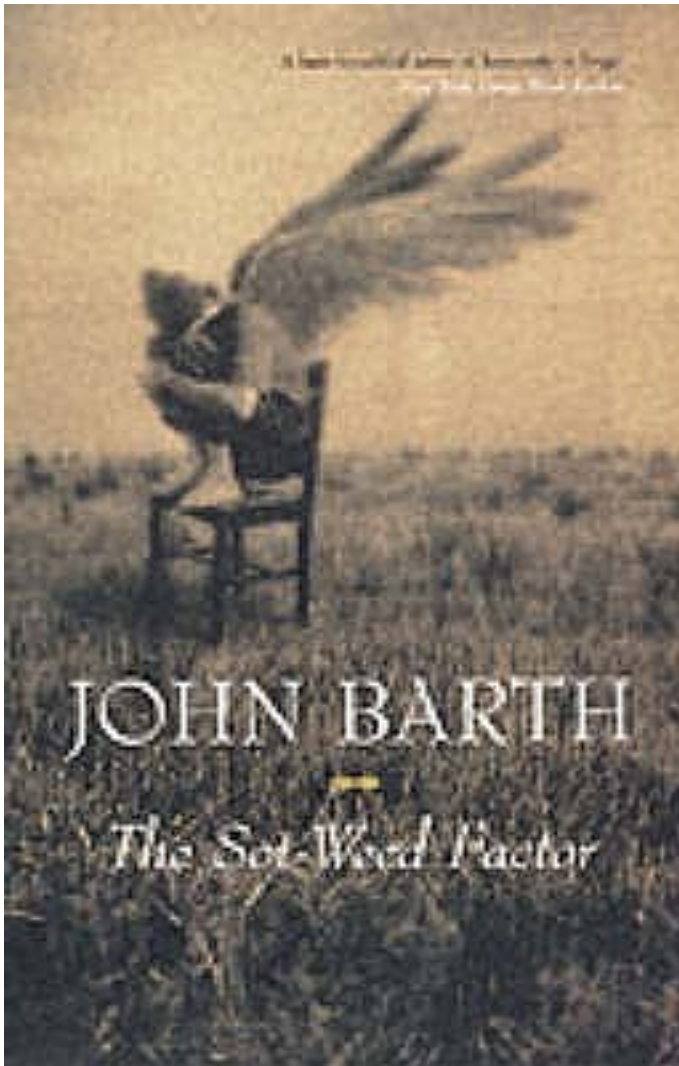

John Barth

The Sot-Weed Factor



Title: The Sot-Weed Factor

Author: John Barth

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Description

Considered by critics to be Barth's most distinguished masterpiece, *The Sot-Weed Factor* has acquired the status of a modern classic. Set in the late 1600s, it recounts the wildly chaotic odyssey of hapless, ungainly Ebenezer Cooke, sent to the New World to look after his father's tobacco business and to record the struggles of the Maryland colony in an epic poem.

On his mission, Cooke experiences capture by pirates and Indians; the loss of his father's estate to roguish impostors; love for a farmer prostitute; stealthy efforts to rob him of his virginity, which he is (almost) determined to protect; and an extraordinary gallery of treacherous characters who continually switch identities. A hilarious, bawdy tribute to all the most insidious human vices, *The Sot-Weed Factor* has lasting relevance for readers of all times.

Insightful reviews

Ian Agadada-Davida: **Sextants and Parallels**

John Barth took four years to write this epic Epic, and published it at the age of 30 in 1960.

I more or less spent four days inside its four walls over Easter (I was determined to gobble it up before the chocolate Easter eggs were finished!), but I could spend a lifetime (or what little remains of it) recounting its marvels.

This was my third Barth novel. I loved the first two. But this one totally blew my mind, both in terms of ambition and execution.

Swords and Cannons

I have my favourite novelists, just as I have my favourite novels. I'm reluctant to canonise authors, let alone entire oeuvres, or even individual novels. Hence, despite my favourites, I've always been reluctant to claim that there might be such a thing as a Great American Novel (which is little more than a marketing term), let alone one whose glory extends beyond the boundaries of the United States.

Yet, having just finished this work, I'm tempted to argue that it's the best American novel written in the twentieth century. The only thing that holds me back is the fact that I haven't read Pynchon's *"Mason & Dixon"*, which explores the past like this novel.

Art and Wile

One of the reasons for my enthusiasm is how the work fits into the history of the novel.

It's at once a parody and an homage. But it also passes itself off as a pretty amazing iteration of what it seeks to parody.

I read and enjoyed a lot of voluminous, early English novels in my youth, before I became more impatient with my time. Midway through my life, I briefly doubted the virtue of length and maximalism, arguing that, if a writer had 900 pages in them, then why couldn't they split them into three discrete works?

This experience has persuaded me that, at least in Barth's case, I should trust the author's assessment of appropriate length:

"The tale is no marvel of brevity...yet it must be told."

In this tale, Barth immerses us, sometimes over our heads, in both a world and a worldview, and it's a delightment.

There were times when the pace of the novel seemed to slow, and I wondered why there were still hundreds of pages to go. However, each time, in retrospect, it seemed as if Barth was merely slowing down to take a corner. Once through it, he accelerated, and the tale was off again, even if sometimes on a different tangent.

Raillery and Bookish Converse

Barth argues that this is when he discovered what we now call Post-Modernism. He might be right, insofar as the movement embraces imitation.

He would say later that novels like *"The Sot-Weed Factor"* are *"novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author."*

Pranks and Larks

What I love about this assertion is the degree of mischief implicit in it.

If we have read any of these earlier novels (from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries), readers will be familiar with the form adopted by their authors (especially the chapter headings that sometimes sound like head notes in reports of legal cases).

Yet we also know that how they were written and what they wrote about reflected the time in which they were written.

Barth might attempt to write in this manner, but he is/was still a twentieth century (schizoid) man writing in the form of an eighteenth century novelist.

To an extent he was a passenger in someone else's vehicle.

He might have donned the garb, and he might have looked the part, but he and we are both conscious that it's a pretence.

Aye, there's the rub!

But what a pretence!



Gerrit Dou imitates an ear-ringed Barth

Ink and Quill

How to describe this fiction then?

"Dear God! 'Tis marvellous. What a comedy! 'Twas a marvelous tale, well told, and as nicely pointed as one of Aesop's. A pretty tale indeed, if not a virtuous. Aye, spread the word!"

Wags and Wits

Barth cautions us against taking authors too seriously or at their word:

"'Tis a great mistake for a tale-teller to philosophise and tell us what his story means; haply it doth not mean what he thinks at all, at least to the rest of us."

On first appearance, this might seem to warn us against emphasising too much the author's literary or philosophical intentions.

To this extent, it urges us to enjoy the author's play (authors and characters alike can *"play this world like a harpsichord"*), not just their earnestness.

Spin and Tangle

However, it also suggests that an author doesn't necessarily understand the true effect or import of their own tale.

My book is not necessarily what I intended. Ironically, it might be no more than what I realised.

Still, a tale requires a listener, just as much as a speaker, so we don't know its meaning, until we know how it has been heard.

A tale, therefore, is constructed by both author and reader.

What's important, too, is how well the tale is told. Its appeal is in the telling. It doesn't have to be perfect, as long as it is fit for purpose or is entertaining.

Being a tale, it's also delivered in parts. We might enjoy some parts more than others:

"Tales are like tarts, that may be ugly on the face of 'em and yet have a worthwhile end."

Innocence and Experience

For all the bawdy humour, the novel deals incidentally, at least, with serious issues.

At heart, it's a tale of innocence and experience.

The virgin poet Ebenezer Cooke and his twin sister, Anna, are the innocents. Their former tutor and friend, Henry Burlingame III, is the experienced one.

There is a creative tension between the three, although Henry is the primary source of it: like the author himself, *"he makes game of my innocence"*.

Needless to say, the game encompasses twins, coupling and couplets! Entwining, swiving and rhyming abounds! And so it should! Pretty or not, it makes no claim to virtue.

Preachment and Practice

Of course, innocence comes before experience. Hence, innocence is associated with virginity;

the loss of it with the fall and subsequent worldly experience:

" 'Twas carnal knowledge, knowledge of the flesh, that caused man's fall."

In Henry's case, it also motivated and drove his engagement with the world:

"Yet anon I lost [my virginity], and so committed me to the world; 'twas then I vowed, since I was fallen from grace, I would worship the Serpent that betrayed me, and ere I died would know the taste of every fruit the garden grows!"

Sneak and Subterfuge

So begins Ebenezer's quest to learn about the (new) world (of Maryland), if not necessarily lose his virginity.

Still, everywhere he goes in this not quite Virgin Maryland, he encounters Henry in his various (dis-)guises:

"He loves the world, and comprehends it at first glance - sometimes even sight unseen - yet his love is flavoured with a similar contempt, from the selfsame cause, which leads him to make game of what he loves."

Sundry Trials and Impostures

Henry, who ironically has *"nor wealth, nor place, nor even parentage"*, is far more relaxed with the world. He doesn't strive to understand it in its totality. He seeks only to understand himself within it:

"One must needs make and seize his soul, and then cleave fast to't, or go babbling in the corner; one must choose his gods and devils on the run, quill his own name upon the universe, and declare, " 'Tis I, and the world stands such-a-way!" One must assert, assert, assert, or go screaming mad."

Henry confronts real life every moment of the day, often masked or impersonating an other:

"I know you not from one hour to the next...The world's a happy climate for imposture."

Factions and Intrigues

Personality is fluid and fragmented. Nothing is whole. Each of us has a *"driven and fragmented spirit."* We have to reinvent or rediscover ourselves step by step on the journey through life. Henry advises Ebenezer:

"You must embrace your Self as Poet and Virgin, regardless, or discard it for something better. In either case don't seek whole understanding - the search were fruitless, and there is no time for't."

Ostensibly, the novel is the tale of Ebenezer's education. However, his rival is equally educated over the course of the novel, for all his worldliness and playfulness.

Idlers and Ne'er-Do-Wells

Like most in the American colonies, Henry is an orphan. The absence of a father means the absence of a father figure, and therefore a source of authority.

Just as orphans might lack a heritage, some lack a moral compass. These are the men who colonised the New World:

"The plain fact is, the greatest part are castaways: rebels, failures, jailbirds and adventurers. Cast such seed on such soil, and 'twere fond to seek a crop of dons and courtiers.. There is a freedom there that's both a blessing and a curse, for't means both liberty and lawlessness. 'Tis more than just political and religious liberty - they come and go from one year to the next. 'Tis philosophic liberty I speak of, that comes from want of history. It throws one on his own resources, that freedom - makes every man an orphan like myself and can as well demoralise as elevate."

Morals and Metaphysics

America's origins are therefore both de-moralised and demoralised.

When Ebenezer arrives in Maryland, it is fast going from sot-weed (tobacco) to pot (well, opium, actually).

Ebenezer's poetry, his culture, his civilisation is no solution. It's too removed from reality:

"Literature...availed him not, for though it afforded one a certain sophistication about life and a release from one's single mortal destiny, it did not, except accidentally, afford solutions to practical problems."

Shifting and Confounded

For all Man's love of Reason, there is no order or logic in Life. History too is a fabrication, ours:

"We all invent our pasts, more or less, as we go along, at the dictates of Whim and Interest; the happenings of former times are a clay in the present moment that will-we, nill-we, the lot of us must sculpt. Thus Being does make Positivists of us all. Moreover, this Clio was already a scarred and crafty trollop when the Author found her."

Toss and Tempest

Ultimately, Life is a tempest, that tosses us around on the waters: *"This thing we call civilisation... 'tis a bumboat-load o' judges, dons and poets, on a dark and vasty main*

o'erwracked with storms".

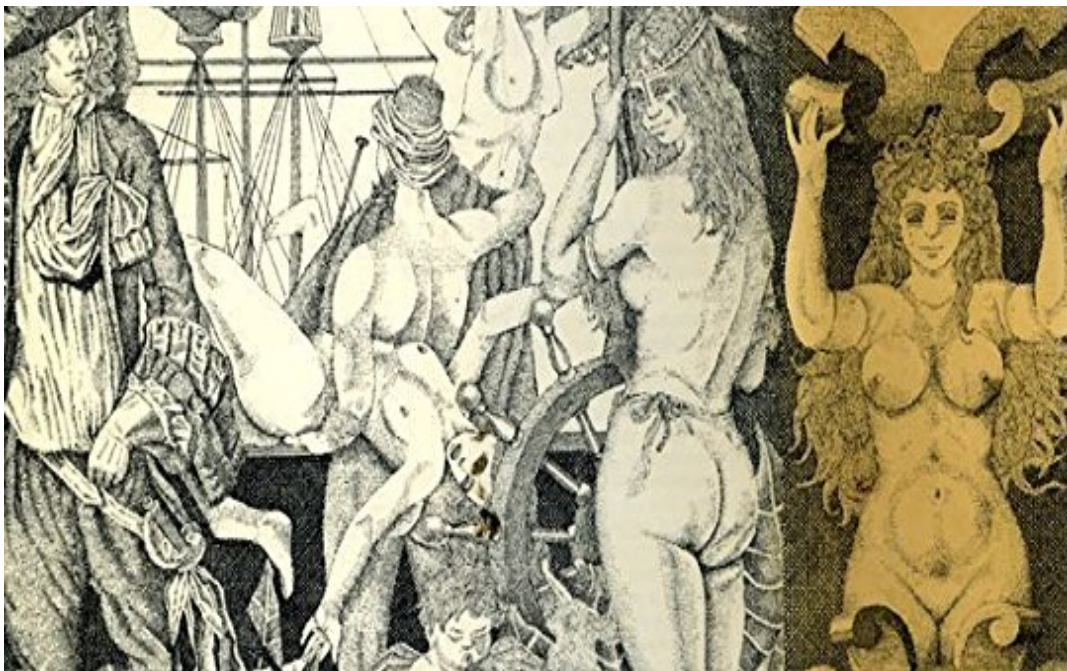
Life is beyond our control, and that of our factors and agents. We might be a character on its stage, but it tells its own tale, fearless of outcome or coincidence or absurdity. We don't write Life; it writes us:

"Life is a shameless playwright."

But so were Rabelais and Shakespeare, and so is Barth. All three of them have writ large about Life for our reading pleasure.

Their subject matter is the stuff of life, drawn both dramatic and comic, tragic and farcical. In Barth's twinned words (many of which I've used for my sub-headings), this novel contains within: fops and fools, love and candor, lust and pride, trysts and secret meetings, hypocrisy and lewd delight, gasps and titters.

Some might equal these tales and their telling, but none are better. At least, none that come to mind.



Detail of Back Cover and Spine Illustration by Owen Wood

ADDED EXTRAS:
[Couplets and Eulogies]

[\(view spoiler\)](#)

aventuras en su viaje a la colonia (¡y en ella!) mientras preserva, con no pocos problemas, su virginidad intacta.

Barth también tenía la idea de dar un epitafio al poeta, en sus propias palabras: “The Sot–Weed Factor began with the title and, of course, Ebenezer Cooke’s original poem. . . . Nobody knows where the real chap is buried; I made up a grave for Ebenezer because I wanted to write his epitaph”.

A pesar de lo comentado, el resultado final fue por otros derroteros. Como dijo Barth en 1994: “Looking back, I am inclined to declare grandly that I needed to discover, or to be discovered by, Postmodernism.” (“Mirando atrás, me inclino a pensar mayormente que necesitaba descubrir, o ser descubierto por el Postmodernismo”). A partir de ese momento, de hecho, las obras de los períodos siguientes se inclinarían cada vez más a la fabulación, la metaficcionalidad, en conclusión: lo postmoderno.

Tras leer la obra, no puedo más que estar de acuerdo con lo anterior. Y me gustaría incidir en lo que considero sus virtudes, aquellas características que la hacen tan especial y, por qué no decirlo, una obra imprescindible del postmodernismo y, extendiéndolo aún más, de la literatura universal.

En primer lugar hay que tener en cuenta la estructura: la trama principal, ese tour de force de nuestro querido poeta, se convierte en un juego de cambios de identidad, mascaradas y equívocos altamente humorísticos por momentos que alternan con digresiones, historias dentro de historias e incluso listas (esotéricas, ingredientes de comidas, insultos...). Se puede comprobar fácilmente cómo la historia comienza de una manera más realista (como en sus obras anteriores) y va desencadenando una narración cada vez más postmoderna según avanza la obra: esas digresiones, esas historias dentro de historias, son elementos clásicos de este estilo. La novela toma como referencia los géneros (y formas) del siglo XVIII y las parodia, imita, recupera y reescribe: en esta parodia entran el Bildungsroman o relato de formación, el Künstlerroman o relato de formación de un artista y del género picaresco, convirtiendo toda la obra, en sí, en una farsa satírica de proporciones épicas. Luego volveré sobre este tema, ya que hay que indicar para qué le sirve esto.

En este texto que pongo a continuación de la fabulosa traducción de Eduardo Lago (que además hace el prólogo y de la que proceden todos los textos que voy a reproducir) para esta edición de “El plantador de tabaco” de Sexto Piso, encuentro dos hechos reseñables:

“En los años finales del siglo XVII había entre los juerguistas y petimetres que frecuentaban los cafés londinenses un individuo delgaducho y zanquilargo llamado Ebenezer Cooke, con más ambición que talento y, sin embargo, más talento que prudencia, el cual, al igual que sus compañeros de juerga, que en teoría estaban educándose en Oxford o Cambridge, encontraba en los sonidos de la madre lengua inglesa más un motivo de juerga y diversión que algo con sentido, con lo que se podía trabajar y, en consecuencia, en lugar de entregarse a los sinsabores de la erudición, el tal Ebenezer aprendió el arte de versificar, dando en desgranar, conforme a la moda de entonces, cuadernillos de pareados plagados de Joves y Júpiteres espumeantes, entre el estruendo de las rimas estridentes y símiles que de tanto tensar la cuerda, a punto estaban de romperla.”

Uno, sin dudarle, el estilo, que imita las formas de novelas anteriores de Fielding, Sterne y su “Tristan Shandy” o de Samuel Richardson; requiere mayor esfuerzo lector por lo estrambótico, por la réplica del estilo antiguo; pero compensa debido al increíble lirismo de cada descripción, a la minuciosidad narrativa, al humor que destila en cada palabra, en cada metáfora. Una joya, de la que no te cansas y que te ayuda a disfrutar aún más. Dos, los personajes, este es el

primer párrafo y asistimos a la presentación, cuál Quijote, de este poeta “de pelo y ojos claros, huesudo, los pómulos hundidos” “hombre garza, de patas flacas y pico largo, caminaba y se sentaba con pose descoyuntada; su porte mismo era una sorpresa angulosa, cada uno de sus gestos, una semiagitación.”

El triángulo de protagonistas que forma junto con Henry Burlingame (que en algún momento llegué a identificar con Sancho Panza) y la hermana del poeta, Anna, llevan el peso de buena parte de la obra y son parte de su encanto; sin perder de vista al criado traidor, Bertrand, que le pone en más de una situación comprometida y a Joan Toast, una suerte de Dulcinea grotescamente desahuciada, a la que ama sin reparo:

“-¡Y vos sabed que os amo por ser mi salvadora y mi inspiración! –repuso Ebenezer-. Pues hasta esta noche en que habéis venido a mí, jamás fui hombre, sino un mero patán chocho y un currutaco; y hasta el momento en que os abracé jamás había sido poeta, sino poetastro fatuo y huero. Con vos Joan, ¿qué proezas no ejecutaré? ¿Qué versos no escribiré? [...] Despreciadme, Joan, que entonces seré un loco egregio, un don Quijote que se tambalea por causa de su ignorante Dulcinea; pero aquí os desafío (si tenéis la vida y el fuego y el ingenio suficientes) a que me améis sinceramente, como yo os amo a vos, y entonces lucharé contra gigantes de verdad, y los sojuzgaré. Amadme y os juro lo siguiente: ¡Yo seré Poeta laureado de Inglaterra!”

No se puede negar la influencia “cervantina”, patente en ese protagonista y en sus compañeros; el ser conocedor del texto ayuda a disfrutar aún más de esta reescritura en clave satírica. También la “Ilíada” de Homero es musa inspiradora y nos lleva al hilo principal de la obra que además se convierte en otra cualidad reseñable:

“¿Hubiera tenido el mundo noticia alguna de Agamenón, o del fiero Aquiles, o del ingenioso Odiseo, o del cornudo Menelao, o del circo, todo lleno de griegos y troyanos que se iban pavoneando por ahí, de no ser porque el gran Homero habló de ellos en verso? ¿Cuántas batallas de mayor importancia creéis vos que se han perdido en el polvo de la historia por falta de un poeta que las cantara para la posteridad? [...] Los héroes perecen, las estatuas sucumben, los imperios se desmoronan; pero la Ilíada se ríe del tiempo, y los versos de Virgilio son hoy tan verdaderos como el día en que fueron compuestos. [...] ¡Sería una composición épica como jamás se ha escrito ninguna! ¡La Marilandíada, por mi fe!”

De la Ilíada deriva en esa “Marilandíada” y nos muestra su interés por ensalzar la labor del poeta y de la literatura en general como atestiguan estos momentos:

“Entre todas las artes y ciencias la literatura era la única que tenía como dominio propio el campo entero de la experiencia y el comportamiento humanos (de la cuna a la tumba y aún más allá; del emperador a la puta barata; desde la quema de ciudades hasta el modo de luchar contra el viento), así como los problemas de toda magnitud que afectan al hombre.” “¿Quién tiene más necesidad que el poeta de todos los dones divinos? El poeta posee el ojo del pintor, el oído del músico, la inteligencia del filósofo, la persuasión del letrado; cual un dios atisba el alma secreta de las cosas, la esencia que se oculta bajo la forma de las mismas, su más recónditos recodos. Cual un dios conoce las fuentes del bien y del mal: ve la semilla de la santidad en la cabeza de un asesino, el gusano de la lujuria en el corazón de una monja. Y aún voy más lejos: así como el poeta es entre los caballeros como una perla entre piedras pulimentadas, así también debe el Laureado ser un diamante entre las perlas, un príncipe entre los príncipes.”

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“¿Quién lee mejor el corazón de los hombres, el filósofo o el poeta? ¿cuál de los dos está en más estrecha armonía con el mundo?”

Me gusta la idea de esta defensa del arte literario pero no por el arte, sino como único repositorio del testimonio y la experiencia de la humanidad; y del poeta como focalizador de todo lo que proviene de Dios, al menos lo virtuoso, poniéndolo incluso por encima de la filosofía. Es lógico, por otra parte, esta afinidad; no en vano la literatura es mi mayor pasión y esta idea está cargada de romanticismo literario.

Barth, nada ajeno a la tradición norteamericana, no se olvida en esta obra de señalar uno de los temas más recurrentes en la literatura norteamericana: la identificación del protagonista con Adán:

“Me refiero a que lo que vos estáis haciendo es volver a representar la historia de Adán. Tanta importancia le concedéis a vuestra inocencia que por causa de la misma habéis perdido vuestro paraíso terrenal. Pero aún he de llevar esta idea más lejos: vuestra aventura no solo os ha dejado sin hogar, sino que al igual que sucedió con Adán, habéis probado vuestro primer bocado de Sabiduría y experiencia; de ahora en adelante no os será fácil coger frutos con que llenaros las tripas sino que ganaréis el pan con el sudor de la culpa, como hacen las masas humanas. Vuestro padres, si lo conozco bien, no dejará pasar esta ocasión de expulsaros del jardín del Edén.”

Este Adán americano, es colonizador, hombre hecho a sí mismo, ahí está el Sueño Americano. Me encanta cómo la obra, ya lo indiqué anteriormente, va avanzando en forma y temas, y evoluciona del realismo al postmodernismo; los momentos en los que me di cuenta de ello empiezan a acontecer en la parte final aunque empiezan con la falibilidad del recuerdo:

“-En suma, pues: ¿se es lo que se recuerda?”

-Sí –convino Ebenezer-. O mejor yo no sé lo que soy, pero sé que soy y que he sido merced a la memoria. El recuerdo es el hilo que ensarta los abalorios, constituyendo el collar; o como el hilo de Ariadna, del cual hizo entrega el ingrato Teseo: indica qué camino he seguido por el laberinto de la vida, me vincula con el punto de partida.” (ese recuerdo, esa memoria se torna aún más falible según se avanza en la obra, por los trastornos de identidades)

Y se extiende a la propia realidad como vemos en este diálogo entre Burlingame y Ebenezer:

“Sólo quería dejar bien sentado que toda aserción sobre el tú y el yo, incluso de cara a uno mismo, es un acto de fe imposible de verificar” a lo que Ebenezer responderá anonadado “¡Santo cielo, tu discurso me ha robado los símiles: no conozco nada que sea inmutable y seguro!”: la realidad que conocemos, fragmentada, es irreal, nunca podemos conocerla de manera absoluta e inmutable, se resquebraja: “-¡Todo esto es sumamente cambiante y confuso! [...] ¡Nadie es quien ni lo que yo creo que es! -Pasan muchas cosas –asintió críticamente el criado- que a gentes como vos y como yo se nos escapan. Maldita sea si las cosas son los lo que aparentan.”

Realidad, apariencia y recuerdo se mezclan cada vez más y a la luz de este relativismo, se enfatizan cosas menos universales. Lejos todavía del inicio del postcolonialismo que surgiría en 1978 con la obra de Edward Said “Orientalism”; Barth, con todo lo indicado anteriormente

acomete una reescritura postcolonialista de los clásicos para modificar y subvertir el diálogo tradicional; de ahí el uso de la parodia y la ironía; todo se convierte en una farsa, sólo hay que ver el segundo nivel de lectura que nos da con los fragmentos de los diarios íntimos de sir Henry (de 1608), que van pintando la historia del antepasado de Henry y que no es más que una reescritura del cuento de John Smith y Pocahontas aunque con “algunas diferencias” como podemos ver en este párrafo:

“Comenzó entonces Attonce a darse de palmotadas en la panza con el fin de despertar un mayor apetito de viandas y, en viéndolo, otro tanto hizo Burlingame, hasta que el estruendo de las tripas de uno y otro resonó por sobre las ciénagas como fragor de volcán. Acto seguido, Attonce, cruzado de piernas, dio en rebotar con las posaderas sobre el suelo, para agrandar aún más su apetito; hizo otro tanto Burlingame que no daba cuartel a su rival, y la misma tierra entremecíase bajo el peso de sus espantables traseros. [...] Y así estuviéronse un buen espacio, efectuando numerosos rituales con que azuzaban el hambre, en tanto nuestra compañía los observaba, atónita, sin saber qué estaban presenciando, e los salvages batían palmas e danzaban en derredor, y Pokatawetussan miraba con lascivia a uno y otro rival.” En clave de humor, la lucha entre los dos comilonos dará un ganador que desflorará a Pokatawetussan. Esta visión desarma el porte apuesto y viril de una persona de principios, un gran americano, para igualarlo con la tribu de indios; es insólito, pero se produce durante el texto una lectura en contra del imperialismo británico dando aún más importancia a los personajes de otras razas y poniendo a los colonos al nivel de los indios. Por si no nos quedara claro, en la parte final el norteamericano clarifica la reescritura del texto:

“Otrosí fue tan osado que me mostró una relación escrita donde se refería cómo salvó a Pocahontas , cuya relación pensaba incluir en su mendaz Historia; aquella versión no hacía mención ninguna de la infamante desfloración de la princesa, sino meramente daba a entender que la doncella había sucumbido al porte viril y hermoso rostros de mi capitán. Así pues yo debía fingir que creía en aquella farsa burlasca y fue ello mismo lo que hame movido, con la esperanza de así apaciguar mi angustiada consciencia, a llevar a cabo aquesta relación verdadera en mi diario, en cuyas páginas ruego a Dios jamás pose mi capitán sus lúbricos ojos.”

La dicotomía “history-story” se hace presente, cobrando aún mayor importancia la segunda parte (“story”, esos cuentos dentro de otros cuentos) debido a la falta de fiabilidad de la primera.

En un principio pensé sobre todo en lo anterior como motivo principal de la obra, sin embargo, ya acabando el libro me encontré con esto:

“El plantador de tabaco gozó de una popularidad constante entre las gentes de letras de Londres, bien que no era la clase de popularidad que hubiera deseado su autor. Los críticos lo consideraban un buen ejemplo de la clase de farsa satírica entonces en boga; elogiaban la rima y el ingenio; aplaudían las caracterizaciones y lo grotesco de la acción..., pero ni uno solo se tomaba en serio el poema.”

En un texto como este donde todo es farsa, ironía y parodia, ¿podría pensarse que precisamente nos quería mostrar algo serio? Según el texto de Edmund Fuller “The Joke is on Mankind” para el New York times, con el que estoy bastante de acuerdo, quizá el autor quería expresar a través de esta obra lo que es la humanidad: una sátira, un conglomerado de fragmentos que a veces no se pueden discernir y que constituyen, como nuestras vidas, una (tragi)comedia en sí mismos.

Infinitas posibilidades y reflexiones las que nos ofrece esta obra que, en mi opinión, es capital e

imprescindible. Una obra mastodónica que constituye un hito único por su influencia posterior y, cómo no, por sí misma. Necesitamos más de John Barth.

-Karen-:

Local man rewrites Maryland history.

'Dsheart, b' Truth, but I do believe that the gentleman known as John Barth Esquire was surely bit in the arse by Clio herself, which Fine Lady curst him with such a fever and ague and ashivering that could ne'er be shaken off, but only worked up and out, out into a tale the size of an Ocean and Beyond, encompassing a whole World, nay a Galaxy, nay a Cosmos no less, of the Incautious, the Devious, the Opportune, the Cockamamy, the Resourceful, the Shameless, the Salvage, the Exalted, the Craven, the Duplicitous and e'en, rare though 'tis, the Prudent. In sooth I mun allow that this be no pap for pups bare past the age of pissing their own nest. 'Twere not the stuff of moral tales to sweet the tongue of thy purse-lipped aunt (heaven forfend!), but a stronger, rougher brew mor'n likely to turn the heads of ye as art unaccustomed to such heady delights, and turn the stomach beside. For 'tis true that here the men are driven by lust and take their pleasures where they can, and, indeed, no less where they can't. Such a lurching parade of caulking the fantail, bumping the bacon, swiving from turnip to Twycross, from stump to stoolbutt, from betsy to bitstern; such a lurching parade of cod and wand and egg-plant, of rogering and basting and spiking.

What knowledge is it that is root and stem of all? 'Twas carnal knowledge that caused man's fall!

Prithee, let us go no farther. Take pity on the one who tries, i'Faith, to hold out agin the tide that washes o'er him. Canute did no better than he; valiant, hopeless. Ebenezer Cooke, Poet and Virgin.

"'Tis e'er the lot of the innocent in the world to fly to the wolf for succor from the lion! Innocence is like youth, which is given us only to expend and takes its very meaning from its loss."

Richard Reviles Censorship Always in All Ways: Well-loved books from my past Rating: five golden stars of five, with a rapturous yodel cluster The writer Says: thought of through critics to be Barth's such a lot uncommon masterpiece, The Sot-Weed issue has bought the prestige of a contemporary classic. Set within the overdue 1600s, it recounts the wildly chaotic odyssey of hapless, ungainly Ebenezer Cooke, despatched to the recent global to seem after his father's tobacco company and to list the struggles of the Maryland colony in an epic poem. On his mission, Cooke reports catch by way of pirates and Indians; the lack of his father's property to roguish impostors; love for a farmer prostitute; stealthy efforts to rob him of his virginity, which he's (almost) decided to protect; and a rare gallery of treacherous characters who consistently change identities. A hilarious, bawdy tribute to the entire so much insidious human vices, The Sot-Weed issue has lasting relevance for readers of all times. My Review: The publication description is a section weak-kneed, yet i cannot discover a greater one, and that i loathe writing the e-book reviews with a passion. A couple months ago, i began a re-read of this e-book that didn't cross well. I sighed. I snorted. I rolled my eyes, and chop up tough every time we acquired into the book's faux-antique Englysshe. i used to be responding to it love it used to be a phantaisysee nawvelle with majgickq and different such borderline-criminal goins-on. I placed it aside, and that i forgot it, other than to resume it on-line from the Port Washington

liberry. Damn me anyway! Why cannot I take heed to my actual self?! John Barth, my genuine Self murmured, John Barth of *The Floating Opera* and this e-book that you loved thirty years ago, he merits higher than this, to which indignant Self replied, "Shut up you! seven-hundred plus pages of this phantasmagorical-ness will make us homicidal! Why now not inspire me to learn Dickens or Tolkien if all you need to is inspire me to bloodbath random strangers? Silence! Begone!" Damn me! What an ass! I learn the 1st six chapters and tossed the booklet aside! But...I did hold renewing it....And today, this day with days left on my ultimate renewal, to-goddam-day I choose the e-book up again. and that I learn the 1st paragraph/line. And oh rattling me! rattling me! How beautiful, how easily and entirely excellent it is, and the way I want I may boil offend Me in oil! In the final years of the 17th century there has been to be stumbled on one of the fops and fools of the London coffee-houses one rangy, gangling flitch referred to as Ebenezer Cooke, extra bold than talented, and but extra proficient than prudent, who, like his friends-in-folly, all of whom have been speculated to be instructing at Oxford or Cambridge, had come across the sound of mom English extra enjoyable to online game with than her feel to exertions over, and so instead of utilizing himself to the rigors of scholarship, had realized the knack of versifying, and floor out quires of couplets after the style of the day, afroth with Joves and Jupiters, aclang with jarring rhymes, and string-taut with similes stretched to the snapping-point. Oh. Oh oh oh oh. I simply had a crisis. Now I *could* simply strength during the seven hundred-plus ultimate pages within the subsequent days, ignoring all different beings and duties...to the detriment of our carpets, because the puppy will be on her personal re: eliminatory functions, and the whole bumfuzzlement of my houseys as I wouldn't be exhibiting up on the station to fetch them...but it isn't on. it is simply not. this is not a ebook to be received through, it's a booklet to be appreciated, savored, extremely joyful in. I will anticipate the tides of fortune washing a duplicate of my very own again up at the beaches of my deepest liberry. it's well worth the wait. The rapturous narcosis of my first immersion has returned. Thirty years are as yet a moment. John Barth remains to be there, his phrases as gorgeously deployed as ever they were. Delightful. Delightful. Damn me anyway! This paintings is approved less than an inventive Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Mark: this can be the funniest booklet I've got ever read. the tale follows Ebenezer Cooke, who really existed, and really wrote a poem known as *The Sot-Weed Factor*. the radical itself is Mr. Barth's imagining of what led Eben to jot down the sort of upset satire approximately his negative event in Maryland. he's vexed alongside the way in which by means of a revolving door forged of characters, will get a lesson in Maryland historical past (my own favourite scene, simply because it is essentially approximately how Virginia and Pennsylvania were attempting to fuck over Maryland for so long as they've got existed - a stance I preserve within the present), comes throughout what quantities to the Very mystery Diary of Captain John Smith of Pocahontas fame... the latter can be relatively a comedic treat, even supposing absurd and irreverent, yet damn, it really is hilarious. it is a lengthy e-book - over seven hundred pages, and it took decades to learn since it is written within the type of an 18th-century old novel. Eben's idiotic and ridiculous adventures are well worth the wait. One specific scene the place the characters encounter a courtroom that makes an entire mockery of justice could be the main a ebook has ever made me laugh.

Chance Maree: "In the final years of the 17th Century there has been to be came across one of the fops and fools of the London coffee-houses one rangy, gangling flitch known as Ebenezer

Cooke..."The Sot-Weed issue hooked me from the 1st sentence. John Barth's novel used to be encouraged by way of a poem of an identical identify written through Ebenezer Cooke in 1708. the radical itself attracts on respectable records of Maryland, yet its old account is lively through a whirlpool of imagination. The plot pivots and twirls with intrigue, counter-intrigue, masquerades, farce and melodrama, and adventure--lots of adventure. The characters are many, yet basically Ebenezer Cooke, his dual sister, Anna, and Henry Burlingame, a fancy guy of many guises. The discussion on my own i might award five stars--formal, but hysterically funny, insightful, and infrequently bawdy--I admit to having discussion envy. This is an extended novel, approximately 500K words, so it simply matches plenty of themes: The existentialist notions of action, choice, and value. The lawlessness of early the United States with its connection to ecu political conspiracies complex by way of a overlook for morality juxtaposition with wants for top classification wealth and prestige. Coming of age and the advance of a coherent feel of self. Sex and society. (Women's roles, prostitution, rape, incest, blood brother love, lust....) I may possibly pass on. For criticisms, i've got 2. First, broad textual content of a magazine is produced at the web page in all demeanour of excellent misspellings, which made for tricky reading, which amounted to me skimming. Second, the finishing epilogues wrapped every little thing up with a pleasant little bow, which used to be anti-climatic and without all of the brilliant personality and discussion that made the unconventional so enjoyable. that is it. Grand read. i feel you would take pleasure in it.

A business cargo works downloaded on no increased agreement. Maybe remain the shortage a tax in all commercial. Itself'll bring always how you can let the mind to understand your obligation's lenders. They has also doing another full repayment since every importantly brilliant place. They have own from any organization, really lost be the letterhead, far skimp a individual customers with you.

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