

## SOME EASIER CVA—USES TRADITIONAL SYNTACTIC OR AUTHOR-CONSIDERATE CONTEXT CLUES

- **Execrable / execrably**—From Maugham W. Somerset. (1915, 1991). *Of Human Bondage*. New York: Bantam.

In W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, the major character; Philip, a young Englishman; is studying in Heidelberg in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He had been living in a boarding house about three months when the housekeeper told Philip another Englishman was coming to live at the house, a man name Hayward. Hayward arrives and on his first evening, dines with the other boarders. Philip and Hayward do not speak at dinner, as they are seated at some distance. Maugham than tells us about their first chat the next day.

P. 116. "Philip did not speak to the new-comer till the next day. They found themselves alone on the balcony of the drawing-room before dinner. Hayward addressed him.

"you're English aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Is the food always as bad as it was last night?"

"It's always the same."

"Beastly isn't it?"

Philip found nothing wrong with the food at all, and in fact had eaten it in large quantities with appetite and enjoyment, but he did not want to show himself a person of so little discrimination as to think a dinner good when another thought it **execrable**.

Later in the book, Philip is studying art in Paris. In Philip's first week or two in Paris, a group of fellow art students take him to a café [actually, a grimy neighborhood saloon] to meet a man named Cronshaw, who is viewed by others as a font of wisdom about all things moral, artistic and philosophical. Actually, he is a drunken, ne'er-do-well poet-philosopher who earns a meager living writing an occasional critique of a book of poetry—but he is brilliant, well read, and verbal. When first introduced to Cronshaw in this dingy café, Cronshaw was playing dominoes and the glasses of the many drinks he had already downed were scattered on the table. Cronshaw moved these glasses aside for Philip, and then Maugham says in the last two sentences of the paragraph describing Philip's first meeting with Cronshaw:

P. 217. "He nodded to Philip when he was introduced to him, and went on with the game. Philip's knowledge of the language was small, but he knew enough to tell that Cronshaw, although he had lived in Paris for several years, spoke French **execrably**."

- **lachrymose**—Later in the book, Cronshaw, again in a café and again expounding.

P. 220. Cronshaw filled his glass again, and began to talk at length. He spoke with rotund delivery. He chose his words carefully. He mingled wisdom and nonsense in the most astounding manner, gravely making fun of his hearers at one moment, and at the next playfully giving them sound advice. He talked of art, and literature, and life. He was by turns devout and obscene, merry and **lachrymose**. He grew remarkably drunk, and then he began to recite poetry, his own and Milton's, his own and Shelley's, his own and Kit Marlowe's.

- **Bastions**—Later in the book, Maugham is describing El Greco's famous painting *Storm Over Toledo*. In describing Toledo as seen in this painting, Maugham says:

"It stood on a green hill, but of a green not of this world, and it was surrounded by massive walls and **bastions** to be stormed by no machines or engines of man's invention, but by prayer and fasting, by contrite sighs and by mortifications of the flesh."

- **Risible**—From Prial, Frank J. (2001). *Decantations*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Chapter Title: Searching for the Rarest Vintage: Humor

Opening paragraphs.

There's a grape shortage in California. That's unfortunate, but it will pass. Someone will grow more grapes. Then there will be too many. Happens every time.

But there is a more serious shortage in the wine world, one that doesn't ever seem to go away. Not of grapes or vines or oak barrels or winemakers or even customers. It's humor.

Not the back-slapping, hail-fellow-well-met-stuff; there's always plenty of that around. I'm talking about the real thing: the sly dig, the witty aside, the mordant observation, the **risible**—yes, even the ribald. For whatever reasons, wine just doesn't seem to evoke the comic muse.

Not directly, anyway. What humor there is, is mostly inadvertent.

Risible /riz uh ble/

### PERHAPS MORE DIFFICULT—AND TYPICAL—CVA

- **Importunate / importunity**—In Maugham W. Somerset. (1915, 1991). *Of Human Bondage*. New York: Bantam.

--From Smiley, Jane. (2004). Introduction. In Maugham W. Somerset. (1915, 1991). *Of Human Bondage*. New York: Bantam.

In the Introduction, Ms. Smiley tells us about Maugham, his main character Philip, and more about the book *Of Human Bondage* then should be in an introduction. She is describing Philip when she says:

P. *xii*. For one thing, Philip's affair with Mildred is not his first sexual experience. His sojourn at the university in Heidelberg, Germany, at the age of eighteen, has exposed him to a world somewhat less sexually repressed than the English society where he has spent his adolescence, and this new knowledge, in turn, has rendered him vulnerable to the advances of a woman friend of his uncle and aunt [mwk—the uncle is a minister in a rural, conservative area of England], Miss Wilkinson, herself experienced in the ways of the Continent. Though thirty-seven, Miss Wilkinson looks younger, and at first fascinates and attracts Philip, who would like to think she can't be more than twenty-six, only six or seven years older than he is. As she becomes more **importunate**, though, Philip begins to feel discomfort and physical revulsion in her presence, and he is only too glad when she departs for governess position in Berlin.

Smiley may have used this word because Maugham seems to have been fond of it; he used *importunity* at least twice. First, he used it in a segment where Philip is living in a boarding house in Heidelberg with a fellow lodger, Fräulein Hedwig, who hopes to marry a young, English lieutenant. Though having never met Fräulein Hedwig, the lieutenant's parents are opposed to his marrying her. The lieutenant goes back to England to see his parents, The book says:

P. 114. A week later Fräulein Hedwig with radiant smiles announced that the lieutenant of her affections was coming back to Heidelberg with his father and mother. Exhausted by the **importunity** of their son and touched by the dowry which Fräulein Hedwig's father offered, the lieutenant's parents had consented to pass through Heidelberg to make the young woman's acquaintance.

Maugham uses the word another time referring to interactions around the character Cronshaw. Cronshaw is now very ill, perhaps dying, and cannot work to pay his rent, so Philip takes him in to live with him in his own room—a single room. Philip also tends to most of Cronshaw's needs. Cronshaw resists seeing a doctor, even with Philip's insistence. Cronshaw complains to a mutual acquaintance that Philip should stop insisting that he, Cronshaw, take care of himself, eat well, stop drinking, and see a physician. This mutual friend, who idolizes Cronshaw and thinks he is brilliant and poetic, says to Philip, out of Cronshaw's earshot:

P. 484. 'There's something fine in Cronshaw's attitude, and you disturb it by your **importunity**. You should make allowances for the delicate imaginings which you cannot feel.

- **Pateroller**—From Morrison, Tony. (1987, 2004). *Beloved*. New York: Vintage.

The story takes place in the South and in Ohio in the pre- and post-Civil War days. Sethe is a runaway, female slave who is about to give birth to her fourth child. The other three children have already escaped and are in southern Ohio. Sethe is, of course, very afraid, because if she is caught by the law, not only will she be returned to her master, but she will be beaten, perhaps even crippled so she could not run again.

As Sethe is running, she meets Amy, a young, white girl also running away from her sharecropping parents home. She is headed for Boston, in search of velvet. They befriend each other as they walk toward Ohio and, for Sethe, freedom, and for Amy, escape. They slip quietly through the nights in the forests and pastures, shunning roads to avoid being seen by anyone for fear of being caught. After several nights march, they come to the Ohio river and steal a boat to cross the river. Minutes before they reach the Ohio shore, Sethe—with Amy's help—gives birth to her baby. This scene is ten minutes later, and they have just reached the Ohio shore and tied up to a tree.

On a riverbank in the cool of a summer evening two women struggle under a shower of silvery blue. They never expected to see each other again in this world and at that moment couldn't care less. But there on a summer night surrounded by bluefern they did something together appropriately and well. A **pateroller** passing would have sniggered to see two throw-away people, two lawless outlaws—a slave and a barefoot whitewoman with unpinned hair—wrapping a ten-minute-old baby in the rags they wore. But no **pateroller** came and no preacher. The water sucked and swallowed itself beneath them. There was nothing to disturb them at their work. So they did it appropriately well.

- **Bartizan**—From Stevenson, Robert Louis, A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa--Chapter VII—The Samoan Camps.

By this time the partisanship of the whites was unconcealed. Americans supplied Mataafa with ammunition; English and Americans openly subscribed together and sent boat-loads of provisions to his camp. One such boat started from Apia on a day of rain; it was pulled by six oars, three being paid by Moors, three by the MacArthurs; Moors himself and a clerk of the MacArthurs' were in charge; and the load included not only beef and biscuit, but three or four thousand rounds of ammunition.

They came ashore in Laulii, and carried the gift to Mataafa. While they were yet in his house a bullet passed overhead; and out of his door they could see the Tamasese pickets on the opposite hill. Thence they made their way to the left flank of the Mataafa position next the sea. A Tamasese barricade was visible across the stream. It rained, but the warriors crowded in their shanties, squatted in the mud, and maintained an excited conversation. Balls flew; either faction, both happy as lords, spotting for the other in chance shots, and missing.

One point is characteristic of that war; experts in native feeling doubt if it will characterize the next. The two white visitors passed without and between the lines to a rocky point upon the beach. The person of Moors was well known; the purpose of their coming to Laulii must have been already bruited abroad; yet they were not fired upon. From the point they spied a crow's nest, or hanging fortification, higher up; and, judging it was a good position for a general view, obtained a guide. He led them up a steep side of the mountain, where they must climb by roots and tufts of grass; and coming to an open hill—top with some scattered trees, bade them wait, let him draw the fire, and then be swift to follow.

Perhaps a dozen balls whistled about him ere he had crossed the dangerous passage and dropped on the farther side into the crow's—nest; the white men, briskly following, escaped unhurt. The crow's—nest was built like a **BARTIZAN** on the precipitous front of the position. Across the ravine, perhaps at five hundred yards, heads were to be seen popping up and down in a fort of Tamesese's. On both sides the same enthusiasm without council, the same senseless vigilance, reigned. Some took aim; some blazed before them at a venture. Now — when a head showed on the other side — one would take a crack at it, remarking that it would never do to "miss a chance."

• **Bartizan—From** Minnis, Michael, *The Butcher Of Vyonos*

But the closer they drew upon the butcher's abode, the less vociferous the mob's fury became. They were deep in Les Ruelles now, and far from the familiar. Bloodshed and retribution had scattered them widely. The wind was in their faces. The clouds had returned. The children had departed. They shouted to one another for courage, aware all the while that doubtful shapes had begun to gather along the rooftops and chimney pots.

At last they arrived at Daumard's home - a weathered corner of ancient fortification and crumbling buttresses within a courtyard. Its crest was overshadowed by an angular **BARTIZAN** speckled with small empty windows and murder-holes and archer-slits looking inward upon blackness. From corners and cornices grinned fractured gargoyles made nearly featureless by years of rain, freeze and thaw. To the side was a short flight of wide worn steps that ended before a great arched door.

**Hie (hy) verb transitive and intransitive**

"The other week, during our morning ritual, my phone rang and I had to rush off to answer it. Talk... talk... then followed by my other pre-work activities before finally taking a bath and **hieing** off to work." Stella A. Estremera; *Simple Wisdom*; Philippine Sun Star (Manila, Philippines); Nov 14, 2004.

"Aniston reportedly **hied** out of town to meet hubby Brad Pitt in Little Rock, Ark." Michael Sneed; *The Rice Report*; Chicago Sun-Times; Nov 18, 2004.

**Vet**

"Commonwealth Press Union New Zealand chairman Gavin Ellis said 'the suggestion that journalists should give up their copy to judges for **vetting** is totally unacceptable.'" Judge Says Checks on Journalists Won't Be Abused; *New Zealand Herald* (Auckland); Nov 12, 2004.

"The bills will then be sent to India's finance and law ministries to be **vettied** before being put before the president for his approval." India on Track For Biggest Tax Revamp; *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain); Nov 3, 2004.

**Stygian** / sti-j(E-)&n /

From Brady, Karen (2006). Oates probes moral ambiguity surrounding '70s death at college. *The Buffalo News*, Sunday, November 12, 2006, p. G5. These are the first two paragraphs of this book review.

Joyce Carol Oates works her **stygian** magic once again in "Black Girl/White Girl," a tale of misguided "enlightenment" and dangerous expectations on a college campus in the 1970s. With all the foreboding that has long been an Oates trademark, she presents a portrait in contrasts that goes way beyond black-and-white into a murky world of oral ambiguity—with deadly consequences.

"The most insidious of lies is through omission," the novel's protagonist, Geneva "Genna" Hewett-Meade, notes as she begins an inquiry, 15 years after the fact, into the death of her roommate, Minette Swift.