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Otterbein College Humanities Journal



Spring 2005

Aegis: The Otterbein College Humanities Journal

Statement of Editorial Policy

A journal designed to catalyze a deeper critical appreciation of the humanities at Otterbein College, *Aegis* seeks scholarly essays and book reviews that advance the presence and values of the humanities on campus and beyond.

In accord with the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) definition of the humanities, *Aegis* will consider scholarly essays and book reviews in the following disciplines: history; philosophy; languages; linguistics; literature; archeology; jurisprudence; the history, theory, and criticism of the arts; ethics; and comparative religion.

Essays and reviews of books in the social sciences that are historical or philosophical in approach—or that involve questions of interpretation or criticism traditionally in the humanities—will also be eligible for publication in *Aegis*. *Aegis* will also consider essays and reviews of books that use the disciplines of the humanities to interpret, analyze, or assess science and technology.

Essays should be between 10-20 pages—in twelve point type, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman font with standard one-inch margins. This includes pages devoted to notes and/or works cited pages. Book reviews should be between 4-8 pages—in twelve point type, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font with standard one-inch margins.

Aegis is committed to nonsexist language and to wording free of hostile overtones.

Aegis will appear annually during the first week of May of each calendar year. Essays and book reviews will be received on a rolling basis. The deadline for the coming year's edition shall be the second Friday of Winter Quarter. Essays and book reviews received after this date will be considered for the following year's edition—even if the writer is in the final year of his/her study at Otterbein.

Submissions, prepared according either to the *MLA Style Manual* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*, should be sent in duplicate and addressed to Paul Eisenstein, Faculty Advisor, *Aegis*, 227 Towers Hall, Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio, 43081. If you are submitting through the U.S. Mail and wish for one copy of your submission to be returned, please include a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage. Authors' names should not appear on submitted essays; instead, submissions should be accompanied by a cover sheet, on which appear the author's name, address, and the title of the essay. All essays accepted for publication will need eventually to be submitted on hard diskette in Microsoft Word.

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Editors' Introduction

● ● ● *Ashar Foley and Michelle Yost*

At the inception of *Aegis*, we wished to provide a forum for students to exchange their research and ideas within the disciplines of the humanities, a goal concurrent with Otterbein College's mission to provide a broad liberal arts education. Both the humanities' qualitative values and the philosophy of the liberal arts aim to cultivate critical thinking in their practitioners and students, thus fostering an educated, interested, and versatile populace. As Milan Kundera writes in *The Art of the Novel*, this invested encouragement of inquiry is crucial to us in an era beleaguered by "the din of easy, quick answers that come faster than the question and block it off" (18). Closer to home, personally valuing inquiry and enlightenment is significant to each of our futures: once we are loosed upon the professional world, it will not be our ability to recite facts by rote that determines our potential worth to an employer, but our ability to synthesize new concepts with an old paradigm. John Locke stated, "[O]f all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education" (74). At this stage in our lives, who we are is very much determined by what we *choose* to learn. It is the contention of the humanities as well as of the liberal arts that the most desirable education is one that aims at a greater understanding of all humanity—through exposure to new languages, religions, histories, and literatures—and that this understanding can help us to see and overcome the artificially constructed differences that often stand between us. The old adage "ignorance is bliss" may be ironic, but it also has dangerous implications, leading us to fear engagement with the unknown or to engage the unknown in the wrong manner. Our forebears having spent ten thousand years constructing human civilization, we should not revel in knowing nothing about it. The anonymous authors of the *Treatise of the Three Imposters* warned that "the world is filled with vain and ridiculous opinions; nothing is better able to give them currency than ignorance" ([Anderson] 95). Therefore we must choose to learn everything we can to combat willful ignorance. It is not enough to read only one book or to hear only one philosophy; rather we must have a plurality of philosophies and viewpoints upon which to draw. In this way, education is the foundation of a functional democracy, and when we leave this campus, it will hopefully be with the versatile, multi-faceted knowledge with which to make the proverbial contribution to society. Humbly, we hope that *Aegis* will be one of many factors in the individual's pursuit of enlightenment at Otterbein College.

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Interview with Dr. Sherrie A. Inness: New Research, Unexpected Sources

● ● ● *Ashar Foley and Michelle Yost*

Aegis had the opportunity to interview one of Otterbein College's 2004 visiting Humanities Scholars, Dr. Sherri A. Inness. We asked her about her investigations of unconventional primary sources, and how these investigations effect change within both academic and non-academic spheres.

AEGIS: While you are professor of American literature, you publish works dealing with popular culture, philosophy, and history as well as literature. How did your studies in American and, presumably, English literature lead you to such interdisciplinary research interests?

INNESS: I've always been interested in women's studies, so I've done a great deal of work with women's studies issues, whether it's in teaching a class in a women's studies department or studying literature and culture issues from a gender/race perspective. I also think [...] that, these days—certainly in the contemporary world of academe—you find so many people take a more cultural studies approach to their work than merely focusing on American literature or British literature.

AEGIS: So you find a lot more flexibility in the fields of English and women's studies now?

INNESS: There's a great deal of flexibility that doesn't always manifest itself in every undergraduate class. [...] I think probably we all would agree that some of the best work being done today is by people [...] questioning what it means to be a literature professor [...]. Does it just mean that you have to focus on canonical texts by great authors? No.

AEGIS: Among all the work done in the humanities, studies of traditionally marginalized groups have been particularly effective in changing the popular discourse. For example, ethnic studies have increased the general knowledge and acceptance of ethnic individuals and their issues. Throughout your career, how have you seen the rise of women's studies alter the popular perception of women? Going further, how may it have altered the experience of being a woman?

INNESS: One thing that it has altered is the whole idea of women being important and being as important to consider as men. Part of this is considering how women's popular culture carries the same influential cultural messages as does [that of] men. One area that I'm fascinated by is girls' culture because this is a field that only gradually is being let into the academic community, only gradually let into the academic discourse. Still we'll find [...] professors who don't mention girls whatsoever. They mention women, adult women, but young girls are left out or [...] laughed at as funny or not as important. Many think about Barbie as being less important than GI Joe, but this attitude is shifting. What you discover in the academy is that, over the last few decades, there has been a boom in interest in girls' studies across the disciplines.

AEGIS: Do you think this will alter how we view girls' culture and how we approach their Barbies and TV shows?

INNESS: It's definitely giving it more importance than in earlier years, and [it's] something that's being taken much more seriously. I have a friend, for instance, getting her doctorate in communications at Temple University now, and she's writing her dissertation on girls' television shows. So, even though she's from a bit of a different discipline, she's looking at shows such as *The Powerpuff Girls* and other shows, talking about the role of the girl hero—again, something that you wouldn't have seen twenty-five years ago. She said that there was a lot of acceptance for her work—it wasn't marginalized because she was looking at girls and their interests.

AEGIS: In your anthology, *Kitchen Culture in America*, you edited a collection of essays that investigates how women learn gender and societal roles, not just in the kitchen, but in cookbooks, cooking shows, magazines, sex manuals. You call for a critical analysis of these cultural phenomena, stating "We need to reflect on how and by whom the food items that we consume are created, as well as about how food serves as a marker of identity in our culture." Our question is, do you see this work and those akin to it as change agents and, if so, what is your vision of the changed society?

INNESS: Absolutely, there is room to change society by thinking about gender and food. This is the area that's particularly crucial because it's something we just haven't given enough thought to, or perhaps it's [...] that we thought about food as being [within] a specific discipline, such as nutrition, or maybe the history of food, or the anthropology of food, but not as much attention has been [paid] to [the] more broad cultural lessons and lessons about gender roles that food and its culture convey to us. I am fascinated by how much food is a marker of who we want to be, and also it's about how we set up various boundaries between ourselves and the world. For instance, some of my students at Miami say, "We won't eat Chinese food, it's too unusual." Well, obviously there's more going on than simply saying a food preference. Lessons about race and strongly racist stereotypes are also being conveyed. Food choices are about different issues, including what's exotic and what's Other.

AEGIS: One of the things we were personally curious about was that women obviously seem to find their place in the kitchen—they've been there for hundreds of years—so, why is it that the culinary arts have become so popular among males that we have Emeril, Rocco de Spirito, Jamie Oliver, and that these male figures have become so important in restaurants?

INNESS: Actually, there's a long tradition that goes back for centuries of assuming that the best chefs must be male, that men are the only ones who can operate on that very highest of culinary levels. Obviously, it makes a difference that they're getting paid large salaries, too. It also makes a difference that they're allowed to be creative [whereas] the woman who has to feed her four kids seven days of the week doesn't always have that opportunity.

AEGIS: Throughout your research, you employ a variety of surprising primary texts, a few examples of which are cookbooks, toys, films, juvenile serial fiction, and women's colleges. Were your research questions inspired by your encounters with these everyday items, and what are the challenges and rewards of working with these sorts of texts?

INNESS: One reason I've looked at so many everyday objects, such as cookbooks or Girl Scouts series books, is because I've seen them out there in our popular culture and wondered about what cultural work they were doing. I wrote an essay on the American Girls Collection because I saw the American Girl dolls and their very posh homes, equipped with every sort of luxury known to dolls. I was interested by what exactly [they were] doing out in culture, and why many of my students had actually purchased American Girl dolls or wanted to purchase them for children in the future. What messages were being sold to women and girls? I've always been curious about how some of these popular texts shape women's or girls' lives. I'm fascinated by how real women's lives, whether in the 1920s or today, are really being influenced.

AEGIS: What are the challenges of those sorts of texts?

INNESS: With some of the popular texts, you're not going to find the same amount of scholarship that's already been done on Shakespeare; if you're going to research him, you can go to the library and find dozens, hundreds of books that you can use. [With] the American Girls Collection, it's going to be very tricky to find anything, or you're going to have to find something that has been written about a broader topic, such as the history of dolls in the United States, and apply it to your subject.

AEGIS: On a personal level, how do you think these "en-gendered" books and films, advertising, and media representations of feminine life influenced your own concept of yourself in society?

INNESS: It's interesting to think about how they influence you, no matter how much of a cagey consumer you are, no matter how much you've recognized that some of the images they are selling us and sending to us are false, but at the same time, it's easy to get lured in. Consider Martha Stewart [...]: when I read her books, I know many of my friends have said one of the difficult aspects of reading such glamorous food-writing is that you think to yourself, "Maybe I should be doing it like that. Maybe my food should look quite as glamorous as hers does." I know many women who feel pressure to be that over-achieving super-woman, someone who really can cook at that kind of gourmet level and also have a professional job and also balance all kinds of other demands. It's impossible for almost anyone to escape the influence of such popular works.

AEGIS: Would you like to see those popular works changed?

INNESS: I'd say that I'd like to see some popular works changed, but not everything because it's such a huge area. Think about a character such as Barbie, for instance: you could criticize her image. Why does she have that Malibu beach house and why doesn't she have a more realistic job? You also have to see how women read against that image, or [how] girls read against it, too. I know many girls who would play with Barbie but [...] have her being a surgeon, instead of a school teacher. We do rebel against society's gender stereotypes.

Dr. Sherrie A. Inness is Professor of American literature at Miami University. A prolific scholar, her most recent books include *Disco Divas: Women and Popular Culture in the 1970s* and *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*. During her visit to Otterbein, she presented her research in the latter work.

Philosophy, Medicine, and Jurisprudence: Klimt's Contemplation of Human Existence

● ● ● Kari Bengé

Gustav Klimt carved himself a place in history through his gutsy interpretations of the themes, *Philosophy*, *Medicine*, and *Jurisprudence*. Living in a period in which classical painting was a way of life, Klimt was considered one of the leading modern artists of his time in Vienna, Austria. Vienna University asked him to be a part of a major painting project that would inspire scholars for generations to come. Instead of conforming to public views of art, Klimt used this opportunity to deviate from the ordinary and to unveil to the world a new way of thinking and painting. Commissioned to glorify Vienna University's academic faculties, Gustav Klimt used the three "university paintings," as the media referred to them—*Philosophy*, *Medicine*, and *Jurisprudence*—to explore the insignificance of humanity's voice in its own fate and the eternal recurrence of its existence.

The conception of the idea of "the university paintings" occurred in 1891. Vienna University submitted plans for decoration of the ceiling, located in the Great Hall of the Heinrich von Ferstel's University building, to the Ministry of Culture and Education (Vergo 49). After debate over who should be commissioned, it was decided that the effort would be split between Gustav Klimt and Franz Matsch: "Matsch was to be responsible for the central panel and *Theology*, Klimt for the remaining faculty paintings and ten of the spandrels (Whitford 68). All together, the ceiling would be decorated with a central panel exemplifying the theme, "The Victory of Light over Darkness," and four faculty paintings entitled, *Theology*, *Philosophy*, *Medicine*, and *Jurisprudence* (Vergo 49). Surrounding these would be sixteen "spandrels, representing, among other disciplines, history, anatomy and the natural sciences" (Whitford 68). Matsch and Klimt were to collaborate on their styles, making the paintings as similar as possible; aside from that, they had free reign to interpret the given subject matter however they pleased. Being two of the most celebrated artists of the time in Vienna and based on the works they had previously produced, it was expected of Matsch and Klimt to come up with powerful, classic pieces similar to Raphael's *School of Athens*.

In 1900, Klimt revealed his first painting, *Philosophy*, to the public in an exhibition at the Secession (Whitford 68). The Secession was "a public building, its potential and intended audience the broad mass of citizens whose tastes the Secessionists hoped to educate and elevate" (Bailey 62). Klimt was an active member amongst this group of artists, the 'Secessionists,' and even served for a time as president. It was *Philosophy*'s unveiling at this exhibition that put into effect a public controversy due to an unforeseen style and content of the university paintings which would last for years, reignited each time another of Klimt's university paintings was initially exhibited. Klimt had reached a point in his career in which he began to reevaluate both his art and himself as an artist: "Having made the transition to Symbolism, Klimt found it impossible to take a traditional positivist approach to the themes he has been assigned [...] the requisite subject matter demanded a sober examination of life's great questions, themes that would preoccupy him throughout the rest of his career" (Bailey 148). The noise surrounding



Philosophy
by Gustav Klimt

Klimt's paintings reached such an extreme that a case was taken to the Viennese Parliament to decide the fate of the paintings. The Parliament ruled in favor of Vienna University, but it was decided that the paintings would not hang in their original planned location, but in a nearby museum gallery. Klimt, however, annoyed and affected by all the negative media attention, decided that the Ministry "could not have the pictures that were still in his possession, in any case unfinished and, as far as he was concerned, his property. The advance payments would be returned" (Whitford 73). In his letter to the bureaucrats, dated April 3, 1905, he explained:

His Excellency, Minister Dr von Hartel, has given me from his actions clearly to understand that my work has now become an embarrassment to those who commissioned it, if this task, which has consumed years of work, is ever to be completed, then I must seek to derive from it once again some satisfaction, and such satisfaction is totally lacking as long as, under the present circumstances, I must continue to regard it as a State commission. I am therefore, faced with the impossibility of bringing this task, which is already so far advanced, to completion. (Vergo 61)

This is a perfect example of how emotionally entwined Klimt had become with his paintings. They were his feelings, his outlet, his way of speaking to the world.

Klimt's university paintings do not exist today. During the Second World War, after Austria's surrender to the Nazis, the castle where *Philosophy*, *Medicine*, and *Jurisprudence* and numerous other paintings had been placed for safekeeping was burned to the ground. In order to prevent the building from falling into enemy hands, retreating S.S. Troops had set the castle ablaze (Vergo 62). While it is regrettable that the paintings that formed such a massive turning point in Klimt's career no longer exist, there are black and white photographs which give a glimpse of how they looked.

Although these photographs are devoid of color, their content and composition are still quite apparent. Klimt's first painting, *Philosophy*, is composed of very organic lines. Along the left edge of the painting, a chain of human figures creates a very solid, vertical line. This chain of bodies begins with young children at the top and continues with figures ageing until finally, at the bottom, an old man seems ready to die. The critic Ludwig Hevesi describes this as "untroubled children, blossoming young bodies entwined, pleasure and torment, labour and strife, the struggle, creation and suffering of existence, and finally the withering, icy greyness of old age" (Frodl, Natter 230). Within the implied downward line of figures, wispy diagonal lines weave in and out creating movement that halts only when the viewer reaches the bottom, where the face of a woman stares out of the painting, making eye contact with the viewer. While the left side of the canvas makes up the foreground, the right side creates depth, implying the endlessness of an outer space that is only broken by the sphinx-like head that forms seemingly out of nothing. Light is also a tool Klimt used to create drama in *Philosophy*. By placing the lightest parts of the painting—the human figures—in a column, the people seem to fuse together and become one. Critic Richard Muther captures the emotion *Philosophy* brings forth when viewed: "The whole weight of thought, the whole colouristic nervousity of our times are embodied. The Heavens open. Golden and silver stars twinkle. Points of light shimmer. Naked forms waft hither. The green mist gathers itself into tangible forms. A fiery head, wreathed in laurels, regards us with large, earnest eyes" (Vergo 50).

Many were very upset about Klimt's interpretation of *Philosophy*, however, "accus[ing] Klimt of presenting 'unclear ideas through unclear forms'" (Schorske 232). The public and those who commissioned *Philosophy* were expecting a very classical painting that celebrated the subject of the title. When Klimt presented his pictorial image of what he saw as philosophy, critics said, "it is nothing but nonsense, translated into the medium of paint and executed upon a large canvas" (Vergo 55). Similar to the majority of new art forms, it was not that the public had a specific problem with Klimt's painting, but rather that it was that the piece was something different, something new, something to which they had been previously unexposed. Another critic, Friedrich Jodl, could only argue that it is "not against nude art, nor against free art that we struggle, [...] but against ugly art" (Schorske 234).

Despite all the criticism, there were many who defended *Philosophy*. A prominent Art History professor of Vienna University, Franz Wickhoff, countered Jodl's attack by holding a lecture with the provocative title, 'What is Ugly' (Vergo 57). The concept of constructing an abstract and unearthly piece of artwork reflecting personal beliefs was a very modern and not yet widely accepted one. One of the few critics who actually appreciated the genius of Klimt's conception wrote:

We see a piece of the universe in mysterious fermentation, a movement whose rhythm can only be guessed at [...]. One thinks of cosmic dust and whirling atoms, of elemental forces, which first seek things out in order to become tangible through them. Swarms of sparks fly about, each spark a red, blue, green, orange-yellow or flashing gold star [...]. At one point in this rolling cloud of colour a green fog accumulates [...]. A stony, immobile visage appears, dark, like that of an Egyptian basalt sphinx [...]. This is an enigma, the image of the riddle of the world, an allusion to it. And flowing from top to bottom past this silent, veiled face is a bright stream of life. (Whitford 69)

This painting is obviously full of symbolism: the chain of figures represents the endless cycle of our human lives, their unclothed state depicts them being handed over to fate and having no say in the everlasting cycle that controls them (Bailey 148). The female head located at the bottom of the painting, as explained in the exhibition catalogue, represents Knowledge (Whitford 69). She is the one who pulls the viewer into the painting, acting as a link between the viewer and the passive chain of humanity drifting through space. Klimt portrays Knowledge as the only conscious piece in the never-ending chain. She is the only connection that man has with the viewer, the depths of space, and the unknown, as represented by the sphinx-like vision, which could also be interpreted as the sum of all the gods of human worship. Knowledge "provides the key to the riddle of human existence. Only with its aid can man make sense of what might otherwise seem to be a pointless and aimless life" (Whitford 69). This is the idea Klimt attempted to portray through *Philosophy*: while humanity's place in the universe amounts to "blind energy in an endless round of meaningless parturience, love and death," as Schorske so eloquently expresses, there is but one hope for understanding and making contact with the unknown—Knowledge.

Medicine was the next in the series of Klimt's university paintings. Compositionally, this was very similar to Klimt's previous painting, being made up of very organic and natural lines. The right side and background of the painting is dominated by a "swarm" of human figures

creating a circular line and a sense of motion around a dark, central skull figure. This circle is a mass of human bodies, all at different stages in life, from birth to death. They twist and fold around one another, giving the illusion of one giant organism. Schorske describes this section of the painting as “a phantasmagoria of half-dreaming humanity, sunk in instinctual semi-surrender, passive in the flow of fate. Death dwells centrally within this river of life, his black veil swirling strong among the tangled bodies of the living” (240). The left side and middle ground is comprised of a woman pulled out from the mass of bodies with a baby at her feet. The viewer’s eye is taken from the mass of humanity on the right, to the woman floating by herself, to the priestess figure in the foreground at the bottom of the painting. This priestess woman is noticeably separate from the circle of humanity behind her; yet she, because of her gaze, acknowledging the viewer, is the link between the viewer and the mass of people. She holds up a snake that seems to blend with the linear decorations on her highly ornamented dress, giving her an air of superiority. Light is once again used to create drama: with a dark center, the circle of much lighter figures blends into a sea of bodies. Bailey describes this as hovering “between linear dynamism and physical passivity, between sensuality and spirituality, and between proximity and distance” (149).

One would think, having been exposed to *Philosophy*, the public’s reaction to *Medicine* would be less dramatic; however, this was not the case: “No longer was it mere professors who attacked his work, but powerful politicians as well” (Schorske 242). The public could not seem to get past Klimt’s use of nude figures in his pieces. One critic exclaims, “The figures represented in these pictures might be suitable for an anatomical museum, not, however, for one of the public rooms of the university [...] where they must, on account of their crudeness of conception and aesthetic deficiency, offend the general public” (Vergo 58). They even accused Klimt of being a pornographer because of his realistic depiction of female nudes (Whitford 72). Interestingly, doctors were also highly offended by the painting. The reviewer for a popular medical journal, the *Medizinische Wochenschrift*, wrote, “Klimt’s *Medicine* is not a representation of medicine. For quite apart from all tradition, the artist [...] must [...] make two important functions evident: first healing and, second, the prevention of disease. Of these two functions not a trace is to be seen in Klimt’s picture. It depicts birth, sickness and death [...] the work has nothing to do with the nature of medicine” (Whitford 72). In support of this, Bitsori and Galanakis argue, “it was obvious that the painter wanted to emphasize the powerlessness of the healing arts and made no attempt to represent the triumph of medicine in the way that doctors would expect” (2).

Klimt did not try to defend his erotic way of painting women; he simply explained that he had a lack of interest in “my own person as the ‘subject of the picture,’ I am more interested in other people, above all, women” (Vergo 60). Klimt’s friends and contemporary defenders presented him to the public as a “misunderstood, lonely artist who was persecuted for his rebellious art” (Bitsori, Galanakis 2). At this time, when *Medicine* was presented to the public in 1901, the “university painting controversy” had been going strong for close to two years. Klimt and his defenders obviously had heard the same or similar statements made over and over. Less and less public statements were made on his behalf, although, as one can see by Klimt’s continuance with the project, he firmly stood his ground in defense of his paintings.

In the same way as with *Philosophy*, Klimt used *Medicine* to make a statement. Beginning with the background of the painting, the skeletal figure represents death. Death is a central part of the circle of humanity; not only does humanity revolve around Death, but Death’s dark veil branches out and becomes part of the circle of endless figures representing humanity: “these figures are profoundly unfree, at the mercy of some higher power” (Hofmann 23). The young,



Medicine
by Gustav Klimt

healthy woman who emerges from the circle, drifting above a baby, represents Life: the only links between the drifting bodies and Life are provided by Life's extended arm and the arm of a male nude shown from the back (Bitsori, Galanakis 2). This shows the doctors' feeble control over life and death through medicine. In the foreground, seemingly of little relevance to what is taking place behind her, is a richly dressed priestess representing Hygeia, the Greek goddess of medicine (Whitford 72). According to the Greek legend:

Hygeia is ambiguity par excellence; accordingly, she is associated with the snake, the most ambiguous of creatures. Along with her brother Asclepius, Hygeia was born a snake out to the tellurian swamp, the land of death. The snake, amphibious creature, phallic symbol with bisexual associations, is the great dissolver of boundaries: between land and sea, man and woman, life and death [...]. Thus Klimt proclaims the unity of life and death, the interpenetration of instinctual vitality and personal dissolution. (Schorske 242)

Klimt used *Medicine* to imply that Life and Death are an endless cycle, each so entwined with the other they cannot break free. Medicine merely pulls life away from this eternal recurrence for a fraction of a second, never rid of the arm which will inevitably pull Life back into the never-ending circle.

Jurisprudence is the third and final piece in the collection of Klimt's university paintings. *Jurisprudence*, similar to *Philosophy* and *Medicine*, is organized into three very distinct grounds. The foreground and bottom of the painting are comprised of an old man being consumed by a giant octopus, his head bent with his hands clasped behind his back in shame. The middle ground and midsection have three female goddess figures in vertical positions with a thick black fog swirling around them. The background and top of the painting contains three smaller, standing females with the two on either side bending towards the middle woman. Floating in vertical bands around their feet are heads, which almost become nonexistent as they blend in with the elaborate patterns behind the three women. While this painting is comprised of many organic lines, it does not contain as much movement as the previous two paintings. The implied lines are mostly vertical and horizontal, with the only movement brought about by the black mist surrounding the three goddess figures in the middle ground. Light is once again used to create drama, drawing the viewer's eye first to the hunched man, then to the three goddesses, and finally to the busy background. Ludwig Hevesi, a critic and friend of Klimt, first saw *Jurisprudence* a few months before its completion in Klimt's studio. His explanation of what he saw is quite detailed:

Never was a painter more fantastical, and yet more true to Nature. How many times has he drawn the old sinner who appears in *Jurisprudence* as the accused. This old, emaciated man, with sunken head and hunched back [...] he stands there, his gaze averted, already condemned. On that occasion, he looked like a mere shadow on the canvas, tormented by three incorporeal ghosts. These three [...] twentieth-century lemurs, by Klimt out of the daughters of Toorop, yet unmistakably with their father's features [...] and then the reddish hair, these strange, comet-like tresses around their heads, studded with gold [...] golden snakes with gleaming teeth [...]. Conscience gnaws with golden fangs! No, in fact Conscience is represented by the giant squid in whose tentacles the

poor sinner is emmeshed. A mighty octopus which, pressing its body against his, wrestles with the accused. A monster of skin and slime, indestructible, insuperable [...]. And yet, a magnificent squid, its skin patterned with spots like a leopard. The latest design of a submarine leopard [...]. There is, indeed, a black humour about the whole thing. Unsuspected, it emerges from this fantasy of grimness and gravity like the golden snakes from the hair of the Gorgons. (Vergo 81)

Passages like this one let people living today know what it must have felt like to stand before one of Klimt's paintings. Without this particular passage, the colors of *Jurisprudence* might as well have never existed; fortunately, Hevesi brings them back to life.

Not everyone was this receptive to *Jurisprudence*, however. While most of the controversy over the paintings had died down, the critic Karl Kraus didn't relent and was one of the main voices of opposition against Klimt's *Jurisprudence*: "[F]or Herr Klimt, the concept of Jurisprudence is exhausted by the notions of crime and punishment. To him, the 'rule of law' means nothing more than 'hunt them down and wring their necks.' And to those who are more than content to have 'nothing to do with the law' he presents the terrifying image of the transgressor" (Vergo 83). They also had problems with the style of the painting. Critics said, "[A]t least *Philosophy* and *Medicine* were similar in style and composition, but *Jurisprudence* was so much simpler, bolder and more powerful in its colours than either of the earlier pictures that it might have been produced by another artist entirely" (Whitford 73).

Ludwig Hevesi was one of the few people to voice his liking of *Jurisprudence*. Moser was also a fan, and in 1903 created a beautifully designed exhibition exclusively to contain works by Klimt and spotlight his university paintings. While Klimt's paintings weren't exactly loved by the public, the unveiling of *Jurisprudence* didn't create the shock that *Philosophy* and *Medicine* had because the novelty of their unique newness had subsided.

However, even though the painting is the last in the set of three, it does not mean that it has any less significance. *Jurisprudence* is centered around the old man, one of the bodies that makes up the chain in *Philosophy* and the circle in *Medicine*. Formerly buried and unheeded, the man's consciousness—represented by the octopus—has now overpowered him and is holding him at trial before the three goddesses. These Goddesses of Fate have power over this dark domain and are in complete control of what will happen to this man (Hofmann 23). Pushed to the back and made to seem insignificant are "the allegorical figures of *Jurisprudence*: Truth, Justice, and Law" (Schorske 250). Klimt equates these figures with those of Knowledge in *Philosophy* and Life in *Medicine*: they are present, yet have no real authority in humanity's fate. Klimt gives the actual judges even less credit. They are just "there with their dry little faces, heads without bodies" (Schorske 250). The viewer has a hard time even recognizing their existence because they blend into the decorative pattern of the background. This symbolizes the superficiality of judges. Schorske gives a great description of the statement Klimt makes through *Jurisprudence*: "the reality of the law, however, lies not in that upper realm of stylized regularity and static decorum, but in the vacuum-like space beneath, where justice is carried out. No crime is recorded here, only punishment" (251).

Gustav Klimt was a very introverted man; it was through his paintings that he developed a voice which would speak to the world. Instead of using traditional methods for his university paintings, Klimt's methods are "personal, and in each case extraordinarily pessimistic. Human-



Jurisprudence
by Gustav Klimt

kind is depicted as a mass of suffering bodies whose plight cannot be ameliorated by the mortal disciplines taught by any of the faculties in question” (Bailey 63). Klimt uses the themes *Philosophy*, *Medicine*, and *Jurisprudence* to show the public that humanity is not anything significant. Along the same lines as Friedrich Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence theory, he uses the chain and circle of humanity in *Philosophy* and *Medicine* to show that no one is special (Nietzsche 467). Each person is merely part of a flow of humanity that is everlasting. As a whole, the university paintings have “two interacting fields of force: one is the ordinary human experience; the other is the rigid power of the forces that govern man” (Hofmann 24). Gustav Klimt came to the conclusion through his paintings that humanity is nothing exceptional: mankind is nothing more than a recurring blip in the universe, paint on a canvas for the gods to manipulate with the flick of a wrist.

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The Dissolution of the White-Indian Dichotomy: The Development of Empathy as Historical Reconstruction

● ● ● *Jason Carney*

The manner in which historians have perceived Native Americans is constantly being defined and refined. For quite some time historians have been sensitive to a euro-centric or a white view of “Indians,” a view which hides important aspects of the Native American role in colonization.¹ By historiographically analyzing a series of articles and books published from 1973 to 1998, I will characterize the development of the “white view” of Native Americans that historians believe has become inadequate for forming a proper understanding of colonization. Accordingly, I will attempt to construct the authentic view of the Native American’s role in colonization that contemporary historians believe is necessary for a full understanding of the White-Indian colonial relationship. At some points, this authentic view of Native Americans is explicitly described by the analyzed historians, the article under analysis directly speaking to a need for such a view. Other times, however, the view must be described using implications present in the methodology, tone, and connotations of a historian’s scholarship. By characterizing the view of Native Americans that historians are rejecting and by attempting to glimpse the view of Native Americans that historians are promoting, we can begin to see two historiographical trends: (1) Historians were and are conscious of a European monopoly on constructing historical reality in colonization; (2) Historians are attempting to understand and ultimately *empathize* with the Native American experience of colonization.

I. Establishing a positive and separate Native American identity

In 1978, James Axtell defined ethnohistory as “the use of historical methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of *change in a culture*.”² When this definition of ethnohistory is applied to historians’ perceptions of Native Americans in colonization, we can lay the bedrock for the white view of Native Americans that historians are attempting to move past. When applied to the Native American population in the context of colonization, the phrase, “change in a culture,” presupposes the existence of a separate Native American cultural identity. Rather than the “Indians”³ being assessed using Euro-hegemonic cultural terms—such as “wanting in a long list of attributes: letters, laws, government, clothing, arts, trade, agriculture, marriage, morals, metal goods, and above all religion”⁴—Native Americans are viewed as having individual cultures. Rather than the “Indians” simply being assessed as Europeans lacking European attributes—in other words a negative entity—they are viewed as a separate positive culture altogether.

A year later, Calvin Martin wrote that “the tendency to interpret another [Native American] culture using the norms and values of one’s own culture as a point of reference”⁵ results in research which “is essentially White history: White reality, white thoughtworld.”⁶ This reliance on “White history,” Martin goes on, “has its place [...] but the point is that it has subtly transgressed its explanatory boundaries to pose as the sole or only valid or only serious explanation of what transpired when Indian and White met.”⁷ The view of Native Americans this statement seems

to reject is one generated from the “White thoughtworld,” which Martin believes is extremely different from the Indian one.

What are the consequences of viewing Native Americans while seated in the White thoughtworld? Martin believes that “the Indian was a participant-observer of nature, whereas we in our Western culture tend to be voyeurs. We keep our distance from Nature; we plunge into it enveloped by an arsenal of protective paraphernalia or admire it through a picture frame or scrutinize it through a microscope lens.”⁷⁸ Martin can only mean that the Indian thoughtworld is something that must be kept in mind while assessing Indian culture.

II. Identifying the morally-charged roots of White-Indian historiography

However, does Martin make any moral judgments of the White thoughtworld? Terms like “*arsenal* of protective paraphernalia”⁷⁹ connote an inherent aggressiveness in the White thoughtworld, if we are to accept “arsenal” as generally referring to weapons. Quite possibly, by using the example, “admiring [nature] through a picture frame,”¹⁰ a picture frame being an entity responsible for setting up aesthetic boundaries, the ultimate subjugation of nature to European “progress and development”¹¹ is predicted and acknowledged. The phrase, “*scrutinize* [nature] through a microscope lens”¹² sets up the White thoughtworld as unquestionably separate from nature—a muddy dog at a white tablecloth dinner. In characterizing the Indian thoughtworld, Martin says “the chief aim in life in virtually all North American Indian societies was to be saturated with the primordial Power of Nature which seemed to pulsate throughout all creation.”¹³ This characterization, when set in opposition to the White thoughtworld, connotes Europeans as invaders of nature, connotes White skin as ultimately a powerful inhibitor against union with nature.

In 1973, John A. Price, addressing stereotypical depictions of Native Americans in movies, wrote, “as a predominant feature in their way of life, most Indians did not regularly ride horses, hunt large game, wear tailored hide clothing, or wear feathers in their hair.”¹⁴ He goes on to say, “other rich and diverse North American cultural heritage[s] should not be displaced or *demeaned*”¹⁵ through such biased and narrow portrayals.”¹⁶ Before Axtell considers the historical changes in Native American culture, before Martin begins talking about a “White thoughtworld,” Price acknowledges an unfair “demeaning” of Native Americans through stereotyping by popular culture, a *morally-charged* conviction. The cultural-disenfranchisement of “North American Indians”¹⁷ is further defined by Price: “Indian life was seen [in silent films] as savage and at an earlier stage of development, and therefore rightly vanishing as Indians are exterminated or assimilated into white society.”¹⁸ His morally-charged focus on Native American stereotyping represents a sentiment present in White-Indian historiography at the time. Martin and Axtell never explicitly state moral motivations in their scholarship. However, if we consider Price’s historiographical placement—a mere five years before Axtell—a moral motivation in some form might be attributed to the development of Axtell’s and Martin’s shared agenda, an *apparently* morally neutral agenda to enrich the research of the Native American experience during colonization.

A year after Price’s article, in 1974, Kenneth M. Morrison wrote, “According to [...] the classic civilized-primitive duality [...] Europeans were superior to savage people because they could point to a written history which was both progressive and cumulative.”¹⁹ His analysis of this classic “civilized-primitive duality” very clearly characterizes the historiographical consideration of “Amerindians”²⁰ at the time: “Recent considerations of the American Indian show

that this view is incorrect in its assessment of both Europeans and Indians. Aboriginal cultures had political, economic and social structures. More amazingly, in light of civilized judgments, primitive people developed highly sophisticated and normative ethical systems independent of Hebraic or Christian revelation. The civilized-primitive framework can no longer be taken seriously.²¹ Although this statement seems typical of the historiographical framework characterized by Axtell and Martin, it possesses some of the same morally-charged biases so blatant in Price. The language, “more *amazingly*,” connotes a not-so-distant historiographical scene wherein the idea of primitive people developing sophisticated systems of ethics would have been a peculiarity, an interesting piece of jaw-dropping party trivia. The adjective “primitive” is also dated in this context, in that today we understand it more as a temporal identifier. Morrison uses “primitive” in an old-fashioned manner, as a description of what we Europeans might consider undeveloped, uncultured, simple, pastoral, or other such masked pejoratives.

III. The moral-charge of Axtell’s and Martin’s view of Native Americans

At this point the rejected historiographical approach to Native Americans, deduced from the cues and clues evident in Axtell and Martin, has two characteristics: (1) Native American culture is viewed as non-pluralistic and as merely a European culture lacking certain traits, a culture which “[stands] in error and [is] deficient in civilization,”²² and (2) Native American culture is viewed as separated from nature in the *same* way we Europeans are separated from nature by our White-thoughtworld, as characterized by Martin. Although the perception of Native Americans inherent in the scholarship of Axtell and Martin seems to lack a moral charge (and ultimately a quantity of bias associated with a guilt-ridden European who has taken the destruction of the Native Americans upon his or her shoulders), we can see its influences and development in the earlier morally charged scholarship of Price and Morrison.

Accordingly, works that seem to be free of such moral biases, for example those of Axtell and Martin, follow in the moral tradition of their scholarly predecessors. Axtell implies that Europeans set themselves at the capstone of some sort of natural hierarchy of humanity, a moral assessment which needs to be assessed, rectified, and corrected to the vilification of the Europeans, the Europeans who forced the Native Americans into a cultural identity defined by a negativity. However, this identity pigeonholes the Europeans as existing in a completely separate world from that of Native Americans, a *morally deficient*, aggressive, binding, and intrusive world.²³

IV. Establishing Native Americans as participants in cultural war

In 1981, Kathleen Joan Bragdon, attempting a reevaluation of New England Native American stereotypes during the post King Phillips war era, wrote, “in spite of [...] pressures towards illegal behavior, notwithstanding their well-documented abuse of alcohol, the Indians of late 17th and 18th century Massachusetts do not seem to have merited the reputation for laziness, insubordination and thievery attributed to them by the commentaries of the period, *any more*²⁴ than did the English.”²⁵ Up to this point, it had been the historiographical trend to consider Native Americans, although as worthy of a voice in the Colonial narrative as Whites, as a different voice altogether.²⁶

Bragdon, however, begins²⁷ a trend in which Native Americans are considered not so different from the White Colonials. Although the Colonials are subject to a completely different culture, a primary empathy is established with the Native Americans due to their committing

illegal behavior no more or less than Whites. The historiographical agenda in the Bragdon article is to portray Indian illegal behavior as neither meriting any special emphasis nor any special downplay. They are on the same level as the Whites with whom they were sharing the American Colonial stages at that point in history.

As is evident in the Bragdon article, the historiographical view of Native Americans in the 1980s takes a more empathetic turn from the European side,²⁸ with the White Colonials and Native Americans understood as not so intrinsically different in psychology or worldview, as characterized by Martin. This empathetic spin in the 80s is not that the Indians are given European traits, nor is it, in accordance with Martin's ideas, that the White historians finally and nobly understand themselves as perceiving a world outside of the Indian thoughtworld. To properly represent this rising empathy for the Native American experience of colonialism, we must return to Axtell seven years after the first article cited in this paper.

In Axtell's book, *The Invasion Within*, published in 1985, he portrays the Native Americans of Colonial New England and New France not only as victims of cultural Imperialism but also as *participants* in cultural Imperialism: "[T]he Indian's conversion of hundreds of 'civilized' captives to 'savage' life tore from the hands of the colonists, however briefly, their sharp conceit as the 'chosen people' of God and their unexamined faith in the superiority of their own customs and opinions."²⁹ In this book, the Native Americans are no longer perceived as a defenseless cultural force caught in the throes of European oppression and obliteration. Rather, the Native Americans are portrayed as an active force in a larger arena of cultural conflict, a force capable of making choices, of coordinating a strategy, of doing everything *but* standing silently with their hands folded, waiting to be converted and relocated. The Axtell of 1985 and Bragdon of 1981 assess both cultural forces, White and Native American, along the same lines and factors as combatants in a cultural war.

V. The White-Indian dichotomy dissolves: empathy utilized as reconstruction

Seven years after Axtell's *The Invasion Within* (1992), Virginia DeJohn Anderson began her article about Native American attempts at livestock domestication with a story representing the extent to which the Native American and European experiences of colonization can be accessed through empathy:

"On a late spring day in 1669, the ambitious younger son of a prominent Rhode Island family received a letter from the town clerk of Portsmouth. [...]. We can only wonder what Metacom, whom the English called King Phillip, made of the preemptory directive from the Portsmouth town clerk – for indeed it was to him, son of Massasoit and now sachem of the Wampanoags himself, that the letter was addressed."³⁰

Anderson's tactic is to catch the reader, seated in a Euro-hegemonic mindset, off guard by allowing him to assume that only Whites were "ambitious younger son[s] of prominent [...] Rhode Island famili[es]."³¹

When she reveals that this person, described the same way a European is typically described, is in fact a Native American, she portrays that the socio-economic hurdles of the era were not faced exclusively by Europeans, but were also dealt with by Natives and oftentimes that these hurdles were faced using the same tactics. This is an interesting change of historiography

when compared to the earlier Price statement of 1978: “the tendency to interpret another [Native American] culture using the norms and values of one’s own culture as a point of reference”³² results in research which “is essentially White history: White reality, white thoughtworld.”³³ If we note that Anderson’s historiographical view of Native Americans seems to run contrary to that of Martin, we can conclude that things have indeed changed in twelve years.

The use of empathy to reconstruct the Native American experience of colonization becomes most clear in the work of Helen C. Rountree. In her article, “Powhatan Indian Women: the People Captain John Smith Barely Saw,” she employs “living history” tactics to understand a generally undocumented female Native American lifestyle. Interviewing the Native American staff at the Jamestown Settlement museum, Rountree reports, “[T]he settlement’s Indian Village staff could tell me in detail about doing hands-on crafts that could be practiced in town.”³⁴

To further characterize her unorthodox research tactics and the extent to which she allows herself to empathize with the Native American experience, consider her description of Indian root-digging: “Digging Tuckahoe for bread making was women’s work. [...]. It can be very hard work in itself, as we have discovered; it also involved travel [...] which in turn required women to have regular access to dugout canoes and strong bodies to paddle them. Before I tried any foraging or canoe paddling, I thought of Indian women as hardworking but not ‘fitness nuts.’”³⁵ As is obvious, much of Rountree’s research insights come from her actually reliving, to some extent, the experiences of the Native Americans. The historiographical scene at the time permitted this style of research; however, it would have been looked upon with a raised brow in the era of Martin and his Indian thoughtworld.

Although the white view of Native Americans began with assessing Indian-culture strictly as a negative (as a European culture lacking certain traits), it developed into a more positive entity, with Indians possessing their own culture characterized by different traits altogether. This movement, motivated by a morally charged trend which can be seen in the earlier works of Price and Morrison, was not free of bias. The dichotomy that would have had White historians completely distance themselves from Native American reality, propagated by Martin, eventually gave way to a more empathetic historiography. This empathetic historiography raised the status of Native Americans from a separate, distant, and intrinsically different cultural force subject to European encroachments to active participants in the historical tides of their era. As the historiography of our contemporary era reveals itself, historians are understanding themselves and their life experiences as not so different from that of the Native Americans.

Notes

¹ This statement should be taken in the context of my limited research survey, shown in the Works Cited.

² James Axtell, “The Ethnohistory of Early America: A Review Essay,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978): 110.

³ The quotation marks are present to emphasize that this term was the reference for the Native American community at this point in the historiography.

⁴ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Incorporated, 1978), 11.

- ⁵ Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," *Ethnohistory* 26 (1979): 153.
- ⁶ *Ibid*, 153.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 153.
- ⁸ *Ibid*, 154.
- ⁹ *Ibid*, 154. My italics.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, 154.
- ¹¹ I am not sure how to characterize the European Colonial narrative at this point. I think it would popularly be referred to as "progress and development," but in the context of this paper I did not think that would be appropriate. Rather than the words "progress and development," I considered using "cultural diffusion." But that would imply wrongly that Native American culture just stepped out of the way. For the sake of irony, I decided to keep it the way it is.
- ¹² *Ibid*, 154. My italics.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, 155.
- ¹⁴ John A. Price, "The Stereotyping of North American Indians in Motion Pictures," *Ethnohistory* 20 (1973): 154.
- ¹⁵ My emphasis.
- ¹⁶ John A. Price, "The Stereotyping of North American Indians in Motion Pictures," *Ethnohistory* 20 (1973): 154.
- ¹⁷ Price's phrase. This term gives way to "Native American" in later articles and books
- ¹⁸ John A. Price, "The Stereotyping of North American Indians in Motion Pictures," *Ethnohistory* 20 (1973): 154.
- ¹⁹ Kenneth M. Morrison, "'The Art of Coyning Christians': John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts," *Ethnohistory* 21(1974): 77.
- ²⁰ Morrison's phrase. This is the first time I came across it in my research. I'm not really sure when it was first being used, or when "North American Indian" gave way to it, as in Price's article.
- ²¹ Kenneth M. Morrison, "'The Art of Coyning Christians': John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusetts," *Ethnohistory* 21(1974): 77-78.
- ²² Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Incorporated, 1978), 11.
- ²³ Defined previously by assessing the connotations present in Martin's statements.
- ²⁴ My emphasis.
- ²⁵ Kathleen Joan Bragdon, "Crime and Punishment among the Indians of Massachusetts, 1675-1750," *Ethnohistory* 28 (1981): 29.
- ²⁶ Cf. Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," *Ethnohistory* 26 (1979): 153.
- ²⁷ Of course, my survey is limited, so I cannot say she started this trend.
- ²⁸ I specify "the European side" because I get the sense that it is a purely European-dominated discipline that is altering their angles. From my position it doesn't seem like Native American historians are the ones manufacturing this empathetic spin in the historiography.
- ²⁹ James Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 333.
- ³⁰ Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "King Philip's Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England," *Colonial America 5th ed*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 2001), 332.

³¹ *Ibid*, 332.

³² Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," *Ethnohistory* 26 (1979): 153.

³³ *Ibid*, 153.

³⁴ Helen C. Rountree, "Powhatan Indian Women: The People Captain John Smith Barely Saw," *Ethnohistory* 45 (1998): 3.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

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Antonio, Mercantilism, and the Other: The Failed Project of Christian Universalism in *The Merchant of Venice*

● ● ● Ashar Foley

Of all Shakespeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice* is arguably the hardest to critique, because its characters do not fall along clearly drawn lines of good and bad. It does not suffice to analyze the play with a simple narrative of Good versus Evil or Christian versus Jew, as the title merchant and chief Christian, Antonio, is often given to bouts of cruelty while the principal representative of Evil and Judaism, Shylock, insists on his own subjectivity and feeling. Clearly, a more implicit and pervasive force is at work in the play, a force more general and explicatory than good or evil tendencies in particular characters. Though less rooted in text than the earliest critiques, recent criticism points to the ramifications of modernity in the burgeoning, cosmopolitan society of mercantile Venice in its various readings of the play: set in one of Renaissance Europe's foremost port-cities, the characters in *The Merchant of Venice* must come to terms with the new prevalence of the Other organic to an open-trade economy. The Christians in the play begin with a universalist vision in which everyone can be a Christian, thereby dispelling the notion of difference, alterity, and inequality. However, the possibility of dissolving the boundaries between the established Venetian Christians and those strangers either entering into or living on the perimeters of their society proves to be too disturbing, ultimately undermining the project of Christian universalism or exposing it as a facade. My project attempts to cast Antonio as one such Christian: while the nature of his trade, marked by outreach and flexibility within a progressively global economy, reflects the communal and difference-dissolving tenets of his faith, the fear of completely doing away with all distinction between himself and the enigmatic Other (present in Shylock) gives rise to hatred, the effects of which subvert Antonio's Christian values and pose previously unknown threats to his livelihood.

Faced with new and clear delineations of nations, Antonio and Shylock employ different methods of trade that reflect their respective faiths: the Christian merchant, in keeping with his community-oriented, universalist outlook, makes many exchanges and is flexible, while the Jewish usurer is more "self-contained" and rigid, living off the interest of the money lent to his clients and adhering to all bonds (Adelman 20).

Antonio as merchant is a character who very much works in the nascent world community, actively involved in a society tied together by money and exchange. He takes risks, putting his cargo out to sea with the hope that his gains will further his own wealth as well as the general economy. Gary Rosenshield points out the valorization of Christian capitalist venture as opposed to the Jewish practice of usury, stating that Shakespeare "elevates Antonio's mercantile activities, presenting them as regal, noble, knightly, courteous, and gentle" (4). Indeed, in the Christian world, Antonio is reputed to personify all these characteristics. The play's pair of cheerleaders, Solerio and Solanio, intermittently sing their comrade's praises with statements like, "A kinder gentleman treads not the earth" and "the good Antonio, the honest Antonio—O that I had a title good enough to keep his name company!" (II.viii.35; III.i.12-14). Also, Antonio is flexible when

it comes to lending a hand to others, particularly to his beloved friend, Bassanio, when Bassanio needs a fast loan. Although he would not usually stoop to dealing with a money-lender, Antonio tells Shylock, “Yet to supply the ripe wants of my friend,/ I’ll break a custom” (I.iii.63-64). Clearly, we can see Antonio as a character whose arms are extended to the community, whose activities are very much a life-force within the mercantile society.

In contrast, Shylock’s own unventuresome mercantilism seems rigid and parasitic on society. Whereas Antonio is constantly engaged in acts of outreach and contribution, risking his goods at sea and lending money *gratis* to those in need, Shylock seems to suck the profits from his clients, acting as a sort of economic black hole. He ventures no capital and takes few risks. This is evident in the difference between his own conceptions of human relationships and property and those of the Christian Bassanio: while Shylock exclaims “My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!” (II.viii.15) indicating that he would have them both back in his possession, Bassanio speaks of Portia as a capital venture, “a golden fleece,” adding that “many Jasons come in quest of her” (I.i.170, 172).¹ Clearly, Shylock fulfills the historical stereotype of Jew as accumulator of material wealth to the extreme, extending it even to the overprotection of his daughter, Jessica. His house is a hermetic tomb, illustrated in the scene just before the masque parade, in which Shylock bids Jessica to lock the doors, close the casements, and “let not the sound of shallow fopp’ry enter/ My sober house” (II.v.35-36). It is little wonder that Jessica confesses to Launcelot that she feels her home is a tedious “hell” (II.iii.2).

It is also little wonder, however, that Shylock should be so concerned with weighing himself down with material goods: his connection to a society of Christians—and indeed to any larger society—is fragile, constituted almost entirely by his dealings as a despised money-lender.² Such an existence is frighteningly precarious. Agnes Heller explores the implications of Shylock’s role as Other in *Merchant*, commenting that he is “absolutely rootless and [his] relation to [his] world is purely accidental and contingent” (1). Heller defines an absolute stranger as one without a country to which to return, and without a cultural context by which outsiders can understand the stranger as an individual. Shylock seems aware of his own otherness, of how he must appear within the business realm to a society of Christians highly involved in commercial exchange. He tries by his own methods to remedy his rootlessness: unable to rely on venturesome commerce within a society that shuns him, he focuses on the preservation of his own wealth and lineage in order to have some sort of foundation and identity. While established Christian merchants like Antonio already have a solid groundwork in their kinship and connections with other Christians, Shylock is still building his groundwork from his stores of wealth and his scant kinship link with his daughter and a few other Venetian Jews. If he is rigid, if his household is indeed a tedious “hell,” it is because Shylock believes he can achieve definition through stasis, even if it is a definition of a “sober” man in the midst of a society that participates in masque parades.

This reading of Shylock serves to humanize him, putting the classic interpretation of Shylock as evil Jew into question. We see a desire in Shylock to belong as an equal, if not as a congruous member of society. It is for this reason that Shylock adheres so closely to the law and its according bonds, as well as why he reacts so violently when even his lawful claims are denied their proper legitimacy. He does not have a problem interacting with Christians, so long as these interactions do not conflict with the observance of his own Jewish customs: as he says to Bassanio, “I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you” (I.iii.35-38). But Shylock does

not receive the same respect in return, and particularly not at the hands of Antonio. After listening to Shylock give a list of grievances concerning his ill-treatment in the public marketplace, Antonio smugly affirms, “I am as like to call thee [dog] again,/ To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too” (I.iii.130-31). Having had enough of Antonio’s abuse, Shylock calls for the flesh bond. Furthermore, it is obvious from the text that Shylock would rather have a nonforfeited bond than have to deal with the complications of exacting the penalty for a forfeited bond: when Antonio’s wracked venture comes up in conversation with Salerio, Shylock replies, “There I have another bad match” (III.i.44). Also, by Shylock’s account, Antonio, “who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto [...] that was us’d to come so smug upon the mart”(III.i.45-47), has acted in a less than noble fashion regarding the forfeiture in failing to face Shylock. The money-lender will undoubtedly use this opportunity to exact the penalty as an affirmation of his equality under the law, if not in daily, social life.³ In response as to why he would ever want to exact such a grisly penalty, Shylock brings up the fact that Antonio owns slaves, and that he would say his cruel and thoughtless abuse of them is justified by his title of ownership (IV.i.89-98); for the same reason, Shylock will have his bond—“the court awards it, and the law doth give it” (IV.i.300).

Shylock’s claim to belonging and equality under the law, as well as the desires that may then be realized, frighten Antonio as he faces the possible dissolution of noticeable difference between himself and an incomprehensible Other.⁴ The intrusion of Shylock as what Heller calls an “absolute stranger” is foreshadowed by Jessica’s conversion. Janet Adelman fully explores Jessica’s attempt to deny all ties to her father in order to gain admittance into Christian society. Although it is clear to the other characters that Jessica cannot sever her blood ties to her father and will invariably remain a Jew, they try very hard to conjure up a distinction through words where no visible difference is present.⁵ Adelman points out that the characters try to use the same light-skinned imagery to describe Jessica [as Lorenzo receives a letter from Jessica, he says, “I know the hand; in faith, ‘tis a fair hand,/ And whiter than the paper it writ on/ Is the fair hand that writ” (II.iv.12-14)] as is used to describe Portia [Bassanio reports, “In Belmont is a lady richly left,/ And she is fair and, fairer than that word, of wondrous virtues” (I.i.161-63)]. Also, referring to Jessica, Salerio insists to Shylock that “There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory, more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish” (III.i.39-42). To justify the acceptance of a Jew into their company, the Christians’ language evokes a contrast between the bright purity of their faith with the dark, unknowable quality of the Other.

This same lack of visual cue to the difference between Jew and merchant is terrible to Antonio, resulting in desperate and cruel lashings out, what Rosenshield describes as “an over-reaction betraying Antonio’s subconscious, or more probably unconscious, fears about himself and his profession, about who he is and what he is” (5).⁶ His deplorable treatment of Shylock in a public venue, his calling him “dog” (thereby reducing him to something subhuman), is a means by which Antonio elevates himself and leaves no question about the demarcation between his profession and that of his Jewish contemporary. But Shylock’s insistence on the legitimacy of his claims to equality refute Antonio’s best attempts to dehumanize him: in demanding his bond, Shylock asserts his own subjectivity, and thus his desires. As a subjective figure, his knife poised only a few feet from Antonio’s chest, Shylock represents the full-blown, enigmatic, engulfing, desiring Other.

Although the play lays out Shylock’s take on his demand for the bond (it is lawful as well as equivalent to Antonio’s treatment of him), it also provides the Christian’s view of this same

desire. The Christians can not understand why Shylock would exact such a gruesome penalty; their confusion increases when he refuses to tell them why he insists on such a bond, answering only that it is his “humor,” and that different men desire different things (IV.i.35-62). Appalled by the voracious, unrelenting character of Shylock’s desires, Gratiano attempts to relegate them to a subhuman level: “thy desires/ Are wolfish, bloody, starv’d, and ravenous” (IV.i.137-38).

Such close encounters with the Other’s desire is a natural consequence of the new global economy in which Antonio deals, as the law does not honor the same bonds of kinship and shared values as the Christians’ code. However convinced Antonio and the other Christians may be of the alienness of Shylock’s desires and of his person, the distinction between Shylock and Antonio is clear in the courtroom. All my sources agree that a greater statement about *Merchant*’s Venetian society is implicit in Portia’s question, “Which is the merchant here? and which the Jew?” (IV.i.174): under the law, all men are indistinguishable.⁷ Therefore, the merchant Antonio, almost convinced of his superiority over, and thus of his invincibility against, the strangers with whom he must interact, finds himself on par with them in court and thereby vulnerable to their demands. Speaking to this point, Adelman succinctly expresses the consequences of Antonio’s participation in a commerce-driven world with standardized laws: “Like Venice itself, with all nations mingling in its markets, the thoroughfares of Antonio’s body are subject to the invasion of others who cannot be kept at bay. This is the danger of the newly modern nation, its porous boundaries no longer defined by kinship and race, its blood no longer intact” (22). Indeed, it seems as though the closeness and acuteness of Shylock’s murderous desire cannot be restrained, that the Other’s claims to equality will be granted legitimacy in a just court of law.

Antonio does have one recourse, however: through a non-Othering process, Antonio can ally Shylock’s otherness, and thus his alien desires. In other words, in order to dispel his adversary’s hold over him, Antonio must use his universalizing Christian ethic and let go of *all* differences between the two men, ultimately realizing his greatest fear of absolute indistinguishability. When Portia asks, “What mercy can you render him, Antonio?” (IV.i.378)—“mercy” being a concept unilaterally associated in the play with Christianity—Antonio requests that Shylock become a Christian, a request that has two implications. As a Christian, Shylock must give up his strange, Jewish practices and mingle with the other Christians in every aspect of life; now, he can have no reason not to eat, drink, and pray with them. More importantly, however, the Christian Shylock will no longer be allowed to practice usury, necessarily becoming a full-blown merchant and Antonio’s equal competitor in the marketplace, in order to make a living. Thus, by Antonio’s request, Shylock is simultaneously made Christian and merchant, dissolving the two hand-in-hand differences that constituted Shylock’s absolute strangeness.

A society infiltrated by converted Jews is even more frightening and threatening to the Christians than a society that suffers a few known Jews to live on its perimeters, however. Adelman sets out this concern, stating, “conversion threatened to do away with the most reliable signs of difference, provoking crisis in a very mixed society obsessively concerned with purity of lineage” (11). It is not surprising, then, that the abuse of Shylock rises to a fevered pitch toward the end of the trial as the Christians employ the same methods of dehumanization and demarcation discussed earlier regarding Antonio’s behavior on the Rialto and Salerio’s light/dark comparison of Jessica and Shylock: part of Antonio’s request cruelly grants half of Shylock’s fortune “Upon his death unto the gentleman/ That lately stole his daughter” (IV.i.384-85), and Shylock leaves distraught and ill, pursued by Gratiano’s barked threats. Reflecting on the cruel response to Christian universalism, Adelman writes, “in the face of this unifying dream, *Merchant* rushes

to reinstate the differences of blood” (23). Paradoxically, the Christians react to the realization of their own vision with an uncontrollable fear of equality with the former Other.

Ultimately, the demands upon a universalizing Christian doctrine seem to be too much in an increasingly open and commercial world full of encroaching Others. Speaking on this dilemma, Gary Rosenshield summarizes the total effect of the play in the Antonio/Shylock plot, stating that it reveals “the inherent contradiction and the limitations of Antonio as a Christian merchant; [it] also give[s] pause to those who envision a world in which these contradictions and limitations can be overcome” (11). Although Antonio turns to this Christian ethic to solve the dire predicament of his forfeited bond, it is in opposition to his most fundamental feelings as an esteemed merchant and Christian that he grants Shylock the same status as himself.

Notes

¹ Gary Rosenshield goes further with this point, asserting Bassanio’s aesthetic superiority (and thus ethical superiority): while Bassanio refers to “the golden fleece” as the ultimate prize of his venture, Shylock makes less visionary mutterings about “money bags” (II.v.18).

² In Agnes Heller’s “The Absolute Stranger: Shakespeare and the Drama of Failed Assimilation,” the point is made that Shylock is immediately identifiable as an Other (absolute stranger) in his society “because he is employed as a stranger [...] to do certain things that the natives of the cosmopolitan city will not do” (2). It is his lot to do the unnatural but necessary job of money-lending.

³ Though I feel I have sufficiently made my point, it would be remiss not to mention Shylock’s “If you prick us, do we not bleed?” speech, as it is the greatest expression of his belief in equality of all people under both natural and governmental laws (III.i.59-68). Coupled with his ironic point that Antonio fails to exemplify the Christian philosophy of teaching by example [“The villainy you teach me, I will execute” (III.i.71-72)], this speech powerfully exposes the facade of Christian universalism at work in Antonio.

⁴ In contrast, Portia has relatively no discomfort when courted by the other “Others” within the play, Morocco and Arragon, because their difference is overtly displayed in their complexions—Morocco is a brown-skinned Arab and Arragon is a ruddy-skinned (not to mention Catholic) Spaniard. Janet Adelman states that, where there is no apparent difference between “races” (as in Shylock’s case), the Other “must be blackened: otherwise there is no reliable way to distinguish [...]” (14). We see in the subsequent paragraphs how important language is to creating difference where, visibly, there is none.

⁵ Jessica, perhaps, is the only character who fails to see the irrevocability of her blood ties to her father; responding to Launcelot’s comment on the impossibility of a true conversion [“The sins of the father are to be laid upon the children” and “Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew’s daughter” (III.v.1-2, 11-12)], Jessica says confidently, “I shall be sav’d by my husband, he hath made me a Christian!” (III.v.20). In “Her Father’s Blood: Race, Conversion, and Nation in *The Merchant of Venice*,” Janet Adelman further discusses Jessica’s interchangeable ideas of marriage and conversion.

⁶ Rosenshield states that Barrabas the Jew in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* represents an “economic egoism of the new age” (3). Arguably, Antonio sees his own such egoism reflected back at him in Shylock’s practices. Not willing to equate his seemingly “noble” trade with the over-scrupulous, usurious practices of his adversary, Antonio must preserve Shylock and his brand of mercantilism as Other.

⁷It seems Shylock is right to appeal to the law: even Portia, who bends it to her own advantage, recognizes its sanctity. She urges the Duke presiding over the trial not to make an exception in Antonio's court case and ignore Shylock's claim: "Twill be recorded for a precedent,/ And many an error by the same example/ Will rush into the state. It cannot be" (IV.i.220-22).

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Harold and Maude: Transcending the Fundamental Fantasy

● ● ● *Amanda Knapp*

While now a popular cult classic, when first released Hal Ashby's *Harold and Maude* was not well received: the match of a seventy-nine-year-old woman to a twenty-year-old man proved to be too much for critics and viewers alike. As one critic put it, "Mr. Cort's [Harold's] baby face and teen-age build look grotesque alongside Miss Gordon's [Maude's] tiny, wizened frame" (Canby).¹ Many others agreed with Harold's psychiatrist in the film, who accuses Harold of having an Oedipus complex. My thesis, however, is that those who insist that an oedipal struggle is at the heart of *Harold and Maude* are missing the point of the movie, which is Harold's journey beyond neurosis.

As Christian Metz describes it, an Oedipal narrative "contains a male protagonist who, after resolving a crisis and overcoming a 'lack,' then comes to identify with the law of the father, while successfully containing or controlling the female figure, demystifying her threat, or achieving union with her" (Creed 79). Although Harold is clearly a male protagonist who overcomes the obstacle of his interest in death, he does not contain or control the female figure whatsoever. Maude dies of her own will, by her own hand, and clearly against the wishes of Harold, for whom it is a complete surprise.² Therefore, the progress Harold makes is not a moving through the Oedipal complex, but rather Harold traverses his fundamental fantasy, the basic relationship between a subject and his elective cause or desire: he moves from a subject who demands to a subject who desires, finally becoming a subject who enjoys at the end of the movie. He thereby joins Maude beyond neurosis, beyond the hang-ups and uncertainty around one's personal enjoyment.

"Do you...enjoy...knives?": Harold's fundamental fantasy

"Were they all done for your mother's benefit?"

*"No, no. I would not say benefit."*³

As Lacan describes, the fundamental fantasy is "the fundamental relationship between the subject (not the ego) and his or her elective cause, the subject as positioned with respect to the cause" (Fink 56). Central to Harold's character is his demand for his mother's [played by Vivian Pickles] affection, which he tries to bring about from his phony suicide attempts. The meaning of these attempts becomes clear in a crucial scene in which he describes to Maude an incident from his school days: in an accidental explosion, Harold set fire to the school's science laboratory. Assuming that Harold had died in the fire, the police reported his death to his mother, who fainted at the news. Having crept into the house unbeknownst to anyone, Harold was able to view this scene as it played out. From this event, Harold constructed a fantasy primary to his existence in which death is the only gateway to his mother's affection. In the subsequent re-enactments of a death event, however, his mother does nothing or tells him to stop fooling around. Harold is desperate to recreate the situation in which his mother demonstrated genuine affection for him.

Mixed with this demand for his mother's affection is the rejection of his mother's demands.⁴ When his mother brings dates to the house in an attempt to get Harold to marry, Harold uses his fixation with death to scare them away. The fantasy of his mother's desire is best shown through his interaction with his therapist [played by G. Wood] for, as Lacan would have it, "the analyst is considered to want from him or her [the analysand] the same thing the parents wanted" (Fink 57). In affirmation of this, Harold dresses exactly the same as the analyst when they are in the same scene, imagining that the analyst, as well as his mother, wants him to be exactly like them. Much of his ambivalence toward his mother comes from the fact that he thinks he cannot be just like everyone else. Underwriting this is Harold's belief that, in death, everyone is the same.

"WHAT?!": Harold desires.

With the appearance of Maude, Harold moves from a "subject who demands (as well as being subject to the Other's demand) to being the subject who desires (as well as being subject to the Other's desire)" (Fink 65). In one scene, Harold wishes he could be a flower in a meadow because "they are all alike," in accordance with his fundamental fantasy. Maude, however, points out that every flower is different and special in its own right: "You see Harold, I feel that much of the world's sorrow comes from people who are this [unique], yet allow themselves to be treated as that [commonplace]." The camera then moves from the shot of white flowers in a green field to rows of white gravestones, making a clear connection between the way society treats the dead as being all the same, and the way Harold imagines the flowers to be all the same. Thus, Harold's fundamental fantasy is directly challenged; Maude proves that people are unique entities even in death.

By this point in the movie it is clear that Harold has fallen in love with Maude. She has opened up to him an aspect of the world he had not previously experienced. As the quintessence of individuality in Harold's eyes, Maude becomes the object of his desire. Maude is also the object of his *jouissance*, which is to say his 'kicks,' implicated through a single bedroom scene.⁵ After this scene, Harold still desires Maude; he tells his mother he is going to marry her.

In desiring a marriage with Maude, Harold passes through the demands of his mother. She demands that he get married, but implicit in that demand is that the marriage be to a woman approximately his own age. By desiring Maude, he simultaneously accepts and rejects his mother's demand. Yet, as the movie clearly shows, his desire is still subject to the desire of the Other, Maude.

"L-I-V-E, Live!": Maude transcends Neurosis

Maude's philosophy is essentially the enjoyment of life. She says to Harold, "It's best not to be too moral; you cheat yourself out of too much life that way. I aim above morality." For Maude, to live means to enjoy, which is exactly what the transcendence of neurosis is about.⁶ As Bruce Fink explains in *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique*, "[O]ne way of stating the configuration analysis aims at is to say that the analysand is at last allowed to be able to enjoy his or her enjoyment" (211). Maude never displays guilt about her enjoyment: she sleeps with Harold, smokes marijuana, and steals cars, but never in the movie does she regret her enjoyment.

In fact, when Harold admonishes her for disturbing people, she explains her philosophy: "Well, some people get upset because they feel they have a hold on some things. I'm merely act-

ing as a gentle reminder: here today, gone tomorrow. So, don't get attached to things." Everyone pretends they have some claims to a particular object—a car for example—while at the same time acknowledging that ownership is a man-made concept. Maude, however, does "the truly subversive thing [...] stick[ing] to [the] letter against the fantasy which sustains it" (Zizek 29). Unlike the rest of the people, she acts as though ownership is really empty: rather than understanding that it is empty, she acts as if it is not empty by committing theft.

Furthermore, Maude understands that desire does not adhere to a single object. For Harold, Maude embodies his desire; he does not realize that his desire exists without her presence. That is why, when Maude tells him that she has taken the pills to die, he calls an ambulance. In the ambulance, he cries, "Maude I love you." But Maude, who realizes that his desire does not end with her demise, replies, "Harold that's *wonderful*. Go and love some more." In going beyond neurosis, Maude realizes that Harold's love is not dependent on her existence.

In fact, in the act of suicide, Maude's transcendence of neurosis shows itself the most clearly. One goal of analysis is to achieve "a desire that does not allow itself to be put off by obstacles or swayed by the Other" (Fink 206). Maude realizes that Harold would not want her to die, yet goes through with it anyway. She knows, for example, that Harold loves her, for he has admitted as much to her. She returns that love, but ultimately remains true to her desire for personal autonomy. It is Maude's desire to die of her own choosing, thumbing her nose at the 'authority' of death.⁷ In fact, Maude wishes to remain outside any authority other than her own self-governance: she laments, "How the world still dearly loves a cage." Although she fully acknowledges the desire of the Other, Harold, her desire to be rid of authority comes first, and she therefore commits suicide.

"I know we've come a long way, changing day to day": Harold traverses the Fantasy.

Harold encounters the 'real,' the kernel of trauma, in his scream of "What?!" as Maude tells him that she has already taken the pills to kill herself. Indeed, Harold has been so quiet and passive-aggressive throughout the movie, that this scream comes as a shock for the audience. Until this point, one is unsure of the intensity of Harold's desire. From the point of this scream on, it becomes impossible for Harold to pretend to kill himself, as he has encountered the 'real' of suicide.⁸

After this scream and Maude's subsequent death, Harold traverses the fundamental fantasy. He becomes the "subject who enjoys (who is no longer subject to the Other)" instead of "the subject who desires (as well as being subject to the Other's desire)"⁹ (Fink 65). Maude, the object of his desire, has gone. Therefore, he has two options: he can finally succumb to his fantasy, killing himself in actuality to gain the affection of the Other, or he can ascend beyond neurosis and find within himself the means to be happy. Just as the hearse Harold drives is about to tumble over the cliff, the shot is still, emphasizing the point of decision. The following shot shows Harold, alone on the cliff top. He plays the banjo that Maude gave him, but for his personal pleasure only—there is no other character present. By discarding the hearse, the symbol of his fixation with death, Harold turns, like Maude, into a creature who enjoys purely and who is no longer subject to the Other.

The future of Harold is necessarily unclear. Even Lacan is not sure what happens after one breaks free of the fundamental fantasy: as Fink interprets, "The traversing of fantasy leads the subject [...] beyond neurosis into largely unexplored territory" (Fink 195). The viewer must not know what happens to Harold after he walks from the cliff side, as our imagination of the event is far more desirable than any actuality.

“What puzzles me, Harold, is that you want to sleep with your grandmother.”

None of the authority figures in the movie can grasp that Harold’s attraction to Maude is not primarily physical—in fact, many of the film’s reviews did not grasp that, either.¹⁰ The authority figures, the uncle in the military [Charles Tyner], the psychiatrist, and the priest [Eric Christmas] all attempt to draw on a signifier to make Harold relinquish his love for Maude, these being President Nixon, Sigmund Freud, and Pope John Paul, respectively. What they fail to realize, however, is that Maude demonstrates that the signifiers to which they appeal are empty. Maude represents the anti-authority, an individual who acts for her own enjoyment and takes action on the empty gestures of society. This is best observed during the encounter with the motorcycle policeman, where Maude takes the policeman at his word that everything is ‘alright’ and leaves.

Also, unlike many movies today, the camera does not focus on Maude’s body. This is due in part to the audience watching the film: most people do not want a close-up of a seventy-year-old’s breasts. But the same can be said of Harold’s gaze upon Maude: although he certainly looks at Maude with love, there is not a scene where he is gazing at her body as a fetish. Maude is not objectified in this movie, the way women typically are in the classic oedipal narrative.

Many film critics notice that classical films “appeared to exhibit an Oedipal trajectory; that is, the (male) hero was confronted with a crisis in which he had to assert himself over another man (often a father figure) in order to achieve social recognition and win the woman”(Creed 76-77). Yet the key point in *Harold and Maude* is that in the end, Harold does not have Maude. Maude eludes his mastery, she commits suicide when she wants, how she wants, and where she wants. Therefore, the struggle that Harold goes through in the movie cannot be Oedipal in nature.

Yet, it is obvious that Harold changes drastically in the film. The Jaguar he has turned into a hearse flies over a cliff, without him in it. Following Maude’s example, Harold discovers that life is meant to be enjoyed, and that authority does not have the ultimate control over one’s life. When Harold begins to play his banjo on the cliff, he has finally traversed his fundamental fantasy.

Notes

¹ Of course, this is not universally true. For a positive review of *Harold and Maude*, see Shedlin, Micheal. “Harold and Maude.” *Film Quarterly*. Fall 1972.

² We viewers note that, at the couple’s first meeting, Maude exclaims that eighty is the perfect age to “pass on.” Afterwards, she remarks that she will be eighty soon. This foreshadowing is completely lost on Harold.

³ It is the acting skill of Bud Cort as Harold in uttering this line that truly delivers the correct impact. The written form is sadly lacking.

⁴ Mixed with this is melancholia. In one telling scene, Harold takes out a gun and points it at his mother who is filling out an electronic dating sheet for him. He reconsiders and points the pistol at himself. As Freud comments, “If one listens patiently to a melancholic’s many and various self-accusations, one cannot in the end avoid the impression that often the most violent of them are hardly at all applicable to the patient himself, but that with insignificant modifications they do fit someone else, someone whom the patient loves or has loved or should love” (“Mourning and Melancholia” 248).

⁵ Indeed the sexual interplay between an old woman and a young man was considered so distasteful that the kissing scene was cut from the final movie. The implication of sex only comes from a shot where the couple wakes up in bed together. See Zizek, Slavoj. "From the Sublime to the Ridiculous: The Sexual Act in Cinema." *The Plague of Fantasies*.

⁶ In a private conversation, Ashar Foley pointed out that in the essay "Finding Ourselves on a *Lost Highway*," Todd McGowan shows us that there is no superego in transcendence, the superego also being the seat of morality.

⁷ The source for Maude's refusal to submit to any authority is shown in the brief shot where Harold glances at her arm and silently notices the identification number tattooed thereon—a sign she had been in a Nazi concentration camp.

⁸ This point was brought up by Ashar Foley in a private conversation.

⁹ In many ways, the soundtrack plays the part of the superego in the movie. Every one of Cat Steven's songs demands enjoyment or the right to enjoyment, especially that proclaiming, "If you want to sing out, sing out, and if you want to be free, be free."

¹⁰ In *Variety*'s 1971 review, the movie was described as having "all the fun and gaiety of a burning orphanage. Ruth Gordon heads the cast as an offensive eccentric who becomes a beacon in the life of a self-destructive rich boy, played by Bud Cort."

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“Justice and realism and really *looking*”: The Gaze in Iris Murdoch’s *The Nice and the Good*

● ● ● Teresa Moore

We not only need to ‘see ourselves as others see us,’ we also need to see ourselves seeing one another. But to visualize looking is not as easy as it might appear. What might seem to be a purely visual theory, or a theory of pure vision, has become lost in the mysteries of human relationships.

~Margaret Olin

Iris Murdoch’s use of Bronzino’s mannerist painting *Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time* in *The Nice and the Good* reveals her interest in the gradual exposure of evil. Indeed, Murdoch exposes immorality and temptation through the novel’s plot and it’s use of the painting by linking these themes to art theory’s definition of the gaze. In fact, the cover illustration depicts only the loving embrace of Cupid and Venus, a portion of the painting which, when separated, implies a scene of idealized love.¹ The portion hidden here is not in itself evil but instead reveals the evil in Cupid and Venus’ embrace. The gaze of other allegorical figures—Deceit, Jealousy, Time, and Truth—shows the horror of incest in the love scene. No longer can Cupid and Venus be mere objective lovers; now the presence of Time and Truth compromises both their sin and the wish of the viewer to find pleasure in the sin.

Murdoch composes her story to discuss both the good and evil to be found through the gaze of others; though incest and evil are revealed in Bronzino’s painting, so is truth. This paradox can be found in both sides of the gaze; the gazer and the object of the gaze are subject to corruption and virtue. For example, the gazer confronts evil through the desire to possess and control the object of the gaze. For Margaret Olin, this desire turns “all human relations [to] power relations. To acknowledge someone visually is to make that person a part of oneself, a possession, as though the person whose image is seen enters another’s body through the window of the eyes and ceases to lead a separate life” (216). The ability to dominate is an obvious temptation for the gazer. But such temptation works upon the object of the gaze as well. The object, given the power to interpret how he or she is observed, is conditioned to register a hysteric reaction in which his or her actions seek to fulfill the desire of others.² By allowing another to define oneself, the object of the gaze denies his or her own sense of responsibility for the world. Rather than confront his or her actions and relationships, the object of the gaze refuses to judge the morality of his or her situation or correct immoral behavior in the surrounding world.

However, a redemptive good can be found on both sides of the gaze. For the gazer, acknowledging the power of sight ruins the pleasure of looking and creates a more moral outlook. As the presence of others ruins the pleasurable love scene in Bronzino’s painting, so the observer becomes ashamed of his or her voyeurism by the gaze of another.³ Olin argues that it is in this returned gaze that both the object of the gaze and gazer are redeemed: “If you can look back, you cannot be possessed by another. [...] Rather than emphasizing the power of the gazing one to make the gazed at into an object, this idea suggests responsibility toward the person looking

back at one” (217). Though such a return is often unsettling, an awareness of both viewpoints illuminates a world of human connection. The resulting sense of shared responsibility begins a joint venture to produce a livable society. The building of an equal, responsible community is available because of the shared gaze, a method for producing a moral secular world.

Murdoch produces such a moral society in *The Nice and the Good* as her central characters, John Ducane and Mary Clothier, move from evil to good. Both Ducane and Mary spend their time at Octavian and Kate Gray’s summerhouse. There, they both take roles of comforter and voyeur to the lives of the characters around them. Ducane and Mary transcend this voyeuristic behavior and the evil of the gaze characterized by a self-centered obsession with how they are seen and how they see others. Ducane confronts the duplicity of his conceived identity as a good man and his affairs with Kate and Jessica Bird while attempting to extricate his own deficiencies from the co-worker’s death he is investigating. Likewise, Mary overcomes her desire to be the ideal confidante to reflect on her own past guilt she feels over her husband’s death. By encountering and acknowledging what cannot be seen by human constructs, these two characters reject their self-focused views to embrace a new code based on selfless love. In doing so, Ducane and Mary find in one another a partner to share the gaze, to monitor moral actions, and to define himself or herself.

The gaze as defining self

In *The Nice and the Good*, Murdoch creates a world wherein morals are derived from social interaction. According to A.E. Denham, this social world plays a part in shaping the individual: “we discover what we ought to believe, ethically speaking, and how we ought to act in part by attuning ourselves to the claims of other human beings” (614). This social code stifles Murdoch’s characters early in the novel; Mary and Ducane place the crux of their identity in their social role. Though, ironically, it is their own actions and interpretations that hold them to this prescribed social identity, the imagined gaze of others paralyzes Mary and Ducane. Consequently, their self-image, while created by themselves, is dependent upon others. In other words, society has created a social code, and, though it is open to individual interpretation, it is what defines proper conduct. This conduct is monitored and maintained through the watchful eye of others. Ducane and Mary both fall subject to this form of self-definition and the resulting fear and insecurity it causes.

Ducane is subject to this self-doubt through his conduct towards Jessica and Kate, two females with whom Ducane is conducting romantic relationships. Though his conduct does not technically breach any social mandate, Ducane hides his relationships from the women for fear that it might *appear* inappropriate. Indeed, the immoral appearance of his behavior is quickly delineated to be the source of Ducane’s fear of discovery and what would cause him the greatest remorse; he admits “he could bear to part from Jessica but he could scarcely bear that she should think ill of him” (Murdoch 178). Ducane confesses that he knows his actions to be those of a “cold-blooded deceiver” but cannot face being thought one (Murdoch 189). The true source of moral consciousness for Ducane is the gaze, or his appearance in the eyes of another. The reality of immorality lies less in Ducane’s actions than in the light in which he imagines others see those actions. He cannot reveal himself to Jessica or Kate because his actions towards the two women would ruin the positive image they have created of him. He becomes a slave to their idea of him—an idea which Ducane uses to define himself. Thus, when Ducane claims he is not “acting like himself,” he is speaking of himself as defined by his social interactions.

Mary Clothier also suffers from the “evil eye” of the internalized social judgment. Mary has internalized the gaze of her dead husband, Alistair, much as Ducane has internalized the gaze of Jessica and Kate. Mary imagines Alistair watching her “all sad and deprived and unappeased [...] I feel as though he still wants my love and I can’t give it to him” (Murdoch 215). This haunting, however, is obviously not caused by Alistair but by Mary’s perception of him. By imagining Alistair’s opinion, Mary projects her feelings of guilt for Alistair’s death and for the inadequacy of her love onto an imagined ideal of married life. The sources of guilt can be traced, cyclically, back to the internalized gaze. Mary describes her love for Alistair, and all men, as “nervous, plucking, plucked at”; though “both her body and mind had been involved in this love[,] they had never been in accord about it” (Murdoch 93). Instead of focusing on her husband and her love for him, Mary hovered around him, seeing herself through his eyes. Because Mary is unable to act without contemplation of the gaze, her love is not free. Indeed, Mary’s consignment to a social position defined by serving and comforting others stifles all of her own desires. She admits, “my wants are huge, my desires are rapacious. I want love, I want the splendor and violence of love, and I want it now” (Murdoch 109). However, Mary’s obsession with her duty to the social norm denies her any object that could fulfill these wants. Thus, her current pursuit of Willy Kost, another summerhouse guest, is characterized not by her concern for him, but for her concern that she is doing what will be good for him. This slight revision accentuates the preoccupation with self that obscures Mary’s love; in turn, Mary’s fear of how she is received in Willy’s eyes causes this preoccupation.

Thus, it is the social self that causes awareness of the gaze and the power that it holds over the individual: although guilt and fear stifle Mary and Ducane’s actions because they both define themselves through others’ perspectives, the gaze is real only within their minds. Murdoch likens this condition to “roving gases [that] travel the world, causing pain and mutilation, without their owners having any full awareness at all, of the strength and whereabouts of these exhalations” (150). The characters whose gaze Mary and Ducane internalize are not aware of their power, for it is not their own. Instead, it is a morality for which no one is responsible. As such, it is a construction built without conviction and upheld through fear of judgment; it is not a true morality.

The gaze as society’s judgment

Ducane and Mary both hold positions of societal import in the novel: Ducane, as detective of the Radeechy case and legal advisor to Octavian Gray, is asked to judge according to the written, governmental code; Mary, as head of the Dorset house, is seen as high council in the beach house and must maintain order on the estate. These roles both obscure and emphasize the self. Ducane and Mary subjugate their own gaze to a prescribed method of looking; however, the social gaze is maintained because Ducane and Mary define themselves through their societal roles. To allow selfish impulses to overwhelm their duty would at once deny the societal construct that Ducane and Mary pride themselves on fulfilling. Thus, selfish pride controls the gaze even from the viewpoint of the gazer.

Gazing through others’ eyes rather than his own, Ducane is unable to separate himself from society’s standards. His ability to judge cannot transcend his own experiences and his ability to act cannot overcome society’s judgment; in this way, Ducane and his gaze are limited. Indeed, Ducane’s inability to place himself in foreign situations impedes his career; Murdoch’s narrator tells us that “his career as a barrister had been less than totally successful [because] he lacked the capacity to conceive of any kind of villainy of which he would not have been

capable himself” (67). Here, Ducane’s sense of self denies the reality of the situation; Ducane is unable to see past what society is *supposed* to be in order to see its reality. At the same time, by becoming society’s eye, he is unable to interact fully with others. This role denies him the ability to make love to the temptress Judy. Understanding that he cannot connect with Judy, Ducane realizes that:

I cannot pity the wretched or bring hope or comfort to the damned. I cannot feel compassion for those over whom I imagine myself to be set judge. I cannot even take this girl in my arms. And that not because of duty or for her sake at all, but just because of my own conception of myself as spotless: my quaint idea of myself as good, which seems to go on being with me, however rottenly I may behave. (Murdoch 261)

Ducane cannot act according to a morality based on personal interaction and experience; he cannot look beyond himself to experience the physical or emotional bonds between humans. Instead, he remains held within the expectations of society, unable to break out of his role as society’s gazer and judge. Indeed, such restrictions hold Ducane’s character in place as an exemplary citizen, but keep him from becoming truly exemplary. Mary, too, is given and denied self in the role of judge. As housekeeper, she is often left outside of the actual household experience; as she sits at a Sunday luncheon, for example, she finds herself in “a conversational vacuum,” isolated from the interactions of the houseguests. Yet she does not resent this isolation, instead embracing her role as gazer with “a sort of maternal sense of ownership towards the group of chattering persons all round her” (Murdoch 108). Mary denies herself interaction, aligning her self-image with the success of order and the maintenance of social norms within the household. The society itself becomes her image, her possession; Mary’s pride is dependent upon the performance of others, and so her love of them is a self-interested one.

Transcending the gaze

Both Mary and Ducane are able to transcend the selfish nature of the gaze through encounters with selfless love. Murdoch creates situations wherein both characters are able to look past themselves to realize the confinements the gaze imposes. For Ducane, this realization occurs through a confrontation of death, aptly set in the darkness of a cave, a place in which sight cannot penetrate. Ducane enters this cave in order to rescue Mary’s son who had swum inside. Similarly, Mary also encounters death through the cave as she faces the possibility of losing yet another loved one. These experiences reveal to Mary and Ducane the insignificance of their positions as objects of the gaze and the inadequacy of their adherence to specific social norms as gazers.

Before the encounter with death, Mary and Ducane begin to lead one another towards enlightenment. They advise each other on their troubles, advocating a disinterested gaze as the course to goodness. Ducane urges Mary to overcome her guilt over Alistair’s death by encouraging her to love him fully now after his death: “Don’t try to see him. Just love him [...]. Love can’t always do work. Sometimes it just has to look into the darkness. Keep looking and don’t be afraid. There are no demons there” (Murdoch 215). Ducane’s advice outlines a love for Mary without the gaze; though she should keep looking, she should not try to create anything in the world or in herself but instead allow the situation to develop outside of her control. In other

words, Mary should not make what she sees conform to a pre-existing standard but should instead remain open to the truth. In doing so, true love is available—even for one long dead—and this love can be without judgment of Alistair or herself. Similarly, Mary advises Ducane to make his decision concerning the Radeechy case without drawing on his current feelings of insecurity and immorality. She asks Ducane, “shouldn’t you just think about the decision and not about yourself? Let the machinery work and keep it clear of the jumble” (Murdoch 281). Here, judgment beyond the self is advocated. A need to judge is admitted, but this judgment should overcome standard social norms to interrogate the actual situation and outcomes of those being judged.⁴ Through this method, Ducane’s image, still caught into his role of judge, would be freed from the actual judging process and thus capable of searching for truth.

The advice that Mary and Ducane give one another, however, is not taken until each character confronts situations in which the truth can no longer be obscured and the advice can be implemented. The encounters with death, showing the finitude of self, illuminate the means for Mary and Ducane to transcend his or her past placement concerning the gaze. Mary waits outside of the cave to discover the fate of her son and Ducane who are trapped inside by the tide. In this waiting, Mary is able to contemplate death and her past with Alistair. She finds a new way to love:

Since death and chance are the material of all there is, if love is to be love of something it must be love of death and change. This changed love moves upon the ocean of accident, over the forms of the dead, a love so impersonal and so cold it can scarcely be recognized, a love so devoid of beauty, of which one knows no more than the name, so little it is like an experience. This love Mary now felt for her dead husband and for the faceless wraith of her perhaps drowned son. (Murdoch 318)

Mary faces the death she had avoided and is able to look beyond her decisions in and concerns about life in order to love what has been lost. No longer is her deficiency the object of the gaze; instead Alistair and humanness and the act of living itself garner attention. Freed from the past, Mary is able to take Ducane’s advice and look “into darkness”; her gaze without sight reveals the goodness in Mary’s past and in her love.

Within the cave, Ducane also realizes the truth of Mary’s advice and relinquishes the self from his role as gazer. The darkness of the cave, the inability to see clearly, allows Ducane to judge himself without the imposition of another’s gaze.⁵ He refers to himself “as a little rat,” acknowledging the selfishness in his gaze. He promises himself:

if I ever get out of here I will be no man’s judge. Nothing is worth doing except to kill the little rat, not to judge, not to be superior, not to exercise power, not to seek, seek, seek. To love and to reconcile and to forgive, only this matters. All power is sin and all law is frailty. Love is the only justice. Forgiveness, reconciliation, not law. (Murdoch 315)

Ducane recognizes his distance from good lies in his *seeking* the good rather than allowing himself to *encounter* it. He promises himself that he will no longer disconnect his gaze, but instead look at the reality of each situation and impose love over duty. He is now able to extract himself from what Mary calls “the machinery” of judging, instead looking toward bettering

himself and others. After escaping the cave, Ducane is able to implement his new vision; he punishes Biranne for his involvement in the Radeechy case, not by exposing his bad behavior and ruining his career, but by encouraging Biranne into better company. Ducane, looking at the situation rather than at his duty as a social agent, finds that “human law,” the social law, “is only a very rough approximation to justice and it’s far too clumsy an instrument to deal with the situation [Biranne is] in” (Murdoch 324).⁶ Ducane, like Mary, has been able to extract the self from judgment. In doing so, both characters are more capable of comforting others, while finding love, granting forgiveness, and finally reaching happiness themselves.

The new gaze

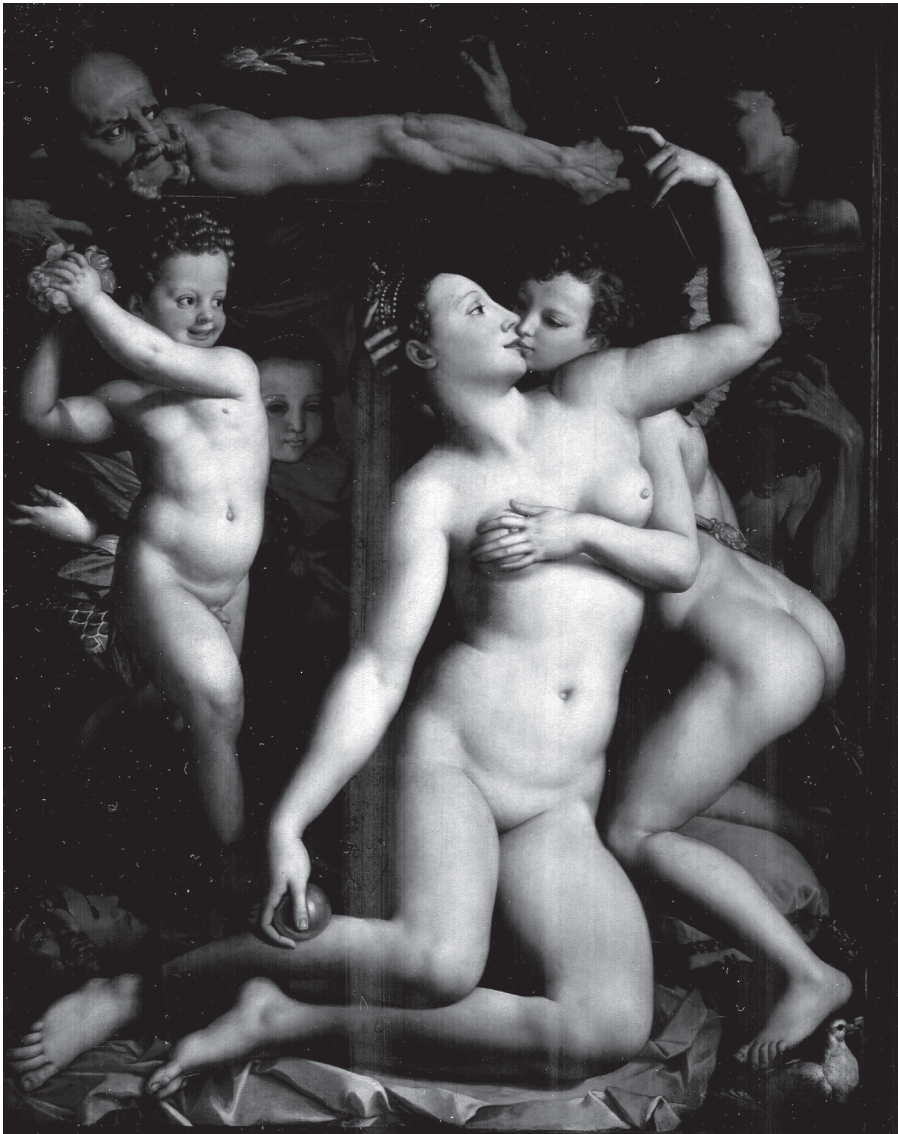
By encountering the lack of gaze and the lack of a visually defined self, Mary and Ducane enter into an enlightenment wherein the gaze is given and received with unselfish love. Indeed, the couple has reached Olin’s moral state of a returned gaze. Murdoch seals this alliance by romantically grouping Mary and Ducane into a relationship of mutual respect. In their marriage, each member will look to the other for moral guidance and, by doing so, will continue to provide the gaze that defines the other. This new view, however, will be dependent upon mutual love and interaction, drawing Mary and Ducane into society rather than isolating them above it.⁷

Mary and Ducane reach their state of love through a belief in one another’s moral goodness. Ducane places his old selfish moral justification in Mary, and Mary takes the role of social law. Indeed, Ducane submits to love only when “he thought, she is better than me. During his gradual loss of a stiff respect he had for himself, he had felt the need to locate in someone else the picture of an upright person” (Murdoch 344). Mary becomes the point within the world at which Ducane is able to leave himself both as object of the gaze and gazer according to his societal role. Again, this release allows Ducane to embrace not only a better form of judgment, but also a better image of himself. Though Ducane “had begun to need Mary when he had begun to need a better image of himself” (Murdoch 344), he ends by gaining a positive image of himself according to his new standard bearer of the gaze—Mary. Mary helps Ducane find goodness within himself and gives him “a moral, even a meta-physical confidence in the world, in the reality of goodness” (Murdoch 344). In turn, Ducane brings forth the good in Mary’s character. Though she initially struggles to surrender control over the gaze, Mary also relinquishes the self in love of Ducane. She realizes the whole of herself in this giving of the self, “her whole thought-body, her whole being of yearning” (342). Thus, Mary discovers depths and realities within herself by overcoming her connection to a social order. Conversely, she gives up her old image of herself to once again take part in the reality of everyday life and relationships.

Murdoch then advocates this new gaze as the source of moral good. The gaze without the self yet engaged in the world becomes the flexible, changeable standard of morality. Murdoch’s philosophy supports such a reading. In *Sovereignty of the Good*, a collection of philosophical musings, Murdoch claims, “the love which brings the right answer is an exercise of justice and realism and really *looking*. The difficulty is to keep the attention fixed upon the real situation and to prevent it from returning surreptitiously to the self with consolations of self-pity, resentment, fantasy and despair” (91). Here, the definition of the new gaze is foremost; it denies obscurities of the self to see the real and discern goodness. Most importantly, it requires interaction with society on a level without hierarchy and power.⁸

Ultimately, Murdoch aligns morality with social interaction, forgiveness, understanding and love. This social life is the journey to encountering the good and creating good in

others. As Denham notes, “Genuine love [...] is a matter of looking out and beyond the self; and when one looks lovingly, one sees not only the empirical reality of what lies beyond, but its value and significance” (625). Yet, the self still maintains a place in the journey; awareness of the gaze and of selfishness must occur within the self in order for the process of enlightenment to begin. Murdoch advocates a goodness that lies both within and beyond the self, a paradox whose tension creates the reality of experience. In *The Nice and the Good*, Murdoch celebrates this tension and the human ability to reach a higher level of good.



Notes

¹ Though there is no evidence to show that Murdoch had a hand in the cover's design, it seems plausible to argue that the cropping of the picture was done intentionally to reflect the novel's predominant theme.

² I refer here to hysteric reactions in accordance with psychoanalytic theory. In this light, the object of the gaze is attempting to fulfill the desires of the gazer. In doing so, his or her own desires are subordinated to the desire of the gazer.

³ This idea of discovering guilt only through the eyes of another is first discussed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. There, Sartre uses the example of a man being caught looking through the keyhole of a door by the idea that someone is watching him. Thus, the pleasure of gazing in the peephole is ruined and the immorality of the action is revealed. For Sartre, this is caused by an increased awareness of the self, a discovery of existence: "I now exist as *myself* for my unreflective consciousness. It is this irruption of the self which has been most often described: I see *myself* because *somebody* sees me" (349).

⁴ This new judgment implies a new reading of Bronzino's painting. Though Jealousy, Truth and Time all gaze down with horror and scorn at the love scene of Cupid and Venus, the ability to judge the lovers lies in specific knowledge of the situation. Cupid and Venus' love, while condemned by social standards, may prove to be a meaningful, loving union. Murdoch opens her story to such an outcome through the reunion of Paula and Biranne. Though Biranne admits he will cheat again, defying social acceptability, the marriage appears salvageable and capable of good at the end of the novel.

⁵ The cave is a particularly weighty symbol for Murdoch. Her close scholarship of Plato suggests that this cave symbolically represents Ducane's encounter with the realm of ideas and the true version of the world according to Plato's metaphor of the cave.

⁶ I do not mean to suggest that Murdoch completely discards the idea of social law and communal policies in this novel; instead, I see her advocating a personal interaction with this law that complies with a good and rational thinking available to all humans.

⁷ Murdoch does present a further option of life without the self and without the gaze. Theo, by returning to his life as a Buddhist monk in India, presents a possibility that completely selfless love is attainable to humans. Theo's choice, which ends the novel, suggests Murdoch's definition of pure goodness as life without possessive love of any kind. Yet, as Ann M. Ashworth suggests, Murdoch "knows that human love is always somehow self-fulfilling, but she does not, therefore, condemn it; rather, she makes it the way of goodness" (21).

⁸ Murdoch proposes so much in *The Nice and the Good* when she aligns evilness in the novel to feelings of detachment. Ducane panics when he finds, "I am becoming cut off [...]. I am becoming like Radeechy, it is all indirect, it is all in my mind" (Murdoch 207). At this moment, he aligns his character to Radeechy, a man who embraced and pursued the evil and occult. Ducane does not reach such a level, however, instead discovering the same level of self-centeredness in Radeechy that he held when under the power of the early gaze. Now freed by the new gaze, Ducane is able to see the selfishness of Radeechy without judging or obscuring himself from an alignment with his actions.

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An Examination of Courtship and Dating from 1900 through the 1950s

● ● ● Kari Parker

In a world where singles bars and dating services dominate the social scene, it is no wonder people are obsessed with finding their perfect mates. In the twenty-first century, the dating process increasingly revolves around technology, and the practice of premarital sex is quite common from the first date to the hundredth. It is important to realize, however, that our modern sense of dating has not always existed.

Indeed, modern dating derives from critical changes that occurred from the 1900s through the 1950s. For example, in 1900, dating was termed “courtship;” the term “dating” only came into usage starting in the mid 1940s. An examination of magazines and newspapers reveals three key periods of change in the history of courtship and dating between 1900 and the 1950s. The three periods include “traditional courtship” from 1900 to 1920, “new woman courtship” from 1920 to the mid 1940s, and the emergence of “dating,” from the mid-1940s to the present. Traditional courtship was a male-driven, asexual, and etiquette-conscious practice. The shift from traditional courtship to new woman courtship resulted in the ability of women to have sexual identities, which they had never had before, and the power to pursue men. Unfortunately, the shift from new woman courtship to dating gave way to a return of male-driven processes; however, the new game-like dating system resulted in social acceptance for an emerging sexuality among teenagers.

In 1900, courtship was a “preliminary contract [...] when two mutually attracted, young people begin to find their lives blending.”¹ Traditional courtship was intended to unite a couple with the dual purpose of marriage and perpetuation of the species. It was also a way for parents to rid themselves of the financial burdens their daughters represented. During this time, few women were actually in the workforce; most were financially dependent on their parents or husbands. Marriage was the socially acceptable practice to ensure a woman the support she needed. While traditional courtship encouraged a man and woman to interact in an intimate setting, its purpose was to ensure a marriage contract for the benefit of both partners.

Before traditional courtship could even occur, men and women had to enter society. To enter society, children had to reach a certain age. Many times, depending upon the economic status of parents, a grand ball was thrown to celebrate the child’s entrance into the social scene. After they entered society, they would receive invitations to formal events, such as balls, dances, and dinners.² Formal events allowed young people to meet and realize primary attractions, yet always under a chaperone’s surveillance. According to a series of *Ladies Home Journal Magazine* articles on etiquette for social occasions, women were required to have chaperones at formal events, walks, or even dinners. For example, at a ball, if a man wanted to see a woman again, he had to ask her chaperone for permission.³ Likewise, the man could not call on the girl unless he had been invited for a formal receiving day.⁴ If he visited regardless, the call would be considered inappropriate. These rules were just some of the practices of traditional courtship.

In selecting a woman to court and start a family with, a man had many considerations. During traditional courtship, the most prevalent consideration for selecting a wife was family.

According to a 1916 article in *Current Opinion*, “Knowledge of family traits is essential as a guide in the selection of marriage mates or at least in the elimination of obviously unfit unions [because] everyone desires the best physical, mental, and moral hereditary equipment for his children.”⁵ In Cold Springs Harbor, New York, a Eugenics Record Office distributed free fliers encouraging people to look at family background before courting and marrying.⁶ These fliers were based on Galton’s theory, which gained great popularity in the early 1900s. According to this theory, “the total inheritance of any living being, plant, animal, or man, each parent has contributed a quarter, each of the four grandparents a sixteenth, each of the eight great-grandparents a sixty-fourth, and so on.”⁷ Therefore, a man should choose to court a woman based on her qualities, her family’s qualities, and what qualities he wants for his children.

In traditional courtship, the man not only initiated contact with a prospective wife, but pursued her as well. The term for the man’s pursuit of the woman was “wooing.” The most common way for a man to woo a woman was to buy her gifts and travel far distances to see her. A 1910 article from *Puck* portrays a man hitting a hi-striker, a carnival game of strength, to determine which gift he will give the woman of his attentions. The accompanying text describes a man who had bought his woman everything from candies to flowers, even a car. However, when his rival buys the woman an airplane, the man loses the woman. In another article from *Puck* in 1904, a man describes his illusions of courtship: “Your idea that you can buy her all she wants; and her idea that she won’t want anything you can’t buy her.”⁸ The amount of effort a man took to see a woman was also considered wooing. For example, in a 1903 story in *McClure’s Magazine*, a man travels from Colorado to New York just to visit a woman,⁹ in 1900, this was particularly significant given the slow methods of transportation. Wooing was a critical aspect of traditional courtship because it involved a man’s relentlessly trying to win the woman of his affections.

Along with wooing, traditional courtship very much relied on the etiquette and habits of the persons involved. For example, in order for a woman to be deemed a suitable mate, she had to be proper, pretty, and ready for all moments of the day. In a 1905 *Ladies Home Journal* article entitled “Pretty Girl Papers,” the writer lists several techniques for a woman to ensure her beauty. For example, one author argues, “You cannot afford to forget the advantage it is to your looks and dispositions to go to bed early.” Or, “a smooth forehead adds greatly to the beauty of the face [...]. Try never to express anything with the forehead.” The author also suggests that women take laxatives in the summer, ride side saddle when riding a horse, and refrain from drinking ice water, which was known to bloat a woman.¹⁰ Meanwhile, in order to talk with women, men had to take off their hats. Also, in order to walk with a woman, men had to walk on the outside, near the street.¹¹ Etiquette was critical in the selection of mates, as it told of one’s ability to be proper.

In keeping with this emphasis on etiquette, physical intimacy was harshly frowned upon during traditional courtship. Women and men displayed little physical expression of their affections towards one another. In a 1909 article from *Puck*, an illustration depicts a man trying to put his arm around a woman’s waist. In the accompanying text, after the man’s attempt, the woman responds, “You shan’t put your arm around my waist” and proceeds to slap the man on the jaw. The woman proclaims the man must be “shamed of himself actin’ so silly.”¹² Even the attempt to touch a woman’s side was strongly discouraged in traditional courtship, much less an evening kiss.

Between the years 1914 to 1918, which marked World War I, articles on courtship drastically declined in number because men were overseas and women were at work in the

factories. Due to their experiences in the workplace, women developed a new sense of independence. They soon realized that they could do exactly the same jobs as men. These revelations led to the creation of the “new woman” ideal in the 1920s. The new woman was “college-educated, frequently unmarried, and [a] self-supporting new woman.”¹³ She was also a working girl, as “growing numbers of working women in blue-collar, clerical, and service occupations [...] reshaped the parameters of [the] female experience.”¹⁴ In addition, she was very political, working towards suffrage, and also experienced a healthy sexuality because she was unmarried and self-supporting.¹⁵ In the 1920s, the advent of the new woman and her beliefs and practices helped shift the direction of courtship.

New woman courtship lasted from 1920 to the mid-1940s. Periodicals of the time proclaimed, “[T]he age of chivalry is considered a joke, and we say it’s dead.”¹⁶ Another article notes, “We’re living a new code of ethics-morals, if you will. Our experience and thought are eternally at war with the old rules and conventions.”¹⁷ From these two statements, it is obvious that the new woman ideal brought about a change to once-accepted customs in courtship. Now, courtship centered around feminine sexuality, and encouraged women to pursue and initiate relationships. It also encouraged women to act naturally because they no longer needed to follow the strict rules of etiquette.

During the 1920s, public acknowledgement of feminine sexuality arose, leading to the commonality of physical intimacy. Women were seen as capable of having a sexuality, whereas previously under Victorian attitudes they were assumed to be asexual. Periodicals of the decade declare “a woman’s body her own.”¹⁸ While men used to be seen as sexual and even promiscuous, women were allowed to claim their own bodies and be sexual if they so desired.¹⁹ The advent of birth control allowed this to happen, and also allowed women to practice sex without the concerns of childbearing. Men could “no longer dictate the lives of their daughters and wives [...] who [were] emotionally and chemically able to have as few children and as many love affairs as they desire[d].”²⁰ Although not all women partook of this new freedom, some women did. Physical intimacy did not necessarily mean sex, however; it also meant kissing. With this period, it was more socially acceptable for a woman to express her affections for a man physically; men were no longer slapped for trying to put their arms around ladies. A 1923 *Current Opinion* article notes, “The older conventions of sexual morality originated in a pre-evolutionary age when the orthodox believed in the vileness of human nature and its conception in sin [...]. [Now] naturalism has rendered these dogmas obsolete.”²¹ Women were encouraged to do what was natural:²² if kissing is natural, then kiss. As shown, female sexuality and birth control changed traditional courtship to new woman courtship.

In addition to sexuality, many other characteristics of new woman courtship were different from earlier decades. Instead of men choosing, pursuing, and wooing women, women became the choosers, pursuers, and wooers. A 1927 astrology article from *McClure’s* argues that the idea, “If a man cares for you, he will tell you so,” was no longer correct.²³ Instead, periodicals of the times strongly encourage women to pursue the man. Moreover, often these periodicals encourage women not to pursue men due to their busy professional lives.²⁴ This same article suggests that modern men should “wait for the ladies of their affections to indicate at exactly what speed they wish the love affair to develop.”²⁵ Women of new woman courtship took on the dominant role of pursuer, or at least of initiator.

Surprisingly, women learned these roles in the classroom. According to various *New York Times* articles in the 1920s, the emergence of college courses on courtship and marriage

gained popularity. In these courses, women were taught how to make conscious decisions about choosing their own mates. One course at Vassar focused solely on marriage, with lectures on how to choose husbands.²⁶ Another course at Pennsylvania State University taught women aspects of courtship and marriage in order to prepare them for married life.²⁷ These articles indicated that women were taking a lead role in relationships, yet there were limits as to whom society deemed the right man.

While women were learning in classrooms about marriage and men, they were encouraged by popular magazines to be themselves. This was the first time this idea had been accepted. During traditional courtship, so much pressure was placed on etiquette that neither boy nor girl truly got to know each other. A 1927 *McClure's* article states, "No wonder so many marriages are unsuccessful when one considers the trickery and hypocrisy of courtship."²⁸ Therefore, as new woman courtship came into existence, etiquette and proper appearance were still recommended but no longer essential. New rules on etiquette allowed women to be who they were, no longer presenting a fake self in order to impress the male, as the *McClure's* article suggests.

Similar to the years of the First World War, articles on courtship again diminished in the popular magazines in the 1940s, during World War II. The end of courtship had come, as it was no longer the accepted form of behavior. Instead, dating emerged as the new accepted practice. The end of the war and the Depression allowed for the American economy to thrive, making jobs and money abundant. As a result of the booming economy, the idea of the teenager first took shape, along with a new consumer group: young people were getting jobs and spending money. For the first time in history, teenagers were a part of American society. Courtship was no longer an accepted practice for young people who had money to spend. A 1955 *New York Times* article quotes a professor from Cornell as he looks back at the previous era of the Great Depression, saying, "Many parents come from generations stultified by the money problems of the depression and the emotional separations of the war which kept their social lives to a minimum."²⁹ He continues, "[K]ids today have little trouble getting jobs and therefore have money [...]. Teenagers have many more planned social events in school and as a result their social maturity level is developing at a faster rate."³⁰ The emergence of the teenager after the depression and World War II had shifted the scene from courtship to dating.

With the advent of the teenager, many things about American courtship practices changed dramatically. For one, "courtship" as a term disappeared, and, instead, teenagers were "dating." According to a 1950 article in *Readers Digest*, "The custom of 'dating' is a pre-courtship behavior peculiar to the inhabitants of the United States."³¹ Dating used the same language and gestures of courtship, but did not imply the reality of courtship.³² Therefore, teens did not intend to marry, as they had in traditional and new woman courtship.

Dating was a foreign trend to most Americans; thus, popular magazines spent a lot of time explaining the mores that defined dating. A 1951 *Today's Health* article states, "As a rule, girls of today have their first dates between the ages of 12 and 14, and boys a year or two later."³³ A 1950 *Reader's Digest* article describes dating as a game: the boy wants to date the most admired girl, while the girl wants to receive as many invitations as possible. Dates typically occurred in public places and events, such as soda shops, the skating rink, or dances. Despite the dominance of the female in new woman courtship, dating returned to a male-dominated process similar to that of traditional courtship because, according to popular magazines, boys asked girls on dates. The boy's job was to captivate the girl, while the girl in return was supposed to discourage her partner. The victor was the one who made the other lose self-control, while

maintaining his or her own. In addition to characterizing dating as a game, the *Readers Digest* article also describes the intimacy of dating. The article suggests both that a goodnight kiss is a minimum repayment for a night out, and that the favors should increase over successive dates with the same person.³⁴ However, the author was quick to note, repayments “seldom includ[ed], actual intercourse” because the ultimate “goal of dating was not sexual satisfaction.”³⁵ Instead, the overall goal of a date was for a boy to show that he was worthy of love and success.³⁶ A boy could prove his worthiness through many skills performed on their date, such as dancing or bowling. So, even though dating was perceived as a game, it also had intimate implications.

While some values, like spending money, were familiar from courtship days, the process of dating proved very different from the process of courtship. According to a poll taken in a 1952 article from *American Journal of Sociology*, only thirty-three percent of girls thought it was appropriate to kiss on the first date, compared to the male’s fifty-five percent. These numbers indicate a drastic change from courtship to dating. In traditional courtship, it was frowned upon to even kiss, while in new woman courtship, a woman’s sexuality was increasingly her own. When asked if the first kiss should be saved for marriage, only three percent of males and females agreed that it should. That this question was asked at all reveals a lot about dating and the conservative society in which it existed. However, when asked about intimate petting, sixty-six percent of females and thirty-one percent of males agreed that it should wait until after marriage.³⁷ These figures indicate that, while acceptance of sexual promiscuity had increased, it had by no means become the liberal standard practice of the twenty-first century.

Dating had taken over the American social scene. One article goes so far as to suggest that children should be taught techniques of successful dating because “gradual preparation gives assurance.”³⁸ A 1951 article in *Today’s Health* creates twelve techniques, suggesting the general need for parents to teach appropriate behavior and to give children the ability to practice necessary skills prior to their first dating experience, such as entertaining, talking, and wearing dress-up clothes.³⁹ This indicates not only the importance of dating to society, but also the importance of dating to the social lives of teenagers.

There were many who liked and disliked this new dating system when it appeared around 1950. Those who thought highly of dating had many great things to say about the effects it could have on a child. A 1948 *New York Times* article records a study from Bowling Green University, which concluded that students who frequently dated had better grades, were well-balanced, and were more capable of making effective adjustments at school and in their social lives.⁴⁰ Later, a 1955 article from the *New York Times* offers the benefits of dating, quoting a teenage girl: “It gives us a sense of security [...]. Maybe we don’t get enough love at home and this is one way of being sure we won’t be left out of things.”⁴¹ Others suggest that dating was a learning experience and that “mature love is built on childhood and adolescent experiences [...]. The experience of being in love has the value of teaching youngsters how to handle this normal and desirable emotion [...] [and] the characteristics desirable for a permanent relationship.”⁴² Therefore, dating could be considered as an excellent opportunity for teens to not only help with emotional stability, but also to prepare for the future.

Meanwhile, other articles from the *New York Times* tell a completely different story. Those against dating indicated that, if students dated, they were robbed “of the finer experiences of growing up—the friendship and companionships of as wide of a circle of acquaintances as possible.”⁴³ Others feel that dating put too much pressure on young people.⁴⁴ Dating was so detested that, in some Catholic high schools, it was banned altogether. In 1947, for example,

four teenagers were dismissed from Bristol High School in Connecticut for their steady dating habits. A school official responded, “[W]e want the students’ mind on their school work and not on their boy or girl friends [...]. We want to make clear that company keeping is a preparation for marriage and none of the students in this school have yet reached that stage.”⁴⁵ Many Catholics in particular believed dating would ruin the Christian concept of marriage and that teenagers were not prepared to keep company with the other sex.

From 1900 through the 1950s, one thing is certain: the practices of men and women courting or dating have changed dramatically. They went from traditional courtship, which marked a male-dominated, non-sexual, and etiquette-heavy social system that led to marriage; to new woman courtship after WWI, in which women were allowed sexual identities, became the pursuers, and were encouraged to act naturally; to dating after WWII, in which men regained control as the pursuer, dates became games, and society began slowly to accept a new sexuality emerging in teenagers. These changes had significant ramifications on the ways in which men and women interacted with one another. In fact, it is these changes experienced during traditional courtship, new woman courtship, and dating which have helped explain the derivation of our modern sense of dating.

Notes

¹ Lucy Barnard Cope, “Woman’s Council Table,” *The Chautauquan*, November 1894, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 28, 2004).

² Mrs. Burton Kingsland, “The Prevailing Etiquette for Young Men,” *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1900, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

³ Mrs. Burton Kingsland, “The Prevailing Etiquette for Dances and Balls,” *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1900, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

⁴ Kingsland, “The Prevailing Etiquette for Young Men.”

⁵ “The Scheme to Establish Courtship on Genetic Foundations,” *Current Opinion*, September 1916, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 28, 2004).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ E.T. Brewster, “When a Man Marries,” *McClure’s Magazine*, September 1911, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 28, 2004).

⁸ “Grateful Young Love,” *Puck*, March 30, 1894. *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 28, 2004).

⁹ E.W. Fowler, “A Strenuous Courtship,” *McClure’s Magazine*, November 1903, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

¹⁰ Emma Walker, “Pretty Girl Papers,” *The Ladies Home Journal*, August 1905, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 28, 2004).

¹¹ Kingsland, “The Prevailing Etiquette for Young Men.”

¹² MW, "A Rural Courtship," *Puck*, June 16, 1909, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

¹³ Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty*, (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 146. _

¹⁴ Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty*, (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 156. _

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Margaret Daniels, "Is Courtship a Lost Art?" *Forum and Century*, February 1938, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 28, 2004).

¹⁷ Marion Meyer Drew, "Two New Lovers Under the Stars," *McClure's: the Magazine of Romance*, 1927, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

¹⁸ "A Radicals Pleas for Widening Sex Experience," *Current Opinion*, December 1, 1923, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ John Hodgdon Bradley, "Sex Freedom and the Family," *Forum and Century*, April 1937, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

²¹ "A Radicals Plea for Widening Sex Experience."

²² Ibid.

²³ Drew, "Two New Lovers Under the Stars."

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Vassar Girls Flock to Course on Marriage; Hear Lectures on How to Choose Husband," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1937, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

²⁷ "Penn State Teaches Courtship, Marriage," *The New York Times*, October 1, 1939, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

²⁸ "Be Yourself," *McClure's, The Magazine of Romance*, June 1927, *American Periodical Series*, <http://www.otterbein.edu/resources/library/library.htm> (accessed October 27, 2004).

²⁹ Faith Corrigan, "Teenagers Jam Talks on 'Dating,'" *New York Times*, March 22, 1955, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Geoffrey Gorer, "America's Most Popular Tribal Custom," *Readers Digest* 56 (1950):34.

³² Ibid, 34.

³³ Elizabeth Hurlock, "First Dates are Important," *Today's Health*, 29(1951):68.

³⁴ Gorer, "America's Most Popular Tribal Custom," 36.

³⁵ Ibid, 36.

³⁶ Ibid, 35.

³⁷ Harold Christensen, "Dating Behavior As Evaluated by High School Students," *American Journal of Sociology* 57(1952):585.

³⁸ Hurlock, "First Dates are Important," 68.

³⁹ Ibid, 68.

⁴⁰ Leonard Buder, "The Benefits Derived from 'Dating,'" *New York Times*, September 5, 1948, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29,

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⁴¹ Corrigan, "Teenagers Jam Talks on 'Dating,'" 34.

⁴² Dorothy Barclay, "When Teen-Agers Start Dating," *New York Times*, March 23, 1958, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

⁴³ "Dating Ban Supported," *New York Times*, October 20, 1956, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

⁴⁴ "Early 'Dating' Held Emotional Liability," *New York Times*, December 29, 1954, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

⁴⁵ Richard Parke, "Four Catholic High School Students Are Dismissed for Steady Dating," *New York Times*, February 9, 1957, *The Historical New York Times*, <http://www.westervillelibrary.org> (accessed October 29, 2004).

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From Another Time and Place: Oral Testimony and the Holocaust

● ● ● *Zach Reat*

And sometimes we were out walking in the snow and ice for weeks. Sometimes we were on a train, which wasn't the train like the first train, but this was an open freight train. And, sixty, eighty, or I don't know how many people were locked on that train. And that was another time that I thought, if I ever lose my mind, this is where I have to lose my mind. Because people were by then terribly irritable, that's a nice way to say it. If I put my foot on somebody, they were screaming. Then somehow, somebody, put a loaf of bread on that train. I don't know where it came from. They were fighting for the bread. So people were getting to be just absolutely [Mrs. Klein delicately clears her throat] not like humans. They were fighting, they were hitting each other. They were biting, and it was a miserable situation. But there was no way out.

-From the oral testimony of Mrs. Ann Klein, survivor of the Holocaust

This story and many others like it, come from the oral testimony of Mrs. Ann Klein. Mrs. Klein was born in the town of Eger, Hungary. She was raised in a Jewish family, but was educated at a Catholic school for most of her teenage life. When the Nazi's occupied her town in 1944, her life changed forever. Mrs. Klein survived her imprisonment under the hated regime, but images, sounds, smells—everything from that time and place—live on in her memory. For fifty years Mrs. Klein did not speak about her time in the camps, but now she shares her memories with anyone who will listen. As I listened to Mrs. Klein, I realized that her words confronted my emotions in a way no other source on the Holocaust ever had before; the stories seemed to find a resonance within me that no book or movie could produce. For the first time, I felt that I was personally remembering the Holocaust.

Oral testimony is a relatively new source available to scholars of the Holocaust. Many attempts to memorialize the Holocaust have come in the form of books, fictional novels, films, theatrical productions, memoirs, poems, and artwork. These works of memorial all address different issues surrounding life under the Nazi regime in Europe during World War II. While all of these memorials bring the Holocaust into the minds and lives of people today, they seem to leave the observer on the outside looking in. Oral testimony, however, brings the memory of the Holocaust survivor directly to the observer in as much detail as the survivor is willing to offer. The nature of oral testimony, specifically its unique intimacy, allows the listener to truly *bear witness* to the event of the Holocaust through the immediate recall of the survivor's memories. By studying the oral testimony of Holocaust survivors, scholars and students will gain a fuller understanding of the Holocaust and the effects it had on its victims.

This paper will examine oral testimony and its value as a source on the Holocaust. The first section will examine some of the scholarly work that has been done on the subject of oral testimony and Holocaust memory, specifically the major arguments of Lawrence Langer and Robert Kraft. The second section looks more in depth at the work of Lawrence Langer,

and includes my own analysis of Mrs. Klein's oral testimony, for which Langer's classifications of Holocaust memory offer a good organizational framework. I will also call upon the work of Primo Levi and some examples from other testimonies to supplement my discussion of Langer's main points.

Memory and oral testimony

The function of memory in the everyday lives of humans is central to the work of Robert Kraft and Lawrence Langer. Both authors argue that memories form the foundation for one's fundamental belief system, and, furthermore, that memories form the basis for one's understanding and interpretation of the world on a broader scale.¹ However, in the case of the Holocaust survivor, memories from the camps are oftentimes so grotesque or horrific that they seem to originate in a world set apart from the one that exists today. Accordingly, Kraft explains that these memories often leave a survivor's memory split between the self that exists today and the self imprisoned in the camps. As Kraft states, "Perceived memories split the self and leave behind dichotomous human beings who live in the present world as tormented guests."² Langer and Kraft both explore this split consciousness, seeking to understand and explain how its disrupted memories manifest themselves in oral testimony.³

In oral testimony, the witness attempts to accurately convey memories of his experiences in Nazi Germany to an audience which in most cases shares no common memory of that experience. When the survivor is able to tell his story smoothly, the listener is rarely confronted with concepts or problems that cannot be understood, or at least imagined. However, in most testimonies, the smooth flow of the narrative is broken by disrupted memories. These disrupted memories are not easily recalled, and are often punctuated by body language or a change in the speaker's tone of voice. The survivor's memory is disrupted when the postwar self cannot justify or understand the actions of the imprisoned self. The story becomes more difficult for the listener to grasp as the survivor can no longer tell the story with a smooth, narrative flow.

In Lawrence Langer's book, *Holocaust Testimonies: the Ruins of Memory*, the author explains the types of disrupted memories that emerge in oral testimony. He begins with an explanation of the Holocaust survivor's memory and how it can become disrupted by the presence of deep memories, or memories that make the survivor feel as if they were back in the camps. This concept of deep memory provides the foundation for the next four types of memory Langer discusses: anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic. There are many memories that emerge in testimony that may not fit neatly into one of Langer's categories, but they offer a good starting point for understanding oral testimony.

Langer's classifications of disrupted memory and the testimony of Mrs. Ann Klein

The first type of memory Langer discusses is deep memory, which "tries to recall the Auschwitz self as it was then. Common memory has a dual function: it restores the self to its normal pre- and post camp routines but also offers detached portraits from today, of what it must have been like then."⁴ Common memory provides the basic framework for most testimonies because it is much easier for the subject to tell her story in the context of today's society; however, many factors can trigger deep memory, thus breaking the chronological flow of the narrative as the narrator is cast back into the time and place of the camps. When common memory breaks away to deep memory, a "vast imaginative space"⁵ is created between

the subject and listener, one telling a story that the other cannot possibly understand. However, Langer reminds the reader that “to share this dissonance with a perception built from the ruins of mutilation without being crippled by it ourselves is the summons we face when we embrace the legacy of these testimonies.”⁶

Kraft defines these two categories of memory with different terms, but agrees that Langer’s basic principle holds true. Deep memories become *core* memories and the common memory is referred to as the *narrative* memory. According to Kraft, core memories are “representation[s] of the original phenomenal experience in the form of perceptual, emotional, and physiological experience.”⁷ It is these very distinct and vivid memories that eventually shape the narrative memory that allows the victim “to tell of the horrible events” in a manner that is “structured and coherent.”⁸ Like Langer, Kraft recognizes that, in the course of testimony, “the witness may be drawn into core memory, losing contact with narrative memory, immersed in the hypnagogic past in a state referred to as *back there*.”⁹

In the testimony of Mrs. Klein, the presence of deep memory is not glaring - she is careful to maintain her composure in front of a classroom full of students. Her narrative seems to be rehearsed to the point of memorization, but there are times when she can no longer go on telling the story with her common, or narrative, memory. When Mrs. Klein describes her time at Birkenau her narrative is disrupted by deep memory:

Now we stayed at that place for four weeks. There was. . . There were barracks, and the barracks had big rooms, but the rooms were, uh, huge. And I would say eighty to a hundred people easily, uh, stayed in one of those big halls, but there were no beds, there were no mattresses, and there was just really nothing there that you could lie down. There. . . So . . . It was pretty horrible because if you want to put your foot. . . You were going to put your foot on somebody, it usually end up that you put your foot on another human being. And we were at this place four weeks.¹⁰

By beginning this story with a statement of time, Mrs. Klein prepares the listener for a smooth telling of her experience at Birkenau. As deep memory begins to take over the story, she stumbles over her thoughts, confused by the event she remembers vividly but cannot transmit accurately to her audience. She realizes that the story she is telling does not find resonance in the detached listener’s ear—how could it? The outside observer has no idea what it would be like to live under circumstances such as these. To bring the audience back into the story, Mrs. Klein quickly repeats the statement of time that began the passage; perhaps she is guarding against losing her audience to something that they could never imagine.

Another type of disrupted memory Langer discusses is anguished memory. Anguished memory comes from a disagreement between the memories of the survivor, who has continued life beyond the camp, and the inmate, whose life ended after the camps were gone. Langer calls upon the testimony of Jacob K. to explain the nature of anguished memory. Jacob K. recalls, “I feel my head is filled with garbage: all these images, you know, and sounds, and my nostrils are filled with the stench of burning flesh. And it’s. . . you can’t excise it, it’s like-like another skin beneath this skin and that skin is called Auschwitz, and you cannot shed it, you know.”¹¹ Jacob’s anguished memory cannot be reconciled with common memory; the sensations of the camp no longer exist, but he still carries them in his anguished memory. This irreconcilable

memory creates a distinct gap between him and the rest of the world as his testimony continues: “I am not like you. You have one vision of life and I have two.”¹² The anguished memory of Jacob K., the memory which cannot be understood in the present, has become a boundary between his story and the imaginative capacity of his audience.

In the written testimony of Primo Levi, a perennial theme is the breakdown of language that occurred in the camps. In “The Canto of Ulysses,” Levi recalls a story about going to get soup with the *pikolo* of his Commando, Jean. On the journey, Levi tries to recite a passage from Dante’s *Inferno*, and then translate the passage into French. However, Levi finds that it is impossible for him to remember every passage, and many words prove difficult to translate.¹³ Anguished memory surfaces as Levi is unable to fully conjure up knowledge from his pre-camp memory and translate it into the language of the camp. Levi also admits that “If the Lagers had lasted longer a new, harsh language would have been born”¹⁴; only in this language could Jacob K.’s second vision of the world be understood.

The next type of memory Langer discusses is humiliated memory, the memory of the unethical and immoral self. He writes, “If anguished memory may be seen as discontent in search of a form, humiliated memory recalls an utter distress that shatters all molds designed to contain a unified and irreproachable image of the self.”¹⁵ Langer explains that humiliated memory is evident in testimony when the subject admits that all of the rules governing life before or after the Holocaust, could not exist in the camps. Humiliated memory in testimonies is sometimes perceived as grotesque, and highly undesirable in the study of the Holocaust. Its stories display blatant opposition to all ethical and moral standards, and construct a useful model of the unethical and immoral world that emerged in the camps.

According to Levi, prisoners and perpetrators alike were forced to live in a ‘gray zone’ by circumstances in the camps: “This gray zone possesses an incredibly complicated internal structure and contains within itself enough to confuse our need to judge.”¹⁶ Within the gray zone of the Holocaust, the ethics and morals of society held no power over human instinct. But within the framework of the unethical and immoral camps, there is no allowance for judgment. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone to judge the actions of the Holocaust survivors. Many survivors understand and sympathize with Levi’s idea of a gray zone that exists outside of judgment’s jurisdiction in the post-camp world.

Speaking within the context of the gray zone, Mrs. Klein shares a part of her humiliated memory that displays the breakdown of morals and ethics in the camps. After leaving Auschwitz, Mrs Klein was transported from camp to camp, one of which was Magdeburg. She was in a barrack with many people who did not speak her language, and she was very hungry:

And again, I can’t remember what we ate except, one incident that I remember, which I have to admit that I am ashamed to say that I did it. But right behind my bunk bed, some of those people had a loaf of bread. And my companion said, take the bread. [Slowly quieting] And I know they were just as hungry as we were, but I did take the bread, we ate the bread [Almost whispering], and when they came back they were furious, and pretty loud, and spoke a language we never understood but by then the bread was gone and we ate it. And I’m not apologizing for it, but it’s something that kind of made me guilty because they were hungry, but we were little, maybe hungrier.¹⁷

To steal someone's bread was to steal their nourishment and strength. In a normal world, this act would be understood as a crime and the perpetrator would be judged in accordance with the human ideal of justice. However, in the camps no justice is present; therefore, there can be no judge, or even any coherent code of laws to be broken. Mrs. Klein understands this concept and does not feel the need to apologize. She feels guilty only because those people were hungry, not as a direct result of her decision to take the bread.¹⁸ She knows that her humiliated memory of stealing bread lies outside of judgment today because it happened in another time and place that cannot be understood. When the scholar of the Holocaust is able to accept the humiliated memory of the survivor, to embrace its horrible memories as an indispensable part of the Holocaust narrative, new understanding is possible.

Tainted memory follows very closely on the heels of humiliated memory. Langer defines tainted memory as "a narrative stained by the disapproval of the witness's own present moral sensibility, as well as by some of the incidents it relates."¹⁹ In *Admitting the Holocaust*, Langer examines the memories of some survivors of the Warsaw ghetto.²⁰ Many of the survivors feel like their actions in the ghetto jeopardized their legitimacy in their society after the ghetto. One example of testimony he offers explains this idea clearly.

Dr. Szwajger was working at the hospital in the Warsaw ghetto when Nazis and collaborators came to clear everyone out. Instead of trying to help the children to safety, or negotiate with the soldiers, Dr. Szwajger went around to each child and poisoned him or her with morphine. This action disturbed her for the rest of her life. As a pediatric doctor after the war, she often had doubts as to her own legitimacy in that profession: "I thought that I had no right to carry out my profession. After all, one does not start one's work as a doctor by leading people not to life but to death."²¹ In this case, not only does the subject have trouble telling the story, but constantly struggles with her role in post-ghetto society. The tainted memory of the survivor "leaves a tainted legacy and a tainted life" which cannot be healed with the passage of time.²²

Unheroic memory is the last type of memory Langer addresses in his work. This memory type exposes the largest gap of understanding between the Holocaust survivor and the outside observer. In the world that exists outside the Holocaust, there is a freedom of choice. Inside the camps this freedom was broken down along with the rest of civilization. Unheroic memory surfaces when the survivor admits that the will to resist was replaced in the camp by the will to survive. For many, including Mrs. Klein, resistance was never an option. From the very beginning of Mrs. Klein's testimony, unheroic memory is present. She constantly reminds her audience that resistance was not an option under Nazi rule, using phrases like, "we could do nothing," and "it was not possible to." In the camps, the breakdown of civilization, as well as the breakdown of the physical self, was so great that resistance was impossible.

Primo Levi is careful to remind his readers that those who could find the strength to resist were very privileged. They had access to a greater means of survival, and therefore had the energy and spirit to foment an effective resistance. Levi contends that the Germans were able to break the spirit of everyone in the camp to the point that not a single one, not even a collective group, could offer a challenge to the society of total domination under which they lived. Unheroic memory is present as Levi explains the accomplishment of the Nazi system: "To destroy a man is difficult, almost as difficult as to create one: it has not been easy, nor quick, but you Germans have succeeded. Here we are, docile under your gaze; from our side you have nothing more to fear; no acts of violence, no words of defiance, not even a look of judgment."²³

When examining the effects of the Holocaust on the people that lived through it, there is no source better than oral testimony. The memories of survivors paint a vivid picture of what actually happened in the camps, but that vivid picture is not always clear at first glance. The context of the memory lies in a time and place which is foreign to the standards, laws, and moral codes of today's society. Therefore, the survivor's memory becomes disrupted as they recall memories that seem to have no place in today's world. It is the task of the devoted listener to embrace these disruptions and seek out what lies underneath the broken speech and fuzzy chronology of the memories. To take this extra step towards understanding may be painful, but working with an event like the Holocaust is never easy.

Notes

¹See Robert N. Kraft. *Memory Perceived: Recalling the Holocaust*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002. Chapter 1, "Revealing Memories." In this chapter, Kraft discusses the effects of specific memories, especially traumatic memories, and their influence on life after the event. He argues that "Holocaust testimony tells us that the most pervasive characteristic of memory for atrocity is its extraordinary persistence." (1) Kraft continues to explain that memories of the Holocaust continue to influence the lives of survivors for an indefinite period of time.

²*Ibid.*, 184.

³Kraft and Langer both conducted their research at the Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. This archive offers a unique opportunity for survivors to voluntarily offer their testimony, and to have it videotaped for future viewing by audiences specified by the survivor. Most of the tapes are open for public viewing.

⁴Lawrence L. Langer. *Holocaust Testimonies: the Ruins of Memory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991, 6.

⁵*Holocaust Testimonies*, 19.

⁶*Ibid.*, 38.

⁷*Memory Perceived*, 25. For a full explanation of Kraft's terms please see Chapter 2, *Defining Memories*.

⁸*Ibid.*, 26.

⁹*Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰Ann Klein. Presentation at St. Pius X, Sixth Grade Class, Spring 2004. Presentation conducted along with Dr. Leah Dickstein, formerly a professor at the University of Kentucky.

¹¹*Holocaust Testimonies*, 53.

¹²*Ibid.*, 53.

¹³Langer also examines "The Canto of Ulysses" in his discussion of anguished memory. *Holocaust Testimonies*, 44-47.

¹⁴Primo Levi. *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996. 123.

¹⁴*Holocaust Testimonies*, 77.

¹⁵Primo Levi. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York, NY: Vintage International, Vintage Books, 1989, 42.

¹⁶Ann Klein. Presentation at Otterbein College, History 410-The Holocaust in the Twentieth Century. 11/11/2004.

¹⁷Langer explains that humiliated memories are often so painful that the survivor does not even wish to try and reconcile the memory with today's world: "But it is clear from the struggle of many witnesses, from their expressions as well as their words, that they inhabit two

worlds simultaneously: the one of ‘choiceless choice’ *then*; the other of moral evaluation *now*. Harmony and integration are not only impossible—they are not even desirable.” Langer, 83. While Mrs. Klein admits she *did* feel guilty, she never offers an apology for her actions. The listener must accept that this *humiliated memory* will not, and cannot, be reconciled with our common memory.

¹⁸*Holocaust Testimonies*, 122.

¹⁹Lawrence L. Langer. *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 38. Also see the testimony of Dr. Szwajger, 37.

²¹*Admitting the Holocaust*, 38.

²²*Survival in Auschwitz*, 150.

Late Nineteenth-Century Women's Clubs: An Education for Evolving Citizens

● ● ● *Jennifer Roberts*

Developing alongside the nineteenth century American women's rights movement, women's clubs provided an important outlet through which middle-class women could challenge traditional feminine ideals and move beyond the home into the community. Popular magazines of the time, such as *The Ladies Home Journal* and *Forum*, provided a wealth of information on the inner workings of women's clubs as well as underscored their accomplishments and widespread growth. The evolution of these clubs brought women into the civic arena. In the beginning years, their foci were social enjoyment, management of house and home, motherhood, and the fostering of intellectual stimulation through literature. Later, the foci shifted to include community, social and educational reform, industry, and politics. Club life gave women experience in running organizations and attending to business affairs through electing officers, organizing philanthropic endeavors, and handling money. Club life also offered women experience with public relations and gave them both a voice in and an influence over the development of reform laws; clearly, club life opened them up to the prospect of mastering the future of their sex. In short, women's clubs of the late nineteenth century helped prepare American women to be responsible, voting citizens of the twentieth century.

Before the era of the women's club, women had almost no political rights and led virtually none of the organizations fighting for such rights. Jane "Jennie June" Croly—author and pioneer of women's suffrage clubs—argued that women's suffrage, temperance, and anti-slavery campaigns were led by men up until the 1850's. She goes on to say, in an article for the nineteenth-century ladies' magazine *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, that "up to the [eighteen-] sixties [...] there were no secular organizations of women. They had no rights to property, not even their earnings; nor in their own children. There were no women's colleges, and few schools of the collegiate class where women could receive more than a 'seminary' education."¹ However, by 1869, just as Croly was forming the first women's club in New York, the governments of Wyoming, Minnesota, and the District of Columbia were beginning to allow married women the rights to property and earnings,² opening doors for women to advance in all arenas of public life.

To understand how club life helped women become activists and leaders in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to observe how clubs developed from social gatherings to entities of social reform and philanthropy. Early on, women's clubs were simply groups of women who gathered for intellectual and moral stimuli centered around literature—precursors to Oprah's Book Club, if you will. The club was a place that "addressed itself to the woman in the home" and was not a place of "women leaders and agitators."³ The early agenda of the women's club was to provide a place where women could exercise their intellect and strengthen their moral bonds in a socially stimulating environment⁴; thus, clubs were a great way for the educated woman to stretch her mind.

Largely isolated within the home, women found clubs a welcome retreat. Even though women had access to some education, this training was not as effective in making them into

productive citizens as higher education was for men. A man was able to use his education outside the home on a daily basis: “[h]is life broadens, becomes alert; he is full of plans and ambitions.” Conversely, a woman, since she was unable to use her education outside the home, withered: “[s]he grows petty, occupied with trifles, warped, censorious.”²⁵ The educational differences between the sexes, coupled with the disparity between men’s lives of business and women’s lives within the home, influenced the interpretations of club life: dealing daily in the business world, men gathered in clubs for leisure, whereas women grew anxious to participate in the world outside their own windows.

Women embraced the term “club” and redefined its meaning. Instead of clubs being a place of diversion and leisure, they became an “educational and intellectually progressive movement.”²⁶ Their mission and definition held a higher significance: a club was an effort to bring women of all social degrees together in support of each other to “break down walls of prejudice” and to make a difference.²⁷ Women balked at coming together simply for “recreation [or] to eat and drink and chat unless they had a higher use.”²⁸ This was in keeping with their ideals of womanhood. Alice Hyneman Rhine’s article, “The Work of Women’s Clubs,” published in the December 1891 issue of *Forum*, contends that it was the natural differences between the sexes and women’s inclinations to be helpful that explained the definition of a women’s club.²⁹

Club life welcomed breaking down social classes and was open to both “women possessed of culture, and women hungering for it,” from women of high society to teachers. Girls emerging into womanhood gathered among the mature in a shared interest for promoting the “social, intellectual and moral advancement of humanity.”³⁰ Not surprisingly, early women’s clubs soon grew into more than social gatherings. Having included women from nearly all walks of life, they now decided to expand their usefulness. In an 1898 article for the *Ladies Home Journal* titled “Twentieth Century Village,” author Natalie Blanchman insightfully states, “[w]omen are never happy very long to be doing for themselves alone.” Women understood they could flex their intellectual muscles beyond the home for the direct benefit of the community.³¹

Women had always considered themselves to be the moral center of the family; thus, the transition into embracing the community was a natural one. Women began to see the community as a larger extension of their homes and, as a result, threw their energies into community reform on all levels. For example, among the various betterment projects that the Peoria Women’s Club of Illinois tackled within their community were the systemization of street cleaning and the improvement of sanitary conditions.³² Other clubs added sidewalks and planted shade trees. They also improved parks, drove public wells, and brought electricity to gas streetlamps.³³

As club events began to include philanthropic activity, women occasionally welcomed men into their organizations; not having much financial experience in or out of the home, women were expected to allow men to handle the business end of their affairs. The June 1896 publication of *The Galaxy* points out that women “can hardly make the purchases necessary for their own households, and would be afraid to undertake anything in the shape of business on their own responsibility.”³⁴ Most women understood that, in order to learn how to manage their own money and gain more independence, they should exclude men. Women realized that a women’s club could offer the preparation for handling their own business affairs. As *The Galaxy* article reveals, a women’s club “enlarges ideas, teaches system and order in the transaction of business.”³⁵ Women’s clubs were valuable tools through which its members could learn new skills.

Some women balked at having male members at all, saying that, until equality was reached, men and women could not come together in the club environment for fear that “men

would naturally assume the office of teacher, director, and lawgiver, which they have held so long.”¹⁶ Women feared they would never learn finance and business if the men were around; another role for men needed to be found. Writing for *Arthur’s Home Magazine*, Anne Wharton produced a solution when she declared that men would be welcome in the club on “gala days,” as they might be “useful and sometimes ornamental in a picturesque boating or tennis costume.”¹⁷ Although some women’s clubs kept male members, others began to tackle economics and business on their own, creating another step toward equality and, in the process, shutting their doors to men.

Established in 1877, the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union of Boston exemplified the progress and fierce determination with which the club movement advanced in areas of finance and business. Incorporated in 1880, this club featured a lavish, three-story clubhouse that represented its successful endeavors in finance and education. Women took classes in housekeeping and prepared luncheons for the officer meetings held on the second floor. There were reading rooms that encouraged employers and employees to come together for joint learning, as well as lodgings to rent, and the cooking department “did an outside trade to the extent of 11,000 dollars.”¹⁸

The Boston Club was not alone in reaching financial success, however. The Old and New Club of Massachusetts aimed for individual progress through education in economics. To aid individual improvement, each member took turns running the business affairs of the club.¹⁹ Not only were women resourceful with money—the Ladies Literary Club saved dues for eighteen years to build their clubhouse—but they also became business-savvy. Women were active in incorporating into stock companies to finance their meetinghouses. One fine example of this business strategy was the Women’s Club of Wisconsin, which built their lovely house, the Athenaeum, from stock profits.²⁰

Though women were branching out into new, uncharted territory and showing exceptional skill in challenging the gender status quo, they were not willing to relinquish traditional feminine ideals. Indeed, they justified the balance between home and community by identifying themselves as “city” mothers; it was their duty as women to “mother” the community, the state, and the nation, therefore substantiating the need to expand their responsibilities from home to country.²¹ Likewise, they emphasized the importance of promoting their moral standards to be “[i]nterpreters between the gods and men,” and believed that broadening their intellect would not interfere with their “natural” position.²² Many clubs even kept domestic activities a large part of their mission to make sure women would not neglect home life. Mrs. Henrotin, President of the State Federation of Women’s Clubs, put it best when she said that the Federation “represents the sum and soul of all causes, Home and Society.” She went on to reiterate that homes were in no danger of being neglected, pointing to the subject matter discussed within the clubs: nutrition, home economics, sanitation, and household expenses.²³

The opportunities that club life offered women—the opportunities to use and develop their education, to widen their scope of usefulness and, ultimately, to obtain equal footing with men in suffrage, industry, and education—appealed to them. Soon, women’s clubs began to experience rapid expansion. By May of 1889, it was obvious that there was a need for clubs to organize on a national level and band together for support. As the first established women’s club—the New York Sorosis Club—approached its twenty-first birthday, founder Jane Croly invited clubs from around the nation to gather in celebration. The purpose of the coalition was to weave a network of women together to share accomplishments and assist each other in achiev-

ing successes on both local and national levels. As a result, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) was born. Within three days of the first meeting, a committee was formed to draft a constitution and elect officers; the goal was to have a full-fledged organization by the following year.²⁴ Undeniably, growth in this club federation was rapid. Within the first four years, the number of clubs went from less than one hundred to five hundred, each with memberships numbering anywhere from twenty-five to five hundred.

Yet, the popular biennial meetings of the GFWC presented a problem to many club members. On one hand, it was difficult for some members to find the time and money to travel the long distances to the conferences; on the other hand, the overwhelming number of delegates who attended the meetings increased beyond building capacities. By 1900, the problem of finding large enough buildings to house thousands of club members during GFWC conventions forced reorganization: the development of the State Federations of Women's Clubs helped resolve these difficulties by holding annual meetings for local clubs within each state.²⁵

The development of state federations also allowed for stronger focus on club-specific topics based on geographic locations. It was decided that states would send delegates to the GFWC and each local club would "find its representation through the State."²⁶ Like their larger sisters, membership in state federations grew swiftly. In 1894 only four states had organized under the State Federation of Women's Clubs, but in four short years that number had grown to thirty. For example, the New York State Federation had 228 clubs federated, with its total membership at thirty thousand.²⁷

It was clear that women understood the workings of organizing a vast body of citizens, as they quite purposefully adopted the local, state and national government structure after which to model their clubs. As explained by Mary C. Francis in an article for a December 1895 issue of *Godey's Magazine*, "The club woman holds her relation to the club; the club is a member of the State Federation, and the State Federation is an [...] affiliated branch of the General Federation of Women's Clubs."²⁸ This system would assist them in focusing on the individual needs of each club, which were quite broad and varied.

Women designed their local club missions to fit the specific needs of their particular environment, even as they benefited from the larger focus of the GFWC as well. Club needs varied depending on their geographic locations, and state federations made it easier to address specific concerns. Clubs in the East and Midwest, having seen some women in the workforce and being surrounded by industry, were more likely to focus on the workforce environment. They discussed ways to enhance and establish industrial reform, child labor laws, tenement housing, and higher education. A club in Wilmington, Delaware, established an industrial school for girls, and Clubs in Chicago focused on sweatshop abuses, the problems of wage earners, and social issues.²⁹

Some women were leading the public outcry in matters of reform.³⁰ One of the most progressive cities in the matter of women's clubs was Philadelphia. An outcropping of that city's New Century Club was the founding of the Legal Protection Society. The purposes of this association were to counsel women and intervene in disputes with employers over the rightful claim of wages—in short, it was a watchdog for women workers' rights.³¹ Using their literary skills, club women took to writing essays and reports on various community projects that needed attention, and soon these reporters moved on to tenement and child labor reform, women in the workforce, and workforce conditions. Clare De Graffenried wrote a lengthy article in *Forum* describing the need for proper housing for wage earners and citing the deplorable conditions

of tenement housing. She cleverly linked the problem to nationwide concerns about health and commercial productivity, writing, “If the mass of the people must live in a way which interferes with physical strength and soundness, the productivity and commercial value of labor are lessened.”³² She also talked about the high cost of maintaining hospitals and institutions that housed victims of illness, and she made a successful argument that the “health of a nation is its wealth.”³³

Unlike their northern neighbors, southern women tended to be more conservative and, at times, viewed clubs linked with political activism as unwomanly.³⁴ Since they sometimes cringed at the term “club” and thought that progressive movements were affronts to their femininity, they focused mainly on educational and philanthropic efforts in art, music, and literature. The Kentucky State Federation, for instance, cited an increase in membership when they focused on literary work, mainly along the lines of the creation of libraries.³⁵ There were exceptions to the southern antagonistic view of reform clubs, however: the New Orleans Woman’s Club, for example, added industrial training to its mission.³⁶ Similar to southern groups, the western clubs were also rarely philanthropic and focused mainly on social and literary education.³⁷ Yet, women in the West and in other isolated areas of the country heralded the women’s club as a “bright spot in an otherwise monotonous and toilsome existence.”³⁸

One of the greatest improvements brought about by the western women’s club movement was the establishment of traveling libraries and art galleries—institutions that women’s clubs were vital in creating, supporting, and expanding. Traveling libraries, permanent “free libraries,” and galleries brought literary education and culture to women in the West. Women were crucial in opening and maintaining these institutions. Emily Tolman from *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* reported, “In Minnesota it is stated that of the sixteen towns having public libraries, fourteen were started and controlled by women.”³⁹ Along with traveling libraries, art galleries were soon on the move, providing more intellectual motivation for women in remote areas. These touring galleries operated much like lending libraries in that a painting was loaned out for a varying length of time and returned in exchange for another. The value of the circulating pictures was incalculable.

Although women’s clubs differed according to geographic needs, they were consistently unified on the issue of education. Since clubs had been designed to stimulate intellect, their focus naturally moved to educational institutions. In addition to introducing “pictures of high order” into schoolrooms, women were key in establishing kindergartens and placing women on school boards.⁴⁰ They created post-graduate courses and college extension centers. The Women’s Legal Education Society, which “endorsed a chair for law lectures to women in the University of New York,”⁴¹ was another product of the active women’s club in the area of education.

By the time women got the right to vote in 1920, they had already influenced many major reform movements across the nation. Women in New Hampshire diligently worked toward the protection of children. Washington women helped raise the age of consent to sixteen. In the District of Columbia, women took it upon themselves to investigate rules regarding property rights, composed a bill that recommended changes, and saw it signed into law. Missouri women worked toward health issues by securing the inspection of milk. Illinois clubs formed schools for the jailed and provided suitable housing for “criminal and destitute boys.” The Midwest saw Chicago clubs join forces to tackle issues specific to their communities, including everything from street improvements to marketplace renovation. They established training schools for

women and provided scholarships for both American and European women's colleges. In the area of reform, they worked on improving housing conditions for women in the workplace and raised money to provide legal assistance.⁴²

In 1897, Emily Tolman summed up the women's club movement with great foresight: "Women have just begun to learn to increase their power by organization."⁴³ Women had gone from being isolated homemakers to proto-citizens who were experienced in parliamentary procedure, politics, social reform, and the management of financial and business affairs. Tolman's statement was profound. Over the next twenty to thirty years, women continued to organize to win suffrage, to acquire civic and labor reform, and to gain and protect their legal and political rights, thus evolving into a powerful force in our nation's development.

Notes

¹ Jennie June Croly, "Women In Club Life: The American Woman In Action," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, May 1, 1900, 19. The American Periodicals Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

² Ibid., 19.

³ Ibid., 20.

⁴ Alice Hyneman Rhine, "The Work of Women's Clubs," *Forum*, December 1891, 520. The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

⁵ E. Leslie Gilliams, "The Association For The Advancement of Women," *Godey's Magazine*, January 1896, 11. The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

⁶ Croly, "Women In Club Life," 19-20.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Women's Clubs and Their Uses," *The Galaxy. A Magazine of Entertaining Reading*, June 1869, 900, The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

⁹ Rhine, "The Work of Women's Clubs," 519

¹⁰ Emily Tolman, "The Club Movement Among Women," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, December 1897, 824, The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

¹¹ Natalie Blanchman, "Twentieth Century Village: Third Article- Starting a Village Library," *The Ladies Home Journal*, October 1898, 28, The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

¹² Mary C. Francis, "The General Federation of Women's Clubs," *Godey's Magazine*, December 1895, 581, The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

¹³ Tolman, "The Club Movement Among Women," 826.

¹⁴ "Women's Clubs and Their Uses," 901.

¹⁵ Ibid., 901.

¹⁶ "Women's Clubs and Their Uses," 904.

¹⁷ Anne H. Wharton, "Women's Clubs of To-Day," *Arthur's Home Magazine*, July 1891, 513, The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

¹⁸ Margaret Polson Murray, "Women's Clubs in America," *Eclectic Magazine, and Monthly Edition of the Living Age*, July 1900, 126, The American Periodical Series, <http://proquest.umi.com>

[com](http://proquest.umi.com) (accessed November 14, 2004).

¹⁹ Rhine, "The Work Of Women's Clubs," 520.

²⁰ Wharton, "Women's Clubs of To-Day," 512.

²¹ Ellen Henrotin, "The State Federations Of The General Federation Of Women's Clubs," *The Arena*, December 1896-June 1897, 126, *The American Periodical Series*, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

²² Wharton, "Women's Clubs of To-Day," 511.

²³ Tolman, "The Club Movement Among Women," 825.

²⁴ Croly, "Women In Club Life," 20.

²⁵ Henrotin, "The State Federations Of The General Federation Of Women's Clubs," 121.

²⁶ Croly, "Women In Club Life," 22.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁸ Francis, "The General Federation Of Women's Clubs," 578.

²⁹ Croly, "Women In Club Life," 21. Henrotin, "The State Federations Of The General Federation Of Women's Clubs," 123.

³⁰ Clare De Graffenried, "Need Of Better Homes For Wage-Earners," *Forum* May 1896, 508, *The American Periodical Series*, <http://proquest.umi.com> (accessed November 14, 2004).

³¹ Wharton, "Women's Clubs of To-Day," 508.

³² Graffenried. "Need Of Better Wage Earners," 3.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3

³⁴ Gilliams, "The Association For The Advancement Of Women," 12-14.

³⁵ Henrotin, "The State Federations Of The General Federation Of Women's Clubs," 125.

³⁶ Rhine, "The Work Of Women's Clubs," 522.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁸ Tolman, "The Club Movement Among Women," 824.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 826.

⁴⁰ Tolman, "The Club Movement Among Women," 826.

⁴¹ Francis, "The General Federation Of Women's Clubs," 579.

⁴² Tolman, "The Club Movement Among Women," 826-827.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 827.

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Women's Agency as Represented in Various Works of Medieval Literature

● ● ● *Amber Robertson*

Representations of women can be considered lacking in medieval literature, as female characters are often overshadowed by the male characters. Women's agency, however, is established through authorial power. Medieval poets and writers had the opportunity to mold female characters in a fashion that challenged the popular cultural opinion, depending on the position they took. By evaluating the popular cultural view of this specific time period and exploring the different approaches taken, this paper will show that both Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France constructed their individual works around their perspectives on medieval culture and society. It is my opinion that the use of the personal female voice in the *Lais* of Marie de France creates a better representation of female agency, while Chrétien de Troyes' female characterization merely reflects the popular cultural view of women in Medieval society.

In her work, *Medieval Women*, Eileen Power states, "The expressed opinion of any age depends on the persons and classes who happen to articulate it; and for this reason alone it often represents the view of a small but vocal minority" (9). The Medieval culture was a society deeply rooted in the feudal system, meaning the personal opinion that became popular belief hailed from the top of the social ladder—the Church and the aristocracy. In all matters concerning the female sex, it is ironic that the expert authority stems from the two branches of society least acclimated with it. The clergy, most having taken the vow of celibacy, knew little of women, and the aristocrats filed them away as "ornamental assets" that fell some distance behind the priority of land ownership (Power 9). With such ideals in mind, the view was established and accepted: women were inferior to men.

The feudal system alone cannot be credited with the ideas of male superiority and female inferiority:

The Middle Ages inherited from Greek culture, especially from Platonic philosophy, a deep distrust of mortal flesh, especially in contrast with the immortal soul. The corruptible body seemed to exemplify moral corruption, but the soul, sharing in God's eternal existence, participated in divinity. Since women's primary function in classical and medieval societies was motherhood (men, although fathers, were not limited to that role), they were identified with the bodily functions of conception and birth, and with the body generally. Viewed as more fleshy than men, women stood for all that the modern word "carnal" suggests: unlawful sexuality, sin, and death. (Potkay 5)

Though Greek philosophy helped build the foundation of the medieval male superiority complex, the Church went back even farther to the root of this view: Eve. Eve was created secondly, with the intended role as helpmate to her male partner, Adam. She was made from his own rib, making her a part of him. Therefore, "Eve was created in the image of man, not God," making her inferior to man's dominant being (Potkay 86). The Christian-dominated

society found no problem in accepting the concept that was embedded in their scriptures and upheld by their clergy.

Eve, however, was not the only female figure set in comparison with medieval women. Contradicting their view on female inferiority, the ruling classes elevated the feminine status by drawing connections between “the Virgin in heaven and the lady on earth” (Power 10). This association of the medieval lady and the Virgin Mary was advocated by the important presence of chivalry in the male society. To be brave, honorable, and courteous, chivalry was the example the gentlemanly knight, the male counterpart of the medieval lady, set for his society: “In chivalry the romantic worship of a woman is as necessary a quality of the perfect knight as the worship of God. The devotion of the Virgin Mary was often indistinguishable in form from that which the knight lavished upon the mortal lady” (Power 20). Only from this chivalrous point of view was a woman placed in a position of superiority.

It is also imperative to note that this elevated status depended not only on the stance of chivalry, but also on the role of the superior female: she must be a lady. The part of the dominant sex could not be placed on a young girl, a working maid, or even a wealthy widow; it was a privilege set aside for a fairer, finer femme—a maiden lady. The maiden lady, one who possessed all the characteristics attributed to the Holy Virgin: “chastity, purity, delicacy and beauty of body, modesty, humility and openness of manner, freshness, incorruption” (Phillips 7). These were the qualities valued by society, which, compiled into one being, created an object of affection worthy of praise: the lady. Power affirms, “In the ideal of chivalry she was the adored, the source of all romance and the object of all worship, who had but to command and she was obeyed, and for whom all deeds of valor were performed” (35).

It is from this popular view that the majority of medieval literature is constructed. Here, fictional females are seen as descendants from Eve and Mary. They are the sinner and the Virgin. They are the permanently inferior who get to hold a dominant card every now and then. They are characteristics molded together to be fashioned at the author’s will.

Many of Chrétien de Troyes’ literary works reflect the poet’s preference for characters and themes that identify with the popular cultural view of women, meaning that they were most likely written for a primarily male audience (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 120). Maintaining the idea that Eve is a part of Adam, that woman without man is incomplete, de Troyes keeps two of his mainstream female characters, Enide and Laudine, nameless until they both take husbands (Gold 31). Not until each marries the respective hero of her own romance do these women have identities.

Many authors identify with the female characters they create, endowing certain characters with qualities and concerns they themselves possess. In de Troyes’ tale of “Erec and Enide,” the female character, Enide, is known for voicing her husband’s faults:

Sir, since you press me so, I shall tell you the truth. I shall not keep the matter hidden longer. But I fear you will be upset. Throughout this land, everyone—the fair, the dark, and the ruddy—is saying it is a great pity that you have set aside your arms. Your reputation has suffered from it. Last year all were accustomed to say that no finer or braver knight was known in the entire world. Nowhere was there anyone to equal you. Now all, young and old, highborn and low, make fun of you. They all call you lost to honor [...]. And what pains me even more is the fact that they blame me for this. (de Troyes, “Erec and Enide” 33)

Though she speaks the truth in order to help her husband, he punishes her for speaking out and recognizing one of his flaws. This points to the poet's effort in challenging his culture, "calling attention to the faults in the chivalric world" (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 118). But the faults he sees in the chivalric world do not shed a favorable light on the female figure.

The main theme in both of de Troyes' works, "Erec and Enide" and "The Knight with the Lion," for example, revolves around the conflict of a knight's loyalty to his lady's love and "the male warrior ethic." It is between "the call to love and the call to adventure" (Gold 22). In de Troyes' poems, women are "romantic objects," a goal to be obtained by men. They are vital components of the story, but not as participants; rather, they are vital only as accessory characters (Gold 28). De Troyes' conflict between love and prowess directly affects the position his female characters take in the story:

The primary female character cannot help the hero resolve his conflict between love and adventure because she, identified with love, is herself part of the problem. Thus a woman also cannot be at the center of romance; the central experience of the romance is a conflict between personal and social concerns in which love for a woman is part of the personal aspect of the inner development of the man. (Gold 37)

Both Erec and Yvain's knighthoods are questioned after they are married. Once Enide calls attention to the fact that people are talking about Erec and his deep, infatuated love for his wife, Erec immediately sets out to prove his prowess. Gawain is the one responsible for Yvain's dilemma. He tells Yvain that he will lose his honor and respect as a knight if he remains with his wife, forsaking the life of jousting and tournaments. In both situations, the women are seen as helpless, unable to fix the problem and associated with its cause.

The theme of female helplessness and weakness is carried on throughout "The Knight with the Lion." Once Yvain kills Laudine's husband at the spring, she immediately has to find a new husband. Her gender is the lone restriction that prevents her from mourning longer than a day. As a woman, she is incapable of protecting the spring and defending her land. Even her councilmen recommend that she find a suitable candidate for marriage right away:

When my lady married nearly six years ago, she did so on your advice. Now she is sad: her lord is dead. The man who held all this country and adorned it so well has now but a plot of earth. Such a shame that his life was so short. A woman is incapable of carrying a shield or striking with a lance. If our lady could marry a fine lord, she would improve and strengthen her position. Never was there greater a need than now. Do you all advise her to take a lord before the tradition ends that has been observed in this town for more than sixty years? (Troyes, "The Knight" 282)

Helpless women continue to be a priority in de Troyes' world as Yvain continues on his journey. After breaking his promise to return to Laudine, Yvain goes mad and realizes that he must win back his honor. He therefore dedicates the rest of his knightly deeds to rescuing damsels in distress (Gold 24).

De Troyes does, however, give one of his female characters a subtle hint of power in her voice. Many medieval authors harness cleverness, wit, or sometimes even magic to give their female

characters a sense of power over male characters. This can be seen in “Erec and Enide,” when Erec and Enide venture into the Joy of the Court. There, they encounter a lady (who turns out to be Enide’s cousin) and her knight, whom she has trapped in the garden by a “hidden promise”:

She extracts the promise of a favor from him in the first bloom of their love when he is willing to promise anything. She only later reveals that he has promised never to leave her until he has been conquered by another knight in battle, which traps him in a very uncomfortable situation: he can only escape by the loss of his life or his honor as a knight, yet by staying, by defeating and killing all his opponents for no real purpose, he is denying, indeed subverting, one of the basic tenets of knighthood—to serve society. (Ferrante, *Public Postures* 216)

Through this “hidden promise,” the lady of the Joy of the Court holds a position of power over her knight. It is one of the few opportunities in which de Troyes presents female authority.

Women writers in the Middle Ages, on the other hand, focused on the achievements of female characters more often than male authors. Women writers wanted to make a point that would influence their female listeners through a story that was still entertaining to a male-dominated audience (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 176). Though many of the known women writers had male patrons—Marie de France even dedicated her *Lais* to “a noble king”—the underlying theme consisted of female characters with more prominent roles (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 176).

In order to establish a strong voice while maintaining a subordinate position in a male-dominant society, women writers often “adopted a posture of helplessness and ignorance when speaking of themselves” (Ferrante, *Public Postures* 213). Potkay discusses one such way of adopting this posture, stating “Humility topos [is] a conventional literary vehicle for self-abasement” (*Minding the Body* 54). Medieval women authors used this tool to validate their writing. By assuming a diminutive position and thus humbling themselves, they eliminated any opportunity to be classified as “presumptuous” women (Potkay 55). Accepted in society under the assumed distinction of an inferior woman, these authors were able to make subtle textual maneuvers that influenced their culture (Ferrante, *Public Postures* 213). Using the humility topos was another way in which medieval authors could identify with their fictional females. Much like their romance characters, who often manipulated situations with secretive and sometimes even deceptive maneuvers, “these writers exercised powerful influence from positions of apparent weakness” (Ferrante, *Public Postures* 227).

Marie de France, however, does not utilize the humility topos. She does not belittle herself or her authorial power, but rather “asserts herself and her abilities, proclaiming her gifts and her duty to use them for the instruction of others” (Ferrante, *Public Postures* 222). In the “Prologue” to the *Lais*, de France even insists that it is God’s intention for her to use her ability to tell her tales: “Whoever has received knowledge/ and eloquence in speech from God/ should not be silent or secretive/ but demonstrate it willingly” (de France, “Prologue” 1-4). By acknowledging the fact that her talents are issued by God, Marie adds a valuable “divine sanction” to what limited womanly power she possesses (Potkay 29). To further emphasize her authorial power, she closes her prologue, not with humble gratitude or belittlement, but with the simple statement, “Do not think me presumptuous/ if I dare present them to you./ Now hear how they begin” (de France, “Prologue” 54-56).

Marie de France did not overtly seek fame or praise with the writing of the *Lais*; rather, she sought a sense of value and worth as a woman writer in her society. She wanted her voice to be recognized as “a female author within a culture in which women’s voices too often go unheard” (Potkay 83). Throughout the *Lais*, de France refers to herself as “the rememberer,” making known that these Breton stories have a history, but also establishing her position of authorship (Potkay 81). In transcribing these oral tales, she is ensured that she, a female voice, will be the one credited for their longevity (Potkay 83). Also, by choosing to relate stories that have no existing written form, she is enhancing her authorial power to shape and mold characters and themes to her preference (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 195).

By writing with a female voice, de France “offers her audience the opportunity to imagine a woman’s experience of the quest and to explore gender inequities of her culture from not only a male but also a female perspective” (Potkay 87). She does not abuse this power by developing stories solely about women, but rather writes her *Lais* in a fashion that are attractive to both men and women. The women Marie de France characterizes “are articulate and active figures who accomplish something the audience, male and female, can admire” (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 176). She includes characters and themes that are more compatible with her prospective readers. With the exception of several supernatural elements, the *Lais* revolves around ordinary life with ordinary people and ordinary problems, “unhappy marriages, possessive parents, inadequate reward for service, frustrated desires, the limitations of people and of society” (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 197). In the *Lais*, “Yonec,” the heroine, lady fair, was secluded in a tower by her jealous husband. In “Les Deus Amanz,” an incestual father finds “consolation” in his daughter, guarding her potential marriage with the request of an impossible task (de France, “Les Deus Amanz” 23). Although she maintains a good balance of good and evil as well as of men and women, she tends to devote more time to the problems concerning women and “their need to take control of their lives” (Ferrante, *To the Glory* 197).

Marie de France continues to utilize some of the tactics that Chrétien de Troyes uses to give female characters some form of power or control. Like the “hidden promise” used in “Erec and Enide,” de France allows women to wield wit, deceit, and magic in order to achieve the upper hand. In the *Lais*, “Yonec,” the lady lover is given an enchanted ring that will make her husband forget all that he has discovered of her and her lover: “She left carrying the ring/ and returned to her country./ There with her lord/ she lived many days and years./ He never accused her of that deed,/ never insulted her or abused her” (de France, “Yonec” 441, 452-56).

She also creates female characters with established power that presents itself and grows within the text. In the story of “Lanval,” the title character, an honorable knight, is overlooked in King Arthur’s court and leaves, worried for his well-being. He is met by a noble lady who is “worthy and wise and beautiful” (de France, “Lanval” 72). He is immediately taken by love of her and his chivalric heart elevates her to a superior status. “If such joy might be mine/ that you would love me,/ there is nothing you might command,/ within my power, that I would not do,/ whether foolish or wise./ I shall obey your command;/ for you, I shall abandon everyone,/ I want never to leave you./ That is what I most desire” (de France, “Lanval” 122-30). The lady grants Lanval her love and her body and tells him that she will provide him with all that he needs, as long as he keeps their love a secret. In other words, the lady assumes the position of Lanval’s private patron. She supplies him with love as well as any material he might need from what is most definitely a position of power (Potkay 96).

Aside from constructing her female characters into powerful figures, she uses their attributes, like beauty, to challenge the ways in which the medieval society views women. When Lanval's lady comes to Arthur's court to attest to their relationship, Marie gives a detailed account of her appearance:

She was dressed in this fashion:
in a white shift
that revealed both her sides
since the lacing was along the side.
Her body was elegant, her hips slim,
her neck whiter than snow on a branch,
her eyes bright, her face white,
a beautiful mouth, a well-set nose,
dark eyebrows and an elegant forehead,
her hair curly and rather blond;
golden wire does not shine
like her hair in the light.
Her cloak, which she had wrapped around her,
was dark purple. (de France, "Lanval" 559-72)

Marie de France gives a quick overview of the lady's body, focuses great detail in her face, and then mentions her regal clothing. In this way, the author removes the emphasis from the lady's body, from her sexual presence, and "offer[s] a visual feast that encourages her audience to see women diversely" (Potkay 98). Also, de France redirects the audience's focus from body to mind in her description of the lady's two servants who precede her entrance at court, noting that all who saw them thought them more beautiful than the queen, but finally distinguishing the girls with age and wisdom: "Here come two maidens,/ well adorned and very beautiful/ The older one was courtly and wise" (de France, "Lanval" 521-22, 533).

However, in de France's "Le Fresne" (the only story of the *Lais* originally named for a female character), the tables are turned. Here, female characters are overtly the dominant figures, while the male characters take on the supporting roles. More than that, de France focuses on the aspect of male weakness to show their insignificance. The husband of the wife who first bore twins is pressured by the growing knowledge of his wife's rumored affair to keep her under lock and key, and the influence of society ruins his happy family. The father of Le Fresne and her twin was tricked into believing that he had fathered only one child; therefore, he could not interfere in his wife's decision to abandon one of his daughters. Gurun, Le Fresne's lover, cannot marry the woman he truly loves because he gives in to the wishes of his vassals and allows them to choose a more suitable mate: "Even the archbishop agrees to disregard the rules of the Church concerning annulments in order to obey the dictates of true love" (Freeman 257).

In the few examples seen here, it is obvious that the characters found in Marie de France's *Lais* show a more thorough display of female agency. The authorial liberties taken by Marie de France illustrate the fact that she was more concerned in giving a strong voice to the women of medieval society, while Chrétien de Troyes was more concerned with urging the culture to reevaluate its position on public life versus private life.

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Communism and Communal History: The Death and Rebirth of Vietnamese Peasants

● ● ● *Michelle Yost*

Introduction

Communal land distribution in Vietnam¹ pre-dates the communist reforms of the twentieth century. Before the arrival of French imperialism in the mid nineteenth century, Vietnam enjoyed a relatively stable system of ‘equal land’ that was communal in nature and adequately provided for the subsistence of its peasantry. Taxes were low and large landholdings were not permitted (even among the royal family). What happened, then, to the traditional Vietnamese peasant with the onslaught of French colonists? It is the contention of this paper that the French methods of colonial administration—oppressive taxes, land usurpation,² and harsh tenant practices—abolished the tradition of independent Vietnamese peasant farmers and instilled a willingness to accept communism as a viable alternative for survival.

To demonstrate this idea, the paper will be organized into four main sections: 1) the communal history of Vietnam’s peasants and the organization of land, 2) the ascendance of French imperialism and its methods of administration, 3) the effect of landlessness on peasants, and 4) the appeal of communism for these peasants. A mix of both personal stories and statistics will be utilized. Economics will be very important (a person’s wealth was often measured in how much rice he harvested) because it is important to note the changes in living conditions from pre- to post- colonial northern Vietnam.

There has already been some work in this field of inquiry. Ngo Vinh Long explored the importance of land and land concessions in his book *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French* (1991). It details the impact of French policies of land expropriation and taxes on the peasants.³ Nancy Wiegiersma explores the plight of farmers in her book *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Revolution* (1988) with an intense study of village traditions. She focuses on the village community and the peasant family as the building blocks of traditional Vietnamese society.⁴ While these are important works, no one has truly attempted to connect the communal traditions of pre-colonial Vietnam with the resistance against French imperialism and the acceptance of communism in the twentieth century.

Part I. A communal history

To begin to understand the importance of agriculture in Vietnam, it is imperative to understand the significance of rice to the Vietnamese political economy. Rice was the staple of their diet; for adequate nutrition, the average person needed to consume 223 kilograms of milled rice annually.⁵ Additionally, rice was distilled into wine for use in religious ceremonies, the importance of which is prescribed in the traditional adage, “a man without wine is like a flag without wind.”⁶ Wealth was measured by a farmer’s rice production and taxes were paid in kind. The emperor himself would symbolically dig the first furrow for rice every year at the beginning of the growing season.

The very nature of rice growing and cultivation required a communal relationship among villagers. Rice is labor intensive and even all the members of a family could not carry out the planting, transplantation and harvesting alone. Village leaders often organized the peasants at important times so that everyone carried out the necessary steps, regardless of whose fields the peasants worked in: “At harvest-time, conditions were different and there was little margin of time since the harvesting had to be done when the paddy was fully ripe [...]. Regular exchange of workers occurred between villages [...].”⁷ Thus a tradition of mutual assistance was long-standing among the peasants of Vietnam.

In 1428, following the expulsion of the Chinese once again, the Le dynasty was founded. A census was taken and land was to be redistributed equally among the population. These communal lands were to be divided among all the males in the village over age fifteen (Article 384 of the Le code) and redistributed every three years (Article 346). Article 347 of the Le Code prohibited the formation of large farms or estates as part of the protection of public lands. While there has been a long tradition of village autonomy, those local officials responsible for keeping records of the land distribution had to receive approval from the emperor, prescribing a very strong central government. To prevent government officials from usurping public property, Articles 342 and 371 dictated that “land illegally usurped would be reclaimed and the value of the harvest confiscated.”⁸ In all, for the use of these lands, a peasant was taxed less than ten percent of the total product of his harvest. The amount of tax also varied based upon the quality of a field (a farmer with a first-grade field paid twice as much as one with a third grade field) and crop losses due to natural disasters. Through this code, the common lands provided income for every family in the village as well as a small tax revenue. This system remained in use for two centuries until the fall of the Le dynasty. There was an important development at the end of the eighteenth century, however, when the land that was to become known as Cochinchina was annexed into Vietnam’s borders from Cambodia. This region then lacked the traditions of the Le dynasty and was never as heavily populated as Annam and Tonkin. It would also be the first region completely ceded to the French in 1867, and so Cochinchina never developed the communal traditions of the north.

The Tay-Son rebellion began around 1765, throwing Vietnam into a chaos that would last until the end of the century. Led by three brothers from the village of Tay-Son, they toppled the ruling families of both the north and south, uniting the country under their rule. During this time, large landlords arose and many people starved. In response to these conditions, upon the ascendance of the new Nguyen emperor Gia-long in 1804, the Le system of land distribution, now known as the “personal share land system,” was resurrected. Land was given to civil and military personnel in place of a salary. An official with the highest rank could expect to receive fifteen parts (a part varied between locations and years) of land. Even at the bottom of the

scale, the lowest ranking official would receive eight parts of land. As for civilians, the most a male peasant⁹ could receive was six-and-a-half parts, with a peasant suffering from long illness receiving five and a half parts; even widows and orphans were given three parts of land.

However, by 1814, Gia-long began to pay some government bureaucrats a salary to make more land available for the peasants. The royal court adapted this idea and expanded on it, paying in money as well as rice. The trade-off for officials, though, was that they could not receive any profit from the cultivation of the communal lands. Even those with royal titles had restrictions placed on how much land they could hold. A member of the royal family or a duke could only have ten *mau*,¹⁰ a marquis up to eight *mau*, a count six *mau*, a baron four *mau*, and an earl three *mau*. This was a significant development (especially from a western perspective where the possession of a vast amount of land was a prerequisite for royalty until World War I), as it was meant to appease the peasants and prevent rebellion. Even the poorest peasant was still guaranteed several *sao*¹¹ to cultivate. The Nguyen emperors strictly enforced provisions against large landholders, as demonstrated in the reforms of 1839. In one village, half of the privately owned land was converted to communal land, the owner, who was not compensated for the loss, left with only five *mau*.¹² Any government official, no matter how high his post, was dismissed from his position and punished if he rented communal land for private profit.

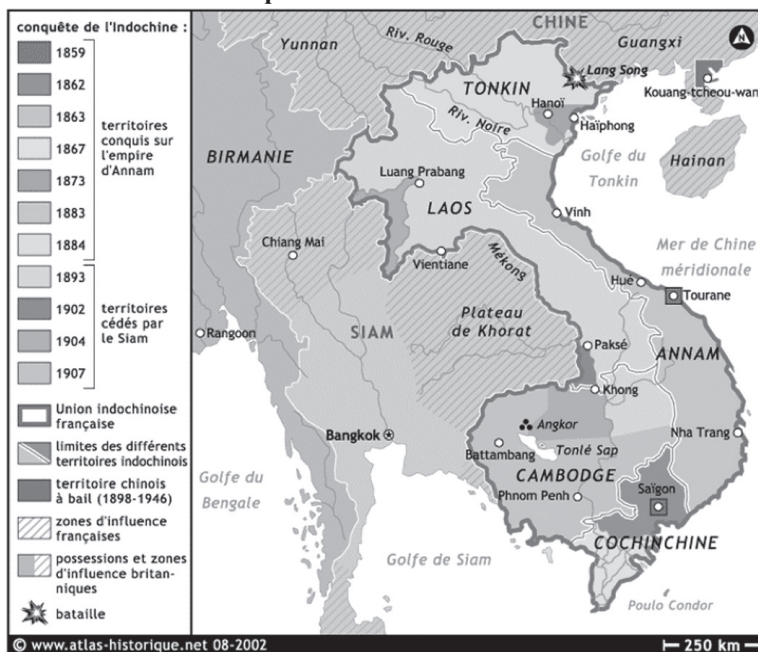
There were several prescribed uses for communal lands in each village. Salary land (*luong dien*) was used to pay soldiers. In 1809, the Nguyen court calculated that eight *sao* to a *mau* were available for each soldier. The tax assistance land (*tri suu dien*) was designated to help the poor pay their taxes. Study land (*hoc dien*) paid for teachers and educational materials for the village. The orphans' and widows' land (*co nhi, qua phu dien*) was used to help support the unfortunate. The cultivation of these lands not only provided an income for necessary government institutions and personnel, but also served as a form of social assistance, a safety net for individual peasants in case of misfortune. These lands could also be rented out to private citizens for a period of three years, the rent money going to the village government. The sale of these lands was absolutely prohibited.

This was the structure of land distribution among the Vietnamese before the arrival of the French in the mid-19th century. Peasants were able to work and feed themselves through 'equal share,' and the tight cohesion of the village provided for those who couldn't work. The planting and harvesting were performed communally to provide for the best possible crop yield. As will be seen, this system swiftly collapsed through land usurpation, and peasants soon found themselves without any land to cultivate.

Part II. The French colonial administration

In 1858 a fleet of fourteen French and Spanish ships carrying 3000 troops seized Danang; by 1883 the French had seized control of all of southern Vietnam and made the central and north portions protectorates. Though the Nguyen dynasty still stood, it was only ceremonial after ceding all sovereignty to the French (see Map 1). There followed a process of land concessions and usurpation that robbed over half of Vietnam's peasants of their land and left many more on the edge of subsistence, ending a traditional way of life.

Map One: French Indochina



Through their conquest, the French forced the Vietnamese Emperor to give up his right to distribute land; the first concessions to the imperialists were thus the communal public lands. In the Annam, near the imperial court in Hue, there was a higher amount of communal lands left, amounting to over two-thirds of the total cultivated lands. But in Cochinchina and Tonkin, communal lands became almost nonexistent. The small farmers had lost their only means of supplementing their insufficient crops. However, all of the lands the French claimed were awarded to French citizens (ranging in grants from thirty to a thousand hectares or larger) who then rented the land back to the Vietnamese peasants. Some Vietnamese who cooperated with the French—Catholics, colonial militia, and mandarins exiled from court—were also given tremendous land grants.

Table One: Total Land Ceded to the French by 1930

Tonkin	104,000 hectares
Annam	168,400 hectares
Cochinchina	606,500 hectares
Total	878,900 hectares

Even after six decades of French rule, the Vietnamese were still ceding land to the French. By 1932 the French and their Vietnamese allies laid claim to 1,950,000 hectares, which increased to 2,100,000 in 1938 and in another ten years, totaled 2,300,000 hectares.¹³ In this way, more than two-fifths of the total cultivated land in Vietnam had been ceded.

Land concessions were carried out in ways beyond the French merely claiming the area for free. Usury was a tremendous problem for many Vietnamese peasants. The majority of peasants worked as tenants and sharecroppers on land owned by a French (or a favored Vietnamese) landlord. The rent and taxes were so high that most peasants had to borrow in order to cover the cost of production and for the food to sustain them while working on the rice paddies.¹⁴ However, if a peasant didn't ask for a loan from the landlord, he was generally not well-treated. Sometimes a landlord would file fallacious charges against a farmer (in concert with local officials) so that the peasant would have to take out a loan from the same landlord to pay off the officials in order to keep out of prison.¹⁵

Since the peasants owned nothing to mortgage, these loans were generally short term and granted at exorbitant interest rates. Pierre Gourou, a French observer, explains how the loan system worked:

There are two methods of granting short-term loans. According to the first, which is called *bac gop* ("money collected daily"), a loan of 10 piastres is reimbursed by a daily installment of 0.40 piastres over 30 days. At the end of this period, the lender had gained 2 piastres, that is, disregarding calculation of compound interest, an interest rate of 240 percent a year. By the second method, which is called *vay bac ngay* [...] ("daily loans"), a piastre borrowed in the morning is paid back that same afternoon with a supplement of 0.10 piastres: the annual interest is thus 3,650 percent.¹⁶

The long-term loans (those lasting more than a month) were just as oppressive. In Tonkin, a loan averaged an interest rate of 60 to 100 percent a year. When a peasant could not repay, as was often the case, the landlord immediately foreclosed on the peasant's farm. In Cochinchina, the average interest rate was 100 to 200 percent a year. This kind of practice is what left Cochinchina with only three percent of its communal land in tact by 1931 (as opposed to twenty percent in Tonkin and twenty-five percent in Annam¹⁷).

The taxes enacted by the French administration were oppressive. As stated before, under the emperors, taxes had been less than ten percent of an individual's income. Under the French imperialists, though, the personal tax was fifty to seventy percent, leaving a peasant family without enough to live on through the year (thus the common practice of taking out loans). The head tax alone was ten to twenty percent, but those who collaborated with the French were exempt. These taxes were to be paid equally, whether or not the peasant owned any land.

Alcohol became another market for the French to exploit. Rice whisky, once produced in the village for religious ceremonies, came under the control of the colonial administration. To buy a bottle officially sanctioned by the state was 900 percent more expensive than if the peasant produced the wine himself.¹⁸ It was illegal for a peasant to distill his own alcohol and the colonial administration actually enacted a quote system, compelling each province to buy a certain amount of this over-priced whisky every month.

These heavy taxes were enacted to develop an infrastructure in Vietnam that would serve French investors. Between 1860 and 1935, the French constructed 15,625 miles of road and 1,570 miles of railroad. Dams and new irrigation also helped to open up more land for cultivation. All of these new facilities, though, did not serve Vietnamese peasants in the least—they only served to transport taxes, French administrators, agricultural exports, and military personnel to quell the occasional peasant uprisings. Wiegiersma puts it aptly when she writes, “The main purpose of the French colonization of Vietnam was the economic development of the country in ways which would benefit French capitalists.”¹⁹ Despite having to pay for their construction and being forced to work cheaply through the *corvée* system,²⁰ most Vietnamese peasants had to carry their produce to market, leaving the roads and railways of little use to them. These taxes weren’t reduced to account for crop losses from floods or drought: in the past, a crop loss of thirty percent reduced taxes by twenty percent; under the French, taxes remained even.

To express their displeasure with the French, many Vietnamese writers disguised their stories as political commentary, and taxes were a common theme. One example of this is *Mud and Stagnant Water* written by Nguyen Tuong Long and published in September of 1938. In chapter two, the protagonist stops and asks a man in the market place why he has a young boy in a basket:

I was very surprised to hear the man’s answer: “I am selling him, young sir.”

“Selling him? What for?”

“To pay my taxes.”

Then the man smiled bitterly. “All day long nobody has inquired. It has really been miserable. Here, if you want to buy him, I’ll let you have him cheap.”

Although he was surely only jesting, his face at the same time showed a certain hope, like that of a drowning man trying to cling to a thin piece of wood in the hope of escaping death [...].

From that time on, slowly, the things I heard and witnessed brought me to a general realization: the peasants, who never have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear but who must always pay the full amount of taxes, will sacrifice everything in order not to be marked as a tax evader.

One could try no harder than they to meet their responsibilities. But human energy is limited. Ideally the responsibility of the government should be to collect taxes only in accordance with the ability of the individual to pay [...].

Unsurprisingly, this story was immediately banned by the colonial administration, which had banned the publication of political essays. Though written as a novel, its contents were meant to be taken seriously as a documentary-style essay.

Heavy taxes, free land concessions, and usury of peasant lands through high-interest loans all served the French colonists. The peasants weren’t noticed beyond the profit that could

be made through their exploitation. The tradition of communal cultivation and communal relationships quickly came to an end.

Part III. The impact on Vietnamese peasants

By 1930, in Tonkin and Annam, almost half the population was landless, and in Cochinchina, that figure was near seventy-five percent. Land concessions and usury had robbed the majority of Vietnam’s peasants of their way of life. In Tonkin in 1938, there were 968,000 *families* without any land, and by 1953 that number reached over a million, so that there were more people without land (fifty-eight percent) than people with holdings.²¹ These figures may actually be worse, in that large landowners may have been putting their tenants’ names on parcels of land to hide how much wealth they actually possessed.

Not only were a majority of the Vietnamese without land, but they were starving as well. Rice had become a very profitable export for the French, accounting for nearly 70 percent of the total value of Vietnamese exports.

Table Two: Rice Exports from the Harbor of Saigon

Year	Tons of Rice
1860	57,000
1877	320,000
1937	1,548,000

In looking at the figures in Table Two, it is important to remember that, while the production of rice in Indochina increased twenty-four percent between 1900 and 1937, the population increased by eighty percent. The *per capita* availability of rice fell from 232 kilos in 1900 to 182 kilos in 1937. Remember, also, that about 223 kilos of rice are necessary per person per year to maintain adequate health. The members of a family of four would need at least 1.08 hectares (three *mau*) to feed themselves. Clearly, too much rice was being shipped abroad and not enough retained to feed the growing population.

To truly understand what the peasants of Vietnam under French rule endured, it is important not just to examine the statistics, but also to listen to their own words. Testimonies collected from several individuals during the late 1960’s offer examples of life under French rule.

Phan Van Chu gave this statement when he was 61 years old, living in the village of Xich Dang in the Kim Dang province. In this passage he addresses all the issues of being poor and landless, of heavy taxation, and of having to take out oppressively high loans, ending with the forfeiture of his land:

I was born in this village of a family of landless peasants [...]. Under the feudal regime there were lots of taxes [...]. When we were old enough to start paying taxes—eighteen—we were given a plot of land to work, down by the river. But as the taxes were very high, a man was unable to hold on to his land and had to sell it to the rich [...]. I had a plot measuring eight *saos*, and I kept it for three years, and then I had to cede it to a peasant for thirty piastres because of a three-year loan he had made me [...]. In the old days, we had to do forced labour when we were eighteen. Among other things, we were

obliged to put up buildings for the Residence, the mandarins and the French. We had to garden for them, too.²²

Vu Van Cat was a sixty-year-old peasant in the hamlet of Huong Dao, in the Phat Diem district. As an older citizen, he can also recall the heavy taxes and unfair lending practices of landlords:

Under the French I didn't have any land at all, except the tiny plot my hut stood on [...]. My parents were poor and used to work for a landowner [...]. When I was sixteen, and therefore more or less a grown-up, I became a hired labourer on a landowner's estate [...]. When I was a child myself, back in colonial times, living conditions were very hard. Every year, I used to run deeper into debt with the landowner. In those days we were all subject to the capitation tax. I also had to pay a tax on my house, and other money besides. Some years it was hard to pay the tax, and you had to borrow. The landowner used to lend money at an extortionate rate [...]. The famine of 1945 caused a great many deaths in the village.²³

There were additional consequences for Vietnamese peasants under this sort of governance: namely, the productivity of their land decreased. The peasants didn't have any resources to put back into the land, nor did they see any reason to since it would only benefit the landlord. An example of these consequences is the steep decline of rice production in Cochinchina (see Table Three).

Table Three: Rice Production in Kilos / Hectare by Year

1934	1,500 k/ha
1935	1,468 k/ha
1936	1,468 k/ha
1937	1,208 k/ha
1938	1,607 k/ha
1939	1,865 k/ha
1940	1,353 k/ha
1941	1,254 k/ha
1942	1,392 k/ha
1943	1,186 k/ha

Unfortunately, there is little data available about crop yield before the arrival of the French, but this overall decline over a ten-year period is enough evidence of the detrimental effects the French had on agricultural production. This can also be seen in relation to other countries in Asia not under the influence of Colonialism. From 1935 to 1940, in China the average yield of rice per acre was 2,259 pounds, and in Japan that number was 3,408 pounds per acre. However, in Vietnam, there was only an average of 1,096 pounds of rice cultivated per acre.

Moneylenders also saw no purpose in exploring any industrial or commercial investment because rice was still the largest export of Vietnam, making usury the most profitable venture.

Peasants lost their land to the unbearable interest rates placed on the loans they were forced to take. A moneylender thus reaped sixty to one hundred percent interest on a loan, or gained land that could be rented to poor sharecroppers to produce rice.

Under French administration, these peasants had nothing. Because they were unable to afford the lands they had once labored on freely, there arose a tremendous landless labor force that the French wasted no time in further exploiting. Although some tried to remain in the villages of their birth, when there was simply no work to be found, peasants were shipped off to French mines and plantations whose conditions were so poor they were often referred to as ‘hell on earth.’ Because so many of them were sent so far away from their homes (ninety-eight percent of all rubber plantations were in Cochinchina, but most workers came from Tonkin and Annam), it was almost impossible to run away. Those who did try were beaten and often killed. The estimated mortality rates in French mines and plantations were around thirty percent, though owners frequently gave lower figures so as not to alarm local Vietnamese officials.

One of the most poignant examples of this ‘hell on earth’ comes from the memoir of Tran Tu Binh’s *The Red Earth* (1984). For three years, Tran worked on the Phu Rieng rubber plantation, owned by the French Michelin company (a company still in existence today). In 1927, Tran was one of 17,606 workers brought to the French plantations of the south. He describes the harsh conditions there:

The most common forms of punishment were to make the person drop his pants, then beat him on the buttocks, or beat his feet until the soles were in ribbons. After a beating, the worker would be locked up in a dark room, legs shackled, and left without water for two or three days. Some people were forgotten there until they died of thirst [...]. Each time a tree was felled and came crashing down [...] the workers held their breath and listened to see if anyone was crying out. On some days two or three people were crushed by trees. There would be at least several people with legs broken, arms pulled out of joint, or faces slashed as the small branches whipped by [...]. When we were felling trees there were few weeks when no one was crushed to death by a tree. As we went to work each morning we were anxious, not knowing whether when evening came we would still be alive to return. The work was extremely arduous as well.²⁴

All of these statistics and personal stories are revealing of the true conditions Vietnam’s peasants found themselves living in under the French. They were poor, landless and starving with little hope of returning to the communal lives their ancestors had enjoyed. Where once a community helped to bring in the rice harvest, now sharecroppers struggled to feed their families, giving up seventy percent of their yield to a landlord. Having no other source of income to support their families, peasants were shipped to far off plantations where thousands died. It was a new way of thinking—communism—which stepped in to offer relief.

Part IV. The appeal of communism

With no land to cultivate, oppressive taxes, and the constant threat of starvation, few alternatives presented themselves to the peasants of Vietnam. Although there was resistance to the French among scholars in the cities, there was no one to speak for the peasants, who composed ninety percent of the population.²⁵ Ho Chi Minh, though, believed not just in liberating

the people of Vietnam from the French, but also in throwing off the capitalist system brought by the colonial conquerors and instituting communism. Ho wrote the following in *La vie Ouvrière* on January 4, 1924, summarizing the plight of the peasant:

The Annamese in general are crushed by the blessings of French protection. The Annamese peasants especially are still more odiously crushed by this protection: as Annamese they are oppressed; as peasants they are robbed, plundered expropriated and ruined. It is they who do all the hard labor, all the *corvees*. It is they who produce for the whole horde of parasites, loungers, civilizers and others. And it is they who live in poverty while their executioners live in plenty and who die of starvation when their crops fail [...]. In former times, under the Annamese regime, lands were classified into several categories according to their capacity for production. Taxes were based on this classification. Under the present colonial regime, all this has changed. When money is wanted, the French Administration simply has the categories modified. With a stroke of their magic pen, they have transformed poor land into fertile land, and the Annamese peasant is obliged to pay more in taxes on his fields than they can yield him [...].

Most of these [land] concessions were founded on legalized theft. During the course of the conquest, the Annamese peasants [...] had abandoned their land to seek refuge in the still free part of the country. When they came back, their lands had been given away. Entire villages were plundered, and the natives reduced to tenants of the lords of a modern feudalism, who sometimes appropriates as much as 90 percent of the crops.²⁶

Ho understood that it would be Vietnam's peasants that would throw off French imperial rule. Summing up Marxist-Leninism for the Vietnamese people, Ho writes, "Revolution is the work of the worker and peasant masses."²⁷ It was the right group to target, because less than half of Vietnam's peasants owned land.

In 1952, preparations were begun by the communist government for a two-tier land reform program: the first phase was moderate, consisting of a reduction in rent (which is purported to have had a positive impact on the soldiers at Dien Bien Phu²⁸); the second was more radical, forming farm collectives or "co-operatives." By 1954, Vietnam finally succeeded in expelling the French, though the country was divided between north and south. To understand how communism appealed to these rural villagers requires a closer look at tradition. Michael Adas writes, "The ability to maintain collective, rather than household, responsibility for revenue payments and *corvee* obligations has often been associated with strong village solidarity,"²⁹ and, during the pre-colonial era, Vietnamese villages were very communal. Social relief during hard times and mutual aid during cultivation helped to make these ties stronger. By robbing the Vietnamese of their land, France nearly destroyed this tradition. Under communism, and Ho Chi Minh's land reforms, though, this type of village solidarity was resurrected (much like when Gia Long resurrected the Le system).

During the 1950's, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam instituted sweeping land reforms to abolish rich landlords. Without private property owners to object, new canals were built to improve irrigation for everyone. Fields were made larger to use the land in an optimized fashion

and collective labor was once again organized. The agricultural surplus was collected by the state and redistributed to those who needed it (including the new urban industrial workers). In 1959, forty-five percent of peasant families had joined with a cooperative, and by the following year, it was up to eighty-six percent.

Table Four: The Co-operative of Hung Yen			
Year	Households	Area (<i>maus</i>)	Rice produced (tons)
1959	32	31	-
1960	82	82	98,668
1961	332	390	572,890
1962	357	417	662,863
1963	368	426	537,778
1964	387	429	677,872
1965	420	450	709,731

The above data indicates that the growth of North Vietnam’s collective operations occurred rapidly. Beyond the stories they told about enduring French colonial administration, the Vietnamese peasants also offered many reasons as to why they supported communism and had joined local co-operatives. While patriotism may have played a small role, these peasants all comment on how their lives changed for the better following both the departure of the French and participation in a local co-operative.

Phan Van Chu testifies:

After the first nineteen households had joined the cooperative, our family joined too [...]. What made us join? Patriotism and enthusiasm, that’s all. The spread of irrigation staved off drought, and we gradually increased the yield. By 1963 there was a distinct improvement, and we had 700 extra kilos of rice [...]. Life is certainly better than it was [...].³⁰

Vu Huy Hoc recalls:

I was one of the first to join the co-operative, for what I had been told made me feel I would be better off if I did. Collectivization brought me many advantages: for instance, there are now three harvests a year, a rice harvest, a jute harvest and a maize harvest; you can earn a lot if you work hard [...]. We no longer have any real worries about the future. There is never any shortage of reserves when Tet draws near.³¹

Vu Van Cat affirms:

With the return of peace in 1954-5, I received nearly a *mau* under the land reform programme. I became a member of the mutual-aid labour pool: this was form of collective labour [...]. In 1956 I bought a buffalo. Things were looking up for me: for the first time in my life I owned land and a buffalo. In 1959 the collective farming was introduced. I joined the cooperative. In my

first year of membership I earned enough to cover my basic needs and pay off my debts [...]. What is socialism? If you ask me, socialism is a way of improving the lives of the peasants.³²

This is not to say that every peasant in North Vietnam completely understood the philosophy behind communism, but they did readily accept the relief the communist land reforms brought. The cadres espoused a philosophy for the poor farmers: “Living together, eating together and working together.”³³ In villages, poor peasants were trained by the cadres to carry out the reforms, the rich landowners now gone. As demonstrated by the cooperative of Hung Yen, villages began to prosper once more.

Communism offered the peasants of North Vietnam a chance to regain the collective traditions of their past and improve the miserable conditions under which they had been living. Once again, villagers worked the fields together and supported each other in difficult times. Exploitative ‘hired’ labor was replaced by the more traditional household and family labor. Most telling about this resurrection of communal organization was the success that peasants had: from 1955-59, there was a forty-seven percent increase in rice, potato and corn production. While this grand amount, 5.8 million tons, was not to be reproduced until 1974, it may be attributed to the war. For comparison, South Vietnam produced 5.3 million tons in 1959, the same as it did in 1939.

Conclusion

There is still a great deal of work that can be done on this topic. Research into peasant agricultural output during the nineteenth century before the arrival of the French would provide for a more adequate comparison of declining productivity. Unfortunately, many records were lost during the wars that decimated Vietnam in the last century. It is also important to remember that any statistical reports or interviews with North Vietnamese peasants may be unfairly biased due to political influence. However, there is no denying the atrocities suffered by peasants under the French, which may be under-reported, given how plantation owners covered up the number of workers that died under their supervision.

Even communism and the land reforms of Ho Chi Minh could not completely restore Vietnam’s peasants to their previous traditions, but at least they were given back the land that had been so egregiously usurped, and a chance to survive, if not prosper. Many did prosper, though, increasing their production of not just staple crops, but pigs, poultry and vegetables. An economic boom of house building took place in the countryside, and small kilns were constructed to fire the bricks that would replace the mud-huts so many peasants lived in. As one North Vietnamese observer put it:

The recent changes in the appearance of the rural areas is full of promise. The spectacle of desolate, muddy villages with a few ancient tile palaces of lords interspersed with rows of obscure thatch and mud houses and clusters of flimsy, twisted huts exists no longer. In its place is the spectacle of well lighted, attractive new brick houses belonging to the agricultural cooperative workers.³⁴

The coming of French colonialists destroyed the peasant farmer and communal villages of Vietnam's past. High taxes, usury loans and forced land concessions robbed the peasants of the land they once worked. Peasants were forced to labor on tremendous farms and plantations owned by Frenchmen, sometimes very far from their homes. But as there was already a communal tradition among Vietnamese peasants, Ho Chi Minh's communist land reforms were more readily embraced. There was not a return to the old ways, but new irrigation and electric innovations improved upon peasant production. Mutual assistance between neighbors was resurrected, as was the safety net for families that fell on hard times. Most importantly, the land was returned to the hands of peasants.

Notes

- 1 It is important to distinguish that, when referring to Vietnam in this paper, it is *Northern* Vietnam that is being discussed. Southern Vietnam and the Mekong river delta were not extensively populated by the Vietnamese until the 19th century, and thus lacked much of the cultural and economic traditions of the north.
- 2 Usury is defined as exorbitant interest charged, in this case a method of high interest loans used by rich landlords to cause peasants to forfeit their lands.
- 3 Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. xxvi.
- 4 Nancy Wiegersma, *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Revolution*, pp. xiii.
- 5 Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 123.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 65. Original Vietnamese: *Nam vo tuu nhu ky vo phong*.
- 7 Nancy Wiegersma, *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Revolution*, pp. 63.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 37.
- 9 This meant males ranging in age from sixteen to sixty. Before the age of sixteen, a young man would live at home and help the family. After the age of sixty, a man was too old to work and it was expected that his family would provide for him.
- 10 A *mau* is equal to roughly nine-tenths of an acre, or 3,600 square meters.
- 11 A *sao* is equal to one-tenth of a *mau*.
- 12 Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 10.
- 13 In 1940, the French official Pierre Gourou estimated there were five million hectares in Vietnam for cultivation of both food crops and industrial crops.
- 14 Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 84.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 84.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 85.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 15.
- 18 Neil L. Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, pp. 63.
- 19 Nancy Wiegersma, *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Revolution*, pp. 67.
- 20 A system of forced labor instituted by the state.
- 21 Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 19.
- 22 Gerald Chailand, *The Peasants of North Vietnam*, pp. 137-138.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 236-237.
- 24 Tran Tu Binh, *The Red Earth*, pp. 25.
- 25 Ellen Hammer, *Vietnam: Yesterday and Today*, pp. 121.
- 26 Bernard B Fall, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, pp. 24-25.
- 27 Nancy Wiegersma, *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Rebellion*, pp. 91.

28 Ibid., pp. 137

29 Michael Adas, *State, Market and Peasant in Colonial South and Southeast Asia*, pp. X 9.

30 Gerald Chailand, *The Peasants of North Vietnam*, pp. 138-139

31 Gerald Chairland, *The Peasants of North Vietnam*, pp. 140

32 Ibin, pp. 137-138.

33 Nancy Wiegersma, *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Revolution*, pp. 138.

34 Wiegersma, *Vietnam: Peasant Land, Peasant Revolution*, pp. 152.

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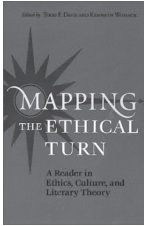
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Davis, Todd F. and Kenneth Womack, eds.
Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics,
Culture, and Literary Theory. University Press of Virginia:
Charlottesville and London, 2001. 296 pp.

● ● ● *Ashar Foley*

Davis and Womack state in their Preface that the title, *Mapping the Ethical Turn*, is not meant to suggest that ethical criticism is anything new, in need of definition and demarcation. Rather, it expresses an intention to “tell a story that highlights a terrain that has always been there” (Davis and Womack ix). The editors acknowledge that we may well wonder who is “doing” this sort of criticism today: aside from the luminaries Northrup Frye and F.R. Leavis, most poststructuralist critics have eschewed looking for or taking distinct moral or ethical positions in their readings of literary works. This is an understandable reaction to a century of upheaval, a century which saw two devastating world wars, the threat of nuclear attack, and the global acknowledgment of systematic genocide. But although we were bound to momentarily lose our ethical and moral bearings, it is absurd to assume that we no longer appeal to or read for “the ethical or moral dimensions of the human condition” in the postmodern era (Davis and Womack ix). We continue to decipher the significance and consequences of our actions and of events, and we do this most concretely with the use of narration—the attempt to verbally or literarily render even the most indescribable experience. This is a characteristically human endeavor, traced throughout history, and so “it would be ludicrous to imagine that readers of literature over the past several decades somehow disengaged their ethical faculties as they encountered their culture’s grand narratives” (Davis and Womack x). What *is* new to the twentieth century reader of literature is her role in the evaluation of a work’s ethical significance in tandem with the author’s own communication, the basic tenet of ethical criticism being that, in his work, a good author provides the reader with concrete life examples in relation to which she can develop her own moral sensibilities, thereby enriching her quality of life. Davis and Womack assert that bringing this external, subjective element to a literary work necessarily elicits a variety of responses to a variety of literatures; in this way, ethical criticism bars “a dogmatically prescriptive or doctrinaire form of reading” (x).

As comprehensive as this approach may seem, it has met with objection from many critics who posit that trying to evoke ethical implications from a literary work is like squeezing water from the proverbial stone. The essays in the first section, “Theory and the Ethics of Literary Study,” address this and other objections, as well as offer several definitions of ethical literary criticism. In “A Humanist Ethics of Reading,” Daniel R. Schwarz takes up the question of the (inherently) ethical dimension of literature, stating that “texts demand ethical responses from their readers in part because *saying* always has an ethical dimension” (Schwarz 5). In other words, a text is written because the author wants to communicate something, and this communication is achieved only when the text has an active, responsive reader. Because the text requires two people, it can be thought of as a sort of dialogue and, as such, exists in the realm of communication among people, or the ethical realm. Thus, the relationship between an author and a reader, Schwarz says, is already an ethical relationship, pointing to the importance of both participants

in ethical literary criticism. Continuing this thread, Wayne C. Booth's piece, "Why Ethical Criticism Can Never Be Simple," challenges what he calls the "author-is-dead" crowd, referring to subscribers of the theory that an author's life and authorial intentions are irrelevant to the author's work itself. Booth asks, "If there is no author, how can you talk about an ethical relation with anything? But if there is an author inflicting choices upon me, I have not only a right but a responsibility to think about whether those choices are ethically good or bad" (Booth 22). It is evident here that ethical criticism views a literary work as an author's whetstone of specific, narrative example against which a reader sharpens her own judgement, imagination, and compassion. In "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism," Martha C. Nussbaum makes a case for the necessity of this dynamic singular to the reading of literature, contending that the human situations laid out before a reader are the essential, invigorating supplements to the "shopworn" terms in the dry, non-narrative prose of law, sermon, or philosophy (60). She goes on to state that reading can offer us the opportunities to learn the lessons of moral behavior, thus helping to shape the reader into a valuable citizen (Nussbaum 65-66). This is not to say that ethical criticism calls for a sermonizing, didactic literature, however. Schwarz demonstrates quite the contrary, citing T. S. Eliot's "Gerontion," in which the speaker uses highly disparaging and stereotypical language to describe his Jewish landlord (6). Although ethical criticism calls for "Gerontion"'s reader to take account of Eliot's own anti-Semitism, it does not expect said reader to learn from Mr. Eliot or his poem that one should also be an anti-Semite, that the Jew who "squats on the window sill" is indeed a bad, miserly person. Rather, Schwarz cites this piece as one literary example that demands reader thought and resistance. Bloom adds to this discussion, pointing to the nature of the stories in the Bible. Rather than encountering lists of commandments and codes, a reader of the Bible primarily engages with morally ambiguous stories: Jesus Himself, for example, "told scores of radically ambiguous parables that forced his listeners into moral thought," and His own story, argued by some to be "The Greatest Story Ever Told," tells "how the God/man at the moment of supreme moral testing is ridden with doubt and cries out, as any of us would have done, 'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?'" (Bloom 19). Perhaps the most interesting stories, then, do not offer a neatly packaged moral viewpoint like Aesop's fables, but allow the reader to think her own way through morally ambiguous territories so that she can critically formulate her own response. With this conclusion, Booth arrives at one of the central premises of ethical criticism: no matter what the literary example or the reader reaction, a reader's character and intelligence are changed and presumably enriched by her read encounters with other worlds. In the words of Schwarz, "Rather than being divorced from life, our reading experience—if we read actively and with intelligence—is central to life and contributes to the development of the mature personality" (5).¹

The second section, "Confronting the Difficult: The Ethics of Race and Power," focuses on the relationship between writer and audience. Kathleen Lundeen's piece tackles the question of reader sympathy, asking the question, "[T]o what extent is our literary engagement biologically or culturally determined?" (Lundeen 84). In other words, do I have to be an African-American woman to identify with Sealy in *The Color Purple*, and can Alice Walker reasonably expect empathy from a reader who is not? The logical but absurd conclusion of such a premise is that "autobiography would emerge as the sole legitimate creative genre," read only by its author (Lundeen 83). But the complementary acts of reading and writing do not exist a solipsistic vacuum, and so one must always ask why and how an author is representing a particular subject, and what he wants his readers to feel. Lundeen investigates one example in which an

author, Felicia Hemans, portrays an infanticide by a Native American woman in an extremely non-judgmental and sympathetic way. Having researched Hemans' own life, Lundeen relates that the author was left alone with five children by an errant husband. Lundeen then concludes that, when we sympathize with the Native woman in the poem, we also sympathize with Hemans' plight—that the Native woman is a poetic proxy for Hemans' own desire for death, the direct representation of which would offend her readership. James Phelan continues the discussion of authorial intentions for the direction of reader sympathy in "Sethe's Choice: *Beloved* and the Ethics of Reading." Authors, he states, always run the risk of being too aggressive with their messages and estranging their audience. Perhaps there is no finer line than that walked by Toni Morrison in *Beloved*, in which a desperate slave woman's brutal murder of her baby evokes both "horror and sympathy" from the reader—but not, Phelan points out, outright condemnation (106). Phelan examines how Morrison's narrative techniques and authorial distance make this reaction possible, concluding that her portrayal of Sethe's dilemma compels the reader to "imaginatively engage with Sethe's instinctive decision that, when faced with the prospect of slavery, loving her children means murdering them" (106). If we can somewhat sympathize with Sethe's choice, we gain a greater understanding of the evil of slavery through direct confrontation with one of its consequences. Margaret Urban Walker looks at different means of moral repair, paralleling the non-punitive attitude towards reparation in Morrison's *Jazz* with the methods of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa. Both offer empowering examples of post-traumatic human healing without retribution, "confirm[ing] that there are many and grave grounds for retribution but opt[ing] officially for reparation and conciliation, offering [...] a passage to a society of citizens, rather than victims and [...] criminals" (Walker 117-18).

The third section of *Mapping the Ethical Turn* deals with the accuracy and limits of artistic representation, looking at the critical "cultural responses" to controversial works. The first of these works discussed, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, is located in the (necessarily) political South African literary tradition, and yet it resists this tradition, putting "ethics before politics" (Meffan and Worthington 131). Although it faces charges of irresponsibility by fellow South African writers, Coetzee's *Disgrace* counters that to represent an Other as an easily decipherable entity or object is to do away with alterity *in total*. Rather, it is the task of an author to preserve the unknowable, as well as the subject's acknowledgement of "his inability to contain all that is perceivable within the ambit of understanding" (Meffan and Worthington 135). The limited understanding of Coetzee's often despicable protagonist, David Lurie, keeps the Other (here, his daughter) from being reduced to its representation, while at the same time allowing for respect. Rather than speaking to some specific, political agenda, *Disgrace* advocates the more general "idea that we must simply learn to speak *with* our Others on equal terms" (Meffan and Worthington 146). In "The List is Life: *Schindler's List* as Ethical Construct," Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack also take on popular criticism, defending Spielberg's film in the face of the charge that it violated the basic principle of *Bilderverbot*—the taboo against any visual depiction of the Holocaust (151). Positing that *Schindler's List* "provides us with a mechanism for understanding the moral and pedagogic motives that undergird Spielberg's narrative" (152), Davis and Womack explore the lessons of the "banality of evil" (155) shown in Schindler and Goeth's strange friendship as well as the didactic effects of Spielberg's more emotional (and less historically accurate) scenes. For Davis and Womack, the danger the film poses of being *the* Holocaust story everyone knows is annulled by the number of people exposed to its message: "Plainly and simply," they state, "it will teach" (161). Susan Gubar deals with another taboo re-

garding the Holocaust—that of writing poetry. Although the American “Testimony Poets”—poets who write secondary accounts of the Holocaust from primary materials—keep in mind Adorno’s proclamation that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, they do it anyway. In fact, Gubar affirms, these “proxy witnesses” use the form best-suited to the fragmented and urgent narratives of the Holocaust (165). Rather than undertaking to present a collective, flowing history (as does *Schindler’s List* and similar productions), the Testimony Poets “highlight anomalous experiences that in their very unexpectedness put the lie to any deceptive sense that the totality of the Holocaust can be captured” (Gubar 183-84). Their work both recalls the lives on which their testimonies are based, but also crucially admits to its own limitations in understanding.

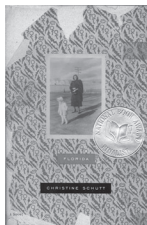
The fourth and final section, “Ways of Seeing: The Diversity of Applied Ethical Criticism,” shows how this brand of criticism can be applied to a wide array of disciplines and critical perspectives, ranging from biocentrism and collaborative life-writing to linguistics and law. Ian Marshall discusses Margaret Atwood’s twofold project of exploring the snake according to its own worldview while recognizing the problem of talking about the non-human realm by means of human language. Marshall places Atwood’s *Snake Poems* among the most recent developments in the evolution of ethics, as it extends rights beyond the human sphere. Marshall asserts that, in order to participate in this moment of the ethical evolution, “We should not act to conserve nature because it is useful to us or provides us with some advantage, even if it is a spiritual as opposed to an economic advantage, nor because we are God’s appointed caretakers of Earth, but because we accept the right to life of all living things” (Marshall 201). G. Thomas Couser explores another means of giving voice to the voiceless in “Making, Taking, and Faking Lives: The Ethical Problems in Collaborative Life Writing.” Although he addresses the issues of collaborative celebrity and politician autobiographies, Couser’s most interesting topics concern the collaborative autobiographies of severely disabled individuals or individuals who speak across immense cultural or class boundaries. Whereas a writer of fiction worries only about his obligation to his audience, Couser explores the multiple obligations a collaborative autobiographer has to the truth, to history, and to the wishes of his subject: she works knowing that “[c]oauthoring another’s life can be a creative or a destructive act, a service or a disservice, an act of homage or of appropriation” (210). Adam Zachary Newton looks at the portrayals of explosive, existential obligations through the gaze in a few works by European authors Witold Gombrowicz and Bruno Schulz. Drawing upon the significance and recurrence of the theme of the face in both authors, Newton launches an inquiry into ethics using the face as a trope. This has interesting implications for such self-referential authors as Gombrowicz and Schulz: Newton points out that the weight of the Other’s countenance, necessarily felt by all humans, is increased exponentially when one achieves an international readership! The two final essays in *Mapping the Ethical Turn*, “Henry James, Moral Philosophers, Moralism” by Cora Diamond, and “How to Be ‘In Tune with the Right’ in *The Golden Bowl*,” address James’ novels and the philosophical and moral themes and variations represented through his characters.

Overall, *Mapping the Ethical Turn* is a marvelous entry into the varied and all-encompassing field of ethics. The reader will be surprised and enlightened by the different insights and disciplines each author brings to his or her reading of a text—for example, Margaret Urban Walker’s relation of the events in Morrison’s *Jazz* to the methods of post-apartheid South African reform. What is particularly interesting and impressive about this brand of criticism, however, is its humility and responsibility to texts, their readers and authors—a breath of fresh air in an often contentious branch of literary studies.

Note

1. Readers who become familiar with *Mapping the Ethical Turn* may note that my brief summary of the first section does not mention Charles Altieri's essay, "Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience." Sadly, this is where my abilities as a reader meet their limits, as I have always found Altieri's writing to be complicated, at times indecipherable.

Todd Davis was one of Otterbein's visiting Humanities Scholars in the Fall of 2004. He delivered a lecture on ethical criticism, using the poetry of friend and colleague Mary Swander for his analysis. He is a Professor of English at Penn State Altoona.



Schutt, Christing. *Florida*. Evanston, Illinois: Triquarterly Books, 2004. 156 pp.

● ● ● *Amanda Hinds*

Until the 2004 National Book Award finalists were announced, no one had heard of Christine Schutt. In 1996, while divorced and raising two sons, she wrote a short story collection aptly titled *Nightwork*. Her first novel, *Florida*, had only sold 700 copies when it was chosen as a finalist for the National Book Award. Criticism has been levied at the National Book Foundation for choosing five obscure finalists. Of course, there may have been other qualified books that sold thousands of copies, but it seems important to spread the word about books such as this one.

Florida is the story of Alice Fivey, who has essentially been orphaned. When she was five years old, her father died when his car veered off the road and into a lake. The reader is never told whether this was an accident, and Alice is only told that her father left and did not come back, leading her to constantly question the circumstances surrounding his life and death. Alice's mother, while very much alive, has a series of mental breakdowns and is taken away to live in a psychiatric hospital simply known as "The San." At the time of her mother's hospitalization, Alice is ten, left to live by jumping from one relative's home to the next.

Intensifying the straightforward story of an orphaned girl trying to find her way in the world, Alice seeks to make sense of both her father's death and her mother's life. Interestingly, she is named after her mother, and spends a great deal of time trying to distinguish between her mother and herself.

The story is beautifully written, if not slightly hard to follow. Written in a series of vignettes that seem suspended in time, the novel does not obey a typical, linear plot: while Alice's life moves forward chronologically, the narration often describes past events. She intersperses childhood memories of her mother and father with her account of adolescent life with her "Nonna," an elderly grandmother who no longer speaks but with whom Alice shares a silent connection. Although this method may be distracting to some readers, most will find it a welcome change from traditional storytelling methods.

There are themes that resonate in the book, such as that of 'Walter,' the generic term for the wide assortment of men who date Alice's mother after her father's death. These men are described in bulk, as though they share similar qualities and are easily dispensable. The reader is never given a way to distinguish between the 'Walters' because there is simply no need: 'Walter' is representative of the male affection which Alice's mother, and later the young Alice, seems to crave. Alice has her own Walter when she is in her twenties, a man who is in his forties and "more terrible than Mother's" own Walters had been (101). When their relationship fails, she signs a contract agreeing to pay him if he leaves her. Walter dies soon afterward, and Alice notes that "only the document held up," forcing her to pay the money to his estate. She laments later that a father could have warned her to "sign nothing with fine print" (103).

Throughout the novel, Alice attempts to make sense of what it means to be Alice and what it means to be her mother's daughter. She wonders whether being named after her mother

means she is like her mother, and the young Alice often seems defiant about this resemblance. When she sent a picture to her mother, her mother wrote in reply, “Your face looks like a pail of worms.” Alice is hurt by this dismissal of the picture, “the only one I liked of me,” and knows that she does not want to be like her mother (26). Later, Alice tells Arthur, a lifelong employee of her family, “I am just the opposite of her” and notes how she almost shouts it (36). Alice acknowledges at a young age, “I didn’t want to leave my mother, but I knew I had to leave her” (23).

Also, the ideas of ‘Florida’ and what Florida means to different people recur throughout the novel. The reader discovers in the early part of the book that, just before her father’s death, Alice and her parents were planning to move to Florida. It promised to be a big change from the “land of the lakes” state in which they lived—Florida would solve their problems, and everyone would be happy all the time:

“In Florida, he said it was good health all the time. No winter coats in Florida, no boots, no chains, no salt, no plows and shovels. In the balmy state of Florida, fruit fell in the meanest yard. Sweets, nuts, saltwater taffies in seashell colors. In the Florida we were headed for the afternoon was swizzled drinks and cherries to eat, stem and all...there was Florida in our future while I was licking at the foam on the fluted glass, biting the rind and licking sugar, waiting for what was promised: the maraschino cherry, ever-sweet every time.” (7)

A few pages later, we realize that Florida in the literal sense is out of the question due to the death of her father, but Alice will continue looking for her own Florida to fill the void. She approaches this turn of events without question, remarking, “My father was dead and my name was hers and everyone said I was surely her daughter, so why did she leave me except that she did? The next day she was off to her Florida, and I was off to mine”(11). For the remainder of the novel, the reader watches Alice work to replace her missing Florida with books or men who double as father figures.

One example of these men is Mr. Early, a high school English teacher who believed in her ability to be a poet. His class inspires her to read more and compels her to write. One day during class after she has written a great deal, he tells her that she doesn’t “have to tell the whole story.” She thinks, “[Y]et I wanted him to know how well I knew the story, better than anyone else because I was not like anyone else but special, inward, informed. I wanted to say: I have seen such things”(79). She keeps in touch with him after high school and is later startled to learn that she had loved him and he had loved her. She realizes how much she had needed a father figure, and how she had turned Mr. Early into one.

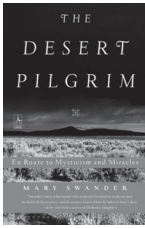
Alice also constructs a father figure out of Arthur: he is the one who takes her mother away, and he is the one who then drives Alice to and from school every day. She feels sorry for him, but also needs his caretaking, and she spends a lot of time keeping him company in his room over her uncle’s garage. They develop a relationship filled with the things she missed about her father, and many of the book’s vignettes are titled with his name.

Throughout the book, the reader comes to identify powerfully with Alice in her attempts to make sense of her life. One fault however, is that we never get to know any of the other characters in the novel on their own terms. Everyone is seen through Alice’s eyes and her

eyes only. When she turns away, they are forgotten, only to be discussed later in bits and pieces when she feels like doing so.

Although this does not help us understand the motivations and secrets of the other characters, it does help us understand Alice. Even when surrounded by relatives, she has had to make a life for herself. She was always understood as a guest in someone else's home, and had nothing to call her own except for her thoughts. She is independent and pleased with being able to adapt to nearly any situation that comes her way, proudly noting "I can live anywhere easily—have done. My boast, but I believe it. I am resilient" (140).

Schutt does an excellent job of portraying the conflict between questions and acceptance in this all-too-short novel. We see Alice question her identity based on all the people in her life, and how their actions affect her. We see her begin to realize the connection between herself and her mother, and yet distinguish between the two. She finds her own place in a world that has never seemed to be hers. Though at times surreal, the book subverts the predictable order of time and plot in novels, instead telling its haunting story through fragments and impressions, slowly helping us to discover the true Alice. Although easily overlooked in a time of blockbuster novels, *Florida* is not a book that is easily forgotten.



Swander, Mary. *The Desert Pilgrim*. New York: Penguin Compass, 2004. 352 pp.

● ● ● *Amanda Knapp*

Swander compares the landscape of New Mexico to that of Iowa throughout the novel, noting how the breathtaking immensity of the southwestern desert confronts one with his or her relation to the Divine. Faced with a debilitating illness, the dreary prospect of an Iowan winter motivates Swander to accept a temporary teaching position in New Mexico with the hope that the climate will help her heal. During her car journey, Swander is reminded by a small medallion of St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers, of the meaning of her Catholic faith and how her perspective of that faith has changed since she was a child. In doing so, she draws a line between the organized system of religion as opposed to her own faith and ties to ancestors.

Though the details of the car accident which left her nearly paralyzed are omitted from the text, Swander lives daily with the repercussions. Much of the book is devoted to conventional medicine's dismissal of patient needs and faith healing's emphasis on personal guidance. Accordingly, under the pressure of mainstream medical culture, Swander goes to the doctor assigned by her health plan; there, however, she is brushed off by the doctor and ignored by the staff. Disgruntled, Swander goes to a counselor to help her sort out her feelings. She quickly finds, however, that this counselor cannot help her, as the counselor herself has had a similar experience to Swander's with which she has not yet dealt.

In desperation, Swander goes to a healer recommended to her by a student, Ernesto, who cautions her not to go into that neighborhood alone. There she meets Father Sergei, a Russian Orthodox priest, whose method of teaching by analogy is not the help that Swander had been expecting but upon which Swander comes to rely. Close to his inner-city monastery, Swander is lead to a pharmacy where herbal remedies are dispensed by Luisa—or Lu, as she is referred to throughout the novel—an elderly Hispanic woman whom Swander is quick to befriend.

Reflecting upon her own mistrust of faith healing, Swander recollects her family's view of faith. Though Roman Catholic, her family did not place much stock in religion; rather, they believed that science would find the cure to heal them. She recalls a scene from her childhood in which her father threw her Virgin Mary statue, a gift from her nun teacher, out the window. Swander admits that she had done the same symbolically in her twenties.

Slowly, Swander becomes angry with the state of medicine. She argues that, while other institutions were being confronted with change, the medical establishment was not. In a particularly moving segment, Swander recalls the memory of her mother's forced eviction from the hospital after she refused futile chemotherapy treatments. Although not particularly religious during most of her life, her mother kept her rosary by her while dying; her faith came through in her last words, "This is my cross."

Swander, who has known the same unfeeling attitude of the medical establishment, does not shrink from vividly illustrating her pain. She describes the medical condition her car accident caused, a neck trauma that left her helpless and a painful situation that left her dependent on friends and acquaintances for everyday functioning. This was something difficult for

Swander, who has valued solitude since childhood. While in this state of terrible pain, Swander has a dream that makes her use Luisa's herbs even though she has doubts. She draws strength from both her mission into faith and in her search for guidance.

Her new acceptance of faith healing leads her to explore the sacred sites of the southwest. She visits El Santuario de Chimayo's healing soil, the story of which can be traced back to the creation myths of the Tewa Indians, who were absorbed by the conquering Spanish. At first, Swander doubts placing her faith in dirt, then concedes, remembering her garden and dirt's power to grow life. Through these small confrontations with belief, Swander's faith likewise begins to grow.

The novel also confronts issues of women's oppression in the Catholic Church. The dogma of original sin and the cross represent oppression for Swander. Yet, she thinks of Lu's goodness and considers the complications that a woman like Luisa has in the larger historical context of the Catholic Church. During the Spanish Inquisition, Lu would have been killed as a 'white witch,' for medicine was being taken out of the wise women's hands and placed into those of the guilds controlled by male physicians and barber-surgeons. Other laws made it impossible for women to use herbal remedies, dismissing such practices as quackery in a time when it was thought medically sound to let blood to cure a patient's fever.

To find models for her own life, Swander turns to Hildegard of Bingen and St. Teresa of Avila, both of whom had health problems that led them to fear and despair, and both moved through that pain to write great books, finding outlets for their creativity. A twelfth century Benedictine nun, Hildegard wrote about the relationship between spirituality and science, and concluded art was the missing link between the two. Breaking from the patriarchal thought of her time, she imagined the universe in female terms. Like Swander herself, St. Teresa's illness threw her spiritual life into turmoil after a long religious waffling and she began experiencing deep meditative states that transcended normal experience. Soon, she learned to detach from the pain.

On Father Sergei's advice, Swander also turns to the male mystics St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Assisi. St. John of the Cross was imprisoned by a monk of his own order for implementing reforms. Imprisoned and sickly, he wrote about despair, or "the dark night of the soul." So, too, Father Sergei counsels Swander not to fight against falling into the void: God is the void, God is the dark night of the soul. Like St. Francis, a charity devotee who didn't find spirituality until ill, Father Sergei tells Swander to stop fighting the pain and to live with gratitude, even in suffering.

As Swander herself begins to fall into the void, she wonders if pain and spirituality are linked. After her mother died of breast cancer, Swander did not pack her belongings from their small, rented apartment. Rather, she left her mother's belongings as they were, week after week, until a dream of her dead mother talking to her allowed her to remove her mother's belongings. Now Swander finds herself similarly inert, unable to move without guidance.

But Swander uncovers her faith in her family stories. She draws from the strength of her mother and grandmothers, Lu, and Father Sergei's dog who benevolently herds her pups. Father Sergei's story of the hidden Spanish Jews in New Mexico demonstrates to Swander the importance of family ties. He relates to Swander how he found scraps of the Torah hidden inside the crucifix of an unknowing woman. In this, Father Sergi shows how a family's history is not always as straightforward as it may appear. Swander relates this story to her own stash of crucifixes hidden in her attic that she is unable to throw away. She becomes reconciled to her Catholic faith, not

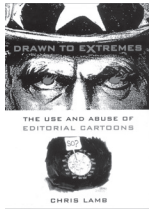
through its oppressive structure, but through a connectedness to family ties and traditions.

By the end of the book, Swander realizes that faith is to accept intuition and not dismiss it as superstition—to accept the nonscientific point of view. From the mystics, she has gathered an almost Buddhist sense of detachment from the pain of living. As Father Sergei announces his own illness and demonstrates his acceptance of his own mortality, Swander, too, is able to detach herself from the pain of living and accept the blessings of faith.

Indeed, as Swander takes the reader along in this multifaceted journey, one feels her own skepticism lifted. As Swander refills herself with a sense of connectedness to the past and reemergence of faith, the reader cannot help but pause for reflection upon her own life. This well researched and stunningly depicted novel, with its careful attention to detail and introspection, simply demands to be read.

Mary Swander was Otterbein's 2005 writer in residence from April 12-14, as part of the Otterbein Enrichment Series. She has been published in the nation's leading magazines and newspapers, and teaches at Iowa State University.

In Brief ●●●



Lamb, Chris. *Drawn to Extremes: The Use and Abuse of Editorial Cartoons*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. 281 pp.

Political cartooning has a long history, but Chris Lamb (an associate professor of communications) begins with a focus on post-9/11 America, then pulls back to look at how that history has influenced American journalism and public opinion.

The book is accompanied by over 150 illustrations, from recent publications to eighteenth century cartoons pushing for the American Revolution. He refers to the circulation wars between Hurst and Pulitzer in the dawn of the twentieth century as the “golden age” of political cartooning. Lamb explores the impact that these artists have had on the general public, stating, “At its best, satire forces us to take a look at ourselves for what we are and not what we want to be. We may not always like what we see.” For example, one cartoonist that criticized the financial gain of 9/11 widows found himself receiving death threats from someone inside the New York City Police Department. With several of the cartoons, Lamb includes both historical background and the critical fallout that ensued, sometimes berating editors who did not stand by their artists. Lamb critically examines the decline in the importance of political cartoons (very few newspapers keep their own political cartoonists on staff), despite the necessity for a free exchange of ideas in a democracy—an exchange that he believes has been curtailed since September 11. The only flaw with this book is Lamb’s inability to summarize his arguments in a coherent conclusion.

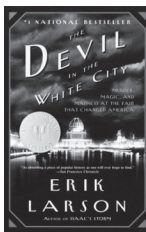
~Michelle Yost



Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of No Towers*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004. 42 pp.

Part political commentary and part therapeutic expression, Art Spiegelman’s *In the Shadow of No Towers* is the author’s attempt to work through the events of September 11th, which he witnesses first-hand as a native of New York City. The first half of the book is arranged in a series of ten, large-scale pages (in his mind, to reflect the enormity of the event), designed using illustration, computer graphics and photographs. One image is consistently used on every page because it haunts Spiegelman—that of the glowing skeleton of the north tower just before it imploded, a few blocks from his daughter’s school. Through the progression of the series, though, the image gradually begins to fade. As life-altering as 9/11 was for America and the author, Spiegelman doesn’t hesitate to criticize the Bush Administration’s handling of the aftermath. There is no developed storyline to correspond with the fragmentary thoughts and images, but Spiegelman follows events from the morning of 9/11 to the beginning of the war in Iraq in 2003. The second half of the book is a comic supplement of comic strips from the early twentieth century, many of them set in New York City or dealing with issues of patriotism, both meaningful subjects for the author. This book is more than just another political history, touching the reader because it is both Spiegelman’s honest exposure of his soul and a creative outlet for his grief.

~Michelle Yost



Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004. 447 pp.

Winner of the Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime and a National Book Award Finalist, Erik Larson's *The Devil in the White City* will leave its readers stunned, entertained, and perhaps a little embarrassed that they were not aware of such an amazing part of America's storied history. Told with the heft of the best historical accounts and the flair of fiction's finest, *The Devil* weaves its account of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 from the perspective of Daniel H. Burnham, the fair's manic architect, and Dr. Henry H. Holmes, the fair's mad murderer. Larson's prose is both invigorating and informative, as the story is told in alternating chapters between Holmes and Burnham. While one would imagine the murders to provide the most shocking and alarming moments, Larson is able to convey the nearly suicidal effort Burnham had to put forth to build the "White City" that housed the fair. As the fair's architectural magnificence was on full display, just west of the fairgrounds sits Holmes's "World's Fair Hotel" where he lures the innocent to an establishment equipped with crematorium, gas chamber, and dissection table. Nearing the twentieth-century, Burnham was determined that the fair establish America as an international presence and, with a cast of characters ranging from Thomas Edison to the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, Larson is up to the task in presenting such a complex time in history. Meticulously researched and flawlessly told, Larson showcases America at its conflicted best, as both a source of grand majesty and imposing insanity. A grand tale masterfully told by an author deserving of every last word of praise.

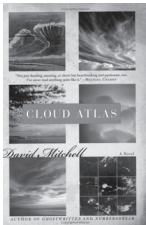
~ Adam Cottrell



Murakami, Haruki. *Kafka On the Shore: A Novel*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 436 pp.

Anyone who has been asked to describe the contents of a Haruki Murakami novel will know that it is not far removed from reading a novel by Haruki Murakami: challenging, exasperating, dizzying, and, above all, enjoyable. With Murakami's newest novel, *Kafka on the Shore*, the reader is thrust into an Oedipal tale set in contemporary Japan relating Nakata, an elderly Tokyo man, to a fifteen-year-old schoolboy, Kafka Tamura. From the start, readers will rejoice and curse Murakami (at times simultaneously) for the wicked web he weaves in this 400-plus page tome that includes fish raining from the sky, a cameo by Colonel Sanders, and, of course, the ability to talk to cats. Yet, for those familiar with Murakami, these pages will provide nothing more than a smug grin as his latest tale continues his marvelous ability to create scenes and characters filled with love, passion and a pinch of magical realism in the post-modern world. While neither Kafka Tamura nor Nakata are of the quality of Murakami's best characters, they are able to draw the reader into their separate yet linked paths of inevitable fate. While readers may grumble that Murakami is trying too hard at points, I offer that this is exactly why one should seek out this lovingly crafted work. While some writers shy away from the chances Murakami takes, we as readers must see that any flaws would diminish the originality of the work. Put more simply, Murakami's flaws are just as important to this novel as his achievements. In the end, Murakami's new novel is stunning and bizarre and down-to-earth and dreamlike and realistic and decadent and focused. In short, everything a good novel should be.

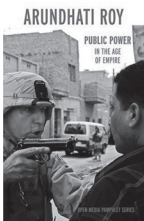
~ Adam Cottrell



Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 2004. 528 pp.

A finalist for the 2004 Man Booker Award, Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, immerses and re-immerses the reader completely and intricately into the seemingly disparate lives of six characters. Beginning with the detailed "Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing," the book plunges the reader immediately into the nineteenth century chronicles of the seafaring Ewing, who is afflicted by a mysterious and worsening illness. Just as the reader gets her bearings, however, Ewing's journal abruptly stops, superseded by the letters of aspiring composer Robert Frobisher to his friend in England, Rufus Sixsmith. Frobisher's missives are in turn replaced by a mystery-thriller starring young journalist Luisa Rey and her quest to expose the greed-fueled Seaboard Corporation conspiracy. Yet another story, that of frustrated publisher Timothy Cavendish, disrupts the climax, beginning just as the silence seems to have been put on Rey's investigation. The stories, six in all, proceed somewhat chronologically, with each main character having read and drawn upon the story that comes before his own. Occurring at different times and places, each involves an individual's resistance against and triumph over a larger and often evil power, culminating in "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After." This tale—that of a struggling civilization in a post-apocalyptic dark age—takes place after the collapse of a consumer-based society that goes so far in its inhumanity as to clone people for the service industry. The second halves of the stories then resume in reverse chronological order, ending the book with Adam Ewing's question, "[W]hat is the ocean but a multitude of drops?" (509): in other words, what is the world if not a collection of powerful, able individuals? Like Ewing, the rest of the characters find it upon their own, small shoulders to save the world, or at least to fight for a more equitable one, serving as dots on an atlas of justice that transcends time and place. Just as courageous as the novel's characters is its form, which is both fragmented and self-reflective—at one point, Robert Frobisher wonders if such a six-part, mounting and receding structure is "Revolutionary or gimmicky?" (445). Gimmicky or no, *Cloud Atlas* serves as an exercise in reading as well as an involving and riveting novel, inviting the reader to pick out his own thematic course from the six stories before him.

~Ashar Foley



Roy, Arundhati. *Public Power In the Age of Empire*.
New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004. 59 pp.

As a part of the Open Media Pamphlet series, Arundhati Roy begins her fifty-nine page take on the empire at large, focusing mainly, of course, on the United States, the recent election, and the controversial War on Terrorism, the War on Terror, the war on whatever stands in the way. She begins this brief reaction piece by stating:

When language has been butchered and bled of meaning, how do we understand “public power”? When freedom means occupation, when democracy means neoliberal capitalism, when reform means repression, when words like “empowerment” and “peacekeeping” make your blood run cold—why, then, “public power” could mean whatever you want it to mean.

She goes on to compare the idea of public power from her perspective as a resident of New Delhi, India and as a frequent visitor and analyst of the United States. Although we can often pretend that the rest of the world doesn’t exist, driving our SUV’s to the mall and back, residents of third world countries, citizens who are not content with accepting what is given to them, must be aware of what the US does on a daily basis as it also affects their days. Roy vents this frustration in *Public Power*, but by no means does she paint the picture of India’s political system as ideal. In a world full of corruption, she begins to put her faith into the mass movement. The hard-working resistance movements, reminiscent of King and Gandhi’s pacifism, can lead to change in the political system.

Through *Public Power* we follow Roy as she defines what that means, or really what it doesn’t mean for all of the world’s citizens. She promotes change and ends the piece by envisioning the battle ahead: “Exactly what form that battle takes, whether it’s beautiful or bloodthirsty, depends on us.”

~ Lauren Suveges

Contributors ● ● ●

● **Kari Bengel** is a Junior Art major at Otterbein College who spends most of her time attending classes either for her Art History and Religion minors or for her Painting concentration. Between classes and work, she likes to spend the little free time she has with friends and family, enjoying the weather outside, working on her latest set of paintings, or just curled up with a good book. After graduation, she plans to continue her education in graduate school, working on a degree that combines World Religion and Art History.

● **Jason Carney** is an elusive Senior, triple majoring in English Literary Studies, Creative Writing, and Philosophy. Although he plans to take some time off after graduating from Otterbein, he will eventually pursue his Ph.D. in one or all of his major fields of interest.

● **Ashar Foley** is a Senior English Literary Studies major and Philosophy minor. She would like to express her gratitude to all the students who helped to make this journal possible in the last two years. Thank you and farewell.

● **Amanda Hinds** is a Senior English major with minors in Psychology and Women's Studies. She is getting married this fall, and after graduating in spring of '06 she plans to pursue a Master's degree in English or Library Science.

● **Amanda Knapp** is a Senior with majors in Creative Writing and Philosophy. Among her prospective post-graduation plans are teaching English in Japan with the JET Program, working with troubled Pittsburgh youth, or joining AmeriCorps. Her tentative long-term plans include earning her M.F.A., getting a degree in Library Science, and promoting American Poetry.

● **Teresa Moore** graduated from Otterbein last spring with a degree in English Literature and Creative Writing. She is currently working on her Masters degree in literature at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and plans to continue her education through the doctorate level. Though she sorely misses the students and professors at Otterbein, Teresa has become smitten with Knoxville's hills and bluegrass music scene.

Contributors

● **Kari Parker** is a Junior Secondary Education major with a focus on History. She would like to extend special thanks to both Dr. Sarah Fatherly and Regina Kengla for their help in writing (and correcting) her research paper.

● **Zach Reat** is a Senior History major at Otterbein College. He is currently serving as President of his fraternity, Pi Beta Sigma, and is anxiously awaiting whatever is in store for him in the “real world.” His intense interest in the Holocaust was spawned by trips to Dachau and Terezin concentration camps, as well as a course he recently took called “The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century,” the instructors of which were Drs. Louis Rose and Paul Eisenstein. He would like to thank *Aegis* for this amazing experience of being published for the first time.

● **Jennifer Roberts** is a Sophomore English major with a Creative Writing concentration and minors in History and Women’s Studies. Besides writing and being a mother, she enjoys running, having completed three marathons to date. Her plans after graduation include moving, writing, and running the hills of a new, yet-to-be-determined town as she pursues an MFA.

● **Amber Robertson** is a Sophomore from Bucyrus, Ohio. She is an English major with a Creative Writing concentration, and is also minoring in Art and Religion. She is a member of Phi Eta Sigma and Alpha Lambda Delta, and volunteers as a tutor with America Reads. She has no definite plans after graduation, but hopes someday to make a living as a fiction writer. She enjoys watching old movies, sewing, and taking snapshots of her friends and family.

● **Michelle Yost** is a Junior pursuing majors in History and Creative Writing. She rows for the Otterbein Crew team and has summer plans to study abroad. After graduation, she would like to continue her education in History at the doctorate level in the hopes of becoming a professor at a four-year liberal arts college. She would like to thank her family and all of her friends for being supportive and understanding of her work.

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