LITER 491.002 [ILI & WI]: Senior Seminar in Literature

UNC Asheville
Fall 2010
Dr. Blake G. Hobby
Director, University Honors Program
Assistant Professor, Literature and Language

Contact Information:
Email is the best way to contact me: bhobby@unca.edu I have regular office hours MW 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and TR 11:00-12:00 in KH 140 (the Honors Program office). If these times don’t suit your schedule, please make an appointment (or try a drop-by). You can also reach me at 251-6607.

Overview:
This course serves as a capstone course for the literature major. As such, it seeks to offer students an opportunity to engage in an intellectual project which can challenge and satisfy them during their concluding course of study for the B.A.. The essay you produce in this course will serve as a significant measure of your competence as a literature major, as well as fulfilling the university requirements of information literacy (ILI), writing intensive (WI), computer competency and oral competency.

This capstone project necessitates: 1) identifying a significant question or issue of interest within a literary text[s]; 2) exploring the issue through research and articulating your interpretive position vis-à-vis the existing body of criticism; and 3) communicating these findings through a significant paper (minimum length 20 pp.) and presenting at the undergraduate research symposium (November 30th).
For more information on LITER 491, see http://www2.unca.edu/lit/resources/seminar.html .

Learning Objectives
At the conclusion of the course, students will demonstrate
1. a substantial understanding of the meanings, conventions, technical features and the historical and cultural contexts of their selected work[s] of literature;
2. advanced literacy through their interpretation and analysis of literary criticism and primary texts;
3. competency in all stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revision and editing);
4. an ability to recognize, employ and adapt the technical, imaginative and rhetorical features of English to produce a polished and substantial research paper;
5. the ability to integrate their own ideas with the ideas of others;
6. oral competency in verbal communication skills through class discussions and in a formal presentation at the undergraduate research symposium;
7. computer competency in their ability to use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing and sharing texts as well as their ability to locate, evaluate, organize and use research material from a range of electronic sources.

Students will further demonstrate the following ILI learning outcomes in their ability to
1. find information presented in different formats (for example, in books, scholarly journals, and authoritative web sites).
2. evaluate information presented in different formats
3. integrate information from different sources into their assignments
4. cite information from different formats as appropriate to the discipline in which they are writing.
5. demonstrate academic integrity by respecting intellectual property, using information ethically, and avoiding plagiarizing

Finally, students will satisfy the following Writing Intensive learning outcomes:
1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the roles played by various genres of writing in their respective disciplines.
2. Students will understand the purpose and the process of revision in writing projects.
3. Students will be able to articulate a coherent thesis or purpose in their writing and support it with evidence and argumentation appropriate to a given discipline or audience.
4. Students’ writing will demonstrate the conventions and tone appropriate for its given purpose.

Evaluation:
- Participation 10%
- Literary Biography 10%
- Prospectus 10%
- Annotated Bibliography 10%
- UGR Presentation 10%
Senior Thesis 50%

Course policies:
- Because this class is a workshop, your regular attendance and active participation are required. More than two absences may result in a lowering of your final grade.
- Papers are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date, or noon if due on a non-class day (unless announced otherwise). Late papers (or incomplete drafts) will be penalized. All papers will be submitted on Moodle.
- Note workshop days and plan to bring a hard copy of your paper to class on those days.
- If you hand in an assignment as an email attachment, you are responsible for confirming its successful delivery.
- All writing assignments should be properly formatted using a word processor. Version copies and final versions should be word-processed and carefully edited. Use MLA style for documentation. For specifics on writing conventions, see Academic Research Writing in the Humanities. Print this document and consult it when editing your essays.
- I take plagiarism seriously, and will fail students who intentionally use other's ideas as their own. This includes work submitted on the discussion forum or ideas presented in class discussion as well as more formal writing done in essays or on exams. Please see me if you have any questions about avoiding plagiarism, and review the departmental and university policies on academic honesty. Academic misconduct takes many forms and includes, but is not limited to plagiarism, submitting a product prepared in whole or in part by another person, buying or selling term papers, and submitting the same piece of work twice for academic credit.
- If you have a recognized disability that might interfere with your success in the course, please see me at the beginning of the semester to arrange accommodations.

Resources:
UNCA Writing Center, Ramsey Library 136. Phone 251-6596.
Ramsey Library Reference Desk 251-6111. See online ‘Ask a Librarian.’

Assignments
All assignments should draw upon the assigned readings, supplemental readings, class discussions, research, your own experiences, and your own creative ideas. All sources should be appropriately cited and referenced in MLA style.
You are expected to keep informed about all assignments. Failure to hand in any of the assignments on time will result in a failing grade for that assignment, a “0.” Exceptions to this policy will only be made under dire circumstances and then with adequate documentation.

Working Bibliography
Compile a list of at least 20 scholarly books and journals pertaining to your topic of interest. Rely on the library catalog for books, print journals, and media; use the library’s electronic databases for studies in literature: MLA Bibliography, JSTOR, Project Muse, The Literary Reference Center, LION, EbscoHost, WorldCat. Follow MLA style.
Method of Evaluation: Graded for completeness and for correctness of citations.

Literary Biography
Prepare a 6-page literary biography. You must include a bibliography in MLA style and must cite all sources you use. Use MLA form, textual references, quotes, paraphrases, and parenthetical citations.
Related Resources: Biographies, autobiographies, letters, The Dictionary of Literary Biography, Contemporary Authors, encyclopedias. Many works in the Reference section of the library are useful. For writing advice, see The Elements of Style (Strunk and White). For a model, see Appendix A at the end of the syllabus.
Method of Evaluation: LIT 491 Rubric

Thesis Proposal
Introduce your topic in a 2-page proposal. Include a Working Bibliography and citations for anything you quote. Include a bolded research question at the end.
Method of Evaluation: LIT 491 Rubric

Prospectus
Perform a close reading of the primary text(s) relating to your topic. Include a main idea that is original (a “thesis”); argue your main idea by marshaling evidence from the text. Use MLA form, textual references, quotes, paraphrases, and parenthetical citations.
Method of Evaluation: LIT 491 Rubric
Annotated Bibliography
First, locate scholarly sources that relate to your topic. These may be sources you plan to use to support your argument or sources you plan to refute with your argument. Then, provide detailed annotations, each around 100 words.
Method of Evaluation: Graded for completeness and for correctness of citations.

All Paper Drafts
Include a main idea that is original (a “thesis”); argue your main idea by marshaling evidence from the text. Use MLA form, textual references, quotes, paraphrases, and parenthetical citations. Drafts should incorporate any necessary changes, revisions, and edits required by the senior seminar director and your thesis advisor. The final draft will be published and must be carefully polished.
Method of Evaluation: LIT 491 Rubric

General Grading Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The A essay is an excellent piece of writing. It presents a focused thesis that is clearly supported throughout the essay. It is structurally sound, with smooth and apt transitions between sentences and paragraphs. The essay logically moves toward its stated purpose, and is appropriate in language and style for its audience. The writing is clear and controlled, and the language is often sophisticated, effective, and interesting. The essay is original, forceful, and compelling. It is free of spelling, typographic, and/or other grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The B essay is a good piece of writing. It clearly and adequately presents a thesis that is almost completely supported throughout the essay. The language is effective. The essay is clear, focused, and mostly free of spelling, typographic, and/or grammatical errors. It may contain shortcomings, such as occasional monotony in expression, lack of originality, ambiguity in purpose, or some lack of precision and economy in use of words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The C essay is a fair piece of writing, acceptable college work. It meets only the minimum requirements of the assignment. There is likely a thesis, but it is either too broad or too narrow, or not adequately supported throughout the essay. There are likely transitional flaws. Language is adequate, but flawed with awkwardness and/or imprecision. There are likely spelling, typographic, and/or grammatical errors in most paragraphs. It may be rely on predictable arguments and obvious support or hasty generalization. It lacks originality, significant purpose, or development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The D essay falls below acceptable college standards. It may partially address the assignment, but lacks any expected insight as to the goal of the essay. Frequently, its writer has not understood the assignment and therefore does not address or respond to a definite purpose. It may express a thesis, but it is likely inappropriate for the assignment. Paragraphs do not exhibit coherent organization or development. The language of the essay is flawed. It likely contains some of these problems: monotonous sentence patterns, imprecise use of words, rambling organization, and repetition of ideas. Sentences are poorly constructed, and spelling, typographic and/or grammatical errors appear frequently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>The F essay is an unacceptable piece of writing. It has a multitude of flaws. It may have no thesis or support. There may be flaws of organization and development. It likely includes an unacceptable number of spelling, typographic, and/or grammatical errors. The essay shows no real understanding of the assignment. An essay that receives a failing grade does not automatically mean a failing grade in the course. It does mean, however, that performance on the particular assignment is markedly below college standards and that prompt improvement needs to be made.</td>
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Grade Scale (used for final course grade)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>(93-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>(91-92)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(89-90)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>(83-88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>(78-79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(72-77)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>(70-71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>(65-69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>(64 and below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITERIA</td>
<td>A (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Essay Purpose</strong></td>
<td>An original, focused thesis; filled with independent thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td>Thesis is imaginatively, logically and precisely developed; strong analysis guides development; paragraphs are well structured and focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Well organized; contains artful transitions between sentences and paragraphs; an inviting lead draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion wraps things up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source Materials</strong></td>
<td>References to materials are significantly related to purpose; source materials support the controlling idea and provide rich details and examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence Structure</strong></td>
<td>Artful sentences that vary in length and structure; create compelling writing and forceful rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diction</strong></td>
<td>Concrete, specific words used correctly; diction is distinctive and mature; no colloquialisms, clichés or trite expressions; language anticipates the audience’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>Free of spelling, grammatical and mechanical errors; no MLA style mistakes (includes)</td>
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**LIT 491 Rubric**
works cited, overall MLA or APA form | formatting, page numbers, heading, header, and citations |
--- | --- |
mistakes | (includes formatting, page numbers, heading, header, and citations) |
agreement, pronoun case and reference, spelling and punctuation |
sentences, reference, spelling and punctuation |
difficult; incorrect MLA form/style |

**Plagiarism**

In order to avoid confusion, the UNCA Department of Literature and Language defines plagiarism in this widely accepted fashion: Plagiarism involves the appropriation and use of someone else’s ideas or words as one’s own. All definitions, terminology, concepts, and patterns of organization taken from an outside source must be identified and given credit in any essay or exam you write—whether it be for the Literature Department or any other department.

When outside reading is undertaken for an assigned paper you are responsible for recording accurate reading notes so that later, should you wish to incorporate some of the ideas or phraseology encountered in your reading, you may properly and adequately identify the source. In identifying such sources, you should follow the style sheet provided in the HANDBOOK FOR MAJORS.

Facts of general knowledge (such as the place and date of an author’s birth, honors granted during his or her lifetime, the titles and dates of published works, etc.) need not be footnoted. However, facts that are not in the area of general knowledge must be credited to the source. Ideas, interpretations, terms, and patterns of organization taken from an outside source may be either directly quoted (in which case the exact words should be placed in quotation marks) or paraphrased. Paraphrase is recommended whenever possible in order to avoid a disproportionate amount of direct quotation in your paper. *In either case—whether you are quoting or paraphrasing—credit must be given to the source.*

A good definition of paraphrase is this one: “To paraphrase is to express the sense of a passage entirely in your own words, selecting and summarizing only information and ideas that will be useful . . . It is the recording of relevant information in the student’s own words. It *extracts* items of information instead of merely recasting the entire passage and line of thought in different words.”


The Department of Literature and Language considers plagiarism a grave breach of intellectual integrity. Instructors in the department have the authority to give students a failing grade for the course because of a single instance of plagiarism or other form of cheating. At the least, the following minimal steps will be taken:

- The student will receive the grade of *F* for the particular work attempted in which plagiarism or cheating is involved;
- The incident will be reported to the Department Chair;
- The incident will be reported to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs who will determine whether any other punishment should be taken. Additional penalties may be imposed at the Vice Chancellor’s discretion. They may include cancellation of scholarships, suspension, and expulsion.

**Student Absences**

Faculty members in the Department of Literature and Language recognize that unexpected occasions may arise when a student must be absent from class. Although such absences are not encouraged, the following policy will prevail:

- *Two absences will be tolerated in a Tuesday & Thursday Full-Term class*
- *Each absence beyond the two allotted will result in your final term grade being lowered a letter grade. Thus, if you miss 4 classes, for example, the highest grade you can earn for the term is a “C."

Students remain responsible for all material covered in missed classes, including reading assignments, announcements and changes of schedules. Should any further unexcused absences occur, however, the instructor has the option of lowering the final course grade by one letter grade for each hour missed. *Failure to attend class in a responsible and committed manner may thus be grounds for failure in the course.*
ADA Policy
Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and who need disability related classroom or testing accommodations are encouraged to see me within the first two weeks off school. Staff members are available in to assist students in arranging these accommodations. For more information, contact Disability Services at 232-5050 (http://www.unca.edu/disabilityservices/).

Late Withdrawals and Incompletes
Late withdrawals and incompletes are only granted in dire circumstances. Not only are they not automatic, but also they require the approval from the instructor, necessitate a formal procedure, and involve other school officials, who may deny the request even after the instructor has approved it.

**TEAL COLOR BELOW MEANS WE DO NOT HAVE CLASS**

**Syllabus:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Writing Due</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue. 08/2 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu. 08/2 6</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Lipson: 1-36; 304-307 Booth et al. 31-50 (Library &amp; Writing Center)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue. 08/3 1</td>
<td>Literary Biography (draft) due at Conference</td>
<td>Lipson: 37-88</td>
<td>Thesis Advisor Due Individual Conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu. 09/0 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue. 09/0 7</td>
<td>Everything You want to Know AND MORE!!! How to do the Prospectus and Working Bibliography due at Conference</td>
<td>Lipson: 123-158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu. 09/0 9</td>
<td>In-class time for questions on topics and in-class research</td>
<td>Lipson: 159-191 Booth et al. 51-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues. 9/14</td>
<td>Literary Biography due to Moodle before class</td>
<td>Lipson: 89-132 Booth et al. 76-80</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu. 09/1 6</td>
<td>Group Editing Meetings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. 09/2 1</td>
<td>8-page Close Reading with Working Bibliography (prospectus) due at Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu. 09/2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue. 09/2 8</td>
<td>How to Do Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>Lipson: 233-266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu. 09/3 0</td>
<td>Article Presentation #1, 2, 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue. 10/0 5</td>
<td>CLASS CANCELLED Come to Concert in Laurel Forum @ 7:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Lipson: 267-300 Bring draft to class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>Article Presentation #4, 5, 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Appendix A

MODEL LITERARY BIOGRAPHY

David Leavitt (1961- ). [1500 words] Jewish American short story writer, novelist, editor, book reviewer, and essayist whose works have appeared in publications such as The New Yorker, The New York Times, Esquire, and The Paris Review. He has received numerous honors, including an O. Henry Award, a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Guggenheim fellowship, and a Visiting Foreign Writer position at the Institute of Catalan Letters in Barcelona, Spain. A graduate of Yale who worked as an editor at Viking-Penguin and has held several academic posts, he currently serves as Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Florida. When he was twenty-one, The New Yorker published his first short story, “Territory” (1982), which, with its openly-gay subject matter, shocked many readers and immediately established him as one of the most influential writers of the gay literature movement.

Leavitt captures gay experience while avoiding stereotypes and traditional notions of identity. He does so by creating well-rounded homosexual and heterosexual characters and bringing a striking level of realism to gay
literature, one in which things do not always work out as planned, men are not always beautiful, and relationships have complex intellectual and emotional dimensions.

In *Family Dancing* (1984), his critically acclaimed first collection of short stories, Leavitt describes a sexually-repressed, middle-class culture ruled by material desires. As with many of Leavitt’s works, his characters are often secular Jews who, although they observe rituals, are loosely connected to their tradition. These nine stories include a gay man seeking acceptance from his mother (“Territory”), two different families dealing with broken marriages (“The Lost Cottage” and “Family Dancing”), a daughter imagining she is from another planet after her father’s near-fatal car accident (“Aliens”), an angry child coming to terms with his gay father and divorced parents (“Danny in Transit”), a mother undergoing radiation treatment (“Radiation”), a family gathering after the father dies (“Out Here”), and a heterosexual woman seeking a gay man’s love (“Dedicated”).

*The Lost Language of Cranes* (1986), Leavitt’s first novel that was later made into a successful BBC film, is the story of Philip Benjamin and his father, Owen, each coming to terms with their homosexuality. The book captures the 1980s, a time when the increasingly worrisome and mysterious threat of AIDS loomed, and gay culture, although gaining recognition, was still vying for acceptance. The book does an especially good job of representing gay life for a general audience and of eliciting sympathy for all members of the Benjamin family--Philip, whose romances the book chronicles; Owen, the deeply conflicted father who leads a double life; and Rose, the mother who struggles to accept her son’s homosexuality. Each seeks a lost language for their complex experiences.

Like the Auden poem from which it gets its name, *Equal Affections* (1989) focuses on a series of unequal relationships in the Cooper family. Louise Cooper, the mother, Louise, is dying of cancer. While Louise’s twenty-year battle with cancer provides the book’s continuity, short narrative divisions, often skipping back and forth in time, create the novel’s shifting perspectives. *Equal Affections*’ family includes a dying Jewish mother in struggling with faith who contemplates converting to Catholicism, a computer professor/inventor father who has an extramarital affair, a gay attorney son leading a suburban, monogamous life, a lesbian folksinger and feminist daughter who, with the sperm of a San Francisco homosexual, artificially inseminates herself.

*A Place I've Never Been* (1990) is a collection of short stories, the first of which Leavitt began in 1984 while working at Viking Press in New York and subsequently finished, with the help of a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, at the Institute of Catalan Letters of Barcelona, Spain. Although the stories sometimes describe promiscuous behavior and graphic sex scenes, as in “Ayor,” an acronym for “At Your Own Risk,” this behavior is always placed in a moral framework. In both “My Marriage to Vengeance” and “Houses,” married heterosexuals struggle with homosexual desire. Both stories present characters that, after a brief foray into a homosexual relationship, choose to stay in a heterosexual marriage. Among the collections’ other compelling stories are “Spouse Night,” in which a man and woman meet in a support group after the death of their spouses, and “When You Grow to Adultery,” in which Nathan and Celia, characters from *Family Dancing*’s “Dedicated,” return.

*While England Sleeps* (1993) was embroiled in controversy from the moment Bernard Knox, writing for the *Washington Post*, noted parallels with Stephen Spender’s 1950 autobiography, *World Within World*. Although *While England Sleeps* takes place in London and Spain during the Spanish Civil War, the novel tells of the passionate affair between Brian Botsford and Edward Phelan, the kernel for whose story lay in Spender’s autobiography. Responding to Leavitt’s novel, Spender claimed that Leavitt had plagiarized the autobiography. Spender also objected to what he described as pornographic love scenes. After a protracted legal and press battle, the novel was withdrawn and pulped. Leavitt settled the lawsuit out of court and revised objectionable sections of the book, although the love scenes remained untouched. *Houghton Mifflin* then reissued *While England Sleeps* with an introduction given in the form of an interview with the author.

In “The Term Paper Artist,” the first of the three novellas collected as *Arkansas* (1997), Leavitt plays with the relationship between authors’ lives and their works—the cat and mouse game of which literary biography is made. In the novel, a character named David Leavitt writes term papers in exchange for sex with UCLA undergraduate men. As with *While England Sleeps*, “The Term Paper Artist” had a controversial reception. Originally slated to appear in *Esquire*, the story was canned by the magazine’s editor in chief, Edward Kosner, who felt the story’s sexually explicit language would offend readers. The collection’s second novella, “Saturn Street,” deals with a writer who delivers
lunches to homebound AIDS patients, while the final novella, “The Wooden Anniversary,” resurrects Nathan and Celia, who were first introduced in *Family Dancing* and who also appear in *A Place I've Never Been*.

*The Page Turner* (1998) tells the tale of an eighteen-year-old pianist, Paul Potterfield, who dreams of making the concert circuit, and his love affair with Richard Kennington, a virtuoso pianist. While Potterfield and Kennington fall in love in Rome, the bulk of the novel’s action takes place in New York where Potterfield is a student at Julliard. The book also centers on Paul’s mother, Pamela, who faces her husband’s betrayal and the unexpected discovery that her son is gay. She blames Kennington, whom she also loves. *The Page Turner* was adapted into a successful film, *Food of Love* (2002), by gay Catalonian filmmaker Ventura Pons.

*Martin Bauman: Or A Sure Thing* (2000) is a story of a young writer who hob-knobs with New York literati and looks for the sure thing: the great novel, a sustaining literary career, and a lasting gay relationship. In his search for self-understanding and fame, Martin is plagued by Stanley Flint, Martin’s former writing professor who is now a key power broker in the publishing industry. With its thinly disguised personalities and institutions, the novel is a gossip-filled accounting of New York’s literary circles and the political machinations of the publishing industry, all of which draw upon Leavitt’s own Martin Bauman-like life. As with Stanley Flint, who writes an autobiographical novel, Leavitt weaves “fact as merely one of the ingredients to throw into the stew, along with invention, hearsay, books, history [and] the news” (314).

With its nine stories, *The Marble Quilt* (2001) moves from the nineteenth century setting of the first story, “Crossing St. Gotthard,” to twentieth century San Francisco, to Florida, to Rome, exploring gay themes and depicting the present gay community in the aftermath of AIDS. Leavitt plays with a variety of stylistics, most notably in “The Infection Scene,” a lengthy story shifting from Lord Alfred “Bosie” Douglas, Oscar Wilde’s malicious lover, to Christopher, a modern-day gay man living in San Francisco seeking to infect himself with HIV. Both stories show an infected gay community, one at odds with itself.


—Blake G. Hobby, University of North Carolina at Asheville