

## Spring Rep: The dramas unfold.

Photos by Erik Borg.



Counterclockwise from top: The cast of *Welcome to the Moon*. Mark Hirshfield, Larry Abbando, Dan Grotenhuis, Melanie Friedlander, Shawn Ryan.



Liz Dewey as Mabel (center) is consoled by En-Jay Hall and Daphne Gil as June and Edith in Snoo Wilson's *Soul of the White Ant*.

The cast of *Talking With...*: Solange Weinberger, Melissa Perry, Natalya Baldyga, Catherine Eells, Tamara Taylor, Sally Evans, and Louise Whitton (next photo).



# McElroy on Women and Men

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tivity which ought to be excluded from fiction, and I find that this derives partly from, ironically, of all people, such a philosophical and thoughtful and rational novelist, Henry James. James' remark that you ought to dramatize and a remark about him that his mind was too fine ever to be violated by an idea...are very distracting, and I think it wrongly limits the powers that we have. I think fiction often dramatizes a debate about values. And I would reason that if part of the excitement about being alive is going through the awful process of indecision and decision; and if one of our functions is to think - and that is one of the most exciting things we can do - it must follow that fiction ought to evoke that. It doesn't mean, therefore, that you should write about philosophers, and it's difficult to do that. The way that people think, the process by which they form ideas and deform ideas and move from idea to idea has got to be part of the experience which is presented in fiction. And no reason why it shouldn't be. I think that American writers often have not thought enough. Now the other side of this, and it is not at all in contrast to it, I think it's the obverse if you will, is Bill Gass' interesting discussions of how philosophy is to some extent fiction. So I feel that there ought to be a place in the possibilities for fiction of all kinds of mental activity...

I am not sure I would need to use the word mythical about an image which I know I turn to all the time, but I don't think that it's all that specific and definite for a reader of mine. I think it's the image of someone having to put life together all over again. At every moment. And it can be seen in different ways. It can be seen as the experience of being on the verge of a disturbance so severe that one can call it psychotic; you turn a quarter of a degree and nothing you look at is familiar. And that can be very exciting for a writer because obviously you want to make it new, make it fresh, you want to make the familiar unfamiliar in some sense. But you turn that quarter of a degree and what you see doesn't make any sense at all.

And so you write a whole book trying to make sense of what you're looking at. Another way of seeing it, is that of waking up in the morning and not understanding what happened yesterday or in the last ten years and having to make sense of it all over again. I guess the flip side of that is I feel threatened with meaninglessness. I think that's partly what I fight against when I try to write a book. *Women and Men* - and this is not an interpretation of the book - could be seen as a vast and beautiful and ungainly metaphor for divorce and getting over divorce. It is a lot of other things. But I think that that experience is one of the dislocating, disorganizing, shattering experiences which exemplify what I mean when I say that a kind of myth, a kind of resident event that I keep turning to, is the event of suddenly having to put the world together all over again. From the beginning I have felt a sense of experience as being fragmentary or being fragments and pieces in a kind of archipelago...

Narrative is a mnemonic device. And I've never discounted it. I remember reading Somerset Maugham's "The Summing Up" when I was 17 out in California working on a cattle ranch and I thought that was it, I really did, that was the last word. I later came to understand how glib it is. Nonetheless it is a useful book for a young writer. One of the things Maugham says there - or one of the things he points to - is the usefulness of a clear narrative line as a means of organizing your memory, as a means of giving the reader some mental comfort, which will give the reader more strength to contemplate other things in the narrative...

### What are your work habits?

Ideally, I get to work about eight in the morning and about eleven things begin to gel. If I'm lucky, I might get two typewritten pages by two in the afternoon. That's ideal.

### How much revision do you do?

A lot. And constant. Revision is where the surprises and real triumphs come, and therefore revision

is all mixed with the making of the new sentences and the forging ahead.

### What is the relationship of your reading to your own writing?

I do read a lot, I know I read a lot. I read a lot of poetry, I read a lot of philosophy, I read a lot of science. I read a lot of junk. I read a lot of magazines, and I guess, I read a lot of novels. I think when I am in the midst of a book, I try not to read novels, try not to plunge myself into a complex and rich narrative voice of somebody else...

I would argue that your education never stops. And that if you think what a good book is, why you have to recognize it as the quintessence of someone's experience. And it's the way you know that person, and the way you know yourself. So you can't not read.

### curves...

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The trend back to curves is a wonderful phenomena. Men will have something to hold in their "big, strong arms" while women can worry less about their God-given curves. The swing back to a fuller body also reflects a swing back to good eating. In the *New York Times* article it is mentioned that people are eating more meat and dairy products. Also, "consumers want nutritious food but they do not want to go to any trouble for it." Thus, take-out food and home delivery are extremely popular. Nutrition and health consciousness remain a concern, but the emphasis on weight is decreasing which allows a little more of the high life.

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## Zoo's Woolgatherer

By J. K. Gray

Last weekend, the Hepburn Zoo was the scene of yet another production presented by the Middlebury College Theater department. *The Woolgatherer*, by William Mastrosimone, was put on as a junior independent project, directed by Jason Rosenbaum '88 and ran for three nights.

The two characters in the play, Rose, a timid young woman who works at the candy counter of a five and dime store, and Cliff, a burly, skeptical, wise-cracking, truck-driver, were played by veteran Zoo actors Annette Toutonghi and Govind Menon respectively.

All the acting took place in one set which represented Rose's tenement apartment in Philadelphia. Rose's character was at once hinted at by the sparse apartment which contained little but the bare necessities and a few dead plants.

The action of the play is merely the conversation and interplay between the two characters, who are both attracted and repulsed by one another.

This developing relationship was effective in revealing the sharp differences

between the two characters and the underlying concerns of each of them. Toutonghi's bird-like flutterings and nervous hesitations worked well to give the appearance of Rose's seeming frailty and innocence. Also, her high pitched but soft spoken voice was especially effective particularly in her dramatic monologues in which she tells of watching boys with "loud music in their ears" stoning to death her beloved cranes at the city zoo. Her frenzied screams at the close of the monologues struck a painful chord within me, and probably most of the audience as well.

The only problem I had with Toutonghi was that her actions were somewhat limited and too often repeated. Part of this may have been due to inadequate blocking, for at times both of the actors seemed uncomfortably riveted, and little free movement occurred on the tiny stage.

Menon, as Cliff, was convincing as the "tough guy," always joking around, yet with the underlying belief that the world was no joke, but dog-eat-dog. Menon moved easily from his back sniping jokes to his serious

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