


us; the unrestricted immigration and cancerous industrial and commercial growth that makes the land unfit for the people whose ancestors fought and died for it.

To all the liberal slogans spouted by conservatives and libertarians, there is always a question that must be asked. To Milton Friedman's "free to choose," a sane person would have to ask, "Choose what?" Otherwise, we shall become like the librarians and teachers who tell children to read without specifying whether they should be reading *Emma* or *Harry Potter* or *The Philosophy of the Bedroom*. So, to

the champions of unlimited growth, we should be asking not only *what* should grow and *how big* but also *for what good purpose*. Until conservatives ask—and answer—such questions, they will be stuck playing the same old games with the leftists who pick the playing field and dictate the rules. Conservatives have always lost in the past—especially when, as in the 1980's, they thought they were winning—and, unless they wean themselves from the revolutionary ideology they have taken in with their mothers' milk, they will always lose in the future. 

John 21.18

by Ralph McNerny

Four seasons of a family pass my house,
An old man wheeled by a younger, the son
Of his daughter who follows with two tots.
The ancient has been shaken up, clothed by others,
Does not choose the way he goes.
His cap is pulled down firmly on his head,
Its bill pulling him forward into what
Throughout his life had been his final end
If not his goal. I watch the wintry figure
Pushed by summer as autumn and spring
Attend his going. No need to ask reasons
For his passing, save that of the seasons.

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“Vampire-Loving Barmaid Hits Jackpot”

The Commodification of Culture

by James O. Tate

Well, of course you’re reading my compelling exposition because of its lapel-grabbing title, but did you notice that my title is in quotes? Oh, yes indeedly. That’s because I got the title from Motoko Rich’s article in the *New York Times* of May 20, and I didn’t want to plagiarize, or rather I should say that I didn’t want to get caught plagiarizing.

So, according to the previously cited Motoko Rich (*op. cit.*), we have learned that Charlaïne Harris of Magnolia, Arkansas, has recently made a bundle with her series of “Sookie Stackhouse vampire mystery romance novels” (*New York Times*, May 20, 2009, *op. cit.*) and the HBO tie-ins related thereunto. Ms. Harris has indeed reached the No. 1 spot on the *Times*’ best-seller list for hardcover fiction, and, if one photograph tells me anything, I dare say that Ms. Harris can identify with her readers, and they with her. And by the way, you just read an elliptical chiasmus. This is *Chronicles*, buster.

Now as a veteran *Times* reader, and indeed a veteran reader, period, I was a little challenged as to why the *Times* best-seller list wasn’t enough in itself. That Americans read trash is hardly news, and if it is, that news belongs in the business pages. So why the additional attention, then? There was the condescending treatment of small-town America, of course, but I knew there had to be something else besides a quote like “Every trip to Wal-Mart is an inspiration” (*op. cit.*). Then there was something decisive, though it was hedged: “With their message of accepting diversity, Ms. Harris said she wrote the Sookie novels in part as ‘a metaphor for gays in America.’ But, she added: ‘I am not a crusader. If you need a good adventure or a vacation from your problems, then I am your woman’” (*ibid.*). The politics was perhaps not as obvious as it seemed, for if there is one thing to want to escape from, that would be the tom-tom beat of the inverted homosexual strategy of certified victimization.

I am not in the market for any vampire mystery romance novels, for like many another, I read Bram Stoker’s 1897 version many moons ago, and do not see any competition on the horizon for the perverse erotics and bizarre vision of the outrageous original. I remember that, when I was young, an adult assured me that *Dracula* was the greatest of novels. OK, so maybe it wasn’t that—but it remains a

hell of a book, a real roller coaster. You might suppose that there could have been some sense of context in the *Times* account, but as George W.S. Trow has insisted, we live in the context of no context.

Yet if I hadn’t known much about vampire mystery romance novels, then neither had I known that there were other “genres” that signified, if anything, less. I don’t know or I didn’t know, or I didn’t care, or I just didn’t give a flying rodent rump—I’m trying to get in touch with my feelings here—what “a classic historical lesbian romance novel” *was* or *is* or *might be* until I “read” about it on the web and began to realize that I would have to expand my grammatical take on the possibility, or rather the impossibility. I was thinking future perfect, like this: By this time next week I still will not have read a classic historical lesbian romance novel, as far as I know. But wait a minute, maybe I was just having difficulty with my right-brain processing and connecting it with male-dominated white history, because my regard for the epigrams and lyrics of Théophile Gautier is one of rapt admiration and the image of Mademoiselle de Maupin might fit in there somewhere, if only I could adjust my imagination to fit the requirements of illiteracy and ignorance that are imposed by the New World Order, er, Oprah—whatever.

Because let’s face it, when Aristotle was lecturing and the usual groupies were scribbling the *Poetics*, neither novels nor romances existed to be analyzed, so the generic criticism we needed and need was not intoned and transcribed. But the Greek romances were just around the corner, though Longinus, who was more in touch with his feelings, paid them no heed. Epic and dramatic poetry were greater than prose, by definition—they were even sublime. Not much earlier, Horace lived just before the composition of great prose fiction, but he gave it no mind, though, later on, T.S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald did. Future perfectly, I will by the end of this screed have indicated little or nothing about the Alexandrian Library and Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes, though I would dearly have loved to because, in those days, they really had criticism—but never mind, let it go. We will get to what “literary critic” means today in just a moment, and, at that time and not before, I will be willing to answer all the questions that dance in your respective (as opposed to respectful and respectable) noggins.

But as I am no longer disposed to the future perfect but rather toward conditions contrary to fact, I believe that

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.