

A stack of several old, worn books. The top book has a dark cover, and the one below it has a red cover. The pages are yellowed with age. The books are stacked on a wooden surface. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a cozy atmosphere.

English in the Amazon:

Unhomeliness in Evelyn Waugh's  
“The Man Who Liked Dickens”

# The Story

- Paul Henty – Englishman on an exploratory expedition to a remote region of Brazil
- Mr. McMaster – landowner with an Indian mother and English father
- McMaster nurses Henty back to health and asks him to read Dickens' novels aloud to him each day, resorting to coercion once Henty becomes unwilling to continue reading.

# Thesis

- Through the character of McMaster, Waugh demonstrates how unhomeliness, resulting from cultural colonization and mimicry, can cause desperation and loneliness when the colonized are alienated from both the colonized and colonizing groups.

# Henty's Perspective

- Early in the expedition, he photographs the natives and collects snakes, observing both as specimens for study (Waugh 2822).
- McMaster is the first English speaker he finds.
  - “I expect you think I’m very odd” (Waugh 2819).
- Distant observer
- Expects to be seen as a novelty

# McMaster: Cultural Collision

- Geographically isolated
  - Lives near Shiriana Indians
  - No one in his region except McMaster is aware of the long line of colonizers (Waugh 2819).
- His British father introduced the English language and culture to him.
- Father became the agent of cultural colonization.

# Mimicry

- Colonized group's "imitation of dress, language, behavior, even gestures" of the colonizer (Dobie 211)
- "The disciplined, conscious imitation of the white man by the colonized, and supposedly subservient native" (Nayer 28)

# McMaster, Mimicry, and Dickens

- The collection of Dickens' novels are McMaster's one connection to his father's culture.
- He cannot read.
- Dickens wrote about distinctly British themes and problems, but McMaster never asks about the particulars of British society within the books, focusing on universals.

# The “Other”

- McMaster imitates a colonizer by “othering” his native neighbors.
- Othering: “viewing those who are different from oneself as inferior beings” (Dobie 212)
- McMaster does not identify as an Indian; he talks about them as a separate people group.
  - “one of *their* superstitions” (emphasis mine, Waugh 2825)
- Views them as children
  - “they would do nothing without my authority” (Waugh 2826)
- Material advantage
  - Landowner, larger house, cattle, plantation, dog, gun (Waugh 2819)



# Unhomeliness

- Part of two cultures, but fully integrated into neither
- McMaster unhomes himself in regard to the natives, but is also unable to gain acceptance in British culture.
  - Physical distance from Britain
  - Inability to read

# Loneliness and Desperation

- McMaster must remain connected to Britain in some small way.
- Henty is not the first man that has been held against his will for the purpose of reading (Waugh 2823).
- Drugs Henty and deprives him of his only chance to return home.
- Desperate enough to kidnap a man, any man, who can keep him connected to is English roots through Dickens.

# Conclusion

- McMaster, both colonized and colonizer, suffers unhomeliness by being neither fully Brazilian nor fully British.
- His mimicry of the colonizer (an effort to be accepted as English), alienates him from the native people group.
- Waugh's text exposes the harm of introducing a foreign culture while at the same time denying full integration into that culture.

# Bibliography

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