Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Authors and editors are often faced with hard choices when they are producing communications intended for the public. In many situations they know that no matter which option they choose, part of their audience is going to be unhappy with their choice.

For example, the communicator is often between a rock and a hard place when choosing between two grammatical constructions. If he or she chooses option A (the more formal, traditional construction), the message will sound stuffy or stilted to part of the audience, and the communicator will be labeled a "traditionalist snoot." If the communicator chooses option B (a more informal, colloquial construction which accurately reproduces contemporary speech) cries of "Bad Grammar!" will arise from grammatical traditionalists. How does a communicator produce a balanced style that results in normal, non-snooty speech, but also anticipates and deflects erroneous but predicable criticism by grammatical traditionalists?

This dilemma confronts communicators in almost every medium and genre of communication, whether written or oral, but our examples in this mini-conference will be taken from the most sensitive genre of all: Bible translation. This mini-seminar is based on experience gained by the Wartburg Project, a society of professors, pastors, teachers and laypeople, who are working together to produce a new Bible translation, the *Evangelical Heritage Version.* (See the Wartburg Project website for information about this project.)

The Bible is the most sensitive genre of communication because Christians cherish the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Translators have no calling to edit or "improve" what the Holy Spirit has said. Experienced readers of the Bible have very definite ideas about what a Bible should sound like, but different groups of those readers have very different ideas about what a Bible should sound like. In addition, readers know many Bible passages by heart from various translations. They expect a new translation to improve the readability of the text but without making any noticeable changes to familiar expressions. The task of Bible translation magnifies the tug of war between formal and informal speech, between freshness and familiarity.

We can start the discussion with a simple example. When our project published a sample translation of the Gospel of Matthew we received the following question.

> "Why does your translation use bad grammar? In the Garden of Gethsemane you twice have Jesus saying, "Who are you looking for?" It should be "For whom are you looking?" Jesus would not use bad grammar."

Our EHV guidelines that govern this situation are:

> Observe distinctions between *who* and *whom*, etc., but try to avoid uses that sound stilted or pedantic in contemporary English. "Who are you looking for?" sounds like normal conversation to most people. "For whom are you looking?" is not common in conversation. When reporting conversation, try out a few English sentences and see what sounds normal.

> Do the same for the rule "no prepositions last." In Germanic languages "prepositions" (which often are actually detachable particles that are part of the verb) sound natural at the end of a spoken sentence.

The editors knew this was a no-win situation. Grammatical purists would say that "who are you looking for?" is bad grammar. But just as many people would say that "for whom are you looking?" sounds stuffy. It makes Jesus sound like a book rather than a living speaker. Other terms some people

would use to describe "for whom are you looking?" are "super-formal," "pretentious," and "a school-teacher superstition." There are strong feelings at both ends for the spectrum.

But editors had to make a choice. (Or we could be super-correct and retain Jesus' original English dialect, King James English in which Jesus would say, "Whom seekest thou?")

If you were the editor of Matthew, what would you have Jesus say?
A. Who are you looking for?
B. For whom are you looking?
C. Whom seekest thou?
D. None of the above. Here is my superior rendering: _____
Explain and defend your choice.

An option for further study: See *The War Over Whom: Supplement II*

This is a sample of the kind of question you will wrestle with in this mini-course. But first we have to make a little detour.

Are You a Snoot or a Slacker?[1]

Before you can wrestle with individual cases, we need some general principles to guide us. What is your basic philosophy about grammar and usage?

Is your approach to grammar *prescriptive?* When making tough decisions, do you prefer to follow a rule book handed to you by some authority? When you are between a rock and a hard place, do you tend to look the situation up in the rulebook and rigidly follow its advice?

Or is your approach to grammar more *descriptive?* You think, "This is a conversation not a formal proclamation." The people I know do not say, 'For whom are you looking?' The normal way of talking is 'Who are you looking for?'"

Self Evaluation

Is your approach to grammar more prescriptive or descriptive? (This is, of course, not an either/or.) Where do you think you fall on this 1-10 scale?

Descriptivist Slacker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	*Prescriptivist Snoot*
(Rules are made to broken)		*(Rules are Rules!)*

Does it matter whether you are writing or speaking?
Does it matter whether you are talking to your grandma or your friend?
Does it matter if you are going to get a grade on it?

An optional further study:

Read and evaluate an online article about prescriptive and descriptive grammar.

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[1] Provocative terms like "snoot" and "slacker" are a rhetorical device that grammarians use to enliven what some people regard as a dull subject. Grammarians themselves find a discussion about fine points of grammar to be perfectly fascinating, but they recognize that a little humor and provocation and helps engage normal people in a lively discussion of this topic. The term "snoot" as a synonym for "hard-core grammatical prescriptivist" was popularized in Garner's *Modern English Usage.*

Twelve Myths People Believe About English Grammar[2]

Here are twelve "myths" about English grammar that are believed by many otherwise sensible people. Most of the otherwise sensible people who believe these myths are staunch prescriptivists. Checking your attitude and practice toward these myths will help you measure whether you are more of a prescriptivist 'rules are rules' snoot or a descriptivist 'rules are made to be broken' slacker.

The Myths

These myths are also called grammatical superstitions, which may be defined as "unintelligent applications of an uninformed dogma."

Myth 1: You should never end a sentence with a preposition.
    This is a valid rule in Latin in which pre-positions must be pre-positioned, but Latin is not English. In English, ending a sentence with a preposition or verbal particle is completely idiomatic. As Winston Churchill remarked, "This is a rule up with which it is not necessary to put."
Myth 2: You should not split an infinitive.
    You are permitted to politely ignore this rule.
Myth 3: Do not split a verb phrase.
    This rule has greatly annoyed me for a long time. It also has annoyed me greatly.
Myth 4: You must not begin a sentence with *And* or *But*.
    But that rule has been ignored by fine writers from Anglo-Saxon times till the present.
Myth 5: Do not write one-sentence paragraphs.
    The previous sentence disproves this rule. One-sentence paragraphs may be emphatic, dramatic, or merely provide relief from wearying verbosity.
Myth 6: Never begin a sentence with *because*.
    Because there is no basis for this rule, you may ignore it. But of course you must avoid creating dangling fragments of sentences beginning with *because*.
Myth 7: Never use *since* to mean *because*.
    Since *since* may refer to either time or cause, you may use *since* as an alternative to *because*.
Myth 8: Never use *between* to express a relationship between more than two objects.
    But since a triangle is a space lying between three points, you do not always have to follow this rule.
Myth 9: It is best to avoid referring to *I* and *me* in formal writing.
Myth 10: Do not refer to your reader as *you*.
    The use of *you* and *I* makes your writing more warm and personal. Substituting something like *the undersigned* for a simple *I* immodestly calls more attention to the writer than a simple *I* would. There's nothing wrong with warm informality in personal opinions that are inserted into formal writing.
Myth 11: Don't use contractions in formal writing.
    When you are reporting informal conversation in writing thou shalt not sound like a snoot. Don't do it!

Self Evaluation
    How many of these "myths" do you believe?
    How many of these "myths" do you practice?

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[2] The terms "myths" and "superstitions" are another example to a device grammarians use to promote discussion and raise awareness. The question being pushed by the term is whether or not many commonly believed grammatical "rules" are in fact "myths" which are not based on objective evidence. Here too, the presentation, terminology, and language are shaped by Gardiner's *Modern English Usage.* Most major books about debated grammatical issues have a bit of a curmudgeon tone to them, especially if they are by British authors. Attempts at grammatical humor tend to be dry humor.

Have you changed your mind about any of them?

How many of these myths does your English textbook recommend as firm rules?

(There is, of course, a difference whether these are practiced as a rigid rules or useful guidelines.)

<div align="center">WARNING!</div>

People who make fun of people who believe myths about grammar usually believe a few myths themselves. Grammarologist Bryan Garner, who composed the list of myths above, himself believes the following myth:

Myth 12: When it comes to relative pronouns, in restrictive (essential) clauses use *that* rather than *which* whenever you can. This distinction between *that* and *which* makes good sense. It enhances clarity. And the best American editors follow it.

Garner's claim that this is a rule of English is unraveled by his inclusion of the words *it makes good sense* and *American.* Myth 12 is based on an authority's *opinion* about what the rule *should be* rather than on *objective facts* based on the historical usage of the English language. American grammatical authorities have made a lot of progress persuading American editors that this myth is true, but they have made less progress among adherents of the Queen's English. In the early 20th century H. W. Fowler, who promoted the same *that/which* distinction as Garner, admitted that neither the most nor the best writers practiced this distinction.

It is, therefore, not necessary to believe the myth which advocates *that* as the only pronoun to govern essential relative clauses and *which* as the right word for non-essential clauses. This rule is not supported by the history or usage of the English language. The distinction between non-essential and essential clauses can be clearly marked by the presence or absence of commas. However, you may want to use *that* as the marker of essential relative clauses more often the historical evidence of English usage would justify, because many people believe this myth and for you to do otherwise would lead to erroneous but predictable criticism.

Another Myth

As long as we are dealing with myths let's tackle one more. The myth: Pronouns that refer to God should be capitalized to honor God.

It has, in fact, been a convention of recent English usage to capitalize nouns and pronouns which refer to God. This practice, however, seems to have begun only in the 20th century. It was not the practice of early English translations, including the original King James.

The basic principles of the EHV are: Capitalization of nouns and pronouns that refer to God is not a feature of the original text nor a long-standing practice in English, so it is better not to adopt this practice.

Capitalization is not a feature that marks deity versus non-deity or that conveys honor. Capitalization distinguishes a title or a proper name from a common noun: the Antichrist or an antichrist, the Evil One or an evil one; the Church or the church. But capitalization does not indicate deity or reverence: *Santa Claus, Satan, the Easter Bunny, the King, the Great Pumpkin*, and *I* are all capitalized.

This example shows how quickly a grammatical myth can rise and fall. After a heyday of less than a century this myth is now in decline.

Discuss:

Why do you think that a request to capitalize pronouns referring to God is one of the most common requests our project receives?

Why does this issue have to be handled with care?

Here We Are, Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Now that you have decided whether you are a prescriptivist snoot or descriptivist slacker, or something in between, you are ready to start rendering your verdict on various grammatical dilemmas.

Give your verdict on each choice. Some comments appear at the end of this section. Check them after you have gone through the list.

1. Who's there? A) *It is I.* B) *It's me.*

2. The king will give Vashti's status as queen to someone A) *better than she* B) *better than her.*

3. A) My mother likes the dog more *than me*. B) My mother likes the dog more *than I*.

4. We must resist A) *the devil* B) *the Devil*.

5. Their sin A) *stank* B) *stunk* to high heaven.

6. The light A) *shone* B) *shined* in the darkness.

7. Judas A) *stoled* B) *stole* C) *stold* the money.

8. She gave birth to her firstborn son and laid him in A) *a feeding trough* B) *a manger.*

9. She wrapped him in A) *swaddling clothes* B) *strips of cloth.*

10. A) Samuel acted honorably *like* a judge should. B) Samuel acted honorably *as* a judge should.

11. A) Samuel acted *like* a judge. B) Samuel acted *as* a judge.

12. A) If I *were* God, we would be in big trouble.   B) If I *was* God, you would be in big trouble.

13. One of the Hebrew words often translated *banquet* is based on the Hebrew verb for *drink*. Should it be translated A) *banquet* B) *drinking party* C) *feast* D) *party*?

14. Israel A) *worshipped* B) *worshiped* God.

15. A) *O* LORD, you are our God. B) LORD, you are our God.

Comments on the dilemmas above

1. Either way someone will complain, so why not avoid the problem and say *I'm here*?
2. The issue is whether *than* is a conjunction or a preposition. Historical usage shows it may be either. Written in full, the first phrase would be *better than she is.* Hardcore Conjunctionites are not persuaded that *better than her* is okay, so if you have a traditionalist audience stick with the use of *than* as a conjunction unless you are aiming for a relaxed, colloquial tone.
3. These sentences say different things, even though *than* acts like/as a conjunction in both examples. The first means *she likes the dog more than (she likes) me;* the second means *she likes the dog more than I (like the dog).*
4. In the Bible the Devil is a proper names for Satan, not a name for the subordinate demons. So the Devil is correct, but no honor is intended.

5. Irregular verbs are losing some of their irregular parts. *Stank* is the correct past tense of *stink,* but *stunk to high heaven* sounds okay to many people.
6. *Shone* is correct, but *shined* is making inroads.
7. If you listen carefully, you will notice that many speakers say *he stold the money,* but only *stole* looks right in print.
8. Some think *manger* is old-fashioned, but farmers have told us cattle and sheep still use mangers and feeding troughs are for pigs (at least in Wisconsin).
9. *Swaddling clothes* sounds old-fashioned until you google Amazon and find they sell *swaddling cloths* [sic].
10. Traditionally, *like* should not be used as a conjunction.
11. Example *A* means Samuel acted like a judge would, but he was not a judge. *B* means he acted in the office of judge.
12. *Were* is the contrary-to-fact subjunctive, but this usage is fading in English.
13. Let's be honest. If drinking is having an effect on what is happening, the translation must reflect that.
14. Many authorities say *worshipped* is British and *worshiped* is American, but searching actual usage with Google ngrams shows that *worshipped* predominates on both sides of the pond. Large databases enable us to search what usage actually is rather than guessing.
15. Modern usages prefers vocatives without *O*, but many readers like *O* in poetry and prayer.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place Part II

The pressure of being caught between a rock and a hard place is intensified when sexual issues or crude language are involved, and it is intensified even more when the Bible is involved. Some parts of the Bible contain sexual language or other course language that is quite explicit. The prophecy of Ezekiel is most notable for this tendency. Many English translations try to hide or soften this language (euphemism). Do we have a right to censor or soften the Bible?

EUPHEMISTIC v CRUDE LANGUAGE

1) In 1 Samuel 25:22 David is guilty of a harsh outburst against a man who has insulted him. He says, "May God punish my enemies severely and double it, if by the morning light I leave alive so much as *one person who urinates against a wall*." In the King James Version David says *any that pisseth against the wall.*" Many recent translations refer to *every male*. Which would you choose? Why?
    A. Urinates against a wall B. Pisses against a wall. C. Every male.
       (After you have given your answer, check the comments at the end of this section.)

    If your teacher read choice B in class or your pastor read it in church, would people
       A) laugh B) be shocked and angry C) be surprised at first but support a literal translation.

2) Ezekiel has a favorite Hebrew word for idol, *gillul*. *Gillul* comes from a root that means "round." Some old dictionaries say these idols were called *gillulim* because they were round like logs, but *gillul* is the round thing that comes out of the east end of a west-bound horse. We will start with the assumption that we cannot use the expression that many Americans would use to name these objects, so would you call them A) *idols* B) *dung ball deities* C) *filthy idols* D) *fecal deities.*

    Sometimes biblical language is blunt enough that people are embarrassed to face the issue. We are working with the assumption that to the pure all things are pure, and the mature (including the high school students in our audience) can discuss every topic.

3) Ezekiel describes Judah and Israel as two prostitutes, who are unfaithful to the LORD. He uses ugly terms to describe their ugly behavior.

    In Ezekiel 16:25, many translations refer to an immoral woman who *offers her body* to every passerby. The Hebrew literally says she is *spreading her legs* to every passerby. Which term would you choose? Why?
       A. *offers her body to* B. *has sex with* C. *spreads her legs for* D. *lies down with.*

       How would a high school class react to choice C?
       Would it make a difference if they were seniors or freshmen?
       Would it make a difference if boys and girls were in separate classes?

4) A special case is Song of Songs in which the whole book has a tone which is sexual but not crude. It has lines like:
       Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters.
       I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit.
    We can hardly soften the translation here.
    At what age should students study this kind of text?
       A. *Late grade school* B. *Early high school* C. *Late high school* D. *College* E. *After marriage*.

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In all these cases the translation principle of the EHV is to be euphemistic when the original text is euphemistic (for example, using the term *know* for an intimate sexual relationship) and blunt when the text is blunt (examples above), but also to take care to avoid offense to readers who may not understand that biblical language is sometimes quite blunt, and to teach the principles before the more blunt examples are encountered.

Comments on This Section

1) Every male gives the right meaning but hides the emotional impact of the text, so it is not a good translation. *Piss* was considered an acceptable term in the 1600s and is very common today. *Urinate* is not the way most people talk, but maybe is best for formal writing.

2) Idols is not a very good translation because it hides the fact that *gillul* is a special, rough word. *Fecal deities* is the translation of the *Concordia Commentary,* but who talks that way? *Dung ball deities* may be too colloquial and artificial. *Filthy idols* softens the term but at least recognizes this is not the generic word for idols.

3) Choices *B* and *D* soften a course expression. Example *A* does not have the full force and offensiveness of *C*. All the phrases have the same meaning but not the same emotional impact. Such blunt terms as *spreading her legs* cause a negative emotional reaction in many readers, but isn't that Ezekiel's purpose? He portrays the full ugliness of Israel's behavior. Do translators have the right to censor the Holy Spirit?

*4)*The answer to all these questions is, of course, a matter of opinion. Many people feel that in our sex-saturated culture, high school is too late to begin discussing these issues.

CONCLUSION

A communicator's degree of freedom depends in part on whether one is acting as an author or an editor. Authors can shape their message to their audience's preferences and biases as long as they do not compromise their message or fail to tell their readers and listeners hard truths which they need to hear. Translators have much less freedom because their duty is to try to convey not only the message, but also the style and emotional impact of the document they are translating. This is even more true when the author is the Holy Spirit. We have no right to soften or "improve" God's message but must convey its emotional impact as best we can. This is true whether the message and language are "in season or out of season."

As long as our language and our audiences have such marvelous diversity, authors and editors who are writing for a diverse set of readers or hearers will often find themselves between a rock and a hard place. Actions that will help you solve this dilemma are: lots of listening to all kinds of speakers, reading a lot of good literature, knowing your audience, finding a balanced position in the middle of the road, and accepting the fact that a communicator can't please everyone all the time.

Thank you for your feedback on these topics. It will help us find the most comfortable spot between a rock and a hard place as we edit EHV. Our current practice is to use more formal language in the formal parts of Scripture such as prophetic oracles but to allow a more informal style in the conversations recorded in the Bible.

For Additional Study: Two supplemental studies:
1) A review of an important new book *Garner's Modern English Usage*
2) "The Battle over Who and Whom"

Supplemental Studies

Supplement I

<div align="center">

A New Resource for Grammatical Study
Bryan Garner's Modern English Usage

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One of the practical problems in communication is, on the one hand, avoiding constructions that will sound old-fashioned and stuffy to some readers, and, on the other hand, avoiding constructions that will sound like bad grammar to some readers. In a sea of grammatical change, how does one objectively determine what the current standards are or should be for editing standard contemporary prose?

The Wartburg Project is now making use of a valuable new resource to address this issue. *Garner's Modern English Usage* has proved to be useful for understanding which constructions, phrases, and words (including spellings) are most common and acceptable today. Our interest started with an article about this new resource on modern English usage. Here's a link to the article for aficionados of good English usage: http://www.businessinsider.com/bryan-garner-interview-english-usage-google-ngrams-big-data-2016-4

Below are a few edited excerpts from that article about the author, Bryan A. Garner:

> The 57-year-old Texan has written 25 books, many of them award-winning, and he's the editor-in-chief of *Black's Law Dictionary*, said to be the most widely cited law book on the planet. In his new book, *Garner's Modern English Usage* (Oxford), Garner has made extensive use of so-called *big data* to write more precisely and more objectively about English usage than anyone ever has done before. Google gave him license to delve into its Google Books Ngram Viewer, which displays graphs showing how words have occurred in books over centuries.

> In many ways, books about word usage have always been based on a good deal of guesswork. That's why Garner calls the use of ngrams "absolutely revolutionary" in the field of usage lexicography.

Here's a little bit of what Garner had to say in the interview:

> The biggest change is the level of empiricism (objectivity) underlying all the judgments. I made extensive use of corpus linguistics, and especially of Google Books and the ngrams, to assess the judgments that I've made in previous editions, and it was a most enlightening process. I've added almost 2,500 ratios of the most current available information about how many times one form—the standard form, let's say—would appear in relation to a variant form. That's enormously useful information for the connoisseur. But even for a less serious aficionado, those ratios can be extremely interesting.…

> If you want to know how often, for example, *between you and I* occurs in comparison with *between you and me* in print sources or current books, that information is now available to us, whereas previous lexicographers and usage writers simply had to guess. There's a lot of this kind of empirical evidence spread throughout the book, and in some cases my judgments about terms changed. I've added about a thousand new entries, a lot of them for connoisseurs — plural forms, some arcane plurals that weren't in the book before. I've tried to make the book the most comprehensive treatment of English usage ever published. That was the goal anyway.…

> Once the ngrams became available, it took me a little time to start playing with ngrams and realize this is absolutely revolutionary in the field of lexicography. The moment I played with a

couple of ngrams, I realized this fundamentally changes the nature of usage lexicography. For a long time, some descriptive linguists have complained that usage books with a prescriptive bent are written by people who just sit back and say, "I like this better than I like that." I don't think that's ever been so, because the best usage books, even prescriptive ones, have been based on lifetimes of study — when you consider people like H.W. Fowler and Wilson Follet and Theodore Bernstein and others.

But still, they had to guess. Even the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had to guess based on the few citation slips in front of them. But now we can apply *big data* to English usage and find out what usage was predominant until what year.

The editors **o**f the Wartburg Project are finding Garner's book to be useful in our translation work. For example, the EHV will be spelling "worshipped" with the double "p." This is actually the standard American and British usage by a ratio of 3:1. Garner comments that some American dictionaries state a preference for "worshiped" with one "p," but this spelling has never attained a predominance in print. Double "pp" has steadily outranked single "p" in America, but in Britain there has been no competition at all. It's double "p" consistently.

Discuss: How have computer programs like ngrams revolutionized the study of grammar?

Supplement II

The Battle Over *Whom:*
Is *Whom* Dead or Just Dying?

The word *whom* is engaged in a life-or-death struggle for survival. The editor of a major American newspaper, who describes himself as a "moderate prescriptivisit," summarizes the current situation thus:

> In conversation, *who* appears to have supplanted *whom*, almost universally. There is no going back.

> In formal writing, such as an academic paper or book, *whom* remains on its precarious perch.

> In middle-level discourse, such as journalism, which aims at a conversational tone while adhering to the conventions of standard written English, *whom* is slowly slipping away, and probably should. …

> It may be time to discuss letting go of the distinction in journalism. No doubt my fellow prescriptivists will see this as a counsel of despair, even though I am holding the ground on *imply* and *infer*, *comprise* and *compose*, even though I continue to use *whom* in my own writing when the pronoun as object is called for, I am two-thirds of the way toward being a dead white male, and I think that *whom* will see me out.

> But language is tricky, and it defies predictions. School-teacher superstitions, such as the supposed prohibition against the split infinitive or the preposition at the end of a sentence, persist despite having been repeatedly exploded.

> For now, *whom,* though it may have seen its best days, is going, going, but not quite gone.

The distinguished pedant H. W. Fowler already foreshadowed this tragedy in his 1908 edition:

> The interrogative *who* is often used for *whom*, as, "Who did you see?" A <u>distinction should here be made between conversation, written or spoken, and formal writing</u>. Many educated people feel that in saying. "It is I" or "Whom do you mean?" instead of "It's me or Who do you mean?" they will be talking like a book, and they justifiably prefer geniality to grammar. But in print, <u>unless it is dialogue</u>, the correct forms are advisable.

Fowler's 1908 rule is pretty much the rule EHV follows: "In print the correct forms are advisable unless it is dialogue." Actually, this was "old news" already in 1908 since substitution of *who* for *whom* occurs already in Shakespeare.

Bryan Garner (see the review in Supplement II) writes:

> It's true that in certain contexts, *whom* is stilted. That has long been so: "Every sensible English speaker on both sides of the Atlantic says, *Who were you talking to?* and the sooner we begin to write it the better."

> According to the LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX measured by ngrams, "*Who* as an object not following a preposition" is "Stage 4." That means that it is "virtually universal but is opposed on cogent grounds by a few linguistic stalwarts" (die-hard snoots). *

> ***NOTE**: In Garner's book, "snoot" is not a bad word, since he is a "half-snoot" himself but to have a clear grasp of the meaning, be sure to read his description of the word on page 840. It's both serious and worth a chuckle.

Garner is careful to note that *whom* is not dead in American English, and, *who* is not always acceptable. For example, "*Who* as an object following a preposition" is only "Stage 2" on the LANGUAGE-CHANGE INDEX. That means that it is unacceptable in standard usage" even if a significant fraction of the language community might use it. In other words, it is not acceptable to say:

> That sits well with the local leaders, *one of who* [read *one of whom*] drew upon his own analogy to describe the party.

There are a number of other problems with rigid attempts to enforce the law of *who* and *whom*:

1. It is a futile attempt at an Amish-style freeze in time, which is impossible in a living language. If we want to preserve the purity of the English language, we need to preserve not only the cases of *who/whom* but also the cases of the 2nd person pronouns: *thou*=singular subject, *thee*=singular object, *ye*=plural subject, *you*=plural object. If the English language can survive the loss of *thou, thee,* and *ye*, it can survive the loss of *whom.* Actually the loss of *thou, thee,* and *ye* is much more serious than the loss of *whom* since it is not the loss only of the subject/object distinction but also the loss of the useful singular/plural distinction.
2. It is an ill-advised attempt to impose the grammar of a dead Romance language on a living Germanic language. A partisan of the lost causes of "who/whom" and "no preposition last" explained it this way: "When in doubt about correct English grammar, I always relied on the rules of Latin." Even among the ancient Romans nobody talked like a book, except for Virgil and Cicero, the two guys who did more than anyone else to assure that Latin would become a dead language.
3. When people try to apply dead rules to living language, they over-correct and make clumsy mistakes like "*a woman whom I think is a genius." Whom* is not the object of *I think,* as rearranging the words demonstrates: "*a woman who is a genius, I think.*" They try to use archaic forms like *thee* and *thou* with little feel for the right usage and think *ye olde Inn* is pronounced *ye olde Inn*, rather than the correct *the olde Inn.* (The letter that looks like y is actually *thorn*, þ, an archaic form of *th*.)

In the Wartburg Project we try to use language that is both correct and alive and to observe the distinction between written communication and conversation (even conversation recorded in writing).

Discuss: Is *whom* dead or dying?

What is its life expectancy?