief articles. If you do not wish to receive the Forum, please contact the Faculty Association Office and your name will be removed from the mailing list.

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