

notes. Do you see any general patterns beginning to emerge?

- c. Reread the Sheehy article. Notice how she establishes her subdivisions, how she characterizes each. As you plan your subdivisions, ask yourself if you have provided similar significant generalizations about each stage.

Rewriting:

- a. Look back over your notes from your brainstorming session. Did anyone say something that might be quoted? Notice how Sheehy uses quotations in her text. Try the same device in yours.
 - b. As a rule of thumb, try for no more than three subdivisions. Remember that Sheehy covered 30 to 35 years in six stages.
 - c. Look at your introduction. Have you tried to catch your reader's interest? Or have you written a standard thesis introduction ("Teenagers pass through three distinct stages on their way to adulthood")? How would *Time* or *Newsweek* begin a story on this topic?
3. Sheehy stops her division with those aged 50. Obviously, though, adults must continue to develop and change until death. Drawing upon published research and interviews with those over 50, write an essay in which you identify the stages through which mature Americans pass. You might write to an audience of younger people who need to understand the stages through which their parents and grandparents are passing.

Shades of Black

MARY MEBANE

Mary Elizabeth Mebane, novelist, teacher, and civil rights activist, was born in 1933 in Durham, North Carolina. Her father was a farmer, her mother a factory laborer. She received her education at North Carolina State College and at the University of North Carolina, where she earned both her master's and doctoral degrees. Her work has been anthologized in A Galaxy of Black Writers (1970) and The Eloquence of Protest (1972). A play, Take A Sad Song, was first produced in 1975. Her writings deal mainly with the black experience in the South and the new consciousness that was born during the years of the civil rights movement. Mebane said: "It is my belief that the black folk are the most creative, viable people that America has produced. They just don't know it." Mebane's most recent and widely acclaimed books are her autobiographies entitled Mary (1981) and Mary, Wayfarer (1983). Prejudice comes in many forms, and in this selection from Mary, Mebane recounts her experiences as a "dark, but not too dark" college student.

DURING MY FIRST WEEK of classes as a freshman, I was stopped 1
one day in the hall by the chairman's wife, who was indistin-
guishable in color from a white woman. She wanted to see me,
she said.

This woman had no official position on the faculty, except 2
that she was an instructor in English; nevertheless, her sum-
mons had to be obeyed. In the segregated world there were
(and remain) gross abuses of authority because those at the
pinnacle, and even their spouses, felt that the people "under"
them had no recourse except to submit—and they were right
except that sometimes a black who got sick and tired of it would
go to the whites and complain. This course of action was se-
verely condemned by the blacks, but an interesting thing hap-
pened—such action always got positive results. Power was
thought of in negative terms: I can deny someone something,
I can strike at someone who can't strike back, I can ride some-

one down; that proves I am powerful. The concept of power as a force for good, for affirmative response to people or situations, was not in evidence.

3 When I went to her office, she greeted me with a big smile. "You know," she said, "you made the highest mark on the verbal part of the examination." She was referring to the examination that the entire freshman class took upon entering the college. I looked at her but I didn't feel warmth, for in spite of her smile her eyes and tone of voice were saying, "How could this black-skinned girl score higher on the verbal than some of the students who've had more advantages than she? It must be some sort of fluke. Let me talk to her." I felt it, but I managed to smile my thanks and back off. For here at North Carolina College at Durham, as it had been since the beginning, social class and color were the primary criteria used in determining status on the campus.

4 First came the children of doctors, lawyers, and college teachers. Next came the children of public-school teachers, businessmen, and anybody else who had access to more money than the poor black working class. After that came the bulk of the student population, the children of the working class, most of whom were the first in their families to go beyond high school. The attitude toward them was: You're here because we need the numbers, but in all other things defer to your betters.

5 The faculty assumed that light-skinned students were more intelligent, and they were always a bit nonplussed when a dark-skinned student did well, especially if she was a girl. They had reason to be appalled when they discovered that I planned to do not only well but better than my light-skinned peers.

6 I don't know whether African men recently transported to the New World considered themselves handsome or, more important, whether they considered African women beautiful in comparison with Native American Indian women or immigrant European women. It is a question that I have never heard raised or seen research on. If African men considered African women beautiful, just when their shift in interest away from black women occurred might prove to be an interesting topic for researchers. But one thing I know for sure: by the twentieth cen-

ture, really black skin on a woman was considered ugly in this country. This was particularly true among those who were exposed to college.

Hazel, who was light brown, used to say to me, "You are *dark*, but not *too dark*." The saved commiserating with the damned. I had the feeling that if nature had painted one more brushstroke on me, I'd have had to kill myself.

Black skin was to be disguised at all costs. Since a black face is rather hard to disguise, many women took refuge in ludicrous makeup. Mrs. Burry, one of my teachers in elementary school, used white face powder. But she neglected to powder her neck and arms, and even the black on her face gleamed through the white, giving her an eerie appearance. But she did the best she could.

I observed all through elementary and high school that for various entertainments the girls were placed on the stage in order of color. And very black ones didn't get into the front row. If they were past caramel-brown, to the back row they would go. And nobody questioned the justice of these decisions—neither the students nor the teachers.

One of the teachers at Wildwood School, who was from the Deep South and was just as black as she could be, had been a strict enforcer of these standards. That was another irony—that someone who had been judged outside the realm of beauty herself because of her skin tones should have adopted them so wholeheartedly and applied them herself without question.

One girl stymied that teacher, though. Ruby, a black cherry of a girl, not only got off the back row but off the front row as well, to stand alone at stage center. She could outsing, outdance, and outdeclaim everyone else, and talent proved triumphant over pigmentation. But the May Queen and her Court (and in high school, Miss Wildwood) were always chosen from among the lighter ones.

When I was a freshman in high school, it became clear that a light-skinned sophomore girl named Rose was going to get the "best girl scholar" prize for the next three years, and there was nothing I could do about it, even though I knew I was the better. Rose was caramel-colored and had shoulder-length hair. She was highly favored by the science and math teacher, who

figured the averages. I wasn't. There was only one prize. Therefore, Rose would get it until she graduated. I was one year behind her, and I would not get it until after she graduated.

13 To be held in such low esteem was painful. It was difficult not to feel that I had been cheated out of the medal, which I felt that, in a fair competition, I perhaps would have won. Being unable to protest or do anything about it was a traumatic experience for me. From then on I instinctively tended to avoid the college-exposed dark-skinned male, knowing that when he looked at me he saw himself and, most of the time, his mother and sister as well, and since he had rejected his blackness, he had rejected theirs and mine.

14 Oddly enough, the lighter-skinned black male did not seem to feel so much prejudice toward the black black woman. It was no accident, I felt, that Mr. Harrison, the eighth-grade teacher, who was reddish-yellow himself, once protested to the science and math teacher about the fact that he always assigned sweeping duties to Doris and Ruby Lee, two black black girls. Mr. Harrison said to them one day, right in the other teacher's presence, "You must be some bad girls. Every day I come down here ya'll are sweeping." The science and math teacher got the point and didn't ask them to sweep anymore.

15 Uneducated black males, too, sometimes related very well to the black black woman. They had been less firmly indoctrinated by the white society around them and were more securely rooted in their own culture.

16 Because of the stigma attached to having dark skin, a black black woman had to do many things to find a place for herself. One possibility was to attach herself to a light-skinned woman, hoping that some of the magic would rub off on her. A second was to make herself sexually available, hoping to attract a mate. Third, she could resign herself to a more chaste life-style—either (for the professional woman) teaching and work in established churches or (for the uneducated woman) domestic work and zealous service in the Holy and Sanctified churches.

17 Even as a young girl, Lucy had chosen the first route. Lucy was short, skinny, short-haired, and black black, and thus unacceptable. So she made her choice. She selected Patricia, the lightest-skinned girl in the school, as her friend, and followed

her around. Patricia and her friends barely tolerated Lucy, but Lucy smiled and doggedly hung on, hoping that some who noticed Patricia might notice her, too. Though I felt shame for her behavior, even then I understood.

As is often the case of the victim agreeing with and adopting the attitudes of oppressor, so I have seen it with black black women. I have seen them adopt the oppressor's attitude that they are nothing but "sex machines," and their supposedly superior sexual performance becomes their sole reason for being and for esteeming themselves. Such women learn early that in order to make themselves attractive to men they have somehow to shift the emphasis from physical beauty to some other area—usually sexual performance. Their constant talk is of their desirability and their ability to gratify a man sexually.

I knew two such women well—both of them black black. To hear their endless talk of sexual conquests was very sad. I have never seen the category that these women fall into described anywhere. It is not that of promiscuity or nymphomania. It is the category of total self-rejection: "Since I am black, I am ugly, I am nobody. I will perform on the level that they have assigned to me." Such women are the pitiful results of what not only white America but also, and more important, black America has done to them.

Some, not taking the sexuality route but still accepting black society's view of their worthlessness, swing all the way across to intense religiosity. Some are staunch, fervent workers in the more traditional Southern churches—Baptist and Methodist—and others are leaders and ministers in the lower status, more evangelical Holiness sects.

Another avenue open to the black black woman is excellence in a career. Since in the South the field most accessible to such women is education, a great many of them prepared to become teachers. But here, too, the black black woman had problems. Grades weren't given to her lightly in school, nor were promotions on the job. Consequently, she had to prepare especially well. She had to pass examinations with flying colors or be left behind; she knew that she would receive no special consideration. She had to be overqualified for a job because otherwise she didn't stand a chance of getting it—and she was

competing only with other blacks. She had to have something to back her up: not charm, not personality—but training.

22 The black black woman's training would pay off in the 1970's. With the arrival of integration the black black woman would find, paradoxically enough, that her skin color in an integrated situation was not the handicap it had been in an all-black situation. But it wasn't until the middle and late 1960s, when the post-1945 generation of black males arrived on college campuses, that I noticed any change in the situation at all. He wore an afro and she wore an afro, and sometimes the only way you could tell them apart was when his afro was taller than hers. Black had become beautiful, and the really black girl was often selected as queen of various campus activities. It was then that the dread I felt at dealing with the college-educated black male began to ease. Even now, though, when I have occasion to engage in any type of transaction with a college-educated black man, I gauge his age. If I guess he was born after 1945, I feel confident that the transaction will turn out all right. If he probably was born before 1945, my stomach tightens, I find myself taking shallow breaths, and I try to state my business and escape as soon as possible.

QUESTIONS ON SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. What kinds of prejudice and discrimination did Mebane encounter? What were the reasons for that discrimination?
2. How does Mebane mix personal experience with commentary on human behavior? Does the mixture seem to work? What does it add to the selection?
3. What is Mebane's purpose in writing?

QUESTIONS ON STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE

1. How is classification used in the selection? How many classifications are made?
2. How is the selection structured? Make a sketchy outline of the organization. What does it reveal?
3. How does Mebane use examples in her classification scheme? Are there examples for all of the categories? Why or why not?

QUESTIONS ON VOCABULARY AND STYLE

1. How does Mebane describe the shades of black? What types of adjectives, for example, does she use?
2. What is the difference between "established churches" and "Holy and Sanctified churches" (paragraph 16)? Why does Mebane use the capital letters?
3. Be able to define the following words: *fluke* (paragraph 3), *nonplussed* (5), *commiserate* (7), *stymied* (11), *traumatic* (13), *indoctrinated* (15), *chaste* (16), *staunch* (20).

WRITING SUGGESTIONS

1. In a paragraph classify the most obvious prejudices people have. These do not need to be based on color or race—it could be appearance, social or economic class, intelligence, social behavior. Limit your classification to two or three major topics.
2. Have you or a friend ever been classified by someone and discriminated against as a result? In an essay use your experience to show how and why that classification was made. If you have not had this experience, turn the question around. Have you ever classified someone and discriminated against that person as a result?

Prewriting:

- a. If you have encountered discrimination, you will probably have a wide range of experiences from which to draw. If you have not, you will need to examine closely your own behavior. Either way, make a list of possible experiences.
- b. Remember that prejudices are based on stereotypes that distort, reduce, ridicule. Your essay should expose the inadequacies of such ways of thinking; it should not celebrate any form of discrimination.
- c. Once you have gathered examples, you must decide which ones you will include. As you saw in Chapter 1, sometimes one well-developed, appropriate example is enough; other times, a number of examples are necessary. Do not try to include every experience. Decide which ones on your list seem most promising.
- d. Try freewriting about each of the examples. Set each of those freewritings aside until it is time to assemble a draft of the complete essay.

Rewriting:

- a. Remember that your examples should reveal the discrimination at work. Do not just tell your readers; show them. Look carefully at your draft to see if you have made the examples dramatic and vivid enough.
 - b. In drawing upon your experiences in this way, your essay will probably make use of narrative as well as classification strategies. Look back through Chapter 2 to review the principles of effective narration. See how closely you followed that advice.
 - c. Once you have a draft of our essay, spend some time re-reading and studying Mebane's essay. Notice how she tells her story, how she reveals prejudice, how she makes transitions from one aspect of the topic to another.
3. Research the problems encountered in interracial, interreligious, or intercultural marriages. What types of prejudice do people encounter? Have they changed in recent years? Classify those problems. You might write to a special audience—for example, couples planning such a marriage.

Faces of the Enemy

SAM KEEN

Sam Keen was raised in Maryville, Tennessee, and graduated from Princeton with a Ph.D. in philosophy. A free-lance writer and lecturer, he was a contributing editor at Psychology Today and a professor of philosophy at Princeton Theological Seminary and Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, and the Director of the theological program at Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California. He is sometimes called a "vagabond philosopher" because his writing frequently blends psychology, philosophy, and theology. His work includes Gabriel Marcel (1967); Apology for Wonder, a book about why we remain religious (1969); a collection of personal essays, To a Dancing God (1970); Voices and Visions, a collection of interviews with various philosophers about the state of contemporary life (1974); Beginnings Without End (1976); a co-authored book, Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith (1978); a book about the causes and solutions for a basic human "emotion," boredom, What to Do When You're Bored and Blue (1980); The Passionate Life: Stages of Loving (1983); Faces of the Enemy (1985), made into an award-winning television program which he narrated; and a co-authored book, Your Mythic Journey (1989). In Faces of the Enemy, he blends psychology and sociology to discuss how paranoia and the "hostile imagination" cast our enemies into stereotypical images of evil. This essay, which first appeared in Esquire in 1985, is a synopsis of his book by the same name. "Wars come and go," writes Keen, "the images we use to dehumanize our enemies remain strangely the same."

THE WORLD, as always, is debating the issues of war and peace. Conservatives believe safety lies in more arms and increased firepower. Liberals place their trust in disarmament and a nuclear freeze. I suggest we will be saved by neither fire nor ice, that the solutions being offered by the political right and left miss the mark. Our problem lies not in our technology, but in